The Teaching Practicum as an Opportunity for Professional Growth:

Perceptions of Three Associate-Teachers


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Studies in Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the student-teaching practicum as an opportunity for professional growth for associate-teachers. Three associate-teachers from one school board in southern Ontario were purposefully selected to participate in the study. Participants were interviewed before and after one 4-week teaching practicum. They were asked to keep a reflective journal during the practicum, and provided with questions to guide their reflection.

The literature suggests that meaningful professional development is contextual and requires reflection on practice. For example, Schön’s (1987b) hall of mirrors phenomenon occurs when teachers reflect on their own practice while observing and guiding the practice of others. Findings from this study suggest the teaching practicum has the potential to be a valuable professional development opportunity for associate-teachers, but that the university and the school board affiliated with the participants do not conceptualize it as such. As well, the research suggests that although all participants found the teaching practicum valuable, the extent to which they were able to grow professionally depended on their professional personality. In addition, it was found that the reflective journal enhanced opportunities for associate teacher reflection. This research suggests that universities and school boards may wish to consider the student-teacher practicum as a professional development opportunity.
Acknowledgments

Thank you to my family and extended family for providing support and patience throughout this academic odyssey. Thank you to all the caregivers who provided countless hours of love to Rachael and Emma while I was at the James A. Gibson Library feverishly writing, rewriting and revising. To the staff at the James A. Gibson Library, I didn’t know library fines could accumulate exponentially. To my husband, who is glad to see the end of library fines and tuition fees, I love you.

Renee, thank you. You have been an exceptionally patient, understanding and caring faculty advisor. Words cannot express my gratitude for your continued support and encouragement. Thank you also to my committee members, Alice Schutz and Mary-Louise Vanderlee for their valuable insight and feedback throughout the proposal hearing and reading process.

It is my hope that this research captures my passion for the importance of relevant professional development for educators. Teachers need to feel empowered to learn about their own practice. This may be achieved through collaboration with and creating authentic opportunities for reflective practice. I feel collaboration and reflective practice are key to providing meaningful professional development that supports both teacher and student learning.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the potential of the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship as a professional development opportunity for practicing teachers. Historically, this relationship was viewed as one in which the associate-teacher teaches the student-teacher. However, research focused on mentoring suggests that the novice-master relationship is mutually beneficial (Zeek, Foote & Walker, 2001). Because this relationship lends itself to dialogue and collaboration, it leads logically to a study that focuses on this relationship.

This chapter outlines the background to the problem, the purpose of the study, and the questions that guided the research. It also outlines the rationale for the study, the theoretical framework used, the scope and limitations of the study, and an outline of how this thesis document is organized.

Background to the Problem

According to a survey conducted for the Canadian Teacher’s Federation (CTF), 9 out of 10 Canadian teachers were involved in professional development activities in 2000 (Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 2001). Of those surveyed, 77% attended a conference, 60% attended seminars, 53% attended courses, 19% were completing master’s degrees, 10% were completing bachelor’s degrees, and 17% attended other professional development activities (Canadian Teachers’ Federation). In addition, more than 70% had spent an average of $820.00 of their personal funds on professional development activities (Canadian Teachers’ Federation). This suggests that teachers generally accept the need to remain current in their profession, and that they engage in activities that
enhance their teaching skills. In addition, to teacher-driven professional development, school boards typically set aside funds for mandated professional development activities.

Professional development has been a long-standing area of interest for provincial governments. When The Royal Commission on Learning (RCL) released its final report, *For the Love of Learning* (1995), it outlined a new vision for education in Ontario. (Ministry of Education, January: 1995). The section of the Report that focused on teacher professionalization and development stated,

...no serious reform of schools is possible without the enthusiastic participation of teachers. Teachers are the heroes of education, but they must have greater support in playing their vital and difficult roles . . . An Ontario College of Teachers should be established as an independent professional body to determine professional standards and be responsible for certifying teachers and for accrediting teacher education programs. (Ontario Ministry of Education: January, 1995).

The report highlighted the essential role that teachers play in educational reform, and it set the stage for a renewed focus on teacher professional development.

By February 1995, the province moved to establish a College of Teachers (the College) as an “important initiative [to] ensure that the teaching profession will be fully accountable to the public it serves” (Ontario Ministry of Education: November, 1995). In May 2000, the College mandated the Ontario Teacher Testing Program (OTTP) and, under the *Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001*, the *Ontario Professional Learning Program* (PLP). Under the PLP, all teachers certified in Ontario were required to complete a program of professional development to maintain their teaching license.
Every teacher was required to successfully complete 14 credits, seven prescribed by the College, and seven electives, during a 5-year cycle. Each course included an assessment component. Course lengths varied but each course was at least 5 hours long. By September 1, 2001, approximately 48,000 Ontario teachers started their first learning cycle. The remaining 148,000 members started their cycle September 1, 2002 (Ontario Ministry of Education: June, 2001).

Problems related to mandating professional development were identified following the release of the RCLs (1993) Report. For example, Boak (1995) warned against mandatory professional development and questioned the value of a deficit model that assumed teachers were not staying current with professional practice. As well, the Elementary Teacher’s Federation of Ontario (ETFO) argued that PLPs undermined professionalism and were not sensitive to individual teacher’s needs, current work assignment, or the stage of their career. Overall, they concluded that the PLP was overly prescriptive and gratuitously tied mandatory professional development to certification (ETFO, 2001).

Although the ETFO (2001) and the CTF (2003) recognized the importance of teacher accountability for student success, they did not accept teacher recertification programs or heightened public attention on teacher competency issues as an effective means for establishing it. The ETFO (2001) proposed positive alternatives for professional development including a professional growth plan for professional development and a teacher evaluation model linked to ongoing professional development. The CTF recommended a move away from the cult of testing (the Ministry was
promoting) to a constructive culture of professional accountability that was not mandated, regulated, or prescribed.

Eight years later, in April 2004, a newly elected Liberal government passed the PLP Cancellation Act, 2004. On December 16, 2004, in an Open Letter to Provincial Parliament, Gerard Kennedy, then Minister of Education and Training, described the PLP as premised on a flawed foundation for professional development. Subsequently, in August 2005, Kennedy outlined alternative approaches for ‘teacher learning,’ which he noted were based on respect and treating teachers as professionals. In this way, the Liberals changed the government tone away from one of teacher accountability (as defined by the previous government) to one of teacher professionalism.

As a teacher with 5 years of experience, I observed the proposal and brief implementation by the Ontario government of a technical model of professional development. At this time, my interest in meaningful professional development surfaced; it appeared to me that the model of educational reform via mandated professional development was flawed and I began to research more meaningful approaches, specifically, approaches that promoted professional development through reflective practice. As a practicing teacher, I was interested in professional development that was neither prescriptive nor imposed. This led me to wonder if existing relationships within the school context, and, more specifically, within the classroom, could provide the basis for meaningful professional development. I noticed that when I attended board mandated professional development workshops, the banter among my colleagues was typically critical. Teachers resented being removed from their classrooms. The “presentation pamphlets” that outlined government and/or our school board’s expectations related to
pedagogy always left me wondering how and when we would have the time to implement these new initiatives. Still, these workshops provided an excellent outlet for professional dialogue and collaboration with colleagues that was engaging and reflective.

In my experience, the professional dialogue, collaboration, and networks established at these workshops were more meaningful to my professional practice and professionalism than the actual content focus of the workshops. The issue that presented itself to me was the need to examine existing teaching relationships that promote collaboration and reflection. The student-teacher practicum came to mind as an opportunity for professional development that remained largely unexplored. The practicum keeps teachers in their classrooms and is already in place. In this way, I wondered if a teaching practicum could provide a sense of collaboration and reflection for practicing teachers and, more specifically, do associate-teachers perceive any professional growth benefits during the teaching practicum experience?

**Statement of the Problem Situation**

In Ontario and elsewhere, educators are asked to take part in mandated professional development. However, other avenues of professional growth that focus on teacher reflection and collaboration through building communities of practice should also be explored (Lieberman, 1996; Schön, 1996). Rich opportunities for meaningful professional growth may be developed through the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship. Historically, this relationship has been viewed as one in which the associate-teacher teaches the student-teacher. Yet, research suggests that mentoring is a reciprocal process that benefits the mentor as much as the mentored (Ross, 2006; Stevens, 1995; Walker-Hopp, 2002). Walker-Hopp explicitly states that mentoring relationships result in
learning and growing together, knowing self, and making a commitment. If this is true, the teaching practicum may provide a taken-for-granted opportunity for professional development. Because research suggests that teachers are often dissatisfied with mandated professional development (Lieberman, 1996; Hargreaves, 2007) there is reason to investigate alternative opportunities.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the potential benefits of the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship as an opportunity for teacher professional development. Because the relationship between associate-teacher and student-teacher lends itself to collaboration and reflectivity, it may lead logically to a study of this nature.

**Research Questions**

The main question that guided this study was: Can the teaching practicum provide a valuable professional development opportunity for associate-teachers? More specific questions were:

(a) What are the perceived benefits of the teaching practicum?

(b) Do associate-teachers feel they reflect more thoroughly on their practice after they have been asked to keep a reflective journal?

(c) Can the teaching practicum be conceptualized as a valuable professional growth opportunity by associate-teachers?

**Rationale**

Teachers need access to professional development opportunities that are problem based and learner centred, and occur throughout their teaching careers (Atkinson & Colby, 2006). The need for this type of ongoing professional development is reflected in
new trends, that involve teachers as both teachers and learners. Darling-Hammond (1995) recommends a vision of professional development that is continuous, inquiry-based, and collegial. This vision incorporates reflection, collaboration, coaching, and collective problem solving that is based on problems of practice.

Research suggests that mentor teachers grow from their experiences as mentors (Atkinson & Colby, 2006; Ross, 2006; Stevens, 1995; Walker-Hopp, 2002; Zeek, et. al., 2001), particularly when it is site-based and viewed as more relevant and meaningful to teacher learning as compared to traditional “pull out” professional development (Olsen, 2007). In Canada, the associate-teacher assumes a mentor-type role that is situated in the school environment and, more specifically, in the classroom. Professional development in the classroom can provide an opportunity that is authentic to the teacher, is embedded within the school, and is respectful to the individual autonomy of teacher learning (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Koutselini, 2008). The literature suggests that the opportunity for the associate-teacher to gain a rich professional development experience has been taken for granted and not been exhaustively explored (Atkinson & Colby, 2006; Olsen, 2007; Ross, 2002; Stevens, 1995; Zeek, et al., 2001). This research sought to address this gap by focusing attention on the experience of three associate-teachers in one 4-week practicum.

**Theoretical Framework**

This research was informed by the literature on reflective practice and reflective journaling (Schön 1987a, 1987b). Schön (1987a) argues that practitioners must work towards being in a perpetual state of reflection during and after their teaching practice. He refers to this as reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action
tends to occur after a surprise, or unplanned event, which occurs during a planned or routine activity (Schön, 1983). In this way, reflection-on-action happens spontaneously and involves quick thinking and flexibility. Subsequently, reflection-on-action refers to the reflectivity on action that may happen momentarily or several hours after the reflection-in-action has occurred. According to Schön (1987a), reflection-on-action does not always occur.

One way to facilitate reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action is through what Schön (1987b) refers to as a ‘reflective practicum’, a situation where people learn by doing in a virtual world. The virtual world is described as a world of practice, but is not the world of practice. The teaching practicum sets up this virtual world of practice for both the associate-teacher and the student-teacher. In it, the teacher becomes the coach who creates dialogue that demonstrates learning by doing. During the reflective practicum, the dialogue between coach and student becomes a dialogue of reciprocal reflection-in-action where each is reflecting on, and responding to, the message received from one another. The reflective practicum acts as a “hall of mirrors” because the teacher of the student-teacher is also a student. The teaching practicum provides an opportunity for the associate-teacher to experience a reflective practicum, and possibly, the “hall of mirrors” phenomenon (Schön). The “hall of mirrors” provides a way to mediate between espoused theory and theory-in-use.

Schön’s (1983, 1987a) notion of a reflective practicum is adapted in Colton and Sparks-Langer’s (1993) collegial environment framework. Their framework supports reflective decision making by encouraging reflective dialogue through collaboration. The framework is more specifically directed towards helping associate-teachers develop a
collegial environment that supports the reflective practice of student-teachers. It also provides a model for reflecting on self practice.

Scope and Limitations

This study focused on the experiences and insights of three associate-teachers from one school board in southern Ontario. Data were collected over an 8-week period before, during and after one teaching practicum in 2004. Data collection focused on participants' reflective journals, semistructured interviews conducted with associate-teachers before and after the practicum, and the researchers' reflexive journal. This research provided a snapshot of the experiences and reflections of three associate-teachers during one 4-week practicum. It did not include the perceptions of student-teachers, except as reflected on by associate-teachers.

Because I (the researcher) am also a practicing teacher, I went into this study with researcher bias. Experience had led me to conclude that formal professional development opportunities were often ineffective and that situating professional development opportunities in the school environment would probably make it more meaningful for teachers. Therefore, it could be argued that I found what I was looking for. To guard against this, I made note of bias in my reflexive journal, and remained aware of it in my data analysis and peer debriefing.

Outline of Remaining Document

The remainder of this document is divided into four chapters. Chapter Two provides a review of relevant literature focused on professional development. It begins by highlighting professional development as advocated by Schön (1983, 1987a), Darling-Hammond (1996), and Lieberman (1996). It reviews relevant literature on professional
development that incorporates collaboration and reflection and suggests the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship provides an opportunity for a practical professional experience that is focused on collaboration and reflection.

Chapter Three details the research methodology and design that was used to collect and analyse data for this study. It includes information on site and participant selection, methods of data collection, and analysis. Chapter Four presents the findings and interpretations of the study. Throughout the study participant personalities inductively emerged. The three participants are identified as the Synergist, Professional Role Model, and Realist. The chapter is organized by the major themes that were used to analyze the data deductively. Overall, all three participants perceived many benefits to having a student-teacher in their classroom. These benefits can be summarized on a continuum ranging from practical to reflective. Chapter Five outlines how this investigation will contribute to the literature on professional development. More specifically, this study contributes to professional development literature that focuses on collaboration and reflection. In addition, this chapter offers recommendations to the government, universities, and school boards about relevant, contextual professional development.

**Definition of Terms**

Associate-Teacher -a mentor teacher who provides a beginning teacher with authentic learning experiences within a teaching practicum.

Professional Development -an activity or workshop that provides an opportunity to provide for new skill acquisition or skill refinement.
Professional Growth and Professional Learning- the learning that occurs through a reflective means. This learning typically involves framing and reframing, and deconstructing and/or reconstructing new knowledge.

Student-Teacher- a novice teacher who is attending a Faculty of Education to become a certified teacher.

Teaching Practicum- the 4-week period during which an associate-teacher accepts a student-teacher into their classroom to provide students with practical teaching experience.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on professional development and reflective practice. It is divided into six sections. The first section reviews the history of professional development in North America; the second compares two competing approaches to professional development; the third focuses on meaningful professional development; the fourth reviews reflective practice as the means to effective professional growth; and the fifth highlights collegial work environments. The final section of this chapter reviews transactional inquiry as a way for teachers to construct professional knowledge.

A Brief History of Professional Development

In North America, the demand for greater responsibility and accountability of the professions, including education, began to emerge in the 1960s (Cervero, 2001). Cervero notes this focus was a reaction to a larger ‘crisis of legitimacy’ that loomed over the professions between 1963 and 1982, and that remains into the present day. This crisis arose, in part, as a reaction to the successful launch of the Soviet Satellite Sputnik I in 1957. Sputnik caught the American public off-guard, and marked the beginning of the US/USSR space race. The fear that the Soviet Union had the technology to also launch ballistic missiles linked scientific knowledge and technological advancement to national security (Bybee, 1997; Finley, 2000). Following Sputnik, the US “perceived itself as scientifically, technologically, militarily, and economically weak” (Bybee, 1997, 12) and consequently, public sector reforms, including educational reforms, were generally supported by the public.
From 1960 to 1980, continuing education for professionals took root, initially as lifelong learning plans. In the 1970s, as part of this trend, professional relicensing and recertification became common practice. By the 1980s, Cervero (2001) notes that continuing education became formalized in medicine, engineering, accounting, law, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, and education. Over time the term used to describe continuing education changed from ‘in-service-education’ to ‘staff development’ to ‘professional development’ (Cervero). In all cases, continuing education viewed the teacher as a passive consumer of prepackaged information. In this way, professional development or continuing education was delivered in a technical and rational nature. In the 1990s continuing education still did not meet the changing needs of professionals (Cervero). Lieberman and Wood (2001) describe the history of professional development in education as a landscape littered with failed approaches. Similarly, Borko (2004) note that professional development is “woefully inadequate” and does not take into account how teachers learn.

Scribner (1999) argues that continuing education is largely geared to the acquisition of knowledge that is situated within an academic and policy laden context. He notes that this type of knowledge acquisition is the foci of school in-services that reflect district or state reform agendas. Borko (2004) also suggests that professional development of this nature is intellectually fragmented and superficial. The problem, as identified by Scribner (1999), is that district and state policies privilege formal and state policies over less formal professional development opportunities. They do this by requiring professional development credits to advance up the salary scale and for license renewal. Consequently, teachers are required to focus on learning activities they often
view as ineffective (Scribner). The demand for measurable goals has led to a technical, mechanistic view of professional development that has the potential to reduce teacher knowledge to observable, preconstructed, trainable items that allude to a deficit model rather than an autonomous, reflective, and empowering one (Fenwick, 2001). This type of professional development is referred to by Schön (1982) as technical rational in nature. In this way, professional development is typically conceptualized with reference to technical workshops, and to formal presentations and expertise.

The technical rational approach that came to dominate professional development assumed that every problem has a fixed means to a correct and specific end. This model views the most important knowledge as scientifically based. Schön (1983) identifies a paradox of professional learning models, that is, there are presently two competing models, each under girded by different assumptions. The technical rational model promotes proscriptive and mandated programs that have a technical basis that dictate clear, objective, and measurable outcomes (Fenwick, 2001). It supports regulated mandated professional learning which, according to Fenwick and Wien and Dudley-Marling (1998), threatens to demoralize professional efficacy and empowerment through the systems of surveillance and control it supports. Still, this model remains the dominant one in education and is reinforced by government imposed standards-based curriculum, standardized testing, standardized report cards, and teacher recertification programs (Taylor, 2001). These strategies for school reform do not support nor authenticate the importance of teacher learning and reflection in professional development (Lieberman, 1996). The other model of professional development promotes a theory of reflective practice.
From Technical Rationality to Reflection-in-Action

From the 1980s on, Schönb (1983, 1987a) has argued for a more contextually driven, reflective approach to professional development. He criticized the technical rational approach for its failure to provide opportunities for educators to reflect on their own teaching practice. Schönb views teaching as a craft, not something that can be proscribed or dictated. He advocated for an epistemology of practice that places the technical aspects of teaching within a context of reflective inquiry.

Schönb (1987a) argues that practitioners must work towards a perpetual state of reflection during and after their teaching practice. He refers to this as reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action tends to occur after a surprise during a planned or routine activity (Schönb, 1983). For example, in the classroom when a master teacher constructs new ways of setting problems, it may take the form of how student behaviour is managed, the way questions are asked and responded to during a lesson, and how teacher’s modify student work to accommodate their individual needs. According to Schönb (1982) the process of reflection-in-action is “central to the ‘art’ by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict” (p. 50). Reflection-in-action is valuable but does not in itself improve practice.

Reflection-on-action refers to the reflectivity on action that may happen momentarily or several hours after the reflection-in-action occurred. Reflection-on-action provides an opportunity for the kind of reflective practice that facilitates professional growth. Ershler (2001) states that “experience is a powerful context for learning...[but] learning and experience are not one and the same. ...In order to learn from experience,
one must think about it and make sense of it” (p. 160). According to Schö'n (1987a),
reflection-on-action does not always occur, but when it does, it is very valuable because it
facilitates a deeper understanding of practice, or in the case of teaching, pedagogy. Schö'n
(1982) suggests that reflection-on-action is a legitimate and rigorous practice that
enhances professional growth. He proposes an epistemology of practice that situates
that many practitioners feel uncomfortable admitting uncertainty mostly, in part, because
they feel this uncertainty will be perceived as a sign of weakness. Yet, in this approach
teaching is an art that is practiced in an uncertain environment. He notes that practitioners
need to foster the legitimacy of reflection-in-action and to encourage its use in a more
rigorous way. In this way, the teacher recognizes teaching as an art that is practiced in
uncertainty. In response to criticism that reflection-in-action lacks rigor, Schö'n (1983)
notes that

...the study of reflection-in-action is critically important. The dilemma of rigor or
relevance may be dissolved if we can develop an epistemology of practice which
places technical problem solving within a broader context of reflective
inquiry...and links the art of practice in uncertainty and uniqueness to the
scientist's art of research. We may thereby increase the legitimacy of reflection-
in-action and encourage broader, deeper and more rigorous use. (p. 69)

Schö'n (1987b) introduced the notion of a ‘reflective practicum’, a situation where
people learn by doing in a virtual world. He describes a virtual world as a world of
practice, but is not the world of practice. The virtual world is a practicum situation within
which the master teacher takes the role of the coach who creates dialogue and
demonstrates learning by doing. During the practicum, dialogue between coach and student becomes a dialogue of reciprocal reflection-in-action where each is reflecting on, and responding to, the message received from the other. In this way, the practicum, or reflective practicum, acts as a “hall of mirrors” because the teacher of the student also becomes a student by watching and reflecting on student growth. Within the reflective practicum, the ‘hall of mirrors’ phenomenon creates an opportunity for the master teacher or coach to use reflection-in-action and reflection-on action to mediate between their espoused theory and their theory in use. Espoused theory refers to what teachers’ say they do; theory- in-use refers to what practitioners actually do. Sometimes, what teachers espouse they do, is not what happens in practice.

According to Schön (1987a) through reflection-on-action, espoused theory can be reframed to more closely match the theory-in-use or vice-versa. In this way, the “hall of mirrors” provides an opportunity for reframing; thus, the reflective practicum can provide a way to reflect on, and then mediate, between espoused theory and theory-in-use. Zellermayer (1991) explores the shift from technical rationality to reflection-in-action in a professional development context. He outlines three basic premises; the first, that “such change is a reframing process, in which practitioners transform and restructure their old professional knowledge rather than abandon it” (p. 4). This implies that teachers must identify the beliefs that characterize their old knowledge and look at how that knowledge is transformed into new beliefs. This is similar to schema theory that suggests all new knowledge is acquired through our ability to connect it with existing knowledge. In this way, new knowledge is not additive, it is restructured. The second premise is that such a change process requires critical inquiry on the part of the teacher. Critical inquiry is a
mechanism for reframing; Zellermayer states, “It is through the critical interactions of arguments that knowledge is generated, tested and acted upon” (p. 7). Arguments evolve out of critiquing one’s personal practice. His third premise is that this process of transformation is very much a social process, “because events include participants and are based on the social interactions of these participants” (p. 8). From this perspective, professional growth is constructed from reflective practice and collaboration.

Zellermayer’s research suggests that given the appropriate contextual conditions, experienced teachers can reframe their orientations towards teaching and learning in a way that may challenge their existing paradigms, and therefore, may lead to professional growth and learning.

Zellermayer (1991) advocates for professional development opportunities that focus on experimentation, interaction, and critical inquiry rather than those that focus on theory-laden presentations. Most importantly, Zellermayer argues that professional development occurs when teacher learning is organized to ensure opportunities for practice, reflection, and collaboration. This approach to professional development is situated within the belief that teacher learning is unpredictable and long term, and that professional development must provide opportunities for teachers to construct their own knowledge-base (Fenwick, 2001, Zellermayer).

The process of reframing professional knowledge involves risk-taking, a social process that is reconceptualized through reflection. In this way, reframing acts as intermediary between theory and practice informing new strategies, and informing the development of new strategies of practice (Russell & Munby, 1991). According to Zellermayer (2001), critical inquiries, along with social interactions, act as the
mechanisms for reframing and reconceptualizing knowledge which, in turn, facilitates professional growth.

**Meaningful Professional Development**

According to Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996), professional development opportunities are criticized for being non-contextual and isolated from the world of practice. They are also criticized for being imposed from above, and for being too technical in nature. The isolationist model of professional development promotes and reinforced the separation of teachers from meaningful, contextual knowledge and autonomous practice (Borko, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Lieberman, 1996; Scribner, 1999). The current organization of teaching, teaching practices, and timetabling further isolates teachers because it limits their ability to meet and form a collegial environment within the school. Opportunities for professional development often also isolate teachers from their social environment and context of practice (Scribner). Schön (1987b) criticizes technical and isolationist frameworks of professional development as being inefficient models of professional learning.

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996) argue that meaningful professional development is participant-driven and grounded within teacher experience and inquiry. They outline a number of characteristics of effective professional development. For example, they note professional development must engage teachers in concrete tasks that relate to teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection. As well, they argue that professional development should be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation and that it should be participant-driven. Consequently, they promote collaborative
approaches to professional development that involve the sharing of knowledge among educators and help to develop communities of practice.

According to Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996), professional development must be connected to teacher’s work with students and it must be sustained, ongoing, and intensive. They advocate for professional development that is supported by modeling, coaching, and collective problem-solving. Finally, they identify the need to connect professional development to other aspects of school change. In this way, they suggest professional development can create new images of what, when, and how teachers learn. This requires capacity building policies that view “knowledge as constructed by and with practitioners for use in their own context...rather than as conveyed by policy makers, as a single solution for top-down implementation” (p. 597). This view empowers teachers to be actively and constructively involved in school change.

Erikson, Brandes, Mitchell and Mitchell (2005) argue for a situative perspective of teacher learning grounded in teachers’ experiences that includes activities on-site at the school. Similarly, according to Putnam and Borko (2000), situative learning provides authentic learning experiences that involve thinking and problem solving. This type of learning, they note, “is intertwined with their [teachers] ongoing practice, making it likely that what they learn will indeed influence and support their teaching practice in meaningful ways” (p, 2). Furthermore, Swain (1998) acknowledges this situative perspective and includes the importance of reflection. He also notes that teachers learn best when experience and observation are coupled with reflection. This model of teacher
learning resonates with Schön's (1983) notion of the reflective practitioner and in his later work, the reflective practicum, and hall of mirrors (1987b).

Similarly, Little (1987) argues that the best professional development of teachers, no matter what the experience or skill level of the teacher, takes place within the context of shared planning and problem-solving with other professionals. She goes on to state that the way teachers relate to their colleagues influences their beliefs about what comprises good teaching and development as teachers. Elliott and Woloshyn (2001) support the notion that teaching is a social activity that assumes teachers learn from other teachers.

**Constructing a Collegial Environment**

Colton and Sparks-Langer (1993) designed a conceptual framework to guide the development of teacher reflection and decision making. The framework assumes that teachers learn from their experiences and that they construct mental representations from their personal meaning. In their framework, they argue that a collegial environmental is a fundamental requirement for the promotion of teacher reflection and that in order to facilitate reflective practice and dialogue, educators must first feel safe and nurtured. The Colton and Spark-Langer model identifies four essential attributes of collegial environments required for teacher reflection: efficacy, flexibility, social responsibility, and consciousness. Efficacy is defined as "the teacher's belief that they can have an impact on children and schools" (p. 50) and notes that teachers require this belief in order to be motivated to examine their own practice and look for deeper meanings. They describe efficacious teachers as those who are willing to experiment and take risks because of their belief that they can improve the lives of their students. The willingness
to take risk is also identified by Schön (1982), Scribner (1999) and Zellermayer (2001) as an important mechanism of learning and reflection. Colton and Sparks-Langer note as well that low efficacy teachers would find such an endeavor too threatening.

Flexibility is identified by Colton and Sparks-Langer (1993) as important because it involves taking on another's perspective and finding new meaning through interpretation. Flexibility is also considered necessary for responsive teaching. It refers to the ability to make on-the-spot adaptations and innovations; this is similar to Schön’s (1982) reflection-in-action. Social responsibility refers to teachers’ encouragement of socially responsible actions in their students. This is demonstrated by their active participation in their school, and in district and local communities; it is also demonstrated by their willingness to care about others and contribute to larger social causes.

Consciousness, which Colton and Sparks-Langer also refer to as metacognition, is the final attribute identified in the model. It is defined as the “awareness of one’s own thinking and decision-making” (p. 50) and refers to the ability to explain the reasoning behind actions. Colton and Langer-Sparks identify the need for precise language to clarify teacher thinking or that of others as necessary for deeper reflection and awareness of meaning. The Colton and Sparks-Langer framework outlines attributes of collegial environment that, in turn, support and encourage reflective practice.

**Constructing Teacher Knowledge**

Like Colton and Sparks-Langer (1993), Zeek et al. (2001) examined the critical role of metacognition in what they term transactional inquiry. In their research on mentor teachers in Professional Development Schools (PDS), Zeek et al. utilized transactional inquiry as a way to engage mentors in sharing, responding, and reflecting on their own
and others’ stories on teaching. The mentors in their research were experienced public school teachers who collaborated with university faculty to scaffold the professional development of preservice teachers. Transactional inquiry is the term Zeek et al. used to “describe the process of a group of educators responding to and reflecting on a text as well as the responses of others to the text for the purpose of informing and guiding…inquiry” (p. 381). In addition, Zeek et al. cited Rosenblatt’s (1978) definition of transactional inquiry as a method to engage teachers in a series of transactions with their own experiences and knowledge, through narrative texts and a social context.

Teachers kept a reflective journal and then discussed their journal entries and experiences with other teachers in the study. The strategy began with a discussion of teachers’ narratives of their practices, which surfaced as teachers reflected on their thought processes and, thus, made them visible (c.f. Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; cited in Zeek et al.). In this way, transactional inquiry encourages teachers to reflect on their beliefs and practices and it provides an opportunity for interaction with colleagues. By using it, teachers were better able to critically examine their own beliefs, practices, and struggles through their interactions with colleagues. It is suggested that,

Hearing the stories of teachers at many levels of expertise in different situations can provide insight into the events that form their professional knowledge.

Reflecting collaboratively on the stories and their lessons can provide understanding of how teachers make sense of their experiences and incorporate them into their personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1999; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Richardson, 1994). Sharing stories and lessons among
teachers can further build a sense of community, reduce the isolation so endemic to teaching, and encourage teachers to see themselves as intentional practitioners integrating skill and art into their practice. (Zeek et al., p. 379)

Zeek et al. suggest that as teachers reason and reflect on their own stories and the stories of others, they are better able to revisit the success or lack of success they encounter in their daily routines.

Zeek et al. (2001) found that mentor teachers were able to identify events that were critical to their professional development and that transactional inquiry provided a framework for discussion that could be used across school sites. They also found that journaling and storytelling helped teachers to reframe their professional knowledge. Their work supported the view that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and dialogue with others rather than in technical workshops. They noted that typically researchers solicit the voices of those removed from the realities of the classroom (administrators and legislators). In contrast, “the narrative mode adds the voices of teachers and the faces of learners” thereby empowering them (p. 384). In this way teachers are viewed as authorities who can respond to and analyze their own stories, beliefs, and practices. Similarly Schön (1982) views “a narrative is both inescapably practical and theoretical...practitioners and researchers commit themselves to reflection and deliberation in the construction of stories and narratives” (p. 263). This process leads to new and deeper insights that could not have been gained through personal reflection alone, and it encourages participants to reflect on practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; cited in Zeek et al.). This greater and deeper understanding of
personal practice is situated within a constructivist view of professional learning (Zeek, Foote et al.; Zellermayer, 2001).

**Summary**

The interest in professional development began in the 1960s, in response to the larger demand for professional accountability. The success of Sputnik contributed to a larger crisis of legitimacy that hung over all professions between 1963 and 1982. Technical rational approaches to professional development were advanced that viewed teachers as objects for training. These approaches were proscriptive and were most often mandated by governments and central school authorities. Professional development opportunities for teachers were often conducted in ways that isolate teachers from their world of practice.

This lead scholars, like Little (1987), Lieberman (1996), and Scribner (1999), to argue that professional development activities reinforced teacher isolation and removed teachers from their social environment and the context of their everyday practice. Even by the 1990s professional development in education was described as a landscape littered with failed approaches (Lieberman & Wood, 2001), and as still not meeting the changing needs of professionals (Cervero, 2001). Scribner (1999) observes that the problem is, in part, that district and state policies privilege formal learning activities over less traditional forms of professional development. Consequently, teachers are driven to engage in professional development they view as ineffective for practice but that are valued as the means to licensing and salary advancement.

Schön (1983, 1987b) argued the professional development frameworks that dominated the 1980s and 1990s were ineffective. He advocated for reflective practice as
the means for professional development. He noted that the assumptions that guide
technical rational models do not support or authenticate the importance of teacher
knowledge. His models of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action influenced both
theory and practice. Similarly, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996) argued that
meaningful professional development is participant driven and grounded within teacher
experience and teacher inquiry. Little (1987) noted that the best professional
development of teachers, no matter what their experience and skill level, takes place in
the context of shared planning and problem solving with other professionals. Elliott and
Woloshyn (2001) found that teaching is a social activity that assumes teachers learn from
other teachers.

Collaboration is promoted as a way to create a community of practice.
Communities of practice allow contextual learning that is meaningful for teachers.
Darling-Hammond (1993, 1995) and Lieberman (1996) argue that collaboration is a
relevant and valuable means of professional development. Collegial environments are
considered fundamental for teacher reflection (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993). For
example, in order to facilitate reflective practice and dialogue, educators must feel safe
and nurtured. Colton and Sparks-Langer identify four essential attributes of collegial
environments: efficacy, flexibility, social responsibility, and consciousness. Their
conceptual framework provides as a guide for teacher educators who wish to develop
teacher reflection. The view contrasts mandated professional development that often
creates an atmosphere of surveillance and control and that is argued works to deskill
teachers (Fenwick, 2001).
Zellermayer (1991) promotes professional development opportunities that focus on experimentation, interaction and critical inquiry. Like Schön (1983, 1987b), Zellermayer argues that professional development occurs when teacher learning is organized to ensure opportunities for practice, reflection, and collaboration. This approach is situated within the belief that authentic teacher learning is unpredictable and long-term and that professional development must provide opportunities for risk-taking and the construction of knowledge.

Zeek et al. (2001) used transactional inquiry as a way to encourage teachers to reflect on their beliefs and practices and to interact with colleagues. They found that teachers are better able to critically examine their own beliefs, practices and struggles when they interact with colleagues. For example, they found that hearing and sharing stories with colleagues of different levels of expertise helped them to gain insight into the events that shaped their professional knowledge. They suggest as teachers reason and reflect on the stories and the stories of others they are better able to revisit the success or lack of success they encounter in their daily professional lives. Zeek et al. found that journaling and storytelling provided a way for teachers to reframe their professional knowledge. Their work supported the view that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and dialogue rather than through technical workshops.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this research was to determine if three associate-teachers could conceptualize the teaching practicum as a professional development opportunity. A qualitative research methodology was chosen because this research was interested in the perceptions and experiences of purposefully selected teachers (Merriam, 1998; Neill, 2007). This chapter provides a brief introduction to the methodology selected, as well as an overview of the research design.

Rationale for Research Methodology

Qualitative research is used when the purpose of the research is to better understand an experience, a perspective, or a process (Merriam, 1998; Neill, 2007). Unlike quantitative research, which uses numerical data for analysis, qualitative research uses words. It is employed when one seeks to understand and describe a human experience (Myers, 2000). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research is broadly defined as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (cited in Neill, ¶ 4).

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the instrument for data collection and analysis. The main types of data collection are interactive interviews, collection of descriptions written by participants, and observations (Neill, 2006). The reason for collecting this type of data is to better understand a phenomenon from the perspective of those who experience it, and to understand the entire experience, not just a part of it (Myers, 2000). Various data collection instruments are used to ensure the data collected is trustworthy and credible (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003; Creswell, 1998).
Caelli et al. (2003) contend that the central aim of generic qualitative research is to develop knowledge from concepts, models, and theories that evolve out of the data, and are identified in the recurring patterns, categories, or factors that exist in the data. This requires inductive analysis, which, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990), with reference to grounded theory, requires theoretical sensitivity, that is, the ability "to see the research situation and its associated data in new ways and to explore the data’s potential for developing theory" (p. 44). A process of rigorous and structured analysis is used to develop an inductive theory that emerges from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Glaser and Strauss (1967) note that in this way, plausible relationships can be made among sets of concepts that are directly developed from data analysis.

The purpose of this research was to inquire into associate-teacher perspectives on the teaching practicum as a professional development opportunity. It was interested in the perspectives of selected teachers who had acted as associate-teachers, and who were considered to be rich sources of data. Consequently, a qualitative research methodology was used. As outlined by Creswell (1998), participants were purposively selected to capture their perspectives and experiences. As well, personal interviews and written descriptions were used to collect data. The purpose of the research was exploratory, and so a qualitative research design may be more appropriate, since the research is in the beginning stages of the project (Neill, 2007).

**Research Design**

The following section outlines how participants were selected, how the data were collected and analyzed, and how credibility and trustworthiness were ensured. As well, it
outlines the limitations of the research and the steps taken to ensure ethical procedures were followed.

**Selection of Participants**

Three elementary school teachers were purposefully selected as participants for this research. They were selected from one school board in Southern Ontario. In accordance with both the University and school board's ethics reviews, the researcher asked key faculty members at the University to contact associate-teachers who met two criteria: (a) they had worked in the school board for at least 5 years; (b) they were teaching students between the ages of kindergarten through to grade 8; (c) they had accepted at least one student-teacher in the past 2 years; (d) they would be accepting a student-teacher for the April 2004 teaching practicum; and (e) they would be good sources of data (See Appendix A). The key faculty members provided potential participants who met the criteria information about the purpose of the study, as well as contact information. If interested, potential participants were asked to contact the researcher by telephone; three people responded to that request. They were faxed a Letter of Information and a Consent Form, which they returned to the researcher. After the consent forms were signed, participants were contacted by phone and interviews were scheduled at times and in locations that were mutually convenient.

**Data Collection**

Qualitative data were collected through interviews, participant narrative journals, and the researcher's reflexive journal. Data collection occurred over an 8-week period, starting with the selection of participants and ending with post practicum interviews. The data were collected in two phases: a pre practicum and post practicum phase. In the pre
practicum phase, data were collected through open-interviews that lasted 45 to 60 minutes. To maintain internal reliability during the interviews, interviews were conducted in a systematic and consistent manner (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 1998).

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer introduced herself and explained the purpose of the study, why the participant had been selected and what would happen to the interview data (Mathers, et al., 1998). Participants were also encouraged to ask questions throughout the interviews. These steps were taken to establish a rapport with the participants. The pre practicum interviews began with structured questions to obtain demographic information. The remainder of the interview was semistructured. The Pre Practicum and post practicum interviews were taped and professionally transcribed (Creswell, 1998). Both transcripts were emailed back to the participants for member checks (Creswell). Prompts and cues were used to encourage the interviewees to probe the questions further (Mathers et al.). For example, participants were asked to “tell me more,” to elaborate on original responses, or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the researcher (Creswell).

The pre practicum interview provided an opportunity to discuss the associate-teachers’ motivations and rationale for accepting a student-teacher. As well, it provided an information session to inform associate-teachers on how to keep their participant narrative journal (See Appendices B and C). The post practicum interview (See Appendix D) took place upon completion of the teaching practicum. These interviews provided opportunities for participants to reflect on their associate-teacher experiences, and to voice their beliefs about the student-teacher relationship as an opportunity for professional development.
In addition to the two interviews, participants were asked to keep a narrative journal. The participants were provided with a series of questions and prompts to guide their journal entries. A series of questions replicated from Zeek et al. (2001) study were used. These questions were prompts to help the participants reflect on their daily practices, as well as to provide an opportunity for the participants to reflect on the possible benefits of being an associate-teacher.

A reflexive journal was kept by the researcher throughout the study. The journal provided a forum for exploring ideas, themes, and reflections on the research (Creswell, 1998; Gay & Airasian, 2003). It also provided a venue for internal dialogue and the exploration of ideas, hunches, and broader explanations that were embedded within the data collection process (Creswell).

Data Analysis

Coffey and Atkins (1996) suggest that data analysis is a reflexive activity that should continually inform data collection in an ongoing, dynamic process. Furthermore it is suggested these inquiries are not linear, but rather they involve frequent revisiting of data in light of new analytical ideas that emerge as data collection and analysis progress (Lacey & Luff, 2001).

Analysis began after the first interviews were transcribed. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded. The main concepts that arose in the interviews and narrative journals were categorized and developed into common themes. The transcriptions cut and pasted according to categories during content analysis (Lacey & Luff, 2001). The transcripts were photocopied into three different colours of paper; each of the three participant’s were identified by a different paper colour. This helped to keep
each participant's comments, separated since the transcripts were cut into pieces for analysis. In this way, words, phrases, sentences, and/or paragraphs became the units of analysis and were arranged into groups according to initial coding and emerging themes (Lacey & Luff) (See Appendix E).

The data were also organized into matrices for easy cross-referencing. The matrices helped to identify a number of key themes. The themes were displayed in a cross-tabulation chart, with individuals along the top of the table and main concepts running down one side. Individual cells contained quotations or paraphrased points (See Appendix F). In addition, a graphic was developed to help display the concepts and themes. The graphics helped to demonstrate how themes or categories related to each another. A matrix of common themes was developed for each participant. The visual displays of data facilitated ongoing analysis. The visual displays allowed the researcher to review and revisit the data in a new light. This process allowed for themes to emerge and themes to merge into theories.

Throughout the study, a reflective journal was kept to help define criteria for coding, and recording emerging theories and questions (Creswell, 1998). The reflexive journal helped to inform the analysis of the findings and discussion.

Methodological Assumptions

It was assumed that a qualitative methodology would provide valuable insights into the perceptions of the associate-teachers. It was also assumed that associate teachers would be rich data sources, and that they would be honest in their reflections. This research assumed that teachers would use their reflective journals in the manner requested, and that the journal would serve as a tool to guide their reflections. Finally,
this research assumed that reflection-on-practice would be recognized by participants as an opportunity for professional learning.

**Methodological Limitations**

As a qualitative study, these research findings cannot be generalized to a larger population or a different point in time. As well, because participants were purposefully selected, it cannot be assumed that all associate teachers would engage with student teachers in a collaborative manner that would promote associate teacher professional growth. This research was limited to the amount of data that could be collected from two participant interviews, one before and one after the teaching practicum, as well as the data collected from both the researcher’s and the participants’ reflective journals. Time, and the depth of associate-teacher responses limited the data that could be collected for analysis.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness**

According to Caelli et al. (2003), generic qualitative research credibility involves four key components: (a) the theoretical positioning of the researcher, (b) the congruence between methodology and methods, (c) strategies to establish rigor, and (d) an analytic lens for data analysis. The theoretical positioning refers to the researcher’s motives, presuppositions, and personal history that shaped the inquiry. In this research, the researcher assumed the student-teacher practicum could provide some professional development benefits for associate-teachers. This research was a qualitative study that used personal interviews, participant journals, and a reflexive journal. Rigor was established through triangulation of data, peer briefing, and member checks. Two interviews and the narrative journal lead to triangulation of data. Data were collected and
analyzed with rigor from a variety of techniques to gain a deep perspective of the research. No significant contradictions or differences were identified in participant responses.

Credibility of the data was established by using peer debriefing and member checks. Peer briefing explored inquirer biases. The researcher discussed her findings and data analysis with her faculty advisor, who helped to challenge and clarify meaning and the interpretation of the data. In addition, the researcher provided participants interview transcripts via email for possible revisions: This is also called member checks or respondent validation (Lacey & Luff, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail was kept through the use of taped interviews, taped and transcribed interviews, transcribed and original journals, and matrices. The audit trail outlines methodological steps and decision points which provide access to all data in their several raw and processed stages (Lincoln & Guba, p. 248).

**Ethical Considerations**

Participants were provided with a written overview of the research, its objectives, and its anticipated time requirements. The invitation to participate in the study explained the voluntary nature of participation, and assured participants they could withdraw from the research at any time (Lacey & Luff, 2001). Interested participants signed a consent form and were ensured of the confidential or anonymous nature of the research. Participants were asked to use pseudonyms when referring to student-teachers in their reflective journals. The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement. Pseudonyms were used for associate-teacher and student-teacher during interviews, narrative journals, and
this document. This research was approved by both the Brock Research Ethics Board (#03-300 Sauer) (See Appendix G), as well as, the school board ethics review board.

Restatement of the Problem

In Ontario and elsewhere, educators are asked to take part in mandated professional development. However, other avenues of professional growth that focus on teacher reflection and collaboration through building communities of practice should also be explored (Lieberman, 1996; Schön, 1996). Rich opportunities for meaningful professional growth may be developed through the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship. Historically, this relationship has been viewed as one in which the associate-teacher teaches the student-teacher. Yet, research suggests that mentoring is a reciprocal process that benefits the mentor as much as the mentored (Stevens, 1995). If this is true, the teaching practicum may provide a taken-for-granted opportunity for professional development. Because research suggests that teachers are often dissatisfied with mandated professional development (Lieberman) there is reason to investigate alternative opportunities.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of data collected through: pre practicum and post practicum interviews with three associate-teacher participants, their reflective journals kept during the student teaching practicum, and the researcher’s reflexive journal. This chapter provides a description of the participants’ professional personality, their thoughts on the student-teaching practicum, and the associate-teacher perspectives on its potential as an opportunity for teacher professional growth.

Three Professional Personalities

Participants ranged in age from 31 to 49 years. At the time of this study, they had from 6 to 15 years of teaching experience, and each had worked with at least three student-teachers before they participated in this research. Data analysis revealed that each participant had a different professional personality, and that their perspective on the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship and its potential for professional growth was shaped by that personality. Each professional personality is highlighted in this chapter. Discussion of the common themes that evolved and their relationship to the literature is provided in Chapter Five.

Margaret – The Synergist

At the time of this study, Margaret had 11 years of teaching experience, and she was teaching grade 4 at an elementary school of approximately 200 students in a medium sized city in southern Ontario. Margaret used the gratuity she received as an associate-teacher to subsidize year-end trips for her students. One of her stated reasons for accepting student-teachers was to have another adult in the classroom, particularly “with class size being what it is today” (Pre Practicum Interview, April 2004). Margaret also
indicated that assuming the role of associate-teacher allowed her to give back to the teaching profession. She wanted the teaching profession to be “exemplary... I don’t want mediocre teachers... I want good teachers in the system...” (Pre Practicum Interview, April 2004). As a stakeholder in the educational system, Margaret identified her desire to participate in teacher education. For example, she noted that,

... it just solidified... my determination to be an advocate for teacher training, effective teacher training and to not just sit back and not participate in that process. It confirmed to me that I want a voice in how teachers in pre-service or in-service are mentored and, and who gets hired and who doesn’t get hired (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Margaret identified the qualities she looked for in student-teachers as follows,

I want them to be innovative, energetic, enthusiastic, professional, really interested in the kids and the class, and just show so much initiative that they want to take over that class and make it their own. (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

In reflecting on a challenging practicum experience from the past, Margaret noted that she expected student-teachers to be prepared during their practicum. She stated emphatically,

...this particular time it was a February block so their second block, and the student-teacher was scheduled to teach after recess. And she had gone down to the office or the staff room at recess and the bell rang the students came in and sat at their desks, I’m getting them controlled and she’s supposed to be coming and I’m wondering where she is. She is supposed to be starting her social studies
unit, and she comes into the class and whispers in my ear, I can’t stay, I have to leave, the furnace man was coming to fix the furnace. . .they bring all of their issues and they expect to be compensated for that so that you excuse those issues but that’s not what teaching is like, and that’s not what they are expected to do when they are in the classroom, and that I think in particular was very disturbing for me. When they expect us to be lenient on them because of their life situation, and we can support them, we can counsel them, but that is not what we are grading them...There is not a double standard and sometimes they [student-teachers] forget that...And it is not excusable (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Student-teacher Growth and Support

Margaret viewed the student-teacher/associate-teacher relationship as a forum for student-teachers to grow professionally. She noted that the practicum provided student-teachers with an opportunity to learn from practical experience and constructive criticism. She observed,

The student-teacher has to be willing to take . . . constructive criticism and often they take offense at it or they make excuses as to why something happened the way it did . . . They have to come prepared to hear faults and improvements and it’s all a growing process and they are learning (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Although Margaret had high expectations for student-teachers, she also had high expectations for herself. For example, when reflecting on the importance of providing student-teachers with a working knowledge of her classroom students she stated,
You need to provide them [student-teachers] with the background, with what went on [in the classroom before they came] . . . they need to know what experiences the students have had before, so they can draw on them. (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004)

Professional Growth and Support

Margaret identified several opportunities for professional growth within the associate-teacher/student-teacher experience. She emphasized the value of having an additional adult in the room, and appreciated the extra support the student-teacher could provide. She viewed the student-teacher practicum as a chance for additional observation, which allowed her to spend more time focusing on her students. It also gave her time to reflect on the programming needs of individual students and time to spend one-on-one time with her students. In her journal, Margaret noted,

I have two teachers now in the room - especially during Science when there are 33 students . . . it's a fantastic opportunity for me to make personal connections with certain students whom you know are slipping thro' cracks. I can stop and give them the extra attention they need so much (Journal, April 2004).

Similarly, she noted,

When you are sitting at the back of the room, watching your students, you can observe all the little things that go on and you can see some of the interchanges that are going on between your students or who is not paying attention and it gives you a chance to observe your student (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).
As well, Margaret identified some of the social benefits of having another adult in the classroom. The student-teacher she was working with during this time had become her confidant, someone she shared the rewarding and the stressful times of teaching with. She noted how easy it was to feel defeated and overwhelmed when negative experiences occurred, and that the conversations she shared with her student-teacher helped her to reflect on the negative and positive aspects of the teaching day. After these conversations, she could go home feeling good about their accomplishments and with a sense of resolve over negative situations that may have occurred throughout the day. Margaret felt especially grateful for her current student-teacher with whom she could share anguish and laughter, and how this helped to provide relief from the stress of teaching.

After the teaching practicum was finished, Margaret noted that she missed the physical presence and emotional presence of the student-teacher and the bond that he developed with the students in the classroom. She stated,

*When you have such an enthusiastic, energetic student-teacher it is contagious and you want to make every lesson meaningful, creative, and memorable. I know I will miss him on Monday as I get back to teaching 33 on my own. But he made so many positive influences on so many. He touched each individually inspiring them to use their talents, persevere and have success. What more could we want? . . . He makes learning fun for everyone- even me* (Journal, April 2004).

Margaret viewed the practicum as a time to become professionally refreshed by observing new lessons, reading new stories and novels, and incorporating computer activities, like webpage design into lessons. She highlighted the extent to which the
student-teacher in her class helped to rejuvenate her, and regenerate her energy and enthusiasm for teaching. For example, she observed,

I had a difficult student teaching situation in February, it was, I was really run down and feeling unmotivated. And not looking forward to having another student-teacher, I saw it more as a cumbersome activity rather than something that was going to be good for the classroom. And it actually turned out to be just the opposite. It helped me feel rejuvenated professionally and motivated and things that I had forgotten to try that I used to do in the way of class management, came back to me and it was just a great experience for me personally. To get excited about things again after, this is my fifth year teaching grade 4 so this year it has been like, oh I'm not so excited anymore. And this gave me a chance to get excited again and it helped me remember some of the things that I used to do that I'm not doing anymore, so from that point of view it really did affect my professional outlook and attitude. He would remind me that this is what is important this is what I need to keep doing, so that, from that point of view it freshened my outlook (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Margaret believed the new activities student-teachers brought gave her new ways to approach units she has taught in the past. She also noted these new activities were exciting to her students. Margaret outlined her experiences with a student-teacher, with whom she was working at the time of the first interview,

It was nice to see a new angle on a unit that had been my fourth year of doing it.
And so that was nice and fresh, so it was as exciting for me as it was for the kids.
He [a former student-teacher] has got so much enthusiasm and so many ideas and we are just building, the synergy is there . . . his ideas, my ideas, and the French teacher’s ideas, and they are all going together. . . Thursday is just going to be outstanding, it is a great way to end his first week (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

These experiences exemplified the synergy and collaboration that Margaret appreciated in the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship. She shared her excitement and celebrated her student-teacher’s strengths in specialist subject areas. She also appreciated the additional expertise the student-teacher provided, and the new and exciting teaching experiences he brought. She noted that all of the student-teachers she had worked with enriched her teaching experiences.

Margaret conceptualized the student-teaching/associate-teaching relationship as one of team-teaching, with two highly motivated people involved in planning and creating enriching activities for students. She contributed to the team-teaching experience through continuous feedback, lesson planning, and assessment strategy support. It provided her with an opportunity to collaborate, and Margaret noted the synergy created through the team-teaching process as follows,

That synergy that you get when you team-teach is wonderful and there is not enough of that in our profession. We are in our own classrooms and even though you have your division meetings, you are still teaching one grade and the other teachers are teaching other grades, so unless you are in a big school where there might be two classes of the same grade, you don’t get to do a lot of team teaching or planning. And that is fantastic because where one person might be getting stale
or have no idea, the other person starts feeding them that idea and that is really exciting (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Margaret believed that the student-teacher and associate-teacher relationship was mutually beneficial. She noted,

*I think that’s good because then new teachers are better equipped as new teachers and they don’t have to struggle along, the first year or two with those aspects [planning and assessment], and they know that those two aspects need to be done ahead of time. And I also feel that um, we are expected to team-teach, which is a benefit for both, both of us and the class* (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Margaret viewed her role in the team teaching paradigm as one in which she was actively involved in the lesson. She allowed the student-teacher to be the lead teacher to whom she would give instructions and support. She described this relationship as collaborative and felt that they would have been unable to complete a lot of their special activities without this collaborative relationship. Margaret noted that the student-teacher helped to increase her consciousness in terms of her teaching practice.

*He often showed so much initiative and concern that he would make me reflect and wonder what was best for the children. [The student-teacher would ask] How do I know that they have learned what I have taught them, which was really good for me because some times you tend to get lackadaisical in your planning and you loose that motivation and it helped me get motivated again. Very conscious* (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Margaret recommended active participation from both the student-teacher and the
associate-teacher to achieve professional growth benefits.

Both partners have to be actively involved to benefit. And if that happens then benefits. But it has to be active participation (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

The Reflective Journal

Margaret’s reflective journal documented the inner dialogue she used to reflect on her own pedagogy through the questions her student-teacher had asked and her student-teacher’s enthusiasm and meaningful lessons. In her journal, Margaret noted that the process of journaling helped her to reflect on her own professional practice. She felt that it helped her to grow, and suggested that all teachers, whether they have a student-teacher or not, should journal. She felt that journaling provides a way for teachers to revisit and resolve problems and suggested that revisiting and resolving problems promotes professional growth. Still, the process required discipline:

I would come home at night and look at the journal and think oh no I’ve got to do that now. But actually once I got sitting down and reflecting it was, it was fun to do. And it was good to me to put into words how I was feeling. I think that was a real growth period for me. I would recommend that for any teacher just to keep a journal about their professional year, about professional, not their personal life but about their professional year, because it does help you see growth or help you think about concerns that you have and work through some of these concerns. It really helps to write them down and see it and then go back and reflect on it.

Instead of just letting it fester and not getting solutions. When you write it down
you get solutions. So that was good, that would be good for any teacher, whether
they had a student-teacher or not (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Examples from her journal illustrate her reflections:

"A" (student-teacher) asks such good searching questions. He is very reflective
about his lessons... His concerns help me to reflect and take a fresh look at my
teaching practices. My fellow associate-teacher and I have established a rapport
we didn't have previously so now I have a new work mate to connect with
(Journal, April 2004).

She asked pedagogical questions about the teaching profession:

If teachers aren't involved, excited and willing to give themselves to the lesson,
how can they ask that of their students? (Journal, April 2004).

She also reflected on ways in which the student-teacher allowed her to enrich her
teaching activities in a way that she would have been unable to do on her own, and on
how this rejuvenated her professionally:

It also helps to have two teachers one male, one female to encourage connect and
support with such a large class. This month has been full of enriching activities
that I could not have done alone. Having a student-teacher has allowed me to
provide my students with learning experiences they would not normally have. This
also rejuvenates my attitude to teaching... Having a student-teacher who is so
conscientious and determined to make learning relevant and fun has brought back
inspiration to me after a long challenging year, to make the last 2 months just as
invigorating (Journal, April 2004).

Margaret used her final journal entry to discuss the differences between a strong
student-teacher and a weaker student-teacher, something she noted she now had a greater appreciation for after her current experience:

*I find I appreciate things more having been in the background for a month. Many positive after effects are still in place. This is the complete opposite to another experience I had with a poor student-teacher. Then I had a lot of negative effects to eliminate and catching up to do. It really can swing either way depending on the student-teacher’s performances* (Journal, April 2004).

**Benefits to Students**

Margaret noted that a male student-teacher provided her students with a male role model and different influences on the students in the classroom. She found this to be particularly useful at her school, which had a high number of single-parent families. She observed improvements in student anger management, and an increase in self-esteem, when an adult male role model took time to talk to students, shoot some baskets with them, and threw the football while on yard duty. She observed, as well, that when he taught them how to do Portuguese dancing, it became acceptable to them and it gave them permission to engage in social experiences they otherwise would not have been exposed to.

**Mandated Professional Development versus Professional Growth**

When asked about professional development opportunities, Margaret noted she was pleased the Professional Learning Program\(^1\) (PLP) had been abolished, and that she

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\(^1\) The Professional Learning Program was a series of professional learning programs offered to teachers in Ontario, who were expected to take 14 programs every 5 years. The programs were mandated for all teachers of public schools in Ontario, and teachers were required to pay for their own courses. Teachers who failed to comply risked losing their qualifications to teach.
felt free to focus on her own personal growth, and on professional development relevant to her and her school. Margaret was confident that the in-school administration could suggest and provide relevant professional development opportunities:

\[\ldots\text{now we can focus again on what professional development we need as teachers, and we can do those programs that are going to facilitate the learning community that we are in. Not because we need these little boxes filled \ldots}\]
\[\ldots\text{I volunteer with a program at our school \ldots and it's a researcher-based program.}\]
\[\ldots\text{and we were trained on that, it was three different training sessions, three full days, there are three staff members from the school that are involved in that \ldots}\]
\[\text{So it's good that now they trust our professionalism, and the administrative end of our principal (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).}\]

**Suggestions for Improvement to the Pre-Service Program**

Margaret recommended that teaching blocks be longer to allow student-teachers to be involved in teaching a unit of study from start to finish. She suggested this would allow student-teachers more time to be involved in developing long-range plans, and conducting assessments.

**Melissa – The Professional Role Model**

At the time of this study Melissa had approximately 23 years of teaching experience and was teaching a split grade 6 and 7 class in a medium-sized city in southern Ontario. She viewed the associate-teacher as a professional role model and stated:

\[I\text{ think we do model what it means to be a professional. I think we do show them in a very concrete way what they need to be doing, every day in terms of}\]
programming for the students, both in the classroom and how you can affect the lives of all of the children at the school by extracurricular programming (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Melissa had high professional expectations of student-teachers, regardless of the teaching block they were working in. She expected the student-teacher to understand professionalism and take charge in a responsible manner. She made it clear that she did not accept lackadaisical attitudes; student-teachers were expected to understand their obligations and professional responsibility. She viewed the student-teacher as a sponge and soak up as much information as possible about the basics of teaching, information that was mediated by her. Melissa reiterated how important it was for the student-teacher to understand that s/he will be a professional and emphasized the need to be accountable to all stakeholders. She described the teaching profession as being constantly under a microscope.

**Student-teacher Growth and Support**

Margaret maintains the importance of each student-teacher to reflect on their philosophy of education in order to be accountable to all stakeholders, including themselves and to recognize their personal growth throughout their educational journey. She experienced,

...my associate-teacher [student-teacher] this time was more than willing to... she wanted to go out and buy the resources I had, and what I thought were the best practices...and why you believe. . .in the practices you are doing. I think it is only going to benefits you in the long run (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).
Professional Growth and Support

Like Margaret, Melissa discussed the benefits of having another adult in the room because it reduced the student ratio, and because it provided time for her to observe and find out what is best for students in the classroom as she noted in both the pre and post practicum interviews:

*I think it's possible to see students in a different way with the student-teachers. I think that's one of the greatest benefits* (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004)

... obviously the huge benefit is having another professional with you in the classroom in terms of not only building activities and resources but also in observing children and putting into practices what is best for every single child in that classroom (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Like Margaret, Melissa conceptualized the practicum as a team-teaching experience, and noted that the feeling of mutual trust that developed contributed to positive experiences for her classroom students:

...we work together as a team in our complete trust that we are doing something outstanding for each one of these children (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

She highlighted the professional conversations that occurred after school and at recesses:

*She was excellent, very hard working very professional, um we would stay many nights after school, talk all through recess and at lunch time, a lot of cooperation going on... I think we had a very good professional relationship* (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).
As well, Melissa noted the new approaches to pedagogy that student-teachers bring to the class, and the fresh outlook to existing classroom routines. She stated that this allowed her to reflect more thoroughly on her own pedagogy:

*I really enjoyed seeing her create activities that I wouldn’t have thought of. I really liked her, listening to her perspective on things, I enjoyed learning about what she had done outside of school that made her experience so valuable and made her so valuable, as a person in our classroom, in our school. Um, I really enjoyed looking at the resources that she brought in, not just ones that she had created but ones that she had gone out and found because I know that I do that a lot, I go out and I find resources and she would find them in a different place and so that gave me ideas of what I could be doing as well* (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Melissa viewed the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship as a reciprocal learning experience. She noted the practicum provided an opportunity to grow professionally. She noted,

*I think both people learn a lot because I think that your teaching only stays fresh and interesting with new ideas, um and so no matter how great you are as a teacher, no matter how great the team is you work with, if there is someone valuable, someone new, someone who has fresh ideas, then obviously you are only growing as a professional yourself.* (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004)

... they are so enthusiastic, they are so fresh, they are just, they are just so eager to become teachers and that’s what he loves. That they haven’t so to speak come into the trenches with what teaching can be like, and that’s certainly what I enjoy
too, that I think what they have taught me is that you know you have to remain open, you have to remain young in your thinking and you don’t get to the end of your learning as a teacher (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

[If] we [do not] continue to learn and grow just like in life, then we are not going to grow as human beings, but I think that um, as teachers we have to be really open to new ideas that might be coming from the university, from the student, and I think we have to be progressive in our thinking (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Melissa monitored all aspects of the student-teacher’s learning, believing that doing so enhanced her professional growth:

It is just like anything else in your life, the more you put into it then obviously the more you are going to get out of it, the more you are going to learn, um, and I think particularly when there is a student-teacher who is quite competent . . . You have to stay on top of every single aspect of that person’s learning and then that is only going to enhance your own learning (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

For Melissa, the student-teacher relationship incorporated such aspects of meaningful professional development as collaboration and problem solving. This reminded her of the importance of classroom management, and the challenges she faced as a beginning teacher. She described a situation in which too much responsibility was given to student-teachers, and the unfavorable experience it presented. She acknowledged this poor judgment and revoiced her role as one of continuous mentor:
... when things happened that were maybe difficult, or challenging it made me remember what it is like to be a beginning teacher; that you can’t ever let your guard down. You always have to make sure that you’re maintaining control of that class... we assumed that she [a student-teacher] would be able to do something by herself and she wasn’t able to do that so I think no matter what you always have to... [have someone] beside them (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Melissa provided an illustration of a negative experience that she framed through the lens of professionalism. When a previous student-teacher did not meet her high expectations for professionalism, she contacted the University and had the student-teacher removed from her classroom. When recounting this experience she noted,

*It was really uncomfortable. ... I cannot begin to do the work of helping this person become a teacher when they are acting in such an unprofessional manner.*

... So it put me in a really uncomfortable position... they [sic] were just not professional. They were intrusive, they were obstructive, they were unprofessional in terms of talking about students in front of students, when I was still teaching, they interrupted me while I was teaching, they went through my resources while I was teaching instead of paying attention to what was in place in my programs... they [sic] didn’t behave as a professional (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

This negative experience challenged Melissa’s sense of professional responsibility, and pushed her out of her comfort zone. In reflecting on her role she noted,

*Last year my student-teacher was one of the very bright, bright people academically and not a natural teacher, really struggled but um we certainly*
made a lot of progress and we continue to correspond and he works over seas now and his class and my class are pen pals and so that's really positive, something that we can carry, something that we have carried on. In helping him to grow and helping myself to grow (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

The Reflective Journal

Rather than using the journal to reflect on the associate-teacher experience as requested, Melissa used her journal as a place to communicate with her student-teacher and offer positive feedback. Melissa explained that she valued the process of journaling and it was her regular practice when in the role of the associate-teacher. She noted,

Well journaling is something that I have always done with all of my student-teachers so it wasn't a new experience for me, I expect that the journal that I keep for them and with them that they are going to be reflecting on what I have written down for them and they are going to be adding their own comments or clarifying something for me, so obviously that has always been something that um that I have found helpful and that is why I have always done that (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Journaling and providing regular feedback to her student-teacher was a source of reflection for Melissa. She outlined to the student-teacher how important daily reading aloud to the students was to her. In this dialogue to her student-teacher, Melissa set a goal for the student-teacher and also reflected on her own pedagogy about reading,

Really crucial that you are reading aloud to the students every day. I think in my own program this is second nature and I tend to do it naturally. I think I haven't emphasized this enough as I reflected on your placement. Even in the older
grades it must be vigilant in our efforts to read. So, with this in mind, how can you “fit” reading into all of your lessons? A core non-fiction, fiction, joke book – an article form the paper a comic – the possibilities are endless. Let’s work on incorporating reading in all subjects this week! (Journal, April 2004).

She also used her journal to question her student-teacher about other classrooms she had taught in. Through this ongoing dialogue, she was able to probe into her own teaching practice, reflect and solidify her own pedagogy. In this exchange, Melissa wrote,

Homework Explanation. It will be interesting to see how these posters turn out. This is a great activity. Remember to initial all work that you look at. How was homework checked in your previous classes? How about agendas? I’m interested in finding out about the differences you have seen between school/class in terms of the basic mechanics/tools in a program (Journal, April 2004).

The journal provided continuous insight into Melissa’s philosophy of education with regard to homework. She reiterated the importance of high expectations for herself, her student-teacher, and the students in the classroom. This dialogue through her journal provided a forum for reflection and reaffirmed her pedagogy. Melissa wrote,

Thank you very much for sharing! We need to have high expectations for all of our students and they will live up to those expectations. If they don’t we need to ask ourselves as educators what we can do to help that student find success and make connections. Students need to know we are not an island in our classroom. There are bridges that we will walk over together and we are here to help you reach your learning destination. (Journal, April 2004).
Benefits to Students

Melissa also noted that the experience of a student-teacher in her classroom enhanced both the learning environment and experiences for her students. She explained,

*And so I think it is a little bit more relaxed for the students because you know it is someone special, they know that the person is going to be doing different and new activities* (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Mandated Professional Development versus Professional Growth

Melissa was very active in Additional Qualification courses outside of the school, as well as board workshops. She compared two different school boards' philosophies of professional development; her present board provided in-servicing outside of the classroom and her past board employer provided professional growth opportunities, like learning communities or action research, which facilitated collaboration. Melissa preferred *teacher as researcher* professional growth opportunities, she explained,

*I found the difference between here and there in terms of professional development is... I was part of a teaching resources or a research team, so we did the talk project and that did count as Additional Qualifications but we were teachers as researchers and um, so we did a lot of presentations, we did a lot of work with fellow teachers. Here it's somewhat different because here I find there is a lot of opportunities and you are given a lot of time to leave your class, and go and be professionally developed but I also think they need to do more work about, around teachers as researchers and teachers as fellow collaborators in learning.*
So that we are given more opportunities to share our expertise (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Suggestions for Improvement to the Pre-Service Program

Melissa had some concerns with pre-service curriculum. She felt that the University is not providing student-teachers with a comprehensive reading program. Melissa was worried that what she feels to be an inadequate reading program may have far reaching implications for new teachers in their first years of teaching. She expressed the need for collaboration between the University and associate-teachers to discuss and make/give suggestions to pre-service curriculum. She noted collaboration would ensure a fresh and cutting edge program. She stated,

And are there conversations with teachers or is someone in a bureaucratic office making that decision about what should be taught to the associates [student-teachers] and how much planning is being done. I mean of all my years of working with the university, and working with the students I certainly have never been approached by the university and had someone say to me here is the curriculum guidelines do you have anything or would you like to come and monitor a class or you know is there something different that we could be doing. Because if we do indeed want education to stay fresh and cutting edge (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

As well as,

...there are some really basic tools that a student-teacher needs to be instructed in at the university level so that when they come into the classroom, they are very confident...once they start their own program...about the programs that they have
used and the skills that they have acquired, and the tools that they need...I think all of the students need to know how to do a miscue analysis, they need to be able to figure out at the beginning of the year, at the middle of the year, and the ending of the year where a student is in terms of their reading ability and this gives them very concrete [evidence] that they can share with parents (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Again,

It is always interesting to watch, to learn what they are teaching at the university as compared to what you in the guts of education see as what the need is, what teachers should be armed with when they walk into a classroom in September so I think that is valuable to know too. That you know, if they are teaching xyz at the university level and you think that abc is important, then that becomes, that becomes interesting too, to wonder why are they teaching that when you think something different is the most important and who determines that curriculum at the university level (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Scott - The Realist

At the time of this study, Scott had 5 years teaching experience and was teaching Grade 8 homeroom and Grade 7 and 8 Science on rotary at a school of approximately 300 students in a large city located in southern Ontario. The principal requested that Scott become an associate-teacher. He thought it would be a great idea because it would provide another adult in the classroom who would help him to manage his hectic schedule. He also thought that the student-teacher experience would keep him fresh. Scott’s expectations of student-teachers depend on the time of year and what they have
completed in their education program. Like Melissa, he noted the value of professionalism and he also noted the importance of the student-teacher establishing a good rapport with the students. He noted,

... the biggest thing that I expect is that they are professional in appearance...
that they have some kind of experience and rapport with kids, um, I don’t expect that they have everything figured out (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

For the final or April teaching practicum, Scott expected the student-teacher to use effective classroom management strategies, to complete long range curriculum plans, and to complete culminating tasks and evaluations. By the final practicum, Scott expected student-teachers to assume the role of the teacher; teaching most of the time with minimal guidance. He explained,

That their classroom management is, is at a level... where they are productive enough to get through lessons... they are just generally able to take on the majority of the, of the teaching placement, I guess the majority of the teaching time. As quickly as possible, with as little, not, with little or nor, or not as much guidance as they think they need earlier (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Student-teacher Growth and Support

Scott noted a positive experience where an unskilled student-teacher experienced professional growth throughout the practicum. He observed,

...they were really inexperienced and had no clue what was going on kind of thing, it was pretty scary, uh, but then within 2, 3 weeks she had gone from pretty much zero to doing a pretty good job so that was kind of a good experience on the one hand to take someone from that and to sort of help her into, being able to deal
with kids. Most of it is in the, I find most of them are very good planners, but it's in the delivery and the classroom management where the real learning needs to take place. Or takes place (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

He explained that sometimes a student-teacher may not adequately complete the curriculum expectations and his students may fall behind in his long range plans. In these cases, the associate-teacher would have to reteach and catch up parts of the curriculum. He also suggested that classroom management may be more difficult after a student-teacher leaves because sometimes inappropriate and undesirable behaviours evolve throughout the course of the student-teacher teaching practicum. Therefore, when a student-teacher leaves his classroom he may have to reground the students in terms of his classroom rules and routines. However, like Margaret, Scott finishes by expressing how he enjoys the energy a student-teacher brings to the classroom.

But sometimes if you have one that isn't great, then it is more work, because you have to start, you have to evaluate them, and then you have to really go back and re-teach a whole bunch of things, and deal with the behaviour issues when they are gone, so it can be a lot more work, but for the most part it is nice to have a student-teacher in here with energy and things like that (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Professional Growth and Support

Having an additional adult in the classroom provided Scott with the opportunity to observe the students in his classroom. Scott benefited from this observation time in two ways: first, he was able to observe student behaviours; and secondly, he reflected on his own pedagogy, more specifically how he taught lessons. He stated,
Definitely when you see somebody else teaching your class you see a lot of things you wouldn’t see being in front of them. I found that I was, that I could see some of the kids when they are talking, when they are not doing, when they are not on task, and you always reflect well am I so caught up in what I’m doing that I am not noticing those things (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

In addition, the presence of a student-teacher provided Scott with additional time to work on administrative tasks like planning. He noted,

*Wel,l I had the biggest benefit was I had some free time. I was able to get some administrative things done that usually get pushed aside until the last minute...*,

while *she* was, once *she* was in a position where *I* could trust *her* with the class and *not* have to monitor *her* so much, so yeah, the biggest was free time.

He gained new insights on how the student-teacher planned units and lessons.

Scott also explained that the student-teacher brought new resources to the classroom and did a great deal of research. He professed that he learned a few things from the student-teacher himself (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

*And...just the way that someone else plans things and executes things...She brought some resources, she did a lot of; she did a lot of research and I learned a few things from her* (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Also,

*Because you are constantly exposed to different ideas and knowing that you really have to roll with it, and you get a fresh outlook I mean... if I continue to do it [be an associate-teacher] and hopefully I can keep my finger on the pulse of some kind... a fresher perspective with a younger student-teacher. Sometimes you can*
get an older student-teacher coming in but I think age may play a different, play a part in it too (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Scott's positive experiences with student-teachers relate to collaboration in technology. The student-teacher was effective at making computer presentations. He shared his computer resources and also taught Scott how to use the software more effectively. Scott noted,

...one of the student-teachers I had a few years ago was um, very into using technology in the classroom, and sort of using PowerPoint, Corel Presentations and um, this one individual had a good grasp...he gave me a disk with all of the things on it, that he had done, so that actually helped me a great deal, because he was actually better at making those presentations than I was. So and he showed me, cause he knew things because he was so well versed with the technology (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

He also noted that these PowerPoint presentations gave him new insight and ideas for how he would teach these units in the upcoming year,

And he was very good at giving, he did some of the PowerPoint presentation for the rocks and minerals unit, as well as, optic but he left though, but it helps me with planning for next year, getting a different spin on things (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Scott believed that accepting a student-teacher into the classroom provided an opportunity for professional growth because it forced him to be more conscious about daily routines.
Yes I think taking a student-teacher does help professional development because it keeps you totally, consciously thinking about what you do everyday. You are always thinking about classroom management, you are always thinking about lesson design you are always thinking about evaluation and assessment and you tend not to fall into, well I haven’t fallen into the same, this day on every year I’m going to do this lesson this way (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

The student-teacher encouraged Scott to reflect on his teaching, his reflections inspired him to strive for creativity when teaching lessons. He reflected that a student-teacher in his classroom helped him to realize than there is more that one way to successfully teach a lesson. Scott observed,

... looking back and giving you a reason to reflect on what you are doing, sometimes you get so busy that, you start delivering curriculum without maybe looking at being a little more creative or different ways of delivering lessons. And seeing that there are not only, one right way to do things. Which is good, yeah, mainly I enjoyed, especially this time of year is to have a little bit of extra time to get things done (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

While Scott watched his student-teacher, he reflected on his own teaching and asked personal questions of his pedagogy. He wondered if the students in the classroom may not pay attention to him at times. He inquired that he may become too involved in the simple delivery of the curriculum and may miss student’s inattention or inability to follow his lessons. He also reflected on his own strengths and weaknesses. He found journaling facilitated his reflection on pedagogy.
As well as not only looking at what you might miss but I also see what I do right. And what I, you know, some of my strengths as well as weakness, but definitely reflect on would I do that differently would I do it, or would I do it the same. But I found, yeah I was constantly, especially with the journal, thinking about what to write in that journal was reflecting about how I am implementing, lesson planning, a lot of classroom management. That seemed to be the biggest, one of the biggest focuses at this point was in the classroom management, sort of reflection on do I need to have better structure so that someone else can come into it (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Scott discussed how student-teachers in the classroom help to examine weakness, specifically content delivery. He suggested that student-teachers help to re-establish teaching energy and help him to reflect on his practice. It seems as though a student-teacher helps the associate-teacher to break out of his/her comfort levels and bring energy into the classroom.

... they [student-teachers] do make you look at your weaknesses if anything. The majority of, as you get into sort of a routine and the way you deliver your lessons can sometimes be a little monotonous perhaps and just sort of an energy that some of them bring in... I find I go in spurts, creative spurts, they sort of make you really think, the student-teacher really makes you think that, that's the way it should be done, a lot of it. Or should not be done some of the way or some of the habits they have or some of the lack of not being able to see what is going on so it makes me think am I like that or do I know what is going on more so. Just, yeah,
totally makes you think about what you could or should be doing, reflecting on what you are or are not doing (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

The Reflective Journal

In his journal, Scott reflected on his student-teacher’s patience level and considered he may need to change his approach when dealing with students and his rigidity in his own practice. He also acknowledged and accepted the idea that there are different ways to teach the same task or activity. He noted,

*She is very patient with some of the students that I have lost mine with! Perhaps I need to lighten up and be more patient with some of the students... I’m trying to come to terms with the fact that there are many ways to complete the same task. Suzy does things differently than I do, however, the outcome is the same* (Journal, April 2004).

Scott writes about his frustration with his student-teacher and questions the qualities of a teacher. He eludes that teachers are born not made.

"*Teach* not simply deliver information. We’ll see if she improves upon this. I think that is something that cannot be taught. Teaching is a skill that requires some intangible quality that people either possess or do not. This is what separates the good teachers from the great ones* (Journal, April 2004).

In the journal, I asked the participants to write a narrative story about a situation that may have gone wrong but worked well for the student-teacher. This is a very short story that Scott entitled *Ray Boxes*. This story illustrates the potential vigor and possible naivety that student-teachers may posses when attacking a problem. Experienced teachers, like Scott, understand the negative consequences of a potentially bad lessons as
a result of defective material and tend to avoid these potential lesson altogether. The student-teacher, in this case, chose to modify her lesson to suit her materials.

I have had a lot of problems with the ray boxes. They are old and have not worked very well in the past. Suzy checked them all over and modified her lesson to suit the ray boxes. This made me think of how I should be more creative in lesson design. I avoided using them (Journal, April 2004).

*Mandated Professional Development versus Professional Growth*

Scott, like the other participants in this study, was very involved with his professional development. He participated in Additional Qualification courses as well as board level programs.

*Suggestions for Improvement to the Pre-Service Programme*

Like Margaret, Scott also discussed extending the length of the teaching practicum. He felt that at the end of 4 weeks the student-teacher is just starting to become comfortable and is starting to achieve success in the classroom. He suggested adopting a longer practicum period. In addition, as previously stated, Scott would like to see the University implement an interim evaluation or a daily journal that would provide the student-teacher with continuous feedback. Like Margaret, Scott also observed that part of being professional is being able to receiving constructive feedback that acknowledges strengths and weaknesses, and improving on these weaknesses. Scott outlined different University evaluation techniques and he preferred a formal interim evaluation. He noted,

I would like to see an interim evaluation ... a 2 week mark, here is an interim, it could be anecdotal, it doesn’t have to be so formal that but it should be a piece of paper that says that here are your strengths, here are your weaknesses. . . . I have
a little journal book that I do the first few days, I write down the time, the lesson and I’ll write points down, you know what strengths, weakness, what I would have done, just points to discuss at the end of the day. I think that is a good idea (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Scott found his most difficult experiences as an associate-teacher was when he had to tell a student-teacher that they he/she was not having a successful practicum. Scott found identifying student-teacher weaknesses, like lack of preparedness, lack of initiative, poor rapport with the students, poor delivery of curriculum, and inadequate classroom management very difficult. As Scott had stated earlier, he felt that a formal interim assessment would help with early identification of these weaknesses and their subsequent remediation. One particularly negative experience involved a mature, male student-teacher who had chosen teaching as a second career. This student-teacher came from a cultural background where winking and touching were acceptable. In the classroom, this particular student-teacher winked at the students and was overly friendly, which made some students uncomfortable. Scott explained that these behaviours received parental attention. Like Melissa, Scott’s sense of professional responsibility was challenged and he was pushed out of his comfort zone. In reflecting on his role, he noted,

...he had a different spin on it, and he didn’t get that you can’t be winking at grade 8 girls, uh, but it didn’t go well, so we had parents call, that this student-teacher was winking at the kids. And touching them inappropriately, I mean it dissolved. ...but that was kind of a tricky situation, it wasn’t positive, it was pretty negative but, and he was upset because he didn’t get that fact that, he took it very
personally, it was just his way of expressing, you know rather than saying good job (Pre Practicum Interview, May 2004).

Scott perceived inadequacies of associate-teacher candidates. He suggested some associate-teachers may accept student-teachers in their classrooms for the wrong reasons, like free time. He noted,

*I've seen some people who have student-teachers who don’t have a, who use it as a way to have someone else do their work. Where as I don’t think that should be the sole, I think it is a bonus that you get a little bit of time* (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

Scott explained that he had had a student-teacher his very first year of teaching and notes that Universities have little or no discretion when taking associate-teachers. He also noted,

...*my take on it is it's, they are very happy to have associate-teachers, so it's sort of, there is, there was no screening on this end, like they don’t know, I mean some of them may know me but they didn’t, I didn’t have to fill out a questionnaire or any kind of thing to qualify for doing this, like I said I mean my first year a had a student-teacher... I have had a student-teacher every year for the, actually for the 5 years I have been here, I had a student-teacher the first year, I guess it was hard, I guess they were having trouble getting...people to accept students, it was the blind leading the blind at that point (laughing)* (Pre Practicum Interview. March 2004).
Scott perceived that the Universities have a hard time recruiting associate-teachers and basically take who they can get. He suggested the University impose a screening process or criteria before teachers can become associate-teachers.

*I think that there should be more of a screening process for people who are going to be associate-teachers. To be honest, I think that there are a lot of bad teachers... that should not be teaching other teachers how to teach... I think that there should be some kind of criteria...a screening process* (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004).

**Summary and Reflections on Questions**

This research was guided by three questions: (1) What do associate-teachers identify as the professional benefits of being involved in the teaching practicum, (2) Do associate-teachers believe the practicum provides a professional growth opportunity, and, (3) Does a reflective journal increase teacher reflection? To avoid repetition, questions 1 and 2 are answered together below. The answer to question 3 is discussed last.

**Professional Benefits for Associate-teachers**

All participants identified ways they benefited from working with student-teachers. These benefits ranged from the more tangible benefits associated with having an additional body in the classroom to the more abstract benefits associated to being able to reflect more on their own values, and how those values were demonstrated in their teaching practices (See Figure 1).

Tangible benefits of having a student-teacher in the classroom were also identified by all participants. They noted that having an additional adult in the classroom provided them with additional time for observing their students, for completing planning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provides another adult in the classroom</th>
<th>May provide an opposite gendered perspective and role-model</th>
<th>Provides unique experiences for the students</th>
<th>Provides a fresh outlook, new perspective, or approach to lessons</th>
<th>Builds new professional relationships</th>
<th>Creates an environment rich in collaboration and team teaching</th>
<th>Provides an opportunity to reflect on practice</th>
<th>Provides an outlet for reflection</th>
<th>Provides an opportunity to examine and reflect on strengths and weaknesses</th>
<th>Increases consciousness about practice</th>
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**Figure 1.** The perceived benefits of the associate-teacher
and administrative tasks, and for helping them create more cooperative learning environments. Scott noted that one student-teacher, in particular, contributed new resources and technological expertise, enabling him to use a computer program more effectively. All participants noted that student-teachers brought additional energy to their teaching, and exposed them to new ideas and teaching resources.

All participants also noted the less tangible benefits of having student-teachers in their classrooms. These benefits related more directly to their own professional development and growth. For example, Margaret observed that being an associate-teacher reaffirmed her professional values and ideals, and helped to solidify her views on effective teaching and effective teacher training. For Melissa, it focused attention on the need to model professionalism, and the importance of caring, and of the need to instill a sense of caring in her own teaching practice. Similarly, Margaret suggested that the initiative and the concern her student-teacher demonstrated toward classroom student caused her to reflect more closely on her own professional practice, and how she would judge if students were learning. In his journal, Scott noted, “Perhaps I need to lighten up and be more patient” with reference to his reflection on the care his student-teacher demonstrated.

Margaret noted that her student-teacher helped to motivate her, and changed how she reflected on her own practice. To use her words, it made her “very conscious” (Post Practicum interview). Similarly, Scott observed that he reflected more on his own practice during the practicum, and stated,

taking a student-teacher does help professional development because it keeps you totally, conscious thinking about what you do everyday...classroom
management... lesson design... evaluation and assessment (Post Practicum Interview, May, 2004).

Although a heightened sense of consciousness about her own practice was not stated explicitly by Melissa, she did note that she viewed herself as a professional role model, and that the associate-teacher experience helped both her and her student-teacher grow professionally.

Participants noted that the collegial relationship that developed between student-teacher and associate-teacher was invaluable. As Margaret observed, "That synergy that you get when you team-teach is wonderful." The value of the collegial relationship was also stated by Melissa who said, "We would stay many nights after school, talk all through recess and at lunch time, a lot of co-operation going on... I think we had a very good professional relationship."

All participants noted that their sense of professional efficacy was challenged, affirmed, and confirmed. This sometimes occurred when associate-teachers were placed in difficult situations that caused them to move outside their comfort zone; for example, when Melissa had to have a student-teacher removed from her classroom. As well, Scott had to deal with parental complaints related to a student-teacher’s inappropriate behaviour. In both cases, this pushed associate-teachers to develop new skills. Other times participants’ sense of self-efficacy increased because they were able to positively influence student-teacher growth. As Margaret noted, "It helped me feel rejuvenated professionally and things that I had once forgotten... came back to me and it was just a great experience for me personally." Melissa reflected, "You have to stay on top of every
single aspect . . . and . . . enhance your own learning,” and Scott observed “I also see what I do right.”

The Value of the Reflective Journal

Findings suggest that the reflective journal was valuable, and provided a catalyst for deeper reflection. For Margaret, the reflective journal provided an outlet for inner dialogue and peer dialogue with her student-teacher and so provided a medium for professional growth. She noted,

I would come home at night and look at the journal and think, oh no, I [have] got to do that now. But actually once I got sitting down and reflecting it was, it was fun to do. And it was good to me to put in words how I was feeling. I think that was a real growth period for me...it does help you see growth or help you think about concerns that you have and work through some of these concerns. It really helps to write them down and see it and then go back and reflect on it. Instead of just letting it fester and not getting solutions (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

As noted previously Scott found the journal pushed him to reflect on his teaching practice.

I found...I was constantly, especially with the journal, thinking about what to write in that journal was reflecting about how I am implementing, lesson planning, a lot of classroom management...do I need to have better structure so that someone else can some into it? (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004).

This research suggests that the teaching practicum has the potential to serve as a valuable professional growth opportunity for associate-teachers, and that the journal
helped facilitated this. The extent to which this can occur depends on both the associate-teacher and the student-teacher, as Margaret reflected.

**Key Findings**

In the following section, the key findings are organized as responses to the questions that framed the research. The response to the first question outlines the benefits associate-teachers identified related to their professional growth; the second reviews associate-teacher’s perceptions of the teaching practicum as a valuable professional growth experience; and the third reviews the perceived value of reflective journals to facilitate professional reflection.

Question One: *What were the perceived benefits of the teaching practicum?*

Participants identified a variety of practical benefits associated with having a student-teacher in their classroom. Perhaps not surprisingly, these benefits included a focus on the additional resources students brought to their classroom, such as resource materials, expertise and skills, time, and energy. However, less tangible benefits were also identified. These benefits can be arranged on a continuum, ranging from the very practical instrumental benefits, to those focused on reflection and increased consciousness of their own pedagogical practice (See Figure 1).

Participants noted that they benefited from the resource materials student-teachers brought to their classrooms. These resources included instructional games, Power Point presentations, and materials student-teachers had developed or had brought with them from their universities. Participants noted as well that student-teachers brought their skills and expertise to the classroom. This expertise included (a) technical skills – like Portuguese dancing, webpage design, and computer software skills; and (b) pedagogical
skills – like the ability to ask good searching questions and to make learning fun for everyone.

All participants stated that having student-teachers in their classrooms gave them additional time to complete administrative and teaching tasks, like planning and student evaluation, and that it allowed the participants to observe and spend more one-on-one time with their classroom students. All participants also noted the positive energy their students brought to the classroom. For example, Melissa noted that her student-teacher created a more relaxed, fun environment, and that he provided a chance to get excited again. Similarly, Scott observed that he felt a renewed sense of energy and had a fresh outlook on teaching after working with his student-teacher.

The energy that student-teachers brought to the classroom also benefited students. With reference to her student-teacher, Margaret noted that he touched each individual [student] inspiring them. She, like Scott, also stated that he provided her students with learning experiences they would not otherwise have had. This was echoed by Scott who observed that the student-teacher provided students with different learning activities and also created a more relaxed learning environment. Margaret also suggested that her student-teachers provided same-sex role models for classroom students.

In addition to practical benefits of having an additional adult in the classroom, participants observed that when they had ‘good’ student-teachers, the collaborative relationships they developed with them contributed to their own professional and personal well-being, and to the well-being of students in their classrooms. Margaret described her student-teacher as a confidant, someone whom she could discuss the ups and downs of the school day with. She stated, I have a new work mate to connect with,
and noted the synergy that was created when she team-taught, how wonderful it was for her, and that there is not enough of that in our profession. Similarly, Melissa highlighted the collaborative relationship she developed with her student-teacher, how many times they worked together after school and during recess, and how valuable she found that. She linked the concepts of collaboration and teamwork to teacher professionalism. Scott also noted that he collaborated with his student-teacher to develop curriculum units. As Walker-Hopp’s (2002) mentoring research suggests, the student-teacher/associate-teacher relationship provides “on-going opportunities for collaboration and collegiality that result in meaningful growth and consistent renewal in teaching practice” (p. 5).

Participants also identified benefits that were more specifically directed on their improved ability to reflect on, and become more conscious of, their own practice. For example, Margaret observed that being an associate-teacher reaffirmed her professional values and ideals, and helped to solidify her views on effective teaching and effective teacher training. She noted that the initiative and concern her student-teacher demonstrated toward classroom students caused her to reflect more closely on her own professional practice, and how she judged whether or not her students were learning. She also suggested that her student-teacher helped to motivate her professionally, and changed how she reflected on her own practice. To use her words, it made her very conscious, and that it helped her to remember things she had forgotten.

Melissa, who often related the associate-teacher experience to professionalism, noted that the importance of caring, and of the need to instill a sense of caring in her own teaching practice. She reflected, as well, that it enhanced her attention to the various dimensions of teaching, every single aspect, and that it enhanced her own learning.
Similarly, Scott observed that the student-teacher allowed him to better see his own practice, what he needed to improve, *maybe I need to lighten-up more*, and also what he did right.

The remarks from all participants suggest that their sense of professional efficacy was challenged, affirmed, and confirmed in their roles as associate-teachers. This happened when they were able to positively influence the professional growth of their student-teachers. However, it also occurred when participants were placed in difficult situations that caused them to move outside their comfort zone; for example, when Melissa had to have a student-teacher removed from her classroom, and when Scott had to deal with parental complaints related to a student-teacher's inappropriate behaviour. Being pushed to deal with uncomfortable situations, and addressing these situations effectively, appeared to increase their sense of self-efficacy.

Question Two: *Can the teaching practicum be conceptualized as a valuable growth opportunity for associate-teachers?*

As noted above, all participants felt they had grown professionally as a result of their involvement in the teaching practicum. The data suggest that to some extent, at least, student-teachers did act as mirrors that, as Schön (1987b) suggests, allowed participants to reflect more deeply on their own practice. For example, as mentioned above, it caused one participant to wonder if he needed to lighten up, and another to pay more attention to how she judged student learning. Participants saw their own practices, and their own strengths and weaknesses reflected in the practices of the student-teachers they worked with. In their journals they were asked to discuss a surprise, Scott entitled one journal entry *Ray Boxes*. In this example, Scott outlined a lesson that the student-
teacher modified and adapted to fit damaged and broken ray boxes. At the end of his entry, Scott noted that he would have just avoided using the ray boxes altogether; however, after watching the student-teacher’s lesson, it made me think of how I should be more creative in lesson design.

In addition, two participants, Melissa and Scott, noted that even negative experiences provided opportunities for professional growth. In these experiences, they were forced to deal with uncomfortable situations they would not have encountered otherwise.

Question Three: Do teachers feel they reflect more thoroughly on their own practice after they have been asked to keep a reflective journal?

Simply stated, all participants recognized the value of keeping a reflective journal during the teaching practicum. It required discipline, and also helped participants reflect more deeply on her own practice. As Margaret stated, it provided a way to revisit and resolve problems, and, as Melissa noted, allowed her to probe into her teaching practice which ultimately allowed her to reflect, reaffirm, and solidify her own pedagogy and decisions she had made related to classroom routines and homework completion. In this way, another participant also reflected on his own daily lesson planning and classroom management strategies. All participants viewed the reflective journal as a highly valuable practice that became the catalyst for reflection and an increased consciousness of professional practice.

The respondents in this study supported bodies of research related to both the mentor relationship and teacher educator relationship that examines their benefits (Olson, 2007; Stevens, 1995; Zeck et al., 2001).
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research was to inquire into the teaching practicum as a potential professional learning opportunity for associate teachers. Although the practicum is typically conceptualized as a practical experience for student-teachers, research on mentoring suggests that in mentoring relationships, the mentor benefits as much as the mentored (Olson, 2007; Stevens, 1995; Zeek, et al., 2001). If this is true, the teaching practicum may provide a taken-for-granted opportunity for the professional development of associate-teachers. Since research suggests that teachers are often dissatisfied with mandated professional development (Lieberman, 1996), inquiring into the teaching practicum as a meaningful professional learning opportunity seems worthwhile.

Three related questions guided this research. They were: (a) In what ways do associate-teachers perceive they benefit when they act as associate-teachers during the student-teacher practicum, (b) Can the teaching practicum be conceptualized as a valuable professional growth opportunity, and (c) Do associate-teachers feel that keeping a reflective journal during the teaching practicum helps them to reflect more thoroughly on their own teaching practice?

This chapter provides a summary of the research. It begins with a review of the research design and a discussion of key research findings. It concludes with recommendations for practice and theory that evolve from the research, as well as suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to inquire into the potential of the student teaching practicum as a professional learning opportunity for associate-teachers. Data were
collected from the three purposefully selected elementary school teachers from one school district in southern Ontario. The teachers were selected on the basis that they (a) had at least 5 years of elementary teaching experience, (b) had recent experience working as an associate-teacher, (c) were slated to accept a student-teacher for the April 2004 practicum, and (d) were identified by university faculty as rich sources of data.

Data were collected through two sets of semi-structured interviews (pre and post practicum), participant narrative journals, and the researcher's reflective journal. Data were collected over an 8-week period that focused on one 4-week student teaching practicum. Pre and post practicum interviews lasted approximately 1 hour, and were audio taped and professionally transcribed. Transcriptions were returned to the participants by email for member checking. At the end of the pre-practicum interview, participants were given a journal and a series of questions and prompts, developed by Zeeke et al. (2001), and asked to reflect on their experiences over the course of the teaching practicum. They were also provided with to guide their journal reflections (See Appendix F). The journals were collected at the end of the post practicum interview and used as a data source. The researcher's reflexive journal was used to explore ideas, themes, and reflections and to provide an opportunity to explore broader explanations embedded within the data collection process (Creswell, 1998; Gay & Airasian, 2003).

Once collected, the data were color-coded (Coffey & Atkins, 1996) and arranged into themes. Words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs became the unit of analysis (Lacey & Luff, 2001). The data were then organized onto a matrix for easy cross-referencing. This helped to identify key themes. As well, visual displays were developed to guide the data analysis.
Initial Findings

At the time the data were collected, the three participants were 31, 40, and 49 years of age and they had 5, 11, and 23 years of teaching experience respectively. An initial review of the data revealed that each participant’s professional approach was different, and that their approach affected how they conceptualized and experienced the teaching practicum. Margaret could be classified as a synergist, Melissa as a professional role model, and Scott as a realist. Margaret was classified as a synergist because she directed many of her comments on the positive energy that student-teachers brought to her classroom and the extent to which the student teacher’s energy revived her own energy, and the synergy it created within her classroom. She felt empowered and motivated by the associate-teaching experience. Melissa was classified as a professional role model because she made frequent reference to the ideals of professionalism and because her reflections focused on the need for professional accountability, and on her role as a model for future teachers. Scott’s orientation was practical, and so he was described as a realist since many of his comments were directed around the practical aspects of having a student teacher in his classroom. He noted, for example, that student teachers provided assistance with lesson planning, student assessment, and classroom management. Despite these different focuses, all participants identified ways they had grown professionally as a result of their role as an associate teacher.

Discussion of Key Findings

All participants noted that the teaching practicum provided them with a valuable opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practice, and that it pushed them out of their comfort zone. When asked to identify the benefits of acting as an associate teacher,
participants noted benefits that ranged from the very practical to the more abstract. From a practical perspective, participants noted that they learned new skills from student teachers. For example, Scott learned to use computer software, and Melissa shared resources her student teacher brought into the classroom, as well as the ones she developed while there. Learning was described as a reciprocal process, and all participants noted that their student teachers brought new teaching ideas into the classroom.

All participants noted that student teachers brought new skills, resources and energy into the classroom, and that this benefited their students. Having an additional teacher in the classroom gave participants a chance to observe, not only the student teacher, but also their own students. For example, it allowed them to sit at the back of their class to observe which students were on task and which were off, and which students required extra help. As well, it gave them time to observe how students responded differently to different teaching approaches. For example, in her journal, Margaret noted that the practicum gave her an opportunity to make personal connections with students, especially those who were “slipping thro’ the cracks” (April 2004). Similarly, Melissa noted that she valued the opportunity “to see students in a different way,” which she stated was “one of the greatest benefits [of the practicum]” (Pre Practicum Interview, March 2004). These findings echo those of Olsen (2007) who noted that having student teachers in the classroom afforded associate teachers the opportunity to direct attention on their [classroom] students, and that it allowed them to “Step out of the on-going classroom narrative . . . to reflectively observe their students in ways which
were impossible as an active author and character. . .[and] to observe in-depth the characters of their students” (p. 16).

Similar to Olsen (2007), who noted that associate teachers found “Interns provided a breath of fresh air, bringing in enthusiasm and new ideas without the accompanying sense of mandated ‘shoulds,’” (p. 8), participants in this research appreciated the energy and enthusiasm of student teachers. Scott felt a renewed sense of energy and had a fresh outlook on teaching, and Margaret noted that her student teacher inspired “every one” of her students. Melissa referred to her student teacher as a “valuable person” who contributed to the classroom and to the school by bringing in resources, and new ways of doing things. All participants noted that the creativity and energy of student teachers was enriching both for students and for them. Margaret even identified behavioural changes she saw in her students when she remarked, “We saw so many changes in . . . anger management . . . emotions . . . self esteem just because there was an adult male in the room who could take a few minutes and talk to them . . . and shoot some baskets or throw the football (Post-Practicum Interview). She stated that having a positive male role model allowed boys in her class to enjoy activities they may otherwise have been reluctant to, like Portuguese dancing.

In her research, Olsen (2007) noted that student teachers brought a dynamic focus on action, and experience rather than on policies and procedures” (p. 8). The practicum, by its nature, is focused on practice, and participants’ comments were directed around lived experiences in the classroom rather than the demands of central offices. It provided an opportunity for associate teachers to think about, and make sense of their own experiences which, according to Ershler (2001), is essential if one is to learn. The
literature on meaningful professional development emphasizes the importance of experiential learning that engages teachers in concrete tasks such as teaching, assessment, and observation (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996). Participants identified this type of learning occurred in their role as associate teacher.

Student teachers helped associate teachers to reflect on their own teaching practice in a manner identified by Schön (1983; 1987a) as reflection-on-action. At times, student teachers acted as mirrors that allowed associate teachers to reflect back on their own teaching as in the "hall of mirrors" effect identified by Schön (1987a). For example, Scott wondered if he should "lighten up" after he observed that his students responded to the more relaxed classroom atmosphere his student teacher created. He also wondered if he was sometimes too "caught up in what he was doing" to notice what was happening in his classroom. Melissa noted the value of collaboration with her student teacher, and suggested that the student-teacher's questions made her reflect on her teaching practices. For example, she stated that "the whole value comes in the conversations you have with the student teacher and [that] helps you reflect on what your best practices are and why those are your best practices."

The large question that guided this study was: Can the teaching practicum be conceptualized as professional development for associate teachers? If professional development is defined as reflection on action, then it appears the answer to this question is yes. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996) argue that professional development should be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that is respondent-driven, collaborative and interactive, and that it involves a sharing of knowledge among educators. Furthermore, Schön (1983, 1987b) argues that professional development
should be contextually driven and that it should place technical problem solving within a context of practice. Schön (1983) also suggests that professional development should be “connected to and derived from teacher’s work with their students” (p. 69). The teaching practicum focused the teachers in this study on pedagogy and practice. It also provided the opportunity for collaborative reflection. Participants in this study noted that the practicum provided an opportunity for collaboration and collaborative practice. Margaret stated that teachers “don’t get to do a lot of team teaching or planning. And [the practicum] is fantastic because where one person might be getting stale or have no idea, the other person starts feeding them . . . idea[s] and that is really exciting” (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004). Melissa also noted, “there is not enough . . . [collaboration] in our profession” (Post Practicum Interview, May 2004). Margaret appreciated her student teacher as a confidant, someone with whom she could discuss the ups and downs of the school day. She described him as “a new work mate to connect with”, and noted the synergy that was created when she team-taught. Melissa also highlighted the collaborative relationship she developed with her student-teacher, how many times they worked together after school and during recess, and how valuable she found that to be. She linked the concepts of collaboration and teamwork to teacher professionalism. Scott also highlighted his collaboration in the development of curriculum units. Walker-Hopp’s (2002), in his research on mentoring, found that the student-teacher/associate-teacher relationship provided “on-going opportunities for collaboration and collegiality that result in meaningful growth and consistent renewal in teaching practice” (p. 5). This appeared to also be true for the participants in this research. The advantage to the teaching practicum is that it does not remove teachers
from the classroom. Olsen (2007) notes that “leaving the classroom to learn about better ways of teaching was in conflict with [associate teachers’] sense of integrity as good teachers” (p. 8).

All participants identified increased opportunities for collaboration and shared knowledge creation. In their role as associate-teachers, participants focused attention on the concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, and observation, activities Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin relate to effective professional development. Because they acted as guides for student-teachers, participants also became more thoughtfully engaged in their own teaching.

Langer and Colton (1993) identify a collegial environment as essential for developing teachers’ reflective decision-making ability. In this research, participants viewed the teaching practicum as an opportunity for team teaching, and they collaborated with student-teachers to solve problems of practice and to share teaching ideas. According to Langer and Colton, reflection in collegial environments can help teachers to develop a sense of consciousness about their practice, as well as a sense of professional efficacy, greater caring, greater sense of social responsibility and increased flexibility. In this study, associate-teachers indicated that they became more conscious about their own teaching practice when they worked with student-teachers. Although they did not explicitly state that the experience increased their sense of professional efficacy, they implied it in their comments, and noted it provided a source of both professional rejuvenation and motivation. As well, it focused Melissa’s attention on the importance of caring for students, and Scott’s attention on the need to rethink his expectations of
students. This suggests that the collaborative environment that developed contributed to associate-teacher professional growth.

A secondary research question this researched asked was whether or not a reflective journal would be perceived as enhancing teacher reflection. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Jalongo and Isenberg (1995), reflective journaling (which they refer to as transactional inquiry) leads to new and deeper insights that could not have been gained through personal reflection alone. Similarly, Koutselini (2008) recommends journaling as a way to encourage teachers to reflect on their practice, and she views journal writing as a self-supporting devise that empowers teachers to reflect on their actions, thoughts, feelings and ideas to increase understanding of themselves, others, and the tasks they engage in. This research suggests that the reflective journal did provide a catalyst for deeper reflection-on-action. All respondents stated that the journal facilitated reflection. Although Melissa used her journal as a means for collaborative professional dialogue between herself and the student-teacher, rather than for her personal reflections, it still helped her to reflect on her own practice. As well, Margaret noted that the journal was a place where she could revisit her thoughts of the day, and that it helped her to reflect on possible solutions. Similarly, Scott considered the journal as a place to reflect on his classroom practice. It appears that, as Zeek et al. (2001) suggest, in this research the journal helped to facilitate reflection-on-action.

**Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study suggest that accepting a student-teacher into the classroom, in combination with keeping a reflective journal, can be an effective means of promoting reflection, and therefore, facilitating professional growth. According to Pines
and Seidel (1999), the Professional Development School (PDS) is the cornerstone for education reform and is based on the premise that exemplary teacher educators are educating teacher candidates. This research suggests that the practicum can provide an authentic professional development opportunity to teachers. This opportunity does not involve tuition fees or long periods of involvement outside of the school day. For the most part, this opportunity for professional development is easily accessible to the teacher.

At the moment, neither universities nor school boards view the practicum as a professional development opportunity. This research suggests that there may be some value in doing so. Using a professional growth angle to recruit associate-teachers may help to increase their availability, and increase the quality of associate-teachers. It would also provide an opportunity for universities to focus more attention on the ongoing professional development of teachers, something school boards are often looking for.

Although beyond the scope of this research, it should be noted that participants made recommendations related to the teaching practicum. For example, Margaret suggested the length of the practicum be increased to 6 or 7 weeks. She felt this would benefit the student-teacher, as it would give her or him an opportunity to become established in his/her classroom management, and in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of his/her units. Scott also suggested that student-teachers just start rolling with classroom management and teaching when they have to leave the classroom. He also suggested different assessment and evaluation procedures for student-teachers and noted that on-going evaluation, especially an interim evaluation, would provide more appropriate feedback to the teacher. Melissa recommended more emphasis on reading
programs at the University level. She felt that student-teachers are not educated sufficiently on how to teach reading, and consequently, were not adequately prepared for teaching. As well, she felt that the University should be collaborating with teachers on preservice curriculum.

In addition, Scott was also concerned with the quality of associate-teachers and suggested a better screening process. These findings are similar to those of Ross (2002), who notes the importance of associate-teachers for the future success of the novice teachers. Ross recommends that associate-teachers be chosen based on their ability to mentor student-teachers, not solely on their content knowledge or teaching proficiency. Ross suggests offering on-going courses at the university level to associate-teachers that focus on mentoring, and reflective practice. She concludes that a teacher education model centred around a shared vision of mentoring and reflective practice between faculties of education and school partners should facilitate the advancement of professional development, improve the quality of teaching, and promote student learning that meets the need of every student.

**Implications for Future Research**

This research contributed to the literature on professional development and teacher reflection. This research also supports Schön's (1987b) contention that researchers must *work uphill against the notion that the teacher is a blank slate who needs to be trained and has nothing to bring* (¶ 30). This study suggests that more research should be centred in the classroom, and furthermore, that teachers should be viewed as active participants in, not passive recipients of, the professional growth process. Additionally, meaningful professional growth can occur when it is embedded
within the classroom. In this environment, the associate-teacher critically solves problems through content rich, learning centred experiences (Atkinson & Colby, 2006).

More research needs to be focused on teaching practicum as an opportunity for collaborative interaction with other professionals. The practicum experience creates a virtual world that provides uncertainty, situations of confusion and messiness that is essential for reflection and professional growth, and that is relevant to teachers. Journaling coupled with the dialogue and reflection in the practicum provided an opportunity for professional growth.

Margaret, who had the most years of teaching experience, was able to articulate the most benefits during the student-teaching practicum. It would be interesting to examine the associate-teacher benefits based on their years of teaching experience, borrowing from Diamond’s (1988) developmental model of teacher’s professional development.

As well, research focused on the student-teaching practicum lends itself to action research. Action research is considered by Koutselini (2008) to be a rewarding practice that gives teachers the opportunity to revisit and reconceptualize their understanding of the curriculum, and teaching and learning.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The literature suggests that current professional development opportunities are viewed as isolated from practice, overly rich in theory and technical in nature. This research suggests that the teaching practicum can serve as a professional development opportunity that is contextual, immersed in practice, and provides opportunities for reflection. Overall, in this study, the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship helped
the associate-teacher become more conscious of his/her own practice. It also encouraged a community of practice that focused attention on collaboration and reciprocal professional growth. From a practical perspective, the student-teacher provided an additional adult in the classroom, opportunities for opposite gendered role models, and new perspective and approaches to teaching. It also provided a collaborative and team-teaching environment, the opportunity to reflect more deeply on practice, and an opportunity to build new professional relationships.
References


Appendix A

Telephone Script with Faculty Member

"Hello, my name is Leigh-Ann Sauer and I am enrolled in the graduate program at * University. I am conducting research to fulfill my requirements for my thesis. The topic of my research is examining the potential professional development opportunities provided by the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship. I understand that you are involved in counseling groups and I wonder if you could forward my letter of information to possible candidates. Would you be willing to do this?"

If yes, the participant selection criteria were outlined.

- The associate-teacher has worked in the chosen school board for at least five years
- The associate-teacher teaches grades kindergarten to eight
- The associate-teacher has accepted at least one student-teacher in the past two years
- The associate-teacher will be accepting a student-teacher for the April 2004 teaching practicum
- For the purpose of this qualitative study, these participants will be good sources of rich, descriptive data

If yes, the researcher would fax a letter of information to faculty member with the anticipation of possible participants contacting her.

Thank you, very kindly for you help, Good bye"
Appendix B

Pre Practicum Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Gender: ______________________

2. Age: _____

3. How many years teaching: _____

4. Why have you accepted a student-teacher into your classroom?

5. Have you accepted student-teachers in the past?

6. Can you tell me about your expectations as an associate-teacher?

7. Can you tell me about the University’s expectation of you as an associate-teacher?

8. When was your last professional development course?

9. Was it a board mandated workshop, Additional Qualification course, or other?

10. Please tell me about a positive experience you have had with a student-teacher in your classroom.

11. Please tell me about a negative experience you have had with a student-teacher in your classroom.

12. Do you feel that you learn new things from having a student-teacher in your classroom? In what ways?

13. Do you find that having a student-teacher in your classroom helps you to improve your own teaching practices?

Probes

Tell me more

Can you explain that situation a little more
Appendix C

Journal Instructions

The following question is taken from Zeek, Foote & Walker, 2001:

"Tell me about an interesting thing that your student-teacher did that turned out better than you thought it would". (Bring these ideas and stories to the first focus group, we will discuss these stories)

(a) Give the story a descriptive or provocative title.
(b) What is the moral of the story?
(c) What message does this story have for you as an experienced mentor?

The purpose of the journal is to help you reflect on your daily experiences with your student-teacher. Please:

- Take time daily to reflect on your times with you student-teacher.
- While observing your student-teacher, reflect on your own practice.

To keep all information confidential please use pseudonyms when writing about student-teacher and event throughout the day.
Appendix D

Post Practicum Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the professional relationship that developed between you and your student-teacher throughout the course of this teaching practicum.

2. Throughout your experiences with your student-teacher, were you able to reflect about your personal teaching practices.

3. Which aspects of your practice did you think about most?

4. Was the journal writing experience a useful one for your own professional development?

5. How could the associate-teacher/student-teacher relationship be improved?

6. What benefits did you receive from having a student-teacher in your classroom?

7. Do you think this relationship is a valuable learning experience for: the student-teacher only, the associate-teacher only, or both the associate and student-teachers? Why?

8. Do you think the experience of the associate-teacher should be counted towards your professional development or development?
## Appendix E

### Integrated Matrix

**Why the participant became an Associate-Teacher**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margaret</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Another adult in the classroom  
- Fundraiser  
- Giving back to the teaching profession  
- Excitement  
- Observe students in the classroom | - To be a professional role model  
- To provide high standards of education to all stakeholders | - Asked by the principal  
- Extra adult in the room  
- Keep fresh  
- Energy | 🔵 Extra adult in the classroom  
🔴 Professional role model  
🔴 Increased consciousness  
🔵 Responsibility to the profession  
🔵 Energy |

**The role of the Associate-Teacher as Perceived by the participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margaret</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Provide continuous feedback  
- Team-teacher  
- Resource person | - Model professional accountability in classroom and extracurricular roles  
- Professional mentor | | 🔵 Team teaching  
🔴 Professional accountability  
🔵 Mentor |

**The participant’s Expectation of the Student-Teacher**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margaret</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Innovative ideas  
- Energy  
- Enthusiasm  
- Establish a good rapport with students  
- Try new teaching methods  
- Able to take constructive criticism | - High expectations  
- Professional  
- Enthusiastic  
- Strong interactions with students | - Expectations depend on time of year  
- Professional appearance  
- Establish a good rapport with students  
- Effective classroom management  
- Goals for assessment and evaluation | 🔵 Energy  
🔵 Enthusiasm  
🔴 Professional expectations |

**Positive Past Experiences with a Student-Teacher**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margaret</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Enthusiasm  
- Synergy | Did not highlight positive experiences, only negative | - Collaboration  
- Use of technology  
- Use of resources  
- Student-teacher show tremendous professional growth over the course of the practicum | 🔵 Collaboration  
🔵 Student-teacher growth |
### Negative Past Experiences with a Student-Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margaret</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of responsibility</td>
<td>- Lack of preparedness</td>
<td>- Fall behind in programming</td>
<td>▶ Difficulties – Student-teachers not prepared,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of preparedness</td>
<td>- Not meeting high professional</td>
<td>- Poor classroom management</td>
<td>not meeting standards, uncomfotable to outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>standards</td>
<td>- Had to identify student-teacher</td>
<td>student-teacher weakness to student-teachers and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Difficult to teach someone</td>
<td>- Weakness</td>
<td>faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be a teacher</td>
<td>- <em>Teachers are born not made</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Benefits to the Associate-Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margaret</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Provides observation time</td>
<td>- Fresh outlook</td>
<td>- Observing students</td>
<td>▶ Observation time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- New lessons</td>
<td>- New approaches</td>
<td>- New approaches to planning</td>
<td>▶ Additional adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- New activities – technology</td>
<td>- Good for students – novelty of</td>
<td>and executing lessons</td>
<td>▶ New perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- New angles on units</td>
<td>someone new, more relaxed</td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ New resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unique experience for the</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Professional relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students that she could not provide by herself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Reflection on practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Another adult in the room</td>
<td>- New activities</td>
<td>- Gives you a reason to reflect</td>
<td>▶ Increased professional consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Male role model</td>
<td>- New games</td>
<td>on practice</td>
<td>▶ Increased responsibility to profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Creates a team teaching</td>
<td>- New ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment</td>
<td>- New perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collaboration</td>
<td>- New resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provided an outlet for reflection</td>
<td>- Another adult in the room</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase consciousness</td>
<td>- Provides time to observe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social benefits</td>
<td>students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Active participation by both parties needed to achieve professional benefits</td>
<td>- Professional growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Building a professional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relationship – co-operation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Keeping doors open to new</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lifelong learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Remaining young in your thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Team teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on Personal Practice</td>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Journal provided inner dialogue about pedagogy</td>
<td>• Dialogue in journal solidified pedagogy</td>
<td>• Journaling facilitated inner dialogue</td>
<td>• Reflection-on-action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rejuvenated attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Examined and reflected on his weaknesses</td>
<td>• Increased consciousness on personal pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Source of inspiration</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflected on patience level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Missed physical and emotional presence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Exemplified spirit of teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Journaling helped her to reflect, revisit and resolve</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thoughts on Professional Learning</th>
<th>Margaret</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Pleased to see PLP abolished</td>
<td>• Involved in Reading Pt. 2 and board workshops</td>
<td>• Involved in Special Education Additional Qualification courses and development of board PD</td>
<td>• Mandated professional development vs. choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focused on professional growth and professional development that is relevant to her</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions for Improvement to a Southern Ontario's Pre-Service Program</th>
<th>Margaret</th>
<th>Melissa</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increase length of teaching blocks</td>
<td>• Would like to be contacted by University for pre-service curriculum input</td>
<td>• Concerned with dedication levels of associate-teachers</td>
<td>• Increase length of teaching practicum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would like to see emphasis on reading programs</td>
<td>• Would like to see screening for associate-teachers</td>
<td>• Concerned with programming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increase length of teaching blocks</td>
<td>• Concerned with quality of associate-teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Would like to see interim evaluation implemented</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>