EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP OF ASSOCIATE TEACHERS AND TEACHER CANDIDATES
WITHIN THE TEACHING PRACTICUM

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
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Doctor of Philosophy, 2013

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Abstract

There is broad agreement that the practicum is a key part of teacher education. In the context of the classroom, the teacher candidate begins to adopt the role of teacher as outlined by the Ministry of Education in Ontario. One challenge for teacher candidates is to translate to the classroom what they have experienced in their university program. Associate Teachers influence this translation of pedagogy by how they shape what Student Teachers have explored in theory. The broad scope of research literature on the role of the Associate Teacher lacks clarity on the varied perceptions of the supportive roles of Associate Teachers. Research is needed on how Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers perceive their pre-service practice experience and the impact of the Associate Teacher support.

This study is a qualitative one. The research is based on a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers who were participants in the 2007/2008 elementary pre-service consecutive teacher education program at one Ontario University. Findings from the research suggest that the use of participatory dialogue throughout the practicum is essential to support the learning process of Student Teachers concerning teaching in the classroom. Additionally, differentiated mentored support by the Associate Teacher proved essential to the
completion of the practicum by the Teacher Candidate.
Acknowledgements

I am fortunate to have this opportunity to thank all those who believe in the merits of the doctoral thesis process, and this thesis in particular. I offer my deepest gratitude and thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Blair Mascall. He is a trusted mentor whom I wish my mom could have met. I appreciate his professionalism and leadership, his constant support and encouragement, his dedication and commitment to me as a student, and the compassion he showed me when both of my parents passed in 2011 – as well as on the passing of family pets. It always seemed as though he knew what was important to me, including some time to grieve. His timing of immediate feedback, his complete honesty and genuine caring, and his constant communication with me have shaped this thesis and been invaluable to me. I respect him highly and admire his contribution to students at the University. Thank you, Blair, for positively and continually shaping my experiences through this process, and for always being engaged; I am grateful. I also offer my deepest gratitude to Dr. David Booth, who believed in the merits of this thesis. I first got to know Dr. Booth’s work when I was in Teacher’s College. He inspired me as a new teacher and I feel honoured to have had this opportunity to work with him. His support has been invaluable. I appreciate his professionalism, and commitment to this thesis. Thank you, David, as well, for your calmness, assuredness, caring, multiple reviews of my thesis, and for the time and effort you have taking on my behalf. Thank you for always being engaged in this process with me. I truly am grateful to you, also. You continue to inspire me to continue my contribution to children and to teaching as a profession.

I would also like to thank the Examining Committee for their valuable feedback before this thesis went to print. I thank the External Examiner, Dr. Michael E. Manley-Casimir, for his comments on his assessment of this dissertation. My thanks are extended to university personnel
who have supported me.

I would also like to thank Peter McSweeney for his editing. I appreciate his time and care for editing. As well, I'd like to thank the participants in this study who graciously gave their time.

Finally, I send my thanks and love to my family for their support and encouragement throughout this process, because without them, this thesis would not have been possible. Each family member has impacted me in different ways. Our time together is precious, and I admire each of you for your unique strengths. To my mom who has always been there for me and is my inspiration both professionally and as a person. Kelly, I appreciate your perspective and vision that makes this thesis a lasting contribution to children, your belief that this thesis enhances the contribution to society and children of the future, your support and trust in me to complete this process, and your indirect support to those future teachers through me. May teachers be better prepared to teach and help children realize their fullest potential through your commitment to me. Kim, you will always be my “big sister.” I still look up to you for your advice, leadership, and caring. Karen, thank you for all of your help at different times. I believe we have well learned that “moral code,” and our practice as caring people is strengthened by our connections with each other. I am grateful to all of my sisters.

In Courage, Hope, Faith, and Love,

Kathleen M. Ronsyn
Dedications

(From left to right: Centre, Marie S. Ronsyn, Kathleen Ronsyn, Kim Scuglia, Karen Hassard, and Kelly Ronsyn)

MARIE was our mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friend. You have to smile just thinking of her. She enjoyed life. For anyone meeting Marie for the first time, within 10 minutes one would know about “the girls,” Kim, Karen, Kelly and Kathy. She was so full of pride about each of you. And if you continued to speak to her, in short order you would hear about her grandchildren Andrew, Adam, Allie, Jenna and David. You all truly were the joy and centre of her life. I cannot begin to count the times she would talk about how lucky she was to be not working when her grandchildren – the “babies” – were born and she had that time to spend with you. Over the years there would always be updates and great stories she would love to share of being with you, about the fun times you had and her love of each of you. “We have been friends for over 25 years,” I would remark.
People would see her after several years and always remark that she looked the same and never aged – and it was true. Marie took the time to take care of herself and she was very organized about doing so. She had an exercise schedule and she really enjoyed her routine of going to the Boys and Girls club…She loved it and it was evident that it all worked…She loved country music and dancing. She could dance with the best of them and she could dance all night…Marie was a great baker, and my favourite was her butter tarts. I would have to put them in the freezer to keep from eating too many at one sitting. Her pastry and her pies were superb. She loved recounting all the times she had been visiting and whipped up dozens of cookies for her grandchildren – of how fast they would be eaten and how she would “just have” to make another batch…She was an amazing seamstress, she made suits and outfits for herself and also for the girls over the years. She had a great eye for timeless fashion…When I shared with some mutual friends about Marie’s passing, without exception they said “Now there was someone who made you smile and laugh when you saw her and knew how to live a full life.” Marie did not suffer fools gladly, to coin a phrase. You always knew where you stood with her. She was always true to herself and never put on airs or pretended to be something she was not. She had amazing strength of character …She was a dear friend and over the years; once or twice we would disagree about something as friends do, but our friendship carried on as true friendships do. They deepen and endure over the years and are your safe place for your joys and sorrows to be shared and supported. Marie was that to me and I am so thankful for her friendship. All my family here in Nova Scotia knew her well and we will keep her in our memories and hearts. We think of her often. Her zeal for life – to enjoy as much as possible each day -- her strength of character and determination to do and be her best …always looking to enjoy all the good things in life is her legacy to all of us. She would want us to think of her with a smile and love, and
want us to make the most of our lives with our family and friends. - Ann Byrne
In Loving Memory of my Mom Sarah Marie Misselbrook (Marie S. Ronsyn)

This thesis would not have been possible without the love and devotion of my mom, Marie Ronsyn (Sarah Marie Misselbrook). My mom exemplifies the unwavering commitment of a mother to her children. Her complete and utter selfless sacrifice in countless ways brings tears as I write these words. My mom gave to charities, and always had hope. It is difficult to put words to my mom’s selflessness; her spirit lives on and deeply impacts me. I honour her commitment and dedication to this process through this acknowledgement, and in part, with her name Misselbrook. I continue to build on her passion for the welfare of children, the good humanity, and the genuine love for children.
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Chapter One: Introduction to the Research

The research question asks whether the use of differentiated instruction and participatory dialogue can build a supportive relationship between the Associate Teacher and the Teacher Candidate during the teaching practicum in an Initial Teacher Education Program. Research indicates the practicum is a valuable part of teacher education. Although this study does not specifically address the mentoring practices of Teacher Candidates, effective dialogue between the Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate can lead to the optimal completion of the practicum by the Teacher Candidate as reported by the participants.

Both the Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed on several points, such as the importance of quality mentoring (perhaps feedback is a more suitable expression), autonomy and responsibility given to Student Teachers, diverse experiences, feelings about being included in the school environment, experiencing the comprehensive role of a teacher, and having a structured practicum. Effective interaction among the different participants within the schools (students and their school-based mentors) is of great importance.

The Research Question

The research question is, what is the impact of the Associate Teachers’ differentiated practices, attitude, and dialogue on the Teacher Candidates’ views of their practicum, speculating about a potential relationship between these support characteristics by the Associate Teachers.

Background to the Research Question

To explore the relationship between the Associate Teacher and the Teacher Candidates during practicum among these two unrelated groups, the elements of, and relationship between, differentiated practices, attitudes, and dialogue by the Associate can be uncovered. Research supports that the practicum is a valuable part of teacher education. Additionally, dialogue
appears to be rooted in mentoring practices by the Associate Teacher. Although this study does not specifically address mentoring practices with Teacher Candidates, effective scholarly dialogue between the Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate can lead to successful completion of the practicum as determined by the Teacher Candidate. Smith and Ulvik (2011) report on the findings of their study as follows:

The parties involved agreed on several points, such as the importance of quality mentoring (perhaps feedback is a more suitable expression), autonomy and responsibility given to student teachers, diverse experiences, to feel included in the school environment, to experience the comprehensive role of a teacher and to have a structured practicum. What happens among the different participants within the schools (students and their school-based mentors) seems to be the most important. (p. 517)

Associate Teachers who provide ongoing feedback throughout the practicum to their Teacher Candidates are providing an important component to a successful practicum experience as determined by the Associate Teacher.

I was motivated to investigate the effectiveness of support of Associate Teachers (ATs) for their Teacher Candidates (TCs) or Student Teachers (STs) during the practicum for two reasons. First, the role of classroom experience in the learning process is significant, and it is experience that is at the centre of the practicum. Second, the practicum experience sets the foundation for candidates as they work toward proficiency as teachers in the classroom.

Associate Teachers play a vital part in the induction and orientation of Student Teachers to the practice of the professional teaching. Associate Teachers who provide ongoing feedback to their Teacher Candidates throughout the practicum are providing an important component of a practicum experience.

This research gives voice to their perspectives as well as to those of the Teacher Candidate. The practicum invariably provides a learning opportunity, but for some Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates, the experience is less effective than desired.
It is the intention of this research to acknowledge both the effective and less useful experiences of the practicum for Teacher Candidates. Learning about teaching and learning how to teach are two distinct foci in teacher education that, ideally, are brought together in the practicum. The practicum is broadly defined by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), which allows for considerable variations in the experiences of prospective teachers. This research identifies two functions of the practicum in the development of teachers. The first is the construction of knowledge of the profession, broadly defined. The second is teaching practice, specifically the construction of knowledge about pupil–teacher interactions in the framework of the teaching and learning processes in the classroom. This research focuses on the second, teaching practice in the context of the classroom. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the value of differentiated mentoring support and the impact of participatory dialogue on the outcomes of the Teacher Candidates’ practicum experiences.

There are 18 faculties of education in Ontario accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). All offer a post-degree Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program, also known as a Consecutive Teacher Education Program (Canadian Education Association, 1993; Ontario College of Teachers, 2009). Accreditation serves to ensure the quality of programs in teacher education; through the College, oversight of programs is ongoing. The College was granted authority to accredit programs through Regulation 347/02: “Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs,” on December 28, 2002 (Ontario College of Teachers Accreditation Handbook, 2003). Regulation 347/02 also sets out the conditions for accreditation of the practicum portion of teacher education in faculties of education in Ontario (Ontario College of Teachers, Memorandum, 2005). The College requires that the practicum meet the following criteria. The practicum must:

• be a minimum of 40 days, which includes observation and practice teaching;
be completed in an instructional setting in schools or other situations that use the Ontario curriculum, or in situations approved by the College;

be completed in English language schools or classes if the candidate is to be certified to teach in English, or in French language schools or classes if the candidate is to be certified to teach in French;

take place in instructional settings which are related to the areas of concentration of the candidate’s program of professional education, that is, in primary (K – Grade 3) and junior (Grade 4 – 6) classrooms for a candidate whose areas of concentration are the primary and junior divisions, or in intermediate (Grade 7 – 10) and senior division (Grade 11 – 12) subject-specific classrooms for a candidate whose areas of concentration are the intermediate and senior divisions, etc…

enable candidates to participate in settings related to each division and, where applicable, in at least one of the subject areas of the program that are relevant to the candidate’s program. Where possible, candidates would be better prepared if they had an opportunity to obtain experience in both subject areas;

be supervised and assessed by an experienced teacher who is a member of the College in good standing. The College recognizes that the determination of a candidate’s success in the practicum is informed by the Associate Teacher’s assessment but that the responsibility for final evaluation rests with faculty staff;

be successfully completed and so noted on the transcript sent to the College;

include a faculty member appointed as an advisor for the student during the practicum. (Ontario College of Teachers, Memorandum, 2005)

The practice teaching part of these programs (the practicum) is an important component of teacher preparation. In this component, the Teacher Candidate explores the role of the professional school teacher (Glickman & Bey, 1990; McIntyre, Byrd, & Fox, 1996, as cited in Beck & Kosnik, 2002). The practicum course is the one course that is not taught by faculty staff; it is usually the responsibility of the supervising Associate Teacher working in a school setting. It is assumed that Associate Teachers will supervise Student Teachers during practicum in the spirit of the professional standards of the College. But these standards may not be clearly evident in practice in school classrooms. Teacher Candidates taking their practicum in a classroom where the College’s standards are not being fully complied with may find it difficult to perform well.

This study seeks to gain insight into the experience of students beginning their professional careers as teachers, and how Associate Teachers support their Teacher Candidates
during practicum based on the seven broad categories of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation as carried out by Associate Teachers.

**Nature of the Study**

This is a qualitative study investigating the experiences of a small sample of teacher candidates from one of the consecutive elementary pre-service teacher education programs in an Ontario university, and a small sample of Associate Teachers involved with the same program. No attempt was made to match a Teacher Candidate to an Associate Teacher. The empirical research involved impressions of the practicum experiences of the members of both groups, based on a series of semi-structured interviews.

This research looks only at one element of the program: the orientation days and two practicums that take place over a 24-week period during the academic year. This study is limited to the impact of the Associate Teachers’ use of differentiated support and interactive dialogue on the Teacher Candidates’ views of their own practicum rather than analysing the Associate Teachers’ views of the Teacher Candidates’ practicum. This restriction allows for a more focused analysis of the data collected.

**Context of the Study**

The Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers whom I had access to were involved in a consecutive bachelor of education (B.Ed.) pre-service teacher education program, which is divided into Primary/Junior (P/J), Junior/Intermediate (J/I), and Intermediate/Senior (I/S) divisions. Only Student Teachers in the first two divisions were invited to participate in the project.

Admission to these teacher education programs is highly competitive: each year there are
many more applicants than available places. The sample program has a large elementary pre-service component; many students are admitted, so there was good reason to expect an adequate response to a call for volunteers for the study.

The B.Ed. consecutive degree program consists of one academic year of full-time study, beginning in September and ending in June, generally taken immediately after four years of full-time undergraduate study. For admission to consecutive programs, candidates must demonstrate proficiency in the English language, have an approved first degree with at least a B average over 15 full-year courses, have some teaching and/or child-related experience (e.g., teaching at a summer camp), and submit a short essay about their desire to be a teacher.

**Program Structure and Personnel**

All teacher education programs have some type of university partnership office whose staff liaises with the schools. This is important to the establishing of effective relationships between the university and the schools. For example, when Teacher Candidates first visit their placement school, this office provides a booklet that describes the practicum course and what is expected of an Associate Teacher. The personnel of the partnership office do not operate in isolation; they form the liaison between university faculty and instructors, and the schools’ administrators, teachers, and staff.

The role of the partnership office is diplomatic: its task is to establish and cultivate strong relationships among the personnel of the partner schools, the boards, the principals of schools, the Associate Teachers, the Student Teachers, and the university faculty. Each partnership office at the Faculty of Education is involved in and contributes to the practicum. Many partner schools have a long history of acting as field sites for university pre-service programs. The programs take care to ensure that their liaison personnel are dedicated people who work well
with equally dedicated program personnel support services.

Several different terms are used to describe the program liaison personnel – supervisor, coordinator, and field support staff – and their titles suggest their responsibilities. Initially, they allocate students to program cohorts or options; that is, groups of candidates who generally take courses together and are generally supported by each other. Cohorts meet via their courses at the university for debriefings about their practicum. Placement in cohorts takes into account students’ preferences, capacities, and other factors. Later, each Teacher Candidate is allocated to a suitable school and an Associate Teacher. In most programs, although some course components or options are common, an effort is made to provide Student Teachers with choices of subject and area specialties (e.g., urban studies). Some program classes are held at field sites as well as on campus. This school-university partnership structure is intended to enhance the theory-to-practice connections between the participating schools and the faculty of education as well as between the Teacher Candidate in class or seminar, and the Associate Teacher in the classroom of a co-operating school.

Options commonly have their own support staff and faculty, although arrangements vary slightly from university to university as to the division of responsibility. Generally, persons who act as logistics liaisons between the education faculty and school administration are among those who support the individual Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers and act as “trouble-shooters” to defuse awkward or tense situations. They usually are staff and/or faculty who are skilled in conflict resolution and damage control, and in reconciling the sometimes conflicting expectations of Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers.

**Background of the Researcher**

I have performed various roles in education in the elementary school system. I have
participated in numerous education courses and workshops as a life-long learner supporting student achievement in various capacities, based on the belief that all children deserve the best possible education we can provide. This commitment is rooted in my mother’s love for her four daughters, the “Ronsyn girls,” and her five grandchildren.

I value learning in the teacher role, and it is the practicum that presents the learning opportunity for Teacher Candidates to learn as practicing teachers. By expanding the scope of this study to include the primary, junior, and intermediate division, I gained broad knowledge of Teacher Candidates’ views of their practicums. Having acquired background knowledge of pupils’ needs within these divisions and through the implementation of the Ontario curriculum for several years in Ontario schools, I have gained strong insight into the teaching and learning processes, enabling me to understand how we can ensure we attend to all pupils’ needs. I used this knowledge in the data analysis to pinpoint the complexities of learning how to teach in multiple contexts and in the dynamic role of teacher.

**Summary of Limitations**

Limitations to this study are noted. The volunteers in the study were individuals committed to this topic in teacher education, who volunteered in the spring and in the fall, and whose experiences were strongly positive or strongly negative. A limitation, therefore, is that the middle group may be the under-represented unit between the two extreme groups. The limitation may be due to the time lapse for recall of experiences in the Spring season and Fall. Recruiting limitations for this study are also noted. The distribution of packages for this study was made through the option coordinators who may have influenced participation. Lastly, I hold multiple perspectives in teaching in the elementary school system, and therefore, these perspectives on learning in the teacher role may not be shared by a researcher who is not a
Definitions of Differentiation and Dialogue

The definition of differentiated instruction is rooted in Tomlinson’s (2001, 2003) belief that teachers need to adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of the students, rather than have students comply with instructional practices. Tomlinson strongly supports the philosophy that there is “variability among any group of learners” (Corley, 2005). There are three components to differentiated instruction that are relevant to this thesis that are part of the definition for differentiated practices: to plan strategically to meet the needs of students; to respond to the diverse learning needs of students; and to attend to content, process, and product of learning.

First, Corley’s (2005) definition of differentiated instruction is applicable. “Differentiated instruction is an approach that enables teachers to plan strategically to meet the needs of every student [Teacher Candidate].” Second, “differentiated instruction is the teacher’s response to the diverse learning needs of his or her students [Teacher Candidates]” (Corley, 2005). Third, differentiated instruction is an approach that is responsive to students’ [Teacher Candidates’] readiness levels (Vygotsky, 1986 as cited in Corley, 2005), their interests (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and their learning profiles“(Sternberg et al., 1998 as cited in Corley, 2005).

Therefore, differentiated practices are those that “respond to the learner characteristics of readiness, interest, and learning profile. Teachers can differentiate, or modify, learning experiences in the three areas of content, process, and product” (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003; Corley,
Differentiation:

Differentiated Practices are those practices that “respond to the learner characteristics of readiness, interest, and learning profile” whereby teachers “differentiate or modify learning experiences in the three areas of content, process, and product” (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003; Corley, 2005).

Dialogue:

Dialogue refers to the “learning-focused interactions” (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. 1) or “learning-focused conversations” (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. 1; 2012, p. 1) between the Associate Teacher and the Teacher Candidate within the context of the school and classroom. Additionally, the “authentic conversations” (Website, OISE, 2013) are not scripted between the Associate Teacher and the Teacher Candidate.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2 focuses on the educational research literature that provides the framework for the thesis, and research that reports on Student Teachers’ learning about teaching pupils in the classroom. Chapter 3 gives details of the methodology used in the study. Chapters 4 and 5 report on the qualitative data gathered and analyzed, to address the research question posed in the first chapter. Chapter 4 summarizes the responses to the first part of the research question, and Chapter 5 focuses on the responses to the second part of the question. Chapter 6 contains the conclusion and recommendations.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter discusses the academic literature relevant to this thesis. Ontario provides the context for this thesis, but much of the literature on the practicum comes from other countries, primarily the United States. Nevertheless, it is clear from the literature that there is significant overlap of the issues in teacher education and the practicum between Canada and the United States. It is not uncommon therefore to see American authors cited in the literature in Canada, so the use of American literature in this thesis is in keeping with common practice.

Additionally, relevant to the framing of this thesis, sections are included that provide background knowledge on teacher education, the practicum course, and problems and issues related to teacher education and the practicum. This background information serves to provide a general milieu for the dynamic profession of teaching. Once familiar with the parameters of the teaching profession identified in this thesis, the reader will find more detailed background knowledge relevant to Associate Teachers’ supporting and guiding Teacher Candidates’ learning. This knowledge includes pedagogical knowledge and practical knowledge of Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates, and knowledge on Teacher Candidates’ growth and development in teaching – or stages of growth in teaching, as some literature suggests. This chapter concludes with the identification of the categories that Teacher Candidates are evaluated on during their practicum course in the context of the classroom.

In the summary at the end of this chapter, I provide the reader with an image of how I conceptualize this relevant literature for the thesis. The summary also serves to bring clarity to the conceptual framework that follows at the end of Chapter 2.

The teaching and learning experience occurs in the education program in two settings: at
the university, and through the practicum experience in the school classroom. Both are briefly described, although only the latter setting is investigated in this thesis. This conception of teaching and learning is not a comprehensive account of the teaching and learning processes, but serves only to frame the study.

University faculty of education professors apply teaching methods that typically include constructivist-based approaches to prepare their would-be teachers for the profession of teaching. Teaching and learning processes continue throughout the practicum experience, which is usually one course in teacher education programs at faculties of education in Ontario. This teaching and learning process includes the experience of the school and classroom where Teacher Candidates are applying their new knowledge to the teaching practice.

**Practice Teaching: Historical Background**

In the 19th century, Ontario teacher training was carried out in Normal Schools. The method was a form of apprenticeship or on-the-job training, practicing under the supervision of teachers. In some schools, along with teaching children, teachers even taught college methods courses as well as supervising students’ practice. Therefore, many teachers were translating theory into practice, explaining the theory, and demonstrating its immediate use. There was a close link between what Student Teachers learned and the practices they observed around them, as well as the practices they later employed (Emans, 1993).

The expansion of Normal Schools throughout the Western World during the 19th century was due largely to increases in school enrolments. As a result, the need for teachers grew. Fiorino (1978) notes that attempts to raise the standards of teacher education during both the 19th and 20th centuries were offset by shortages of teachers, by wars, and by economic instability. “One of the overriding principles that has governed policy development regarding
teacher education in Ontario has been that of supply and demand”.

Two documents released in the 1960s, the *MacLeod Report* (1966) and the *Hall-Dennis Report* (1968), influenced policy development in teacher education. During the 1960s, “responsibility for training elementary teachers was transferred for the most part to faculties of education within universities from government-operated teachers’ colleges” (Fiorino, 1978, p. 139). Thus, one major transformation in teacher education fermenting during the late 1960s was the decentralization of responsibility for teacher education. One concern during this decade, and the impetus for the *MacLeod Report*, was the development of elementary teachers. This concern was twofold. First: one year of professional training following Grade 13 was insufficient background for teachers; and second, “the centralized control of the teachers’ colleges inhibited innovations in teacher education” (Fiorino, 1978, p. 141).

In 1964, William Davis, the Ontario Minister of Education of the time, appointed a committee chaired by C.R. MacLeod, “to examine and report on the training of elementary school teachers in Ontario” (Fiorino, 1978, p. 141). The *MacLeod Report* was published in 1966. The committee reported on the problems in teacher education, primarily relating to the academic background and to maturity of teacher candidates. Unanimously the committee recommended, among other things, that teacher education should be provided by universities. The committee also agreed that one component within teacher education be practice teaching. By the early 1970s, most of the recommendations were implemented.

The *Hall-Dennis Report*, also known as *Living and Learning on Teacher Education* was published in 1968 by the Provincial Committee’s Review of the Aims and Objectives of Education in Ontario schools. One major change that emerged from this report was a re-examination of the nature of schooling in our society (Fiorino, 1978). Following the Ontario Minister of Education’s directive, an Order-in-Council mandated the committee to study aspects
of education through consultation with educational administrators, researchers, and teachers (Fiorino, 1978). This report was another major document that affected elementary school programs and teacher training during the 1960s. “The elementary school educational policy of the Ontario Government is explicated in Education in the Primary and Junior Division (1975) and The Formative Years (1975) and these documents reflect the influence of the Hall-Dennis Report” (Fiorino, 1978, p. 150), and a focus for curriculum orientation in Ontario schools. “The Hall-Dennis Report forced educators to re-examine how children [learn] and how they ought to be taught” (Fiorino, 1978, p. 151).

The curriculum focus expressed in the Hall-Dennis Report is “the learning experience of the pupil” (Fiorino, 1978, p. 151), which was a change in perspective from the previous academic orientation to subject material. This change in perspective was intended to redefine the emphasis of the Ontario school curriculum. Also noted during this decade was a redefinition of the role of teacher: “Obviously a redefinition of the school curriculum necessitated a re-examination of the role of the teacher” (Fiorino, 1978, p. 151). One aspect of the redefined role of teacher is the focus on the learner.

The Hall-Denis Committee endorsed the MacLeod Committee’s recommendation that teacher education be moved to the universities (Fiorino, 1978). Other recommendations that both endorsed are:

- That teacher education should be a four-year program combining academic and professional studies.
- That universities should develop imaginative and innovative teacher education programs.
- That diverse paths for teacher certification are desirable.

Teacher Education in Ontario

Teaching certification in Ontario is regulated by the Ontario College of Teachers. To be recognized as valid, teacher education programs must be accredited by the College through a
mandate set by the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*. Programs are continually being reviewed by the College to ensure they meet the requirements of accreditation. All teachers who teach in Ontario’s publicly funded elementary or secondary schools must have completed a teacher education program. Once the teacher education program is completed, teachers apply to the College for a Certificate of Qualification: the license to teach in Ontario. Prospective teachers enrol in one of the teacher education programs in Ontario accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers. Ontario teacher education programs (faculties of education) offer both concurrent and consecutive Bachelor of Education programs. A concurrent teacher education program is one taken at the same time as a program leading to an undergraduate degree; a consecutive program is taken following the completion of a post-secondary degree. The research for this thesis involved a consecutive teacher education program offered at one of the university faculties of education in Ontario.

In Canada, education is the responsibility of the provincial governments; in Ontario, it is governed by the *Education Act* and the Ministry of Education. This overarching governance of education sets the duties and responsibilities of all persons involved in publicly funded education - from the Minister of Education down to school boards, school board supervisory officers, principals, teachers, parents, and students. The *Education Act* specifies that teachers are responsible for:

- preparing lesson plans and teaching classes;
- encouraging students in their studies and evaluating student work and progress;
- supervising students’ behaviour and maintaining classroom discipline;
- demonstrating good citizenship and respect for all groups of people; and
- acting as teacher-advisers for students in Grades 7- to 11, such as helping students complete their annual education plans and monitoring their school performance and progress toward their career goals. (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 3)

Teachers’ professional organizations also provide direction to licensed teachers in Ontario. Teacher Candidates become familiar with the expectations of these organizations
through the pre-service programs in faculties of education across the province, through their social and through professional relations with colleagues in the faculty and in the schools, their relations with their Associate Teachers, and through their own initiatives, readings, research, and background experiences. The knowledge and information thus gained support their practicum placements in schools in Ontario. The Ministry of Education in Ontario, the Ontario College of Teachers, and the Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF) each have some measure of control over the teaching profession in Ontario. In October 2006, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) approved an accord on initial teacher education (ITE). Its purpose is “to provide guiding principles for the preparation of new teachers” (ACDE, 2009).

The Ministry of Education mandates the school curriculum that licensed school teachers in Ontario must follow. The curriculum documents cover all grade levels in the Ontario education system; however, this thesis deals only with the elementary years, JK to Grade 8, in the Ontario school system. The role of teacher specified for the kindergarten curriculum includes the consistent use of the word should and not the word must. It may be interpreted that the word should refers to teachers aspiring to be effective in their dynamic role as teachers. This is not an exhaustive list. The Ministry of Education (2006) describes the role of kindergarten teachers as “complex and multidimensional”. “The Kindergarten program is a child-centred, developmentally appropriate, [and] integrated…” (2011, p. 1).

Teachers should use reflective practice, planned observation, and a range of assessment strategies to identify the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children in order to provide instruction that is appropriate for each child (“differentiated instruction”).

There should also be a balance between teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities.

Learning experiences should promote integrated learning:

Consultations with parents [in this document, parent(s) is used to refer to parent(s) and (guardian(s)], caregivers, resource teachers, teacher assistants, early childhood educators, and children themselves. Teachers should work with these partners to gather and share information on the strengths, needs, interests, abilities, and learning styles of the children
in the class. (2006, p. 3)

The Ontario Curriculum: Language, 2006 specifies the tasks associated with the role of the teacher as:

Developing appropriate instructional strategies.
Using appropriate methods for assessing and evaluating student learning.
Addressing individual students’ needs.
Ensuring sound learning opportunities for every student.
Providing numerous opportunities for students to develop the skills and knowledge in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing that will enable them to make meaningful connections between what they already know and what they need to know.
Providing students with frequent opportunities to practice and apply new learning, and through regular and varied assessment give them the specific feedback they need in order to further develop and refine their skills.
Assigning tasks that promote the development of higher-order thinking skills, [to] enable students to become thoughtful and effective communicators.
Encouraging students to think out loud about their own language processes, and support them in developing the language and techniques they need to assess their own learning.
Providing opportunities to relate knowledge and skills in language learning to wider contexts, both across the curriculum and in the world beyond the school.
Motivating students to learn and to become lifelong learners.

(Ontario Ministry of Education website, retrieved April, 2009)

The language used in connection with “role of teacher” is to emphasize that the role of teacher, according to these governing bodies, is comprehensive and varied. Action words that are found throughout the curriculum documents show that part of the teacher role is to encourage and motivate, as well as inform pupils.

The reference to the Education Act and the Ministry curriculum documents is to give the reader a sense of how multifaceted and complex the expectations of the teacher are. The purpose is to provide a larger framing of what it is that teachers in Ontario do as part of their role and what Student Teachers are expected to learn in order to be effective in that role. The crux of this thesis is how Teacher Candidates perceive their role during practicum, part of which is their teacher role, and how Associate Teachers perceive their role during practicum.
The Practicum Course

The practicum differs from other courses in the teacher education program: It is judged on the competence of the Teacher Candidate and the behaviour of the pupils, and on actions, words-in-action, and attitudes, supported by the report and information learned from lectures, discussions, and books. Completion is based on the interactions between two adults (the Teacher Candidate and Associate Teacher), and between one adult (the Teacher Candidate) and a group of school pupils. From the theoretical knowledge and understanding gained through their education program, the Candidates then need to derive the practical knowledge and understanding of how pupils progress as learners. They also need to observe and learn about the group of pupils they are trying to teach, a prerequisite for effectively implementing the curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Education.

Associate Teachers influence the translation of pedagogy to the classroom by how they construct pupil activity, by their expectations of the Teacher Candidates, by the opportunities they provide for pupil-Teacher Candidate interactions, as well as by the affective and intellectual tone they set within their own classrooms. According to Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987), Associate Teachers and education faculty members can deliberately work together to improve the Teacher Candidates’ pre-service experiences, so that the practicum becomes more effective and useful. Such fruitful collaboration is not, however, guaranteed (see also Beck & Kosnik, 2000). Ideally, teacher education should be based on a partnership between university faculty, Associate Teachers, and Teacher Candidates, in what Beck and Kosnik (2000) call the triad relationship in pre-service education.

Problems and Issues in Teacher Education and the Practicum

The Ministry of Education initiated a new directive for the expansion of the Teacher
Education Program across Ontario’s 13 Faculties of Education, to begin in 2014, but details of the expanded program have yet to be determined through regulation (Ministry of Education, 2012). The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) specifies the role of the Associate Teacher as follows: “Your role is a multidimensional one and encompasses the following three areas: Mentoring, Facilitating, and Evaluating” (ETFO, 2010, p. 3). ETFO also states that the Associate Teacher should provide “guidance and support” (ETFO, 2010, p. 5), and that “the best Associate Teacher-teacher candidate relationships are reciprocal in nature” (ETFO, 2010, p. 8). The support for the Associate Teacher-Teacher Candidate relationship in teacher education programs entails a more explicit focus on the “learning-focused relationship” (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. 1), “learning-focused interactions” (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. 1), and “authentic conversations” (OISE, 2013) during the practicum. That is, teacher candidates need more focused and explicit support, guidance, and discussions when they are training during their practicum.

Additionally, some faculties place strong emphasis on mentoring Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers. Teacher Candidates who may be at risk of failing the practicum may require more differentiated practice to help them succeed. Chudleigh and Gibson-Gates (2010) state “supporting Teacher Candidates who are at the earlier point of this developmental continuum offers challenges and complexities to teacher educators” (p. 101).

The mentoring relationship is gaining strength as an emerging trend in university faculties working in this research area, with some faculties becoming heavily dedicated to developing a better understanding of the Associate Teacher-teacher candidate mentoring relationship. Aderibigbe (2011) identified the results of their research on this mentoring relationship, saying their “research showed that how a collaborative mentoring relationship between teachers and Student Teachers can be enhanced is one of the key questions/issues that needs to be explored in
the next stages of the research” (p.2). The authors concluded:

Teachers acknowledge the need for on-going training for those serving as mentors or supporter teachers and they are also positive about establishing a collaborative relationship with Student Teachers in the classroom based on egalitarian principles. (Aderibigbe, 2011, p. 2)

In addition to the necessity for on-going training of Associate Teachers, the method by which Teacher Candidates are assessed and evaluated through a mentoring relationship with their Associate Teacher provides a better understanding of what is effective in their practicum program. Maphosa and Ndamba (2012) found that most mentors were “confident with the supervision and assessment of Student Teachers using their intuition and common sense…and…had not attended any workshops on mentoring” (p. 80). Additionally, their study “recommends that teachers’ colleges should train mentors on supervisory skills that promote reflection in Student Teachers” (p. 76).

Furlong and Maynard (2012) remind us that practical experience is the only way a teacher can acquire “some aspects of professional knowledge.” The practicum offers both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates opportunities to learn from each other. While the relationship between the Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate is not clearly defined, it is evident that the role of the Associate Teacher during the practicum is to support and guide the Teacher Candidate and nurture his or her growth and development in the teacher role. The strength of the mentor-mentee relationship shows the depth of the rapport between the Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate. Furlong and Maynard (2012) state that “like any form of teaching, mentoring, the authors suggest, must be built on a clear understanding of the learning processes it is intended to support” (book review). What is evident, however, is that the support given is individual and varied among Associate Teachers, and is sometimes very personal. According to Hamid, Rajuddin, and Saud (2011), a similar situation exists for learning by Teacher Candidates: “Student teachers’ ‘learning how to teach’ during teaching practice is
varied.” (Conference paper). This suggests the need for further direction and clarification on what skills and attitudes should be supported during practicum.

When the practicum course in the Faculty of Education offices is being offered, there are clear supports for both the Associate Teachers and the Teacher Candidates that extend beyond a personal support system to being informed through research initiatives and to availing of the university offices’ own successes and challenges within the teacher education program and the practicum field experiences. This ‘third party’ support system within the faculty of education is extensive and critical to the completion of the practicum for Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers.

Within the context of this study, the university office is instrumental and diligent in its efforts to provide personal supports at an individual level to candidates and Associate Teachers. The extent to which the office provides the individual service to participants varies among faculties, and a high level of individual support may appear to be a more “student-friendly” program. This is evident through the offices’ visits to schools, through their one-on-one consultations and conferences with individual participants, through group conferencing with those in the field and within the members of the university office, and through technology providing an up-to-date website with several links that are accessible. This personal level of support from the university office can relieve stress for learners in the field by ensuring that participants are not alone in the process.

The work of the University office, however, extends well beyond a personal level. University Office faculties are also involved in research agendas in varying capacities. For example, faculty may utilize their own successes and challenges within their own program to better inform themselves on how to support their Associate Teachers and teacher candidates. Chudleigh and Gibson-Gates’ (2010) work with at-risk Teacher Candidates at the Ontario
Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) served to inform their own teacher education program and field experiences, as well as data shared with other faculties. Their paper was “intended to share our own ever-evolving organizational and programmatic response…” and to “contribute to the growing body of literature addressing field experiences in the context of reform in Canadian teacher education programs” (p. 101).

Similarly, Nielsen et al.’s (2010) work with the cooperating teachers in the field found their own “operational, professional, and programmatic” (p. 860) concerns. What surfaced from their research supported their own cooperating teachers and “defined and framed the work of these cooperating teachers” (p. 260). Additionally, Faculty staff are actively exploring other research reports to better understand work outside their faculty, gaining insights into teacher education reform. Aderibigbe’s (2011) work on exploring collaborative mentoring relationships is one example, identifying further research directions for exploring collaborative mentorship relationships in teacher education programs. Inevitably, gaining insights from research work on how to further support Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates is paramount, given the value of field experiences. Acknowledging the work of the university practicum office in managing the practicum is significant to the development of effective practicum experiences. The focus of this research, however, is on the impressions of the program by Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates.

Looking at the Canadian context, Kosnik and Beck (2007) argue that many of the current problems in teacher education are due to a failure to re-think the priorities of the pre-service program. Problems and issues in teacher education have been dealt with by authors in Canada, the United States, and around the world as evidenced by the numbers of empirical studies that have been conducted. Only the problems and issues related to this study are discussed here.

For many education scholars, the challenge for school-university partnerships in pre-
service education is one of balancing the university-based program with the school-based practice in such a way as to provide opportunities for the Teacher Candidates to implement their training in pedagogical thinking (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987; Timperley, Rubie, Black, Stavert, & Taylor-Patel, 2000). Strengthening such partnerships by involving the Associate Teachers in decision-making about university program curricula might help them understand more clearly their role in the practicum. Beck et al. (2000) believe that having Associate Teachers work closely with university faculty members could improve and refine the practicum experience to ensure that candidates apply the pedagogy learned in the university program to the reality of the classroom.

The dissonance between pedagogical knowledge acquired in the university and practical knowledge from the classroom remains a significant issue for many in teacher education. Some faculties strengthen school-university relationships through contract positions, secondments, and action research projects involving school personnel and university faculty.

Beck and Kosnik (2000), among others, insist that Associate Teachers play a key role in supporting Teacher Candidates during the practicum (Cole & Sorrill, 1992). How this supportive role is conceived and played out by Associate Teachers differs, in part because of their own teaching experience, their own experience in the role of Associate Teacher, and the support they receive from university faculty (Koerner, 1992). Grimmitt and Ratzlaff (1986) conclude that the Associate Teacher is important for successes in pre-service teacher education. The responsibilities of the Associate Teacher include orientation, planning-instruction, evaluation, and the professional development of the Teacher Candidate. Grimmitt and Ratzlaff also conclude that the Associate Teacher must play an active role in the socialization of Teacher Candidates, whom they characterize as “would-be teachers” (p. 48).
Associate Teacher Roles

The Associate Teacher is a licensed, practicing teacher who has been chosen by those in charge of the university’s pre-service teacher education program to supervise the practicum of a particular Teacher Candidate. She or he is expected to support and supervise the Teacher Candidate in the practicum in the classroom. The research literature explores the gap between what is expected of Associate Teachers and their actual behaviour. Nevertheless, the literature does not clearly define the Associate Teachers’ expectations and perceptions of their role, or the expectations and perceptions held by the university teachers in charge of the pre-service program and the Teacher Candidates they supervise (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Cole & Sorrill, 1992). Few studies report on how Associate Teachers see themselves (Koerner, 1992). This thesis is intended to fill part of this gap in knowledge on – the roles of two of the three players, the Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates.

A body of academic literature has examined Teacher Candidates’ expectations of Associate Teachers (Enz & Cook, 1992; Gonzalez & Carter, 1996; Hill, 1985), but the authors do not compare these expectations with how the Associate Teachers see their role. Academic research has also suited Associate Teachers’ need for more formal training for their changing role (Cole & Sorrill, 1992; Copas, 1984; Ramanathan, 2002), but scholars use inconsistent and mutually incompatible role definitions, and draw distinctions between teacher education through university programming and teacher training in school settings (Britzman, 1988; Koerner, 1992).

Some argue that consistency of role definition will emerge only when Associate Teachers are more involved in the development of the pre-service programs and when their management responsibility for school-site practica is recognized. But there has been little investigation into how exactly this will occur, and how rapidly, and, what the restructuring of authority should involve.
The research of Murray-Harvey et al. (2000) relates the usefulness of Teacher Candidate practica to the quality of the supervising teacher – not a surprising finding since it is generally accepted that the Teacher Candidate–Associate Teacher relationship is important to the overall quality of the practicum experience. Horwood (1981) concludes that this relationship can adversely affect the learning of new aspects of teaching behaviour, but equally it can offer the opportunity for a collegial partnership in learning.

Teacher Candidates have legitimate concern for their evaluation and assessment process. The concern over Teacher Candidates’ evaluations during the practicum is echoed by Beck and Kosnik (2000) who found that Teacher Candidates reported to faculty fears about their evaluations: no feedback until the evaluation, biased evaluations, and no formalized link between feedback given and the final evaluation. Teacher Candidates seem to perceive feedback and their assessment and/or evaluation as related. A close reading of the excerpts from transcripts reveals an undertone of a hierarchy of authority associated with this aspect of the Associate Teacher’s role. The vulnerability of Teacher Candidates is clear: Ultimately, the Associate Teachers are responsible for their assigned grades. It appears that the more Teacher Candidates focus on their own assessment and evaluations, the less they focus on the pupils’ learning. This gives the impression that Associate Teachers need training in the assessment of Teacher Candidates. Ganser (2002) claims that “without clear expectations and high-quality training, cooperating teachers’ and mentors’ ability to enhance Student Teachers’ and novices’ professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions may be minimized” (p. 384).

The concerns that the Teacher Candidates expressed about their own assessment, evaluation, and progress during the practicum are genuine and are supported by the research literature. Already mentioned is the claim that “role behaviours [of Associate Teachers] are greatly influenced by the way one conceptualizes or thinks about that role” (Guyton & McIntyre,
1990, as cited in Boudreau, 1999, p. 455). Therefore, the assessment-evaluation role of the Associate Teacher can vary according to individual conceptualizations of it. Jones (2001), for example, reports on the differences between English and German mentors: “English mentors … rate assessment as one of their main responsibilities, their German counterparts ascribe minor importance to these roles … consequently, [German mentors’] attention is primarily focused on the learning process itself and on providing evaluative feedback and support” (p. 85).

Educational scholars have claimed that the practicum portion of pre-service education programs needs to be refined and re-conceptualized. Pre-service education programming has been accused of being inadequate and deficient, particularly with respect to practice teaching, by some Canadian authors (for example, Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Cole & Sorrill, 1992; Wilson & Saleh, 2000). One criticism is that there is a lack of exemplary instruction or role modeling of effective teaching practices by Associate Teachers in the classroom (Wilson & Saleh, 2000). Another is that there is a need to redefine the practicum in view of changes in the context and social conditions in which teacher education now occurs. Many Teacher Candidates discover they have theory-to-practice gaps in pedagogical knowledge in their practice teaching experiences in the classroom contexts, a situation that increases their dependence on their Associate Teacher.

Cole and Sorrill (2000) conducted a study in Ontario to investigate the role of Associate Teachers during the practicum experience; the authors make recommendations in all five areas of their research. Of interest to this research, however, are the conceptions of the role of Associate Teacher; in this area, the authors make three recommendations. First, they recommend that Associate Teachers be given the time and opportunity to define their role. Second, Associate Teachers need information about the purposes of both university programming and the practicum component, and the relationship between them. Third, expectations of both Associate Teachers
and Teacher Candidates should be defined.

Two Canadian scholars, Kosnik and Beck (2007), have recently redefined the problem in teacher education as one of setting priorities. They insist that the main emphasis must be on creating the opportunity for Teacher Candidates to come to understand the main themes of teaching and assessment, and how to modify and integrate those themes into their practice. There is agreement that the practicum portion of teacher education gives Student Teachers the opportunity to apply what they have learned about methods and theories of teaching and learning to enable them to develop a practical, personal understanding of the work of a teacher and of the school community and society in which it takes place (Cole & Sorrill, 2000; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987; Hill, 1985). The practicum offers Student Teachers opportunities to apply what they have learned academically about the teaching of pupils, and ideally, the Teacher Candidate then becomes responsible for the learning of others. She\(^1\) moves from being a student learning about pedagogy to a teacher applying knowledge of pedagogy. In addition, the Associate Teacher has the opportunity to enrich his or her own understanding of pedagogy and learn new pedagogy within a reciprocal relationship with the Teacher Candidate.

It is within the Associate Teacher-Teacher Candidate relationship that pedagogical theory is relevant within the classroom. Under one unidirectional mechanical model of theory-to-practice, Teacher Candidates only apply their learning to the school classroom and the Associate Teacher supports the process; under another model, the Associate Teacher simply demonstrates

\(^1\)Throughout this thesis the third person singular, female gender term she is used for convenience. This is a reasonable compromise to avoid the use of he/she since the majority of the elementary STs and ATs in Ontario are female and the majority of the participants in this research are female (although there are more male than female ATs).
expertise-in-action and the Teacher Candidate observes and learns from the master teacher. But instead of these, the focus of the pre-service program is to make it possible for the Teacher Candidate and Associate Teacher together, in a practical setting, to co-construct knowledge about teaching and learning for the benefit of the pupils in the classroom. In this relationship, however, the Teacher Candidate is the novice and as such, it is the Teacher Candidate who must demonstrate knowledge in practice. Nevertheless, the central task of practice teaching is to help the Teacher Candidate acquire a personal pedagogical perspective, to move from novice to practitioner, to shift their focus from their own learning to that of the pupils. The focus moves from self to others. The task requires reflection on learning in general, on one’s own experience of learning, and on the learning of those being taught. Allen and Casbergue (1997) remind us that “reflective teaching is viewed as a paramount vehicle for enhancing the development of effective teachers” (p. 741). Reflection therefore continues to be a prominent component of teacher education programs (Allen & Casbergue, 1997). Furthermore:

The practice of reflection allows and results in the prospective teachers’ progress through cognitive-development stages, the growth from novice to expert teacher, that enables them to view teaching from a more interpretive and critical perspective. (Frieberg & Waxman, 1990, as cited in Allen & Casbergue, 1997, p. 741)

The Teacher Candidate’s reflection on what has occurred (and is occurring) should facilitate their understanding of pupils and how their learning can be assured (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987; Gess-Newsome, 2001). Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) remind us that the practicum is an opportunity for Teacher Candidates to construct knowledge about teaching because it is experiential. Bell (1997) also acknowledges the experiential nature of the practicum, arguing that “experience provides the beginner with the contextual knowledge necessary to make decisions. The development of expertise is a personal and experiential journey” (Bell, 1997, p. 28).
Therefore, Teacher Candidates have the opportunity to develop through teaching a practical pedagogy in classrooms. Several other studies have corroborated the importance of the practicum in teacher education (Freeland, 1979; Grimmett & Ratzlaff, 1986; Staab, 1984; Tardif, 1985), and it remains a component in all pre-service programs.

Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1996) agree that the primary purpose of a placement should be to practice in a real-life setting to act like a teacher; it is a situation in which the Student Teacher has the opportunity “to discover what it ‘feels like’ to be in charge of the class” (p. 256). The practicum provides the Teacher Candidate with the experience of the independence of being a classroom teacher. As a policy matter, therefore, research to improve the practicum experience must be a high priority. These authors bring to this thesis the important issue of the need for agreement on the priority of the many purposes of a university-based pre-service professional program. They insist that the main overriding purpose is facilitating the student becoming a competent and confident teacher capable of teaching the pupils in the classroom.

Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) answer the question, “When does student teaching become teacher education?” as follows:

Student teaching is teacher education when intending teachers… move toward a practical understanding of the central tasks of teacher; when their dispositions and skills to extend and probe student learning are strengthened; when they learn to question what they see, believe and do; when they see the limits of justifying their decisions and actions in terms of “neat ideas” or classroom control; and when they see [the] experience as [a] beginning rather than a culminating point in their learning. (p. 272)

The central task of teaching is to focus on pupils’ learning and student achievement, yet this is a difficult task for Teacher Candidates to achieve during practicum. Kosnik and Beck (2007) insist that pupil achievement includes assessment, and that the relationship between achievement and assessment has not been given adequate attention in teacher education.

Research on pupil assessment, pupil achievement, and other expectations of teaching – in the current context of the schools – suggests that teachers in training could not possibly cover all that
is expected by the Ontario curriculum, especially when this is demanded of Teacher Candidates and first-year teachers who are only beginning to feel comfortable as teachers (Bransford & Darling-Hammond, 2005; Hagger & McIntyre, 2006, as cited in Kosnik & Beck, 2007, p. 1). As an issue in teacher education, the Associate Teacher role during the practicum in relation to the Teacher Candidate’s focus on student achievement is not clear. Rogers (1993) believes that such refining of pre-service education involves making the Associate Teacher central to the pre-service activities. It is the Associate Teacher who then translates theory to practice, supporting the Student Teacher, to make the theory-to-practice connection work in the classroom. In order to support the connection between theory and practice, Associate Teachers must not only model good teaching practice themselves, but also understand the pedagogical theory Teacher Candidates have been learning in the university program (Rogers, 1993).

Related to the issue of the prior knowledge of the Teacher Candidate, and in particular the prior knowledge of teaching, the work of Pike (1979) is useful. Pike asked Student Teachers to state their perception of “a teacher.” He identifies the shortcomings of many university teacher training programs and his research inquires into the university’s pre-service curriculum. He concludes that the programs leave the “development of the essential functions of teaching to chance, and focused the university’s training procedures on the less valued functions” (p. 67).

In their 1987 study, Lessons of Experience and Their Limitations, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann discuss the teaching practice of two Teacher Candidates. They conclude that, even though there were differences in the amount of prior classroom experience, both participants acknowledged that they still found it a challenge to take on someone else’s class particularly with respect to developing a relationship with the pupils. These novice participants found that much of their time and energy was taken up setting limits for the pupils, dealing with class management, planning instruction that took into consideration individual differences between the
pupils, and trying to make decisions-in-action. Neither felt that she had been taught how to adopt classroom dynamics in her planning before she came to the placement school, although prior experience helped clarify “what counts as a worthwhile learning activity” (p. 271) for the pupil. Nevertheless, the candidates’ university course background prior to the pre-service program – whether or not the program was university-based – might well have influenced their construction of knowledge during the practicum. As well, the school context may have been influential. That is, even with prior classroom experiences, when a teacher must perform in a new context, there can be new, unanticipated challenges.

Hedberg’s (1979) research focuses on the degree to which early field experiences enhance Student Teachers’ performance in their college courses (as cited in Lasley & Applegate, 1985, p. 221). Extending this line of inquiry, Lasley et al. (1985) found that Student Teachers who have good prior exposure to school classrooms do not perform better than those who have no such experience. Investigating this, Feiman-Nemser (1983) found that veteran teachers explain this finding by raising a caveat: The daily work of teaching is not entirely based on past knowledge and experience; it must also be informed by current, even immediate, knowledge. This knowledge is derived by coming to know the particular pupil in the specific classroom, and studying the immediate context, the situation at that point in time (p. 150). Denton (1982, as cited in Lasley & Applegate, 1985) found that Teacher Candidates’ teaching-related experience and field experience prior to entering the pre-service program would be of help to them in the program, if it induced a “meaningful set” (Denton, 1982) of understandings – that is, understandings that led them to “understand classroom dynamics and schooling contexts” (p. 222). This accords with the findings of Lasley and Applegate (1985) that Teacher Candidates begin to “assimilate information based on experience” (p. 222).

Confounding the problem of making the practice of teaching the top priority in the
curricula of university-based programs is not only the issue of the value of prior knowledge and the issue of the relationship of the on-campus learning to the Teacher Candidates’ field-based learning about teaching, but also the issue of differing expectations – those of the curriculum designers and those of the Teacher Candidates. Lortie (1975), who studied program goals and Student Teachers’ expectations, found that the programs’ courses set unrealistic goals and arouse unduly high expectations, without providing Teacher Candidates with the immediate practical know-how to be effective in a classroom (p. 155).

On the other hand, much later, Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) found that Teacher Candidates value the practice teaching part of their experience more highly than the other aspects of their program. But they also report that Teacher Candidates, “express appreciation of more theoretical aspects of teacher education, such as becoming knowledgeable in the subject matter; mastering the skills of teaching (pedagogy and didactics), [learning to be] able to handle children with diversity, [learning] to better understand their problems and being equipped to help” (p. 300). The authors conclude that Teacher Candidates accept that there is a core body of knowledge that is essential for teachers, which is best acquired in a teacher education program at an institution.

**Pedagogical Knowledge or Practical Knowledge of Associate Teachers**

Associate Teachers’ pedagogical knowledge is derived from two sources. First, formal knowledge comes from their ongoing professional development as classroom teachers and their own pre-service education. Second, experiential knowledge of the Associate Teacher comes in the classroom (van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001). The similarities and differences between the Associate Teachers’ knowledge base and that of the Teacher Candidates is relevant given that Associate Teachers support Teacher Candidates’ learning during the practicum. One similarity is
that a teacher’s practical theory of teaching is dynamic (Kettle & Sellars, 1996). As Associate Teachers gain classroom experience and engage in professional development activities, their practical knowledge and beliefs about their practice evolve. This similarity becomes important when Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates have the opportunity to co-construct knowledge during the practicum.

A second similarity between Associate Teachers’ knowledge base and that of Teacher Candidates is that for both teachers’ beliefs are included (van Driel et al., 2001), their personal beliefs and their beliefs about their own teaching practice derived from teaching experiences. One difference, however, is that Associate Teachers’ experiences in the classroom, as well as their engagement in professional development over the years they have been teaching, have either confirmed or altered their prior beliefs about teaching. While the analysis of teachers’ beliefs is not within the scope of this thesis, it is sufficient to mention here that, according to van Driel et al., “it has become clear that there is not one ‘ideal’ way to organize staff development in the context of a reform project. Rather, multiple strategies are necessary to promote changes in teachers’ knowledge and beliefs” (van Driel et al., 2001, p. 148). These authors also suggest that, “in attempts to change this knowledge, however, one should realize that the role of a teacher’s practical knowledge … is complex and multifaceted” (p. 152). Agreeing with Wallace and Louden (1992, as cited in van Driel et al., 2001), the focus, “should be on facilitating the growth of the knowledge teachers have and use” (p. 518). Van Driel et al. (2001) also state their agreement with other authors on the focus of changes in practical knowledge, “in other words, the implementation or ‘scaling up’ of a reform is ‘a process of learning rather than a process of design and engineering’” (Thompson & Zeuli, 1999, p. 371, as cited in van Driel et al., p. 148).

Two important distinctions between Associate Teachers’ pedagogical or practical knowledge base and Teacher Candidates’ knowledge base are discussed briefly. First is the
distinction in the knowledge base that incorporates classroom experience. Second is our understanding of what expertise in teaching means, as described in the literature, in order to give a benchmark for pedagogical expertise of both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates.

Although Associate Teachers’ gain experience in teaching with each year they teach the literature indicates that experience does not always result in expertise (Berliner 1986; Carter, Sabers, Cushing, Pinnerger, & Berliner, 1987). Berliner (1994) notes that experts excel mainly in their own domain and in particular contexts (schools). In this study, this means that if a teacher remains in one context (school) for a time, it is likely that she or he will develop expertise in that context. Although experience is a prerequisite for expertise (Bruer, 1993, as cited in Allen & Casbergue, 1997), one component necessary along the journey to expertise is “reflect[ion]-on-experience” (Carter et al., 1987).

The second difference between the knowledge bases of Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates is related to their growth and development of professional expertise to an expert level. While the Ontario Ministry of Education has clearly specified the role of the teacher in the elementary grades, the pivotal point at which expertise is achieved remains elusive, as evidenced by the literature on elementary education. Schempp, Tan, Manross, and Fincher (1998) claim that, “studies of the primary characteristics of teaching expertise (i.e., how teachers with varying levels of expertise think and act) are scarce” (p. 11). Similarly, Carter et al. (1987) reiterate the necessity for further studies in teacher expertise to untangle the distinction between experience and expertise. Consequently, Associate Teachers’ experience in classroom teaching does not necessarily make them expert teachers; something more is required for that, as for example, some form of \textit{reflection-on-experience} (Carter et al., 1987).

Two final points on our understanding of \textit{pedagogical} or \textit{practical knowledge}, as it applies to elementary education and this thesis, need to be made. First, there are similarities and
differences between practical knowledge, pedagogical knowledge (PK), general pedagogical knowledge (GPK), and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Second, two limitations prevented a close examination of the Associate Teachers’ pedagogical knowledge in this study.

First, there are similarities and differences among authors’ descriptions of the knowledge base for classroom teachers. Practical knowledge, also termed *craft knowledge* (Leinhardt, 1990; Shulman, 1987), includes location-specific knowledge that may be fragmented, superstitious, and inaccurate (Leinhardt, 1990). Van Driel et al. (2001) specify that practical knowledge is action-oriented knowledge, it is person- and context-bound, it is implicit or tacit knowledge, and it is integrated knowledge; teachers’ beliefs play a key role in building practical knowledge. GPK is a broader kind of knowledge that transcends contexts (Shulman, 1986). It is knowledge of pedagogy that encompasses educational purposes and goals, personal and cognitive knowledge of learners and learner characteristics, and knowledge of content beyond the particular subject taught (Shulman, 1986; van Driel et al., 2001). In other words, GPK is a knowledge base from which classroom teachers support pupils’ learning beyond the walls of the classroom. As such, GPK is therefore part of practical knowledge of teaching. It differs from PCK, which refers specifically to teaching subject matter and content knowledge. PCK is knowledge of a particular topic and includes curricular knowledge and content knowledge represented by examples, explanations, and illustrations for learner comprehension. But PCK goes beyond knowledge of subject matter to knowledge of teaching (Leinhardt, 1990; Shulman, 1986). “PCK is developed through an integrative process rooted in classroom practice implying that prospective or beginning teachers usually have little or no PCK at their disposal” (van Driel et al., 2001, p. 143). Thus, in elementary education, it is common for classroom teachers to possess a practical knowledge of teaching that encompasses GPK and PCK. Teaching expertise varies with teachers’ proficiency in practical knowledge. In addition, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993)
comment that a key difference between experts and non-experts is in how they apply their knowledge.

Second, I want to mention two limitations faced in attempting a close examination of Associate Teachers’ pedagogical knowledge. One is an inherent problem outlined in the literature with explicating craft knowledge (Leinhardt, 1990). The second is an inherent problem with studying expertise (Berliner, 1986). Leinhardt (1990) claims that the problem of explicating craft knowledge or pedagogical knowledge lies in determining whose craft knowledge sets the standard. Berliner (1986) also cites this challenge commenting, “The ... problem has to do with stipulating which knowledge systems should be studied in exploration of pedagogical expertise” (p. 8). All problems identified by these authors limit how closely Associate Teachers’ pedagogical knowledge can be examined for the purpose of this thesis. These limitations surface within the structure of the practicum and in particular are enmeshed in the Associate Teacher-Teacher Candidate relationship. For example, experienced Associate Teachers have their own practical knowledge of teaching, so, the Teacher Candidate is exposed to the craft knowledge of one Associate Teacher (Leinhardt, 1990; Shulman, 1986) in the classroom. There is also considerable variation in the level of expertise among Associate Teachers, depending on, for example, whether or not the Associate Teacher has engaged in “reflection-on-experience” (Carter et al., 1987, p. 157). Therefore, not only do the experiences of Teacher Candidates in the classroom vary considerably, but the professional growth and development of Teacher Candidates’ can either flourish or be constrained by their Associate Teachers’ knowledge base and level of expertise.

**Teacher Candidates**

The level of a Teacher Candidate’s exposure to the knowledge base (of teaching pupils’
in the classroom) is in direct proportion to the particular Associate Teacher’s growth and development as a teacher and “reflection-on-experience” (Carter et al., 1987, p. 157). And the extent to which an Associate Teacher shares knowledge with the Teacher Candidate determines whether or not the Teacher Candidate flourishes in the learning of how to teach. In addition, in some instances, collaboration and co-construction of knowledge between Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate can be realized, assuming both parties are active, willing participants.

Second, expertise is context-bound: Experts excel predominately in their own contexts (Berliner, 1994; Bullough & Bauchmann, 1985; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006). Thus, Associate Teachers’ professional growth as teachers can be either constrained by their context or nourished through in-context learning. Although other avenues of professional development for teachers are also relevant, investigation into these is beyond the scope of this thesis.

**Teacher Candidate Growth and Development in Teaching / Stages of Growth in Teaching**

To understand the teaching and learning process in the context of the classroom, it is necessary to understand the pivotal point in the Teacher Candidates’ learning; that is, when they learn to focus on the pupils’ learning in the classroom rather than on their own learning, a point that is not always easily discerned. In discussing the development of the professional teacher, some authors identify specific stages of growth and development (Bell, 1997; Berliner, 1988, 1994; Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Huberman, 1989), while others focus on a particular area of growth, such as growth in teaching as a cognitive skill, from novice to expert (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986). Schempp, Tan, Manoss, & Fincher (1998) focused on novice and competent teachers on assessing pupils’ learning difficulties. These authors also explored the conceptions of knowledge and reflective practice (Schempp, Tan, Manoss, & Fincher, 1998). Kagan (1992) groups professional growth among novice and beginning teachers together suggesting that

Of particular note to the discussion of growth in teaching and relevant to this study of learning how to teach in the practicum is the development of expertise, the reason being that growth in the Teacher Candidate’s teaching ability was often cited by participant Associate Teachers (see Chapter 6 where the question of the stages of Teacher Candidates’ development is dealt with specifically). Relevant to this discussion then, are the authors’ criteria for determining expertise (Berliner, 1986), and their operational definitions of expertise (Allen & Casbergue, 1997; Schempp, Tan, Manross, & Fincher, 1998). Berliner (1986) claims that in the elementary grades a teacher’s reputation is determined by classroom observations and consistent excellent classroom performance on standardized tests (USA). Schempp, Tan, Manross, & Fincher (1998) state that the operational definition of an expert has often been reduced to secondary characteristics, such as experience, reputation, or a recommendation; Bruer (1993, as cited in Allen and Casbergue, 1997) report that an expert “is defined as an individual who is highly skilled or knowledgeable in a given domain” (p. 743).
This is relevant because determining Associate Teacher expertise in the sample program appears to reflect these authors’ depictions of expertise. For example, Associate Teachers in the sample program were selected for their reputation in teaching and/or the Associate Teachers were recommended by the principal in the school to take on the role of Associate Teacher. What is relevant to this study is whether Associate Teachers’ knowledge and skill are adequate to support Teacher Candidates’ learning how to teach.

Schempp, Tan, Manross, and Fincher (1998) discuss Berliner’s (1988, 1994) five-stage theory of the development of expertise: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. These authors use Berliner’s stages to frame the differences between competent and novice teachers. Schempp et al. (1998) state that, “once advanced beginners can engage the students and content in the teaching-learning process, they have reached the developmental stage of competent teacher” (Schempp et al., 1998, p. 11). The significance of attention to pupils’ learning is reiterated by Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) when they answer the question, “when does student teaching become teacher education?”

“Student teaching is teacher education when intending teachers … move toward a practical understanding of the central tasks of teacher; when their dispositions and skills to extend and probe student learning are strengthened” (p. 272). Schempp, Tan, Manross, and Fincher (1998) claims that, “studies of the primary characteristics of teaching expertise (i.e., how teachers with varying levels of expertise think and act) are scarce” (p. 11). In a similar vein, Carter et al. (1987) reiterate the necessity for further studies into teacher expertise to make clear distinctions between experience and expertise. In the context of the practicum in elementary education, Associate Teachers’ experience can further compound their roles. Although the role of the teacher is set out by the Ministry of Education, Associate Teachers will inevitably vary in their own development along a continuum of expertise.
Teacher Candidates reflect on their formal learning and teaching experiences, and bring to that reflection their own beliefs about teaching. Van Driel et al. argue that “multiple strategies are necessary to promote changes in teachers’ knowledge and beliefs” (van Driel et al., 2001, p. 148). As stated previously, van Driel et al. (2001) also suggest that, “in attempts to change this knowledge, however, one should realize that the role of a teacher’s practical knowledge … is complex and multifaceted” (p. 152). Koerner (1992) and Zeichner and Liston (1987) insist that teacher candidates do reflect on what they are experiencing and compare it with what they have experienced, and that they re-learn through reflection during the period of practice. Thus, through reflection, knowledge from all sources is used to develop the neophyte teacher’s ability to teach. Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers must participate in a cycle of reflect[ion]-on-experience (Carter et al., 1987, p. 157); that is, apply the skill of reflection in order to continue to grow as teachers (Van Manen, 1991, as cited in Allen & Casbergue, 1997). Experience, therefore, is not enough for the development of expertise. As Berliner (1986) points out, experience and expertise may be used interchangeably, but they are not interchangeable.

As Teacher Candidates aim to personalize the principles of pedagogy learned through the teacher education program, their abstract ideas and principles can become contextualized during the practice teaching portion of the practicum. However, this translation of theory-to-practice does not always occur or it occurs at different rates for Teacher Candidates. Looking at growth in teaching as a cognitive skill, Frieberg & Waxman (1990, as cited in Allen & Casbergue, 1997, p. 741) suggest that, “the practice of reflection results in the progress through cognitive-development stages” (p. 741). Thus, part of the challenge for Teacher Candidates is the develop a schema or cognitive picture for teaching that joins the two worlds of their teacher education program, and creates a link between their university classroom and the school classroom. Unless Teacher Candidates develop the habit of reflection on their experiences, their perceptions about
teaching may remain oversimplified.

**Knowledge Acquisition**

The challenge for Teacher Candidates during practicum is to transfer what they have learned in their university courses to the practical application of knowledge in the classroom. This transference of knowledge is influenced by factors such as the Teacher Candidates’ background, and prior experiences. Teacher Candidates’ knowledge acquisition during practicum can be enriched by their Associate Teacher. The longer Associate Teachers teach, the further his or her practical knowledge evolves. As Teacher Candidates move through their practicum experience, their relations with their Associate Teacher remains important.

Britzman (2003) tells us that during practicum, “the [student] teacher’s work brings new and conflictive demands that well exceed the resources of her or his school biography” (p.2). This challenge for Teacher Candidates during practicum means that the construction of teacher knowledge is a complex process. The development of a teacher identity is part of this complex process. Britzman (2003) suggests a tension between knowledge and experience during practicum, and proposes the importance of the dialogical relationship between the Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate. Ideally, Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates continually communicate for the benefit of the pupils in the classroom.

Another perspective on knowledge acquisition is social constructivism. In constructivist learning, we know that learners construct their knowledge (Beck & Kosnik, 2006, p. 9). As a paradigm of complexity, these Canadian authors give a deep analysis of its structure within the ITE program. A distinct emphasis, however, is the role of the Teacher Candidate in constructing his or her own knowledge through the practicum experience. The additional challenge of responding to a diverse pupil population
in schools means that Teacher Candidates must also build knowledge on pupil populations they may likely encounter in the classroom environment. Carter (1994) suggests that “ultimately teacher educators may have to work even harder to find ways to structure the content and processes of teacher education so that students are prepared to be of service in providing educative experiences to an increasingly diverse student population” (p. 251).

The Teaching and Learning Process

To frame this thesis and to review the literature that supports conclusions drawn from the study’s data, a brief description of the teaching and learning process is relevant. Teacher Candidates engaged in the practicum portion of their teacher education program are placed in a school classroom with an Associate Teacher to enable them to develop a practical knowledge of teaching. Optimally, it is through this process that the Teacher Candidate gains familiarity with the context, the pupils, and the curriculum in the classroom. Through experience, Teacher Candidates can expand their repertoire of teaching approaches that focus on pupils’ learning. The challenge for Teacher Candidates learning how to teach is to attend to all pupils’ learning needs as well as orchestrate the social and intellectual context of the classroom. The teaching and learning process, specifically as it relates to the Teacher Candidate and the licensed teacher in their respective roles in the classroom and the pupils’ learning needs, is the focus of this thesis.

According to Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987), student teaching is teacher education when Teacher Candidates attend to pupils’ learning in the classroom. The authors also claim that “without guidance, they cannot be expected to recognize that management skills may be necessary to teach classroom groups but are certainly not sufficient for teaching content” (p. 272). The guidance during practicum is the job of the Associate Teacher. The Teacher Candidate has to learn to orchestrate the demands of classroom discipline and management with the
intellectual demands of the pupils. As well, “‘sink or swim’ induction encourages novices to stick to survival practices, whether or not such practices represent ‘best’ practice in that situation” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1013). Furthermore, Grossman (1992) comments that, “classroom management and instruction are eternally married. How teachers manage classrooms enables or constrains the possibilities of teaching, classroom discourse, and student learning” (p. 174). Grossman’s point is echoed by Liston, Whitcomb, and Borko (2006) who remark that, “context matters, and some [contexts] are better organized to support teacher learning than others” (p. 356).

In the context of the practicum, it is inevitable that Teacher Candidates become exposed to classroom contexts in which it is easier for them to attend to pupils’ learning, and contexts in which greater energy is expended on management issues. The orchestration of classroom management and instruction appears to be one measure of teacher competence and growth. However, the difficulty of the task is at least in part dependent on the particular classroom in which the Teacher Candidate is placed for the practicum.

**Teacher Candidates’ Evaluation**

Teacher Candidates are required to demonstrate competencies in the following seven broad areas of learning categories related to their initiation into the teaching profession: Assessment, Planning, and Instruction; Understanding Curriculum and the Learner; Involvement in School/Community Life; Classroom Management; Professionalism; Diversity/Equity; and Religious Education and Family Life Education (as appropriate). Each learning category has indicators that enable Associate Teachers to assess whether their Teacher Candidates are developing as expected; Associate Teachers must also assess whether Teacher Candidates need
further development, need remediation, or are at risk of failing. While all seven categories are described in this chapter, literature in this chapter supports the five learning categories discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Literature in this section sheds light on how effective Associate Teachers support and guide their Teacher Candidates during practicum; literature in this section also identifies how Associate Teachers that were perceived by Teacher Candidates as less supportive can be recognized through behaviours that do not support Teacher Candidates’ growth and development in the teacher role. It is noteworthy that the first category—Assessment, Planning, and Instruction—has been given significant attention in this literature review, one reason being the focus of this category on teacher education programs in Ontario. It is also one category that appeared highly represented in the data.

Assessment, Planning, and Instruction

Tomlinson (2001) states that “a differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquiring content, to processing or making sense of ideas, and to developing products so that each student can learn effectively” (p. 1). One of the key aspects of differentiation is that the teacher is responsive to the learning needs of the pupils. According to Tomlinson (1999, 2001), differentiation is a philosophy, not a specific methodology. This understanding has implications for what teacher dispositions and behaviours must be in order for the teacher to implement differentiation in the classroom.

A differentiated classroom is one in which the teacher responds to the unique needs of student. Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999) names content, process, and product as factors that are differentiated in a classroom. The content is what is taught. The way a learner interprets, adapts, and finds ownership is the process. The product shows the learner’s personal interpretation and what he or she knows. Differentiated instruction gives a variety of options to successfully reach targeted standards. It meets learners where they are and offers challenging, appropriate options for them in order to achieve success. (Gregory & Chapman, 2005, p. 3)

However, the evidence in the research literature suggests that teachers do not usually begin to differentiate instruction until a later stage in their development, usually after they have
have been teaching for about four years (Gould, 2004; Lidstone & Hollingsworth, 1992). The reason is that it is only at this point in the teacher’s development that teacher’s beliefs are integrated with teaching performance (Lidstone & Hollingsworth, 1992). For Teacher Candidates with less experience working with pupils, support and guidance with lesson planning, instruction, and assessment is critical for them to overcome challenges with lesson planning. In accord with the literature (Beck & Kosnik, 2000), the Associate Teacher is instrumental in determining the quality of the Teacher Candidates’ experience. As well, simple experiences yield confidence and competence. A trial-and-error approach to the implementation of a lesson plan can pose serious challenges, as in the timing of lessons. Teacher Candidates committed to reflective practice can learn from ineffective lessons, as well as from Associate Teachers helping them to “figure things out.” It has emerged that the skill of reflection helps Teacher Candidates to learn from their lesson implementations.

The research literature supports using a reflective or inquiry-oriented approach to teacher education (Han, 1995). Van Manen’s (1977) “levels of reflectivity” is relevant here to help elucidate the quality of inquiry. Van Manen identifies three levels of reflectivity: technical, professional, and critical. It is at this final stage of reflectivity, the critical, that the teacher considers the moral and ethical aspects of educational practices. Hatton and Smith (1994) claim that the nature of critical reflection includes “thinking about the effects upon others of one’s actions” (p. 45).

The challenges the Teacher Candidates face with lesson planning are also described in the literature (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987; Lasley & Applegate, 1985). Lasley and Applegate (1985) comment that:

Instructional problems for prospective teachers center on knowing how to maintain student interest during lessons, how to give clear, concise directions, how to organize instruction for large groups of students, and how to modify lesson content when students have difficulty completing assignments. The problems implicit in this factor are associated
primarily with understanding the dynamics of the teaching-learning act and with developing the skills necessary for organizing classroom instruction. (p. 224)

A reflective practice supports Teacher Candidates’ efforts to learn from their experiences. Planning while considering individual differences in the classroom can also support Teacher Candidates’ efforts to provide for all pupils’ learning needs. This adjusts Teacher Candidates’ planning in further lessons based on what was learned from the lesson. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) state that, “being in charge and having to keep 25 students occupied showed [one participant in the study] the value of setting limits and dealing with management through instructional planning that considers individual differences” (p. 271). The necessity of providing for individual differences through planning is reflected in the findings in this study, for example, relating to differentiated instruction. In one instance, the Teacher Candidate was able to differentiate instruction based on the information she received from the Associate Teacher on what the pupils were currently learning from the curriculum, as well as the long-range plan.

Once again, “the cooperating teacher [Associate Teacher] is extremely important in determining the overall quality of a field experience” (Lasley & Applegate, 1985, p. 225). Gould (2004) reminds us that:

Very few teacher preparation programs differentiate for preservice teachers. Because novices do not even know how it feels to be a learner in a differentiated classroom let alone teach in one, many teacher preparation programs fall short in helping novices adapt curriculum and instruction to address learner needs effectively. (p. 2)

According to Levin, Hammer, and Coffey (2009), “stage-based views of teacher development hold that novice teachers are unable to attend to students’ thinking until they have begun to identify themselves as teachers and mastered classroom routines” (p. 142). To design and provide lessons using a differentiated instruction approach, the Teacher Candidate needs to be able to attend to student thinking. In practice, in the first placement, the Teacher Candidate may have heard of the benefits of differentiated instruction and differentiated learning. Gould
(2004) explains the research support that novice teachers need to focus on classroom management, teacher-centred teaching, and instructional planning, not to mention the burden of the student-teaching or first-year experience, making it difficult to focus on differentiating instruction to meet student needs. (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Hollingsworth, 1989; Hollingsworth and Lidstone, 1992 [and in parentheses by author]; Tomlinson et al., 1994, as cited in Gould, 2004, p. 1).

For the Teacher Candidates who engaged in questioning the pupils, it is unknown whether or not the questioning pupils was documented in their lesson plans. Rubin (1989) states that:

Since neither student behavior nor the progress of a lesson is entirely predictable, it often is necessary to alter planned procedure, to take a different tack, or to abandon one instructional ploy in favor of another. The issue hangs on value and belief: should we encourage teachers to (a) follow prescribed steps, (b) obey the premises of “effective teaching”, (c) adhere to predetermined lesson plans, or (d) make personal determinations about what and how to teach. (p. 31)

Most likely, the questions arose during the lesson delivery based on pupils’ responses. Rubin (1989) comments that, “the use of good technique, effective organization, and sensible content are all aspects of professionalism” (p. 31). However, for the novice teacher it can be difficult to accomplish all of these things at once, especially when the Teacher Candidate must first deal with classroom management issues. Classroom management is part of the performance of teaching (Rubin, 1989).

Self-confidence is often revealed through Teacher Candidates’ initiative in the teacher role. The development of confidence seemed to be linked to the relationship with the Associate Teacher for several Teacher Candidates. This suggests that the Associate Teacher plays a significant role in the development of confidence in the Teacher Candidate development that is part of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) identifies four sources of self-efficacy information: one source, which he calls efficacy information is the mastery experience. Tschannen-Moran, Hoy,
and Hoy (1998) talk about *mastery experiences* as the most powerful source of efficacy information. Efficacy information is strengthened through mastery experiences and is a source of information as self-efficacy. Continued mastery experiences support the strength in a belief in the self.

Among the Teacher Candidate participants in this study, resilience in the face of change seems to be related to the level of self-confidence felt in the new context of a classroom and school. When it was required, Teacher Candidates understood that it was their responsibility to seek an alternative solution when their way was barred. This resilience is not unrelated to self-efficacy as described by Bandura (1997).

Kalaian and Freeman (1984) claim that “the actions of teacher educators are often grounded in the implicit assumption that self-confidence is a necessary condition for success in teaching” (p. 4). These authors state that “all students gained confidence over the course of the program” (p. 1). Also, these authors claimed that “candidates with a high level of self-confidence at program completion thought in distinctly different ways about careers in teaching than those with low self-confidence” (p. 1). Given that Associate Teachers have a significant influence on Teacher Candidates during the practicum, Teacher Candidates enter their teacher education program with varying levels of self-confidence, and Teacher Candidate are faced with new situations in their program and practica; confidence in teaching ability may be context-bound in the same way that practical knowledge is.

**Understanding Curriculum and the Pupil Learner**

When Teacher Candidates discover information about the pupils in the classroom on their own, Wilson (1977) calls this model of student teaching the *Robinson Crusoe Model*. The dominant mode of the Teacher Candidate learning about teaching is trial and error. This kind of
learning is slow because it takes the Teacher Candidates time to figure things out on their own and learn what works with pupils in the classroom without intervention from the Associate Teacher. The expectation that the Associate Teacher knows the pupils in the classroom better than the Teacher Candidate can be a barrier to the Teacher Candidate’s development of practical knowledge if the Associate Teacher either does not have such knowledge or does not share it. The Teacher Candidate can learn about the pupils in the classroom and their needs through dialogue with the Associate Teacher. But Associate Teachers who are not committed to the Teacher Candidates’ learning do not provide Teacher Candidates with information about the background of pupils in the classroom. That is, they do not support the development of the Teacher Candidate’s practical knowledge in the classroom.

According to the literature, Teacher Candidates’ being active in the practicum is consistent with the development of professional agency (Turnbull, 2004), effective teaching practices (Peters, 2008), and a practical theory of teaching (Kettle & Sellars, 1996). Learning by discovering takes time. The short duration of the placement in the school limits the Teacher Candidates’ ability to get to know the learning needs of the pupils. Each class will include pupils who are not typical of the particular grade and age level. Part of what teachers do — as outlined in the OCT standards — is to seek out appropriate ways and means to teach atypical learners. Therefore, it may be assumed that the Associate Teachers have in-depth knowledge of their own pupils and can supply the Teacher Candidate with all the information she needs. When this occurs the Teacher Candidate will be in a better position to benefit from the practice teaching experience. The experience of teaching pupils provides a valuable opportunity for Teacher Candidates to develop the skill of assessing pupils’ learning-in-action, and then seeking practical solutions to any problems that arise.

Some scholars have noted that Teacher Candidates concentrate on themselves before they
focus on the pupils’ learning (Burden, 1981, as cited in Feiman-Nemser, 1983); other scholars argue that Student Teachers do attend to pupils’ thinking (Davis, 2006; Levin, Hammer, & Coffey, 2009) as evidenced through video and field note analysis of Teacher Candidates (Levin, Hammer, & Coffey, 2009). This suggests that Teacher Candidates’ development of practical knowledge in the school classroom is not static. Kettle and Sellars (1996) explain that practical theory is dynamic and changes over time. That is, Teacher Candidates who focus on their own learning rather than that of the pupils are at one end of the continuum; Teacher Candidates who focus on pupils’ thinking are at the other end of the continuum in their overall development of practical knowledge.

**Involvement in School/Community Life**

Johnson and Hawkins (2008) comment that:

> [In] today’s educational system, every classroom will include a student with diverse needs and every teacher will be required to meet the needs of these students. This necessitates that teachers have confidence in their ability and the knowledge and skills… to meet the individual challenges that they will encounter in the present school climate. (p. 6)

In the school placement sites, Teacher Candidates can have opportunities to be involved in the school-community life that reflects both classroom cultures and school cultures. Lave and Wenger (1991, as cited in Fairbanks & Meritt, 1998), describe four apprenticeship models and, “the means by which apprentices join the community of practitioners”:

> [Lave and Wenger] suggest that those apprenticeships that support legitimate means of participation in the community of practice, which include partaking in actual practices of increasing complexity and responsibility, provide apprentices with more successful entrance into the community of practice. (p. 16)

This research appears to support Howey and Collinson’s (1995) work on collaborative cultures and the lasting effects of collaborative enculturation. Collinson (as cited in Howey & Collinson, 1995), reports “that [Teacher Candidates’] first exposure to a collaborative setting not
only served as an initial, powerful source of professional growth but also contributed to a long-term disposition for collaboration with colleagues, even when the teachers later taught in school contexts not intended to foster such cooperation” (p. 22).

The Teacher Candidates’ first exposure to the culture of the school is during orientation. This period is followed by their first two-week placement in the host school. According to Howey and Collinson’s (1995) work, this initial exposure to a collaborative school culture is an important experience for Teacher Candidates to support their initiation into the community of practice. This exposure also supports Teacher Candidates’ understanding of their teacher role in schools and school membership. The development of practical knowledge and:

constructing a professional identity entailed the give-and-take of shaping and being shaped by the circumstances of their teacher preparation, by the interplay of all of these forces. In other words, each preservice teacher was engaged in ‘an evolving form of membership’. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53, as cited in Fairbanks & Meritt, 1998, p. 16)

In terms of the OCT standards for the practicum/practical experience (see Chapter One), and what is mandated for teachers by the Ministry of Education (see Chapter Two), there is considerable variety in the experiences and access to these experiences for Student Teachers within the structural arrangements of the practicum. The OCT requires that the practical experience/practicum be fulfilled to “enable candidates to participate in settings related to each division” (Ontario College of Teachers, Memorandum, 2005). The Ministry of Education is specific when defining the role of teacher to include the following:

Consultations with parents, caregivers, resource teachers, teacher assistants, early childhood educators, and children themselves. Teachers should work with these partners to gather and share information on the strengths, needs, interests, abilities, and learning styles of the children in the class. (Ministry of Education, p. 3)

School experiences during practicum seem to enrich the Teacher Candidates’ overall practicum experience, but pupil-Teacher Candidate time together in the classroom takes priority. School experiences appear to be extra for Teacher Candidates and directly relate to their
Associate Teacher’s participation and willingness to foster the Teacher Candidate’s involvement. In short, Teacher Candidates’ “experience in schools negatively informs their perceptions of school culture” (Cherubini, 2008, p. 50).

**Classroom Management**

*Initiative* (Turnbull, 2004) appears to support risk-taking behaviour on the part of the Teacher Candidate, but, this disposition can be restricted by the Associate Teacher. Dialogue between Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate appears to be a significant contributing factor in the Teacher Candidate’s comfort in the classroom. In the absence of dialogue between the Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate, the Teacher Candidate was less likely to feel comfortable and therefore less likely to take risks.

Attending to pupils’ needs in the classroom is the goal of the effective teacher. Ministry documents emphasize that it is necessary that teachers connect the material students already know to what they are learning. Teachers need to be committed to pupils’ learning to ensure that all pupils’ needs are met.

Because teachers work with groups of students, they must consider the needs of many individuals as they orchestrate the social and intellectual sides of classroom life. Good teachers at their best moments manage both sides together, whereas novices usually cannot give them equal attention at the same time. By concentrating on the interactive side alone, however, Student Teachers may learn to manage pupils and classrooms without learning what it takes to promote learning. Teaching, in sum, requires knowledge of subject matter, persons, and pedagogy. It demands principled and strategic thinking about ends, means, and their consequences. Most important, it requires interactive skills and serious commitment to foster student learning. (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987, p. 257)

What distinguished some Teacher Candidates from others is the level of attention paid to the social context of the classroom and an understanding of the role of this dynamic in pupils’ learning. As Pike (1979) suggests, “The master teacher is responsive to the ‘immediacy’ of the classroom” (p. 66). Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) state that “what distinguishes
teaching from other helping professions is a concern with helping people learn worthwhile things in the social context of classrooms” (p. 256). Thus, to promote learning, teachers must “find ways to help students acquire understanding. Since teachers cannot observe learning directly, they must learn to detect signs of understanding or confusion, feigned interest or genuine absorption” (Dewey, 1904/1965, as cited in Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987, p. 256).

The Ministry describes one aspect of the role of teacher as “addressing individual students’ needs.” It is only through the experience of pupil-Teacher Candidate interaction that the Teacher Candidate develops the skill of assessing in the moment whether or not a pupil is understanding what has been said. It is in the moment that the Teacher Candidate must adjust her approach to meet the learning needs of the pupils.

**Professionalism**

The literature claims that Teacher Candidates’ disposition of “openness” (Turnbull, 2004, p. 19) supports professional agency. Professional agency during practicum supports the dispositions of both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. The level of activity during practicum is influenced by the particular circumstances. For example, van Driel, Beijaard, and Verloop (2001) state that one important feature of practical knowledge is that it is “action-oriented knowledge” (p. 142 [emphasis in original]). However, Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) claim that, “the level of efficacy affects the amount of effort a teacher will expend in a teaching situation and the persistence a teacher will show in the face of obstacles” (p. 213). As a result, if Teacher Candidates have a low level of self-efficacy then they are likely to be less engaged in the teaching situation in the classroom.

Teacher efficacy among pre-service teachers has been linked to the level of professional commitment (Evans & Tribble, 1996, as cited in van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001, p. 213).
As a result, Teacher Candidates with low levels of teacher efficacy may be more likely to demonstrate a lower level of professional commitment, for example. This may be a reflection of Teacher Candidates working with less supportive Associate Teachers as role models. Teacher Candidates with higher teacher efficacy during the practicum may be either influenced by their own professional commitment and or experience relationships with effective Associate Teachers. Van Driel, Beijaard, and Verloop (2001) state that practical knowledge is also “person- and context-bound” (p. 142). They claim that, “practical knowledge is affected by teachers’ concerns about their own teaching context” (p. 142). It seems evident as well that Teacher Candidates who are in placements with positive Associate Teacher role models as opposed to less supportive Associate Teacher role models are at an advantage when developing their practical knowledge about teaching.

Associate Teachers who are role models of positive teaching practices support Teacher Candidates professional commitment to teaching as well as Teacher Candidates’ practical knowledge. Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner (2002) claim that acting as a role models is “axiomatic to [Associate Teachers’] status as [Associate Teacher]” (p. 55). In one U.S. study, Copas (1984) concludes that there are 422 effective behaviours and 175 ineffective behaviours of Associate Teachers that affect Teacher Candidates. As well, the author concludes that there are 571 effective behaviours and 322 ineffective behaviours of Associate Teachers that affect children. The effective teaching behaviours are: responding behaviours, enriching behaviours, involving behaviours, structuring behaviours, enforcing behaviours, and facilitating behaviours.

Flexibility in teaching is a desirable characteristic of teachers; it enables them to be responsive to students’ learning needs. Beck and Kosnik (2000) affirm that in one study, Associate Teachers were found to have an inflexible approach to supervision requiring students to closely follow the curriculum rather than explore new topics and approaches. This tough
approach to supervision, they claim, was not well received by Teacher Candidates.

**Diversity/Equity**

The Diversity/Equity category is marked by Teacher Candidates’ respect for each other in schools, particularly in multicultural schools with their diversity of people. Teacher Candidates are also evaluated on working with students effectively and in a caring manner. The Ontario Curriculum has appropriate documents to apply to diverse groups in our Ontario schools that are infused with our respect for each other and care for all students in our publicly funded Ontario schools. This category implies that Teacher Candidates are equally evaluated on their application of respect and caring for all students as well as the use of instructional materials which may supplement the Ontario curriculum to cater to the individual needs of schools. As Fullan (2005) states “we can’t mandate what matters” (p. 22). This statement by a long-standing scholar confirms the importance of our behaviour as teachers, our behaviour in applying effective practices, and our behaviours as teachers in training. The implementation of the Ontario curriculum provides all students with a sufficient focus for learning in Ontario schools. The Ontario curriculum also provides Associate Teachers with an appropriate teaching tool to encourage respect for others.

**Religious Education and Family Life Education**

The Religious category is based on Catholic Education and warrants a direct curriculum focus for Catholic Education in Ontario which integrates prayer celebrations and gospel values. There is a direct link in the integration of the curriculum document in Catholic Education and the implementation of religious functions in the school although respect for others and caring for all
students infused into all behaviours for teachers and the training of Teacher Candidates. In this category, the Ontario curriculum provides the foundation for learning for all students.

**Differentiated Instruction and Participatory Dialogue**

Literature on differentiated instruction and participatory dialogue is reviewed to provide background on the items identified in the research questions for this study. Adult learning literature is limited in these areas, so other academic literature is referenced. The decision to use the available academic literature on differentiation and interactive dialogue to support this research is based on the applicability of elements of differentiation to all learning. The content, process, and product of learning not only support the learning of pupils in a classroom, but these areas also support the education of Teacher Candidates. It is noted that there is a relationship between interactive dialogue and differentiation as they are presented in this thesis. That is, when Associate Teachers were corresponding with their Teacher Candidates, the Associate Teachers were also better understanding how to attend to their Teacher Candidates’ needs and subsequently responded to those needs. The dialogue resulted in teaching practices that tailored to the individual needs of the Teacher Candidate.

**Participatory Dialogue**

In the context of this study, dialogue refers to the “learning-focused interactions” (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. 1) between the Associate Teacher and the Teacher Candidate within the context of the school and classroom. Additionally, the “authentic conversations” (Website, OISE, 2013) are those conversations which are not scripted between the Associate Teacher and the Teacher Candidate
and take place within the context of the classroom and school.

Associate Teachers use ongoing, focused dialogue with their Teacher Candidates to support their development and growth in the teacher role. These “learning-focused interactions” (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. 1) or “authentic conversations” (Website, OISE, 2013) are instrumental to the growth and development of the Teacher Candidate in the teacher role. What is noticeable, however, is that the focused conversations are not predetermined or scripted. The conversations involve aspects of the role of the teacher that occurred in the context of the school/classroom at any particular moment in time during the practicum. For example, Teacher Candidates’ interactions with pupils often became the topic of the dialogue, and the on-going acquiring of professional knowledge was specific to the Associate Teacher, the Teacher Candidate’s rapport, the Teacher Candidate’s fit with the Ontario curriculum expectations to the learning needs of the pupils, the Associate Teachers’ focus for their Teacher Candidates with at-risk pupils in the classroom, or their asking specific questions related to the lesson/integrated unit or classroom management strategies. These are a few examples of the factors affecting interactive dialogue between the Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. In reality, these examples of specific dialogue cannot be predetermined, giving relevance to how conversations are ‘authentic’. In Nielsen et al.’s (2010) work with the Cooperating Teacher’s role in their own teacher education program, these authors found “improvisation as the key ingredient for teacher learning” (Nielsen et al., 2010, p. 837). Their current work with cooperating teachers was informed by their previous study in British Columbia, Canada. They identified that “teachers called for a more substantive and sustained dialogue for their work with Student Teachers.” Given that most conversations occur in the context on the school and in the classroom, and are more spontaneous, it is challenging to encapsulate all the details of the Associate Teacher-Teacher Candidate discussions that contributed to the ideal completion of the practicum.
What is more evident is that Associate Teachers adapt their dialogue based on the needs of the Teacher Candidate. Additionally, Nielsen et al. (2010) explain that, “as teachers considered the learning path and background knowledge of their teacher candidates, they were drawn to consider their own knowledge and assumptions about teaching and learning to teach” (p. 861). As a result, authentic dialogue with their Teacher Candidates, exposing their own shortfalls, may not always be acceptable to Associate Teachers, and could even have less positive outcomes for the Teacher Candidate.

Aderibige (2011) concluded that the teachers in the study serving as mentors or supporter teachers “were positive about establishing a collaborative relationship with Student Teachers in the classroom based on egalitarian principles”. (p. 2). The attitude of being positive and the willingness to collaborate with the Teacher Candidate is an important attribute for the Associate Teacher. Maphosa and Ndamba (2012) identified that Associate Teachers in their study evaluated their Teacher Candidates using “intuition and common sense” (p. 80). Associate Teachers used their own insights, instinct, and good judgment to evaluate their Teacher Candidates in their study; therefore it is apparent that without such a disposition towards authentic dialogue, Associate Teachers can offer a difficult and challenging experience for their Teacher Candidates during practicum.

Tang and Chow (2006) claimed that the Associate Teachers’ feedback is critical to Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. Tang and Chow (2006) state that “communicating quality feedback is a key element in assessment processes that enhance learning” (p. 5). They also claim that an important function of feedback is to direct future performance. Tang (2002, as cited in Tang & Chow, 2006) points out that; “immediate classroom practice rather than wider educational/theoretical issues is the primary concern in post-observation conferences” (p. 3). Sadler (1989) reminds us that, “feedback is a key element
in formative assessment, and is usually defined in terms of information about how successfully something has been or is being done” (p. 120). Kulik and Kulik (1988) discuss the benefits of immediate feedback. They report that applied studies carried out in real classroom settings (as opposed to experimental studies carried out in laboratories) provide evidence that immediate feedback is preferable to delayed. This finding also supports the contention that whether the recipient of the feedback is a pupil in a classroom or a Teacher Candidate learning how to teach, learners benefit from immediate feedback. On the other hand, delayed feedback also has value. Hattie and Timperley (2007) report that difficult items require a longer time to process and as such in these cases delayed feedback is preferred. Part of effective teaching, therefore, is determining the optimal timing of feedback.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) reported that the value of written comments on improving performance has been investigated by several authors. For example, there is significant evidence that written “comments are more effective than grades” (Black & William, 1998; Crooks, 1988, as cited in Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 92). The analogy here for Teacher Candidates’ learning, is that the Associate Teacher feedback to Teacher Candidate can have more of an impact on the Teacher Candidates’ learning than just providing them with a satisfactory/unsatisfactory on the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation. Also, grades alone can increase involvement, but don’t affect performance (Butler, 1987, as cited in Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 92). In other words, in order for Associate Teachers to have impact on the teaching performance of Teacher Candidates in the classroom, the use of feedback for Teacher Candidates’ learning how to teach seems significant.

Differentiated Instruction

The definition of differentiated instruction is rooted in Tomlinson’s (2001, 2003) belief that teachers need to adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of the students, rather
than have students comply with instructional practices. Her belief strongly supports the philosophy that there is “variability among any group of learners” (Corley, 2005). There are three components to differentiated instruction that are relevant to this thesis that are part of the definition for differentiated practices: to plan strategically to meet the needs of students, to respond to the diverse learning needs of students, and to attend to content, process, and product of learning.

First, Corley’s (2005) definition of differentiated instruction is applicable. “Differentiated instruction is an approach that enables teachers to plan strategically to meet the needs of every student [Teacher Candidate]”. Second, “differentiated instruction is the teacher’s response to the diverse learning needs of his or her students [Teacher Candidates]” (Corley, 2005). Third, differentiated instruction is an approach that is responsive to students’ [Teacher Candidates’] readiness levels (Vygotsky, 1986 as cited in Corley, 2005), their interests (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and their learning profiles” (Sternberg et al., 1998 as cited in Corley, 2005).

Therefore, differentiated practices are those practices that “respond to the learner characteristics of readiness, interest, and learning profile, teachers can differentiate, or modify, learning experiences in the three areas of content, process, and product” (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003; Corley, 2005).

In Teacher Education Programs in Ontario, there is a lack of literature on how Associate Teachers differentiate the learning for their Teacher Candidates in the classroom. However, for Associate Teachers, it is also possible that Associate Teachers differentiate for their Teacher Candidates’ learning needs. Associate Teachers differentiate the learning of their Teacher Candidates’ lesson planning, for example, by reducing size of lessons, providing visual aids to support the delivery of lessons, and ensuring that lessons are achievable for their pupils and age-appropriate. Teacher Candidates may have individual interests in teaching that they would like to
explore during their practicum, or have skill-sets which afford them readiness to manage the classroom. Differentiation supports these learning needs of Teacher Candidates in the teacher role just as pupils are supported in the classroom by teachers.

Planning for differentiated instruction in the classroom for pupils offers pupils diverse ways to succeed (Gregory & Chapman, 2007). Dialogue is an important aspect of planning in the differentiated classroom. Learning becomes less overwhelming for pupils when teachers seek to understand what pupils know and bridge the gap to what they need to learn. Through dialogue or questioning techniques, teachers gain valuable information about the learning trajectory of pupils. In similar ways, Teacher Candidates also have a learning trajectory when they enter the classroom environment and try to make sense of what it means to be a teacher. In a differentiated classroom, the teacher is the organizer of learning opportunities (Tomlinson, 2001). Associate Teachers can support their Teacher Candidates’ learning in the classroom through dialogue with the adult learner to better understand the Teacher Candidates’ individual interests, and readiness in the classroom.

The Associate Teacher provides differentiated practices to their Teacher Candidate in an effort to support their individual learning trajectory during practicum. The differentiated practices are based on the learning categories of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation in the practicum course. The Associate Teacher implements differentiated practices when the Associate Teacher is able to understand the learning needs of their Teacher Candidates’ and provide their needed opportunity for practice, support and guidance so the Teacher Candidates can excel in learning in the teacher role.

Associate Teachers vary in their support, guidance, and opportunity for Teacher Candidates to practice the teacher role with the pupils. -Hamid, Rajuddin, and Saud’s (2011) findings
show that the way student teachers “learn how to teach” were varied. Their sources of learning were mainly from their university and school supervisors. Their prior experiences as schoolchildren also contributed to their learning process besides informal discourse with their peers and their pupils”. (Conference paper)

The authors also state that

the gain in knowledge and mastering of teaching skill amongst student teachers could be classified into two approaches or methods. The first one is based on past
experiences. The second one is a direct teaching and guidance from people in the learning
environment that happens through social interaction”. (Hamid, Rajuddin, and Saud, Conference paper)

The direct teaching and guidance from the Associate Teacher is based on the skill level of the
Teacher Candidate. The importance of the past experience of student teachers is echoed by
Nielsen et al (2010). These authors say that “as teachers considered the learning path and
background knowledge of their teacher candidates they were drawn to consider their own
knowledge and assumptions about teaching and learning to teach” (p. 861).

According to Knowles et al. (1998), “Emerging theories of adult learning…are based on
the unique characteristics of adults as learners and result in differentiated educational practices”
(1998, abstract). By identifying what is being differentiated, we get a glimpse of what the role of
teacher means from this collective group of Teacher Candidates, albeit not necessarily
individually in this study. In reality, Teacher Candidates were only “lucky” to experience
aspects of the role of teacher identified in this thesis. For example, in the category Assessment,
Planning, and Instruction, Teacher Candidates who were fortunate to have experienced choice in
what they taught in the classroom as part of their Associated Teachers’ differentiated practice
with them. Similarly, those Teacher Candidates who did not have a choice in what they taught
did not experience a standard part of teaching practice in the role of teacher.

The Role of Power in the Relationship Between the Associate Teacher and Teacher
Candidate

The relationship between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates during practicum is
a dynamic one. McNay (2003) acknowledges that “awareness that issues of power and authority
are part of the context” (p. 80) in the dynamic relationship in the practicum in teacher education
is an important step for initiating further dialogue on this topic in teacher education programs.
However, Anderson (2007) notes that little information has been published on “the role of power
in the socialization of new teachers” (p. 308).

This brief section acknowledges that there can be an abuse of power by the Associate Teacher toward the Teacher Candidate during the practicum (Badali, 1994; McNay, 2003). The acknowledgement of abuse of power is important because of the significance of the practicum experience to the Teacher Candidate (McNay, 2003, p. 72). Additionally, McNay (2003) writes about studies done by others on the need to redefine this dynamic power relationship between the Associate Teacher and the Teacher Candidate.

The multiple dimensions of power and authority in the Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate relationship reveal various aspects of this dynamic relationship as reported by Anderson (2007), who states that

some of the student teachers in this study changed to become more like their cooperating teachers because they were afraid not to, some changed because they felt that they were supposed to, and some changed because they felt they had to in order to become members of the profession. Most student teachers, however, changed because they wanted to learn from their cooperating teachers and respected the capacity their cooperating teachers held to teach them. As such, the cooperating teachers in this study held expert power (French & Raven, 1960 as cited in Anderson, 2007) and had the potential "to translate their expertise and knowledge into language that is accessible to learners". (Pratt, 2005, p. 214 as cited in Anderson, 2007, p. 320)

Evidently, there are numerous dimensions to the concept of power and authority within the dynamic relationship between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. While this thesis acknowledges that the role of power and authority likely has some relevance in this dynamic relationship, it does not explore this topic. It is sufficient to state here that issues of power and authority may exist during practicum and may have relevance on a continuum of experience, but the thesis does not discuss the topic in detail.

**Summary of Chapter 2**

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to this thesis. First, I presented background
knowledge on the general milieu for the teaching profession to give a general context for this thesis. From Chapter 2, we learned that the teaching and learning experience addressed in this thesis is through the practicum course; it is one course in the teacher education programs in Ontario’s Faculties of Educations. With the evolution of practice teaching, Teacher Candidates now are certified to teach in Ontario schools through the OCT. One of the problems and issues in Teacher Education and the Practicum remains with aspects of the relationship between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. We know that Associate Teachers play a key role in supporting their Teacher Candidates during practicum, but more importantly, Associate Teachers appear to control the quality of the practicum experience. This thesis addresses part of the gap with the quality of this relationship.

Second, I presented more detailed background information related to the relationship between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates, and how Associate Teachers support their Teacher Candidates’ learning how to teach during the practicum. Less obvious are the transparencies of the quality relationships between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates, a topic this thesis seeks to expose to some degree. The literature supports the seven learning categories on the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation during practicum. Next, the conceptual framework for this study shows how these seven learning categories are proposed for this study, and how the two conclusions for the study are represented in the center.

**The Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for this study. Each circle represents one of the seven categories on the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation form. The circle represents the intricacies of the experiences themselves incorporating reflection, learning, re-trying whether or not Teacher Candidates had Associate Teacher support or not. The experience is a continuous cycle and I have chosen to represent this cycle as a circle. The categories overlap because the
experiences of the Teacher Candidates during their practicum overlapped these categories. As they told their stories, their experiences represented random experiences in no particular order or structure. Similarly, for the Associate Teachers’ evaluation of the Teacher Candidates, their evaluations based on the seven learning categories seemed random. I have represented the categories in my conceptual framework as I have envisioned the Teacher Candidates experiencing them and the Associate Teachers evaluating their attainment. Since Associate Teachers also have the opportunity to learn from their Teacher Candidates, the circles also represent their opportunity for learning from their Teacher Candidates. All categories are included here to show that they had equal opportunity to be represented in the data. It is important to mention that, as a process, dialogue supports differentiation, so these two variables are related.

This is a circumstantial approach to my data analysis. The use of semi-structured interview questions and open-ended questions were two ways that I ensured maximum representation of all categories. The arrows in the centre of the framework represent only the Associate Teachers’ support for their Teacher Candidates. While the learning categories are represented by circles, the arrows represent the Associate Teachers’ direction for Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. The arrows are meant to capture a cyclical process of guidance across categories where the point of entry for support in any one category is open-ended and is based on what both the Associate Teacher brings to the experience as well as the Teacher Candidate.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework: The use of Dialogue and Differentiated Instruction to accomplish the Seven Categories of the Teacher Candidate Learning.
Dialogue & Differentiated Support

- Religious Ed. & Family Life Education
- Diversity and Equity
- Professionalism
- Involvement in School/Community Life
- Assessment, Planning & Instruction
- Classroom Management
- Understanding Curriculum & the Learner

Diversity and Equity

Professionalism

Involvement in School/Community Life

Assessment, Planning & Instruction

Classroom Management

Understanding Curriculum & the Learner
Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

This chapter describes the methods of the study. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews of two groups (a total of 16 Teacher Candidates; 11 Associate Teachers). Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates were unrelated to each other; that is, they were not paired in this research, so Associate Teacher comments do not refer to these particular Teacher Candidates, nor do Teacher Candidate comments refer to these particular Associate Teachers. The Associate Teachers were involved with the same pre-service program as the Teacher Candidates, and had supervised Teacher Candidates during their practicum. This study uses methods common to qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2007) elaborates on common characteristics of qualitative research: Researcher as key instrument where the data are collected through the interviewing of participants using a tool for collection, such as a protocol; and Participants’ meanings: What is important is the meaning that participants hold from their own experiences. Another Common characteristic mentioned by Creswell is Interpretive Inquiry where the researcher makes an interpretation on the meaning that participants report.

I began with a lengthy and detailed analysis of participants’ comments on a wide range of experiences for both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates during the practicum, including those related to the relationship between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. For example: Associate Teachers’ lack of expert knowledge and therefore lack of support for their Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role; issues related to Teacher Candidates and pupils in the classroom (such as lack of Teacher Candidate confidence to deliver the curriculum expectations to pupils, and therefore needing Associate Teacher support); and general issues with the program itself, such as the length of time for the practicum. This analysis allowed me to focus the presentation of the data on the two items. In the larger study, data on all seven learning categories were sought, but data on all seven learning categories were not evident. The data on
only four of the learning categories proved to be most rich and insightful, so I limit the
discussion to these.

The populations of Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates varied in this study even
though the Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates were in the same pre-service program.
Teacher Candidates’ were selected among approximately 700 Elementary Teacher Candidates.
The number of Associate Teachers ranged in the schools from two to ten, with a total of
approximately 900.

Qualitative Research Design

The assumptions of qualitative research are used to inform what decisions were made in
the data collection and the interpretation of the participants’ perception of their experiences
during practicum. In the first assumption about qualitative research, I used a protocol to ensure
the constancy of the interview process. This structure of the protocol was necessary to have some
rigidity of interview questions to compare across participants, yet the protocol also had flexibility
to allow participants’ to elaborate on their individual experiences. A more rigid protocol without
the flexibility to allow participants to personalize their answers to interview questions would
limit their authentic voices.

Broadly, researchers study the world through frameworks that provide their overarching
perspective or worldview on how they see the world. The origin of qualitative research is not
clearly defined with roots in an historical context. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe the past
overlapping contexts through a number of traditions: “The traditional (1900-1950), the modernist
the postmodern (1990-1995), post experimental inquiry (1995-2000), the methodologically
contested present (2000-2010), and the future (2010- present)” (p. 3). We know that qualitative
research has a complexity that has historical roots. What is evident in the dynamic nature of qualitative research is the more recent application to education.

Qualitative research makes assumptions about how researchers inquire into the meaning of human issues and problems. The description of a qualitative design and subsequent approach to inquiry used for this study serves to encapsulate an appropriate best fit for understanding the meaning of the practicum experiences of both Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers.

There are assumptions and common characteristics of qualitative research that are relevant when studying the perceptions that participants have about their experiences during the practicum. Creswell (2007) describes common characteristics of qualitative research that are supported by other researchers. Variations in the common characteristics are relevant. In qualitative research the researcher is the key instrument. Data are collected through interviewing participants, as opposed to through observation, using an instrument for collection, such as a protocol. The protocol is used for every participant and allows for flexibility in the interviewing process. The protocol is also unique to the study as opposed to one being used by another researcher, or a questionnaire as in many quantitative studies. Another common characteristic of qualitative research applicable to this inquiry is participants’ meanings. It is the meaning that participants hold from their own experiences related to the practicum as opposed to the researcher’s meaning imposed on the participants. Careful attention to this distinction is demonstrated throughout the qualitative research process.

Another common characteristic of qualitative research applied to this research is that it is an interpretive inquiry: the researcher makes an interpretation of the meanings that emerge from the participants’ reports. The objectivity of the study can be maintained, even though the challenge rests with the inseparability of the researcher’s interpretations of the participants’ meanings and his or her own background. Not all common characteristics mentioned are used for
every qualitative study – as is evident by the number of researchers that use some but not others, depending on the nature of the study. In a dynamic definition of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) tailored aspects of the common characteristics applied to the qualitative design.

Creswell (2007) states that “it is appropriate to use qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored. The exploration is required, in turn, because of a need to study a group or population…” (p. 39). He also suggests that “qualitative research keeps good company with the most rigorous quantitative research, and it should not be viewed as an easy substitute for a “statistical” or quantitative study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 41). Additionally, “qualitative inquiry requires a strong commitment to the problem” (p. 41), and requests that the researcher “write long passages, because the evidence must substantiate claims and the writer needs to show multiple perspectives. The incorporation of quotes to provide participants’ perspectives also lengthens the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 41).

Common to qualitative research is researcher as key instrument, whereby the researcher collects data through interviewing participants, observing behaviour, or examining documents, as discussed by Creswell (2007). In this study, interviewing participants was the preferred method of data collection. The decision to use a semi-structured interview protocol was intentional in order to capture the essence of the participant words. Freestone (2012) writes that “semi-structured interviews enable the deep exploration of experiences” (p.4). Semi-structured interviews give participants plenty of opportunity to report their perceptions of their experiences while simultaneously answering pertinent questions. One goal is to elicit a benchmark of responses about the phenomenon, and for this reason, the benefit of semi-structure interviewing outweighed the pitfalls – for example, in the wording of the questions. Careful attention was given to avoid errors in questioning, such as not asking questions if the participant is confused about responding and not asking double barrelled questions. In this type of interview protocol,
the “interviewee has freedom in responses but interviewer retains control” (Drever 1995 as cited in Freestone, 2012, p. 4)

The Approval Timeline for Research

I received ethical approval for this research from the University, from the pre-service program, and from the School Board.

The Sample Pre-Service Program Description

The sample program’s orientation is one day per week (usually the same day) for five consecutive weeks. The practicum consists of two four-week periods, one in the fall, and the other in the spring. Teacher Candidates are assessed on their practice teaching performance at mid-point informally and more formally in a final report prepared by the Associate Teacher and submitted to the faculty of education where it is reviewed and the pass/fail judgement is made. Failing students may be put on probation and have a further placement, usually with a different Associate Teacher, and the initial assessment is reviewed. This pre-service program was selected for convenience.

Rationale for Quotations

In addition to the objectivity of choosing representative excerpts from transcripts, the following characteristics were also further noted. The selection of quotations is based on which quotations best represent the answer to the research question and those quotations that provided insights into the hypothesis about the potential relationship between differentiated practices, attitudes, and dialogue. Quotations were also selected based on how they compared with differentiated practices, attitudes, and dialogue.

Recruitment Procedure: Teacher Candidates

The random selection of Teacher Candidates began following the approval process. The
total population of Teacher Candidates from which I drew my sample included 700 Student Teachers. Random lists were generated by the registrar’s office two times due to the low response rate in the first distribution of invitation packages. The pre-service department could not release a set of randomly chosen Teacher Candidate names due to the Freedom of Information Act. In total, 208 invitation packages were sent out with a response total of 16. There were five responses from the first distribution of 48 packages and 11 from 160 invitation packages sent in the second distribution. Table 1 shows this distribution of packages.

I devised an identifying system in the form of a template for the registrar’s office personnel to use to keep track of the Teacher Candidate names for each of the eight options (Appendix D). I labelled each invitation package with an individual code prior to giving them to the registrar’s office. I divided the packages into options to be given to the coordinators of each of the eight options for distribution. Once the coded packages were given to the registrar’s office, personnel in the office could put the names of the Teacher Candidates on the packages. I was not privy to the names of the Teacher Candidates and from this point I did not have further access to the packages. The packages were given to the coordinators for distribution by the registrar’s office who kept the master list. This list matches the Teacher Candidate name to the code on the package. This was done so that the packages could be tracked for follow-up while maintaining the anonymity of the potential participants. The registrar’s office gave the packages to the coordinators who then distributed them to the Teacher Candidates when they met at a scheduled university meeting at the end of May. The ethical approval for Teacher Candidate participation was also granted by the pre-service department at the end of May 2008 so there was approximately one day between the approval time and the distribution of packages. Since not all Teacher Candidates attended that meeting a variant distribution system had to be adopted for the absentees. Therefore, early in June the registrar’s office mailed the undelivered packages to the
remaining names on their list.

As a further follow-up, in mid-June a message was posted on the coordinators’ conference websites to try to increase the number of participants from five to the desired level of 16 (Table 1). For this follow-up via the conference website, the Teacher Candidates were asked to respond by a specific date and could reply to the invitation or ask for further information by emailing me directly. The conference website remained active throughout the data collection period.

Once a volunteer candidate responded, communication continued by email; however, a problem arose – many of the potential Teacher Candidate participants were going to lose access to the university email following convocation. But some Teacher Candidates provided alternate email addresses, and the conference website offered an avenue of communication for others.

By July, the decision was made to adopt the “snowball” sampling. Snowball sampling started when two volunteers from the original distribution who were being interviewed face-to-face, offered to speak to Teacher Candidate colleagues about participating in the research. By late July, 16 volunteers had been obtained. It is not known whether some of the questionnaire-only respondents (in the original thesis to this study) were Teacher Candidates who had been recruited through the snowball effort, or indeed, whether all of the last interviewees had been recruited by snowball sampling. Some of the later participants could well have been replying late to the first or second distribution of invitation packages.

**Recruitment Procedure: Associate Teachers**

The distribution of invitation packages commenced following approval from the co-operating Board of Education. This Board of Education was selected because of its local location to the pre-service program at the University. It was determined that with only the one
participating board that there would be enough Associate Teachers to satisfy the requirements for a legitimate study and for this thesis. Optimally, it was intended that only one Associate Teacher per school participate. Later, in the recruitment process with a low response rate, snowball sampling was used, resulting in two to three Associate Teachers participating in one school. In total, there were 98 invitation packages sent out with a response rate of 11 Associate Teachers. Associate Teachers were associated with one Board of Education so approval was sought for this board. The size of the Associate Teacher population was estimated based on the number of participating schools, but an exact number could not be determined by the university.

This was completed by early June 2008. However, the registrar’s office could not provide a random list of Associate Teacher names, so an alternative selection and distribution process had to be devised. The pre-service office sent out pre-coded packages to the appropriate schools with the names of Associate Teachers affixed to the envelopes. This method of distribution is not ideal, but steps were taken to ensure that the distribution sample was random. The process was as follows: pre-grouped invitation packages, sorted by option and coded, were given to the pre-service office. Coding was then affixed to all envelopes so that tracking for follow-up was possible. The coordinators submitted the names and schools of potential participants. The information was recorded on a master list with codes grouped by option. The linking master list of names was held in the pre-service office. Each coordinator then randomly gave out packages to their option’s Associate Teachers, one Associate Teacher per school.

In case further follow-up with Associate Teachers should prove to be necessary, a list of partner schools – with two to 10 Associate Teachers each – was obtained from the university. Before sending out further Associate Teacher packages, flyers were distributed (via regular mail) to all Associate Teachers of the sample pre-service program (comparable to the all-call for Teacher Candidates via the internet), inviting them to participate in the study. A copy of the flyer
is included in the Appendix. One attempt was made to recruit by flyer, then a follow-up
distribution of invitation packages was made. When, by the end of August 2008, only a few
Associate Teachers had volunteered to be interviewed, snowball sampling was adopted. The
search for Associate Teacher volunteers ended when the eleventh volunteer was secured in
October. Generally the Associate Teacher snowball sampling resulted in a volunteer who taught
in the same school as the recruiting Associate Teacher. By October, when teachers were
officially back in the schools, there was a total of 11 Associate Teacher volunteers for interviews
at which point it was decided to cease further recruitment. Eleven Associate Teachers would be
sufficient to provide the range of evidence desired to address the research questions.

**Response Rate**

Table 1 shows the interview response rates for both groups of potential participants. The
response rate was lower than expected given the number of potential Teacher Candidates as
participants in the program and the number of participating Associate Teachers in schools.
Overall the interview response rate for Teacher Candidates was 7.7% (16 from 208 invitation
packages: 48 first distribution + 160 second distribution mail-out) and for Associate Teachers
11% (11 from 99 packages).

**Table 1**

**Interview Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Distribution 1</th>
<th>Distribution 2</th>
<th>Total cumulative response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(June 2008)</td>
<td>(summer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired</td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Desired</td>
<td>Actual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCs</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATs</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**The Research Instrument**

An interview schedule is attached to this thesis as an appendix B. There are two interview protocols, one for Teacher Candidates and one for Associate Teachers. The interview protocols have parallel questions, but are specific to either Teacher Candidates or Associate Teachers in relation to the practicum experience. The interview schedule was used in a pilot study at the design stage and vetted, for prima facie validity and clarity, by three experienced teachers. Suggestions they made resulted in modifications of the protocol before use in the study. The three teachers were an experienced special education teacher and two secondary school teachers. None is employed by the participating board. One served as Associate Teacher for another Ontario board. The interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended. Participants were prompted to clarify their answers and expand on them.

During the interviews probing questions were used to encourage participants to be specific, give examples, and expand on their answers by sharing their thoughts and elaborating on their ideas (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Most interviews were face-to-face; five (three Teacher Candidates, two Associate Teachers) were by telephone. All were recorded with the participant’s written permission and later transcribed. Transcripts were then member-checked for accuracy and, where necessary, corrected. When reporting interviewees’ stories and replies to specific questions, care was taken to preserve the intent of the respondent. However, transcribed recorded speech is replete with “ums” and “ehs” and “ands,” with omitted nouns or verbs, and series of phrases rather than sentences. Sometimes a word was added or removed for clarity. Where this editing occurs deletions are indicated by an ellipsis and word insertions are surrounded by the customary square brackets.

Italics are used in the excerpts from transcripts to represent emphasis by the interviewee.
The lengthy interviews elicited many enthusiastic responses. When recalling their thoughts and explaining their opinions, interviewees’ voices became very expressive, changing both in pace and tone. Italicizing parts of excerpts from transcripts, where applicable, is an attempt to illustrate the spirit behind the words for the reader.

**Data Analysis: Interview**

A technique commonly used to organize qualitative information for analysis and interpretation involves a continuous process of interviewing, transcribing, reading, re-reading, and reflecting on the transcripts as they are being produced and after they are all assembled. This process ensured that the analyzed data are directed to answering the research questions of the thesis. So, as the information emerged from the interview-transcription-reading-reflection process it was categorized by group (in this case Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers) and theme, and then re-analyzed to note differences and similarities by theme both between and within groups, as, for example, when both groups reported on the lesson planning process for the pupils. For Associate Teachers, they reported on how they supported lesson planning of their Teacher Candidates. For Teacher Candidates, they reported on their lesson planning practices.

The replies to probing questions represent specific examples from the experiences of the respondents and helped me to establish the eight themes for the original thesis. Subsequent revisions to the original thesis meant that I reviewed the eight themes again to reveal the two findings reported for the study. Transcripts were originally colour-coded (labelled) by category or theme in order to facilitate decisions about what should be quoted in the thesis. Transcripts were revisited in this revised version of the thesis to ensure that all data were captured.

**Participant Coding in Excerpts from Transcripts and Anonymity**
To ensure anonymity the words of every participant are identified only by code. The code also indicates whether the Teacher Candidate (or Associate Teacher) was interviewed or only responded to the questionnaire. The code is used as if it were a name. An example: the code [ST7a-2] indicates a Teacher Candidate, the 7 represents the project package number counting from 1, the a signifies the second round distribution of packages to Teacher Candidates, and the 2 represents the pre-service program option number. The option number is attached to the option name, but the option is not identified in order to preserve anonymity. [AT2b-1] stands for an Associate Teacher, the 2 represents number two package, the b represents the second distribution and snowball sampling (a would signal second distribution only), and the 1 represents the option number. There are five options associated with the Board of Education in this study.

Choosing Representative Excerpts from Transcripts

Once the themes were determined, representative (and a few uniquely different) examples of relevant remarks were chosen from the transcripts. This process applied to the revisions to the original thesis as well; the following steps were followed:

- A very large number of passages were marked on the grounds that they were quotable, that is that the nuances of participant’s attachment to the experience were evident through the tone of voice, indicating enthusiasm, expectation, or disappointment.
- It was determined that the marked excerpts from transcripts represent a wide range of views or perceptions and descriptions of experiences. The chosen passages were further marked to indicate their suitability as illustrations of the participants’ perceptions of practicum experiences that could be linked with elements of the role of teacher described in the literature. Links were also sought to the role of teacher as outlined by the Ministry of Education in Ontario. This marking represents material appropriate for inclusion in Chapters Four and Five specifically relating to pre-service Teacher Candidates’ learning how to teach pupils in a school classroom supported by their Associate Teachers. Both parties’ views of how effective such experiences are were noted, as well as whether or not the Teacher Candidates generally had appropriate support in their construction of knowledge of how to teach pupils.
- The final step in the choice of quotable material to be used from the pool of possibilities followed the following rules: if possible, each Teacher Candidate and
Associate Teacher would be quoted in the thesis at least once (although the more articulate Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers will be quoted more frequently); noticeably piquant or surprising remarks would be included even if the number of quotes for a section seemed to be unduly high.

**Teacher Candidate Interview Sample**

Interviews were conducted with 16 Teacher Candidates in the sample between June and early September 2008. The 16 Teacher Candidates had a variety of work experience and teaching-related experience to report. On entrance to the one-year program they varied from recent university graduate (early 20s) to mid-life career changer (mid-30s, 40s, early 50s). All had bachelor degrees, and some had graduate degrees. The sample was comprised of 12 females and 4 males.

Participants were not asked their age although some volunteered the information; for others an estimate was made from the background information provided. The females ranged in age from early 20s to late 40s; the males were somewhat older, from mid-30s up. Participants came from many cultural origins, and thus were representative of the range to be found among the elementary teachers in most Ontario boards of education. All the Teacher Candidates had graduated (i.e., their practica had been successful). Only one of the 16 Teacher Candidates reported that she was not seeking employment as a teacher with a board of education.

**Associate Teacher Interview Sample**

Interviews were conducted with the 11 Associate Teachers in the sample between July and early October 2008. All are licensed, experienced, practicing elementary school teachers, employed in schools of the participating board. Their experience in the role of Associate Teacher varied from “first time” to “many years” (approx. 20+ years). All Associate Teachers worked
with Teacher Candidates in the same elementary consecutive pre-service program they had just completed. The Associate Teachers hold undergraduate degrees and degrees in education. The most common of the latter is the B.Ed. Six of the Associate Teacher interviewees are male, five are female. Their ages range from late 30s to 50s. This group of Associate Teachers appeared to be exceptional because they provided a level of service to their Teacher Candidates that was self-reported and may not be characteristic of the entire population of Associate Teachers. The Associate Teachers’ skills in this thesis are described as “effective” or “supportive.”

Limitations

Since the Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers who participated in the study were volunteers, it is important to note that volunteers tend to be committed enthusiasts, deeply interested in the activity, policy, or idea under study. Participants want to have their say sufficiently strongly to be ready to sacrifice their time for the opportunity. This generally results in a more dichotomous group than a truly random sample would produce. There were those among the Teacher Candidates who had positive experiences in their placements – and they were effusive in their praise of the factors governing their practicum experience. At the other extreme, there were those who had disappointing experiences and were equally passionate in their expression of their disapproval. In the discourses reported herein the in-between position may well be under-represented. Chapter Two explains the potential problem of self-reporting issues that are recognized for this study.

In order to keep the amount of data to a manageable level, information on respondents’ socioeconomic situation, ethnicity, and gender was not gathered, so differences arising from such variables were not considered. The only descriptors used for the students arises from a question about their teaching-related experience prior to admission to the pre-service program – justified
since learning to teach is the activity (practice in teaching) of the practicum. Candidates were also free to mention prior education. Associate Teachers provided some information about their academic backgrounds as well as their careers and experience as Associate Teachers. Only those excerpts from transcripts relevant to the revised thesis were included to support the two conclusions for the study.

Given that the Teacher Candidates were interviewed just after they had completed their spring practicum experience, it is likely that recall of information, opinions, and feelings about their recent placement were clearer than of the fall placement. Nevertheless, most gave detailed accounts of both placement experiences. A few Associate Teachers were interviewed as late as September 2008 (and one in October), well after their experiences with the 07/08 group of Teacher Candidates, but before seeing the 08/09 cohorts. Therefore, it is likely that they recounted general experiences, perceptions and judgements of general recall, rather than those specific to the students of 07/08.

One final limitation of the research is noted. I have been a full-time classroom teacher, and I have also been an Associate Teacher. I was also a Teacher Candidate participating in a practicum before this research was undertaken. Therefore, I may have perspectives that would not be shared by a researcher who is not a qualified teacher. To maintain objectivity of the data I sought to let the Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers speak without leading or steering them with probes. In analysis, I identify the common elements, the themes that run through all or most of their stories. Within these themes, I identify common ground and report on outliers – those eloquent in praise and those as eloquent in their criticisms. Then I examine my response to what I am hearing or reading in transcript to check for bias arising from my own experiences. When choosing excerpts from transcripts to include in this thesis, I made certain to represent a variety of positions as well as both sides of opposing positions if and when they are present in
the data. Finally, I rely on my own disposition and commitment to objectivity when doing this research to represent the data as it appeared in its richness of text, tone, and in full representation of the participants.

Possible Limitations of the Recruitment Process

Because of the initial response to the call for volunteers and the two sampling procedures used, the following concerns about possible effects on the interview data arise:

- For the first round, the distribution of invitation packages for Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers was through the option coordinators of the university program. This may have influenced participation since the coordinators knew the participants, and the participants may have felt obligated to participate. However, it was felt that participants could make up their own mind to participate given this relationship between coordinator and participant. The risk was not felt to be substantial enough to warrant not proceeding in this manner.
- More than one university program uses the Associate Teachers in the schools of the cooperating board to provide the practicum for their Teacher Candidates. The responding Associate Teacher may, therefore, at times be recalling her experience with a Teacher Candidate from a program other than the sample program.
- The Associate Teachers who consented to participate in this research are unlikely to be Associate Teachers who are uninterested, or generally hostile to Teacher Candidates. The Associate Teacher participants in this research are likely a more homogeneous group than are Associate Teachers in general, and those described by the Teacher Candidates.
- This is also true for the Teacher Candidates who consented to participate in this research. All Teacher Candidate participants seem to have approached their practicum placements critically. Again, this group of Teacher Candidates may well be more homogeneous than Teacher Candidates in general, and their stories more skewed pro or con than would be the case in general. Again, this likely affected the degree of congruence between the two groups.

Ethical Constraints

Doctoral research is submitted to a series of reviews that consider the ethical implications of the manner and process proposed for the project. This process is intended to protect the researcher, the research subjects, the board of education and its schools and personnel, and the university, the pre-service program, and its faculty and staff. Ethics approval implies that all reviewers agree that the research – as proposed – affords no foreseeable risk for participants and
no harm is expected to result from the study itself. Participants were asked in writing to return a consent to participate form indicating in writing their consent to be interviewed. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or penalty. The main constraint imposed on the researcher conducting this kind of research is the anonymity rule: no person, program, institution, or agency may be described in such detail, or in such a manner, as can lead to his, her, or its identification.

**Research Question Related to Interview Questions**

Generally, in the original design, the interview questions were meant to elicit a freewheeling narrative, questions aimed at eliciting replies about the Associate Teacher’s support and guidance with their Teacher Candidates, and specific questions related to the experience of learning how to teach, the barriers to such learning, and more specifically, how effective Associate Teachers support and guide their Teacher Candidates. For example: what emerged about the practicum experiences of these Teacher Candidates is that about three-quarters of the group had one of two very different kinds of experiences. On the surface, one experience was almost entirely positive and the other almost entirely unsupportive. Yet such broad grouping only identifies a surface perception of their respective practica. To distil deeper, more nuanced perceptions, the responses were scrutinized three ways: first, through the vocabulary used to describe activities; second, the analysis seeks to align the defined experience with the role of the teacher as mandated in the Ontario curriculum, and the participants’ efforts to link their university courses to their practical application of those courses and to determine some logical conclusions. For example, I looked for evidence of Teacher Candidates’ efforts to attend to the prior knowledge of pupils in the classroom and whether or not they were successful. Third, I distilled the Teacher Candidates’ and Associate Teachers’ experiences based on the Teacher
Candidates’ evaluation and learning the teacher role. I looked at how their opinions and stories represent a developmental process using the benchmark for the teacher role as identified by the Ministry and OCT standards.

Excerpts from transcripts were analyzed for their inclusion under the four or five learning categories of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation during practicum. In this thesis, I link perception of experiences to the teacher role by using evidence of language and reports of activity and opinion about the progression of learning for both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates during the practicum.

I also use the research literature to specify what we know about the practicum through other empirical studies and academic articles. That is, do Teacher Candidates perceive that the experience moves them towards becoming a professional teacher based on their evaluation of teaching performance during practicum. For Associate Teachers, what does the literature tells us about how they support and guide their Teacher Candidates during practicum? The experiences themselves are also judged by the Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers (when evident) and even by myself as researcher in this study, in order to distil what these participants perceive their own role in the practicum – and that of the other – to be.

**Organization of Chapters 4 to 6**

During the analysis, commonalities were pinpointed across a number of themes which resulted in the two conclusions presented in Chapter 6. Chapter 4 reports on the data for the first part of the research question, on differentiated instruction. Chapter 5 reports on the second part of the research question, on the use of dialogue. It is noted that in these unrelated samples, Associate Teachers commonly self-reported on their own positive support of their Teacher Candidates. In other words, there were no reports by Associate Teachers who themselves felt that
they did not provide their Teacher Candidates with a level of support that appeared positive. A positive support in this thesis means that the support was acceptable to the Teacher Candidates and appeared to help them grow in the teacher role. There was no calculated outcome known for Associate Teacher support, only that the outcome appeared positive. In contrast, in this unrelated group of Teacher Candidates, they not only reported on their Associate Teachers that appeared positive, but they also reported on their Associate Teachers that they perceived as less supportive and not contributing to their learning in the teacher role. This distinction is relevant for the reader making sense of Chapters 4 and 5.

Only four of the seven categories are reported on, and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. These four categories are: Assessment, Planning, and Instruction; Understanding Curriculum and the Learner; Involvement in School/Community Life; and Classroom Management. The other three learning categories are not represented in this thesis due to lack of evidence in the data to support them.

Each category has indicators that enable Associate Teachers to assess whether their Teacher Candidates are developing as expected; Associate Teachers must also assess whether Teacher Candidates need further development, need remediation, or are at risk of failing. Those Associate Teachers who were interviewed saw themselves as successful in distinguishing their instructional approach and guidance for Teacher Candidates to promote achievement of the indicators for teaching.

However, several interviewed Teacher Candidates reported that, in one of the placements, their Associate Teacher did not vary support and guidance in the teacher role, thereby undermining the Teacher Candidate’s learning. As a result, these Associate Teachers were perceived as less supportive role models, albeit by an unrelated group of Teacher Candidates. Furthermore, the interviewed Teacher Candidates reported on their own dispositions and
attitudes, supporting their own completion of the practicum course in spite of difficult interpersonal situations with their Associate Teachers.

They also described how they reported and learned from Associate Teachers, but felt unsupported by a number of Associate Teachers who they saw as less supportive role models. In these latter cases, the Teacher Candidates managed their university curriculum expectations and their relationships in order to complete the practicum course. The resultant learning for many Teacher Candidates made a difference to their learning in the teacher role. For other Teacher Candidates, their experiences with less supportive role models as Associate Teachers were less effective. A less supportive Associate Teacher role model is an Associate Teacher that has demonstrated minimal or no support for the Teacher Candidate that would contribute to the growth or development of the Teacher Candidate in the teacher role.
Chapter Four: Data Analysis: Differentiated Support

Introduction

This chapter examines how Associate Teachers differentiated the learning for their Teacher Candidates during the practicum. Reported are the experiences of both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. This chapter is organized by presenting the views of both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates in each of the learning categories of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation. For each learning category represented in the data, I first discuss the Associate Teachers’ views and then discuss comments from the Teacher Candidates.

This chapter details four of the seven broad learning categories on the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation represented in the data: Assessment, Planning, and Instruction; Understanding Curriculum and the Learner; Involvement in School/Community Life; and Classroom Management. This chapter provides the contrasting views of both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates, outlines the pros and cons of their reported experiences, explores possible reasons for their different views, and describes how Associate Teacher support helped some Teacher Candidates, but was less helpful to others. The chapter provides evidence that Associate Teachers as supportive role models guide their Teacher Candidates in ways that Associate Teachers as less supportive role models do not.

Also described in this chapter are what appeared to be the causes of the Associate Teachers’ support and what appeared to be missing when Associate Teachers’ support was not implemented. One theme explored throughout these broad categories of evaluation of Teacher Candidates is how Teacher Candidates managed their expected experiences compared with what they had actually experienced. This reporting by Teacher Candidates was usually in the form of complaints that they did not receive what they had expected. They clearly viewed these experiences as resulting from Associate Teachers who were less competent in delivering what an
experienced Associate Teacher should deliver.

**A Rubric for Assessment, Planning and Instruction**

For this learning category, Assessment, Planning and Instruction, I will first present the views of Associate Teachers, then those of the Teacher Candidates. Associate Teachers described how they provided Teacher Candidates with opportunities for practice to develop skills. They did this rather than simply put a check mark by skill completed on their mid-assessment or evaluation when there was first evidence—or perhaps not—of the skill (while disregarding learning the skill as a process). They also provided visual materials to support their lesson planning, reduced the size of their lessons, focused the Teacher Candidates on what was achievable for pupils, made lessons age-appropriate, and guided Teacher Candidates’ self-assessment and reflective practice of lesson planning. During our interviews, while some Associate Teachers explained and described the support they gave their Teacher Candidates, other Associate Teachers talked about the impact of that support and guidance. Consequently, Associate Teachers varied in how they distinguished their support with Teacher Candidates. Following are examples of the Associate Teachers’ differentiated support.

**Associate Teachers’ Perceptions and Insights and their Predisposition to be Supportive**

*Beth:* You’re always using the Ministry documents. Once again…I’ve had some students who were just trying these huge lessons, and...[the tasks are] trying then to refocus them to specific expectations, and how to address those. I think it’s making sure that the Teacher Candidates understand what we’re doing and *why we’re doing it.* There’s a purpose and it’s connected to expectations.

*Bonne:* We give them long-range plans that we have to hand in to our principal and it says what we’re covering term one, term two, and term three. And I’ll say this is what we’re working on this term and the month you’re here. Here are the things we need to
You can cover them any way you’d like. If you find a book that has a great art activity based on the fall feel free to do that with the kids and I’ll help make it age appropriate, but I can’t suspend the program for the needs of the Student Teacher. We have to keep plowing through because the curriculum’s pretty heavy. I mean even in kindergarten you’ve got to cover a lot of things.

Bob: At the beginning she probably taught 25% to 50% in the first week, and then maybe 75% in second week, and then maybe 80% to 85% because there were a couple of things that I always did. [In this] progression she was aware of the HSP kids and having to tailor it [her teaching] to them. She still maybe went over their heads at the beginning, and there was too much reading and writing involved. But by the end she [had] changed, and everyone was having more success.

Berry: I usually say to the Teacher Candidate, “This is your lesson, this is your plan. This is what I would do.” Each term I’ll say, “Give me your lesson plan and I’ll deliver it. I’ll show you how I would do it first.” It’s getting them to look at the different practices and different experiences and then, of course. I reassure them,” We always put our own touch on it, our own look [on a lesson].

Beatrice: I had a student last year who was really struggling and I don’t think that he should have passed, but I had him in the second practicum, and the first practicum he got a glowing, glowing evaluation and I asked him what he taught and he said, “well I just taught a few Grade 2 math lessons”…you know I expect my [Teacher Candidates] to do a lot, and I think sometimes other associates don’t, so then when the [Teacher Candidate] comes to me or anybody in the second practicum and they haven’t had a good experience or they haven’t had a lot of experience teaching in the first practicum. It’s really hard to evaluate when they haven’t done a lot… and I found it really challenging at the mid-term assessment. I told his teacher that you know I had a lot of concerns, and… I guess it didn’t help that the student I had in the first practicum was stellar, so by comparison he was really, really struggling, and he had a lot of philosophical differences that he couldn’t rationalize, and… in the end I ended up passing him anyway because…we did the mid-term evaluation and I set up goals for him and he did try to achieve those goals so he did understand where he was lacking and what he needed to do, but I wouldn’t say that he achieved them. I wasn’t able to give him a good reference when the board called to ask because in good conscience I couldn’t, and I don’t think he should have passed… I don’t like having that responsibility of being the one to decide whether they pass or fail. I think the [university] teachers should evaluate. I think they should come more than once and really evaluate and not just come in and sort of observe for 5 minutes and then chat to all the teachers. So I would say that as being an evaluator, I find it the least enjoyable part of the whole process.

Some Associate Teachers also reported on the impact of this differentiation of support to facilitate the Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role, as shown in the next examples.

Bob: She was very cognizant to have a mental set for a lesson plan and then to have a reflection period at the end of a lesson. A three-part lesson, [which] was something I praised. I noticed [how] she would do it. She would always have this elaborate cartoon, or
something with a diagram... so that when they came in they immediately saw it linked to the lesson task. She knew how to do that very well and she understood why it was important... Therefore they were always excited or she made them very excited right away. I know that when I was in teacher’s college the mental set was something they stressed a lot, so I’m guessing that they stressed it with her too.

Bee: It was regarding language. The Student Teacher, from what I can recall, she delivered a series of language [lessons] particularly punctuation lessons. She brought her own resources in. She delivered three sets of lessons and it was scaffold. That’s what was good about it. So it looked to me that she was aware of how to deliver lessons in chunks so the students would learn and have practice at the same time. She also applied knowledge of student learning in terms of the amount of time she spent. So in a 45-minute period she would teach for 10 to 15 minutes, practice with the children for another 10 and give them their own work with sheets that she then photocopied and they would work on it independently. So she actually covered the balanced literacy programming so I would say she was very strong the way she delivered those lessons. But in the end because she was able to compile anecdotal records while she was observing during the shared and writing aspects and then independently when she finally collected the sheets, she had a really good idea of how the students progressed through the three times the three sessions.

This group of Associate Teachers demonstrated a disposition towards differentiated support. They modeled teaching practices that made their support possible with what they perceived as a positive outcome for their Teacher Candidates. These Associate Teachers wanted Teacher Candidates in their classrooms and sought to provide a comfortable learning environment for them. Their disposition and attitude were their impetus to adapt and differentiate their guidance and support. These Associate Teachers showed a predisposition towards supporting an adult learner in their classroom, a predisposition that made a difference to how the Associate Teachers approached their role: they sought to understand their Teacher Candidates’ interests (differentiated support) and assess their prior knowledge for the teacher role (differentiated process) before they began teaching in the classroom. They were supportive role models of practices that were familiar to them as teachers.

Bob: [For] the HSP kids especially, or the two or three who have behavioural issues, [that is] behavioural IEP’s [Individual Education Plan]. I [would] model as a 2/3 teacher who had mixed groups based on their levels, not based on their grades - because I didn’t see any point in not challenging a Grade 2, and I don’t see any point in going over the head of a Grade 3. She definitely worked to give each pupil the attention that they
needed. [They were] being taught at the level they needed.

**Associate Teachers’ Perceptions and Insights**

Associate Teachers were responsible for the evaluation of their Teacher Candidates’ performance, and were required to determine if their Teacher Candidates needed further development, remediation, or were at risk of failing. Associate Teachers anticipated that how they supported their Teacher Candidates with assessment, planning, and instruction was helpful to them. The Associate Teachers supported skill development in this category by offering them content support with lesson planning in the teacher role. This effective group of Associate Teachers supported their Teacher Candidates’ initiation into the teaching profession in ways that were individual to each Associate Teacher and were based on the learning needs of their Teacher Candidates. Their predisposition towards supporting an adult learner made a difference to the initiation of Teacher Candidates into the teaching profession because Teacher Candidates learned how to more effectively plan lessons from an effective Associate Teacher. The Associate Teachers’ expectations of their Teacher Candidates differed depending on how Associate Teachers were supporting their learning. For example, as evidenced by Beatrice, she expects a lot from her Teacher Candidates and questioned that other Associate Teachers may not expect as much from their Teacher Candidates during practicum. What also differed among the Associate Teachers was their perceived impact on Teacher Candidates’ learning, as for example, keeping the pupils engaged in their lessons, or their successful delivery of a series of language lessons, or the perceived skill achievement of the pupils in a process of learning over time.

**Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions and Insights**

The impact of the Associate Teachers’ support was also reported by the unrelated group
Katy: Because of the way things happened in teacher’s college, I had no idea how to do a unit plan. Six weeks in, we hadn’t done that yet. We’d had a crash course in lesson planning, so I had a vague idea of what I was supposed to be doing. For lesson planning I could say OK I get it, but [the AT] definitely helped me figure that out a little bit. But in terms of the unit plan, I had no idea until we came back after Christmas. That’s when we did that piece of it in school. So I couldn’t. I had no idea where to even begin with planning the entire unit. So that’s definitely something that I needed him to help me with, and sort of got me through. Even something like literature circles, which I’d never even heard of much less been part of or taught, I really needed support with that. You know he pointed me to good resources and he showed me what he had done in the past. I couldn’t have done that without him because I didn’t have any background in that from school, so it would have been hours and hours and hours of me looking for, not just resources for completing it, but how to books on, you know just instructions on getting it done. So his helping me really smoothed that out for me.

Kay: [My Associate Teacher] ... handed me this package the first day and said, “These are all the things that I think would be really helpful….I took a few minutes and pulled it all together, so take some time to digest it and we can chat about it your next [orientation] day.” So the first [orientation] day I just... said to him in an email “I’m ready to jump right in so, you know, put me to work that first day” And he just told me at the beginning of the day, “…do you want to do the spelling lesson?” He handed me these things and it was amazing right from the start.

Kay: I made [differentiating my lessons] my priority as a general approach to all of my lessons. So I built it right in and came up with my own template that included integrated learning so that I knew what was doing ahead of time. Because he [the AT] had supplied me with these plans, the long-term plan, the weekly schedule, and the agenda, da da da, I was then able to come up with a template of how I would integrate the learning and differentiate the learning. So each lesson was, sort of, in that spirit -- depending on the subject and the content [what] I would do in different ways. [Following more time with the professors] I now had [more content] knowledge on how to use some of these teaching practices like jigsaw and fishbone and all those ways to structure the class that I had not ever known. I was the only primary/junior person in that gifted education class and none of my other colleagues in the cohort would have had any exposure to [all this]. They didn’t take that course. There was no other specific course that specifically addresses differentiation. The how to’s, the real nuts and bolts of that.

Ken: The day before I arrived at [our] introduction, [the AT] gave me a lesson to do and then she gave me feedback and that means I was able to learn what I need to learn. She said you’re going to teach [this], so when I went home I searched for information on everything, so it gave me confidence again. I had almost lost confidence. I’m telling you the truth. So that built me up again.

In the unrelated group of Teacher Candidates, the dispositions of the Associate Teachers and their approach to their Associate Teacher role meant that these Teacher Candidates had an
opportunity to explore their own initiatives in the teacher role. This unrelated group of Teacher Candidates achieved their learning expectations in Assessment, Planning, and Instruction through the opportunities provided by their Associate Teachers. Teacher Candidates’ successfully managed their university expectations because of their Associate Teachers.

Jerry: [There is]... the design-down theory we learned in class. The backwards designing where you look at expectations first. Look at the curriculum expectations, say, for my social science unit. I did a social science unit on Ancient Greece and I looked at the expectations first, then I looked at the curriculum, then how I would know my students achieved that learning. So, what do you want them to learn from the expectations and how will they know that learning from assessment? And how you enable them to learn comes from lesson design. The theory of backwards designing and lesson planning I tried to use right away.

Kay: [Planning] relates on how I set out a teaching task. I mean, it would influence how I plan for it. But I think the over-riding notion of a good teacher is how you differentiate the learning, and how you recognize the multiple intelligences and learning styles in a classroom of students, so you don’t let your own style influence the way you implement. But it will influence the way you do your own planning.

Katy: I think if there was a moment [of despair] it would be in the first practicum where I would say I had my worse lesson ever. It was a phys-ed lesson. It was bad. It was badly planned. I didn’t plan for enough time. I lost the students after 20 minutes. It was just a bad, bad, bad lesson and I think when we went back to the classroom after that phys-ed lesson was when I realized that. I [also recognized] ... how important it is to reflect on what you’re doing and not to say, “Oh that wasn’t a good lesson. Oh well better luck next time,” but to look at it carefully and say, “What did I do wrong?” You know to be able to say, “why weren’t they listening to me?” Because they were bored. Why did I lose them? Because they could probably pick up on the fact that, oh my god there’s still 20 minutes left [whisper]. I’ve finished everything I had, I mean [children] pick up on that kind of thing. That lesson made me sort of clue into, yah, you’re the boss. They can pick up on everything that I’m feeling, and if I’m really showing that I’m lost, or I don’t understand what I’m saying, that time’s running short, kids will pick up on that. That’s when I said, I am the teacher, I do have to pay attention to all that kind of thing.

Lucy: I had one student in my Grade 7 practicum who had a lot of difficulties with math. She struggled with it all year. And I spent a lot of time sitting down with her, guiding her and going through it. She joined the math club so I’d help her then, and after school. I think it made a big difference not only to her learning but also her self-esteem. And I think she realized that I really cared for how she did, and for her. This was reflected in her efforts and just her general temperament in class. She became an easier-to-manage student; she would listen to me. In the end it was very rewarding. I was trying to teach her circle graph for a large part of the unit and in the end when I left, she made me a circle graph and it said, “Who loves Miss ...”, and she had every student on the circle graph. There were the percentages there, all the calculations. It was the most beautiful circle
graph that she’d ever done. So I just felt not only did she take time to actually do this, but it showed she learned [what I had tried to teach]. It was such a rewarding thing for her to make this for me before I left… It’s the bonds with the students that reinforce my wish to continue teaching.

Jerry: when prompted by interviewer to give indicators pupils were successful or not] Indicators were that I would ask pupils questions as I went along. If there were no hands raised that would be a good indicator that pupils understood, or, it was an indicator that they were just shy… Asking questions, or providing writing tasks. For example, in a language lesson [I would] read their answers. Providing an indicator of whether they got it. I would ask pupils individually and ask them if they understood, and checking in individually.

Lynn: [Grade 6] I think there was a lot more mental planning in my first practicum and maybe because it was my first practicum so there was a lot more things that I had to get my head around to be successful. I don’t know if it was as well laid out as it could have been and maybe because it was a junior grade there wasn’t as much physical preparation as…the younger grades there wasn’t as many cut-outs and prep…props to create. I maybe could have done more of that with my first practicum…with hindsight I could have planned some of those experiences in a little bit more positive way for those [pupils].

What undermined the differentiation of support and guidance for Teacher Candidates, for example, was the fact that some Associate Teachers did not want a Teacher Candidate in their classroom, as reported by Teacher Candidates, an attitude that appeared to have an effect on how the Associate Teachers approached their role. The resultant experience for Teacher Candidates was that they learned from their Associate Teacher practices they perceived as not benefiting pupils. Following are examples of statements by Teacher Candidates who worked with Associate Teachers who they felt were less supportive role models. Also, these Teacher Candidates were successful in managing their university evaluations of the practicum and their relationships with their Associate Teachers.

Lori: [She was] very teacher-directed, but the teacher had a strong belief that that was necessary to teach at a junior-high level. Whereas the first practicum we had more… interaction between student and teacher…. I believe that the pupils benefited more from that type of environment.

Mary, in her first practicum…or she would say you can do a read-a-loud on this book and then she couldn’t find the book, and all that kind of thing….and the main thing that was really detrimental to me is she never did any planning or at least not with me. …but I spent a lot of time chasing her around saying things like, “well, what do you want me to
teach tomorrow”, or “what do you want me to teach this week”…she would always put me off with very vague answers. …and I came to realize that a lot of teachers spend their weekend planning for the week ahead, and I could never get anything out of her on Friday night on what was coming up during the week, and she would refer me to the curriculum documents, and I looked at them and I thought how is that useful. I know that it gives you an overview of what topics are to be covered over the year but what are we covering next week!…but on the very last day, we came across this document which of course you don’t know about called the long range plan that she gives to her principal at the beginning of the year and it involves what you’re doing for each month, and I said, “oh, this would have been so much help”…but she didn’t bother to give me any of those kind of documents and at least I would have known what topic we were on in social studies…but it worried me, for example, that I rarely saw math taught the whole four weeks I was there.

Kay, speaking of a ‘standard protocol’ to receive information for planning from their Associate Teachers] Some [Teacher Candidates] just [didn’t] get it and they would have no sense of direction. Like they don’t’ know where that class had come from since the beginning of the year, [or] where they’re going to…I think it became a really narrow reality for them where, ok, I’m just teaching this math strand. Then there’s no opportunity to integrate the learning in other curriculum areas. There’s no opportunity for them…I think it just really limits the knowledge of the real workings of teaching…To me, that would be important.

Conclusion

Associate Teachers reported how they differentiated their support for Teacher Candidates’ planning, assessment and instruction of lessons. They guided their Teacher Candidates in different ways with assessment, planning, and instruction for pupils, and ensured that the Teacher Candidates had the tools, developed the skills and abilities to be successful with the required expectations. Associate Teachers provided long-range plans and other resource materials to support Teacher Candidates’ age-appropriate lesson planning. Long-range plans are those that divide the school year into time blocks of first, second, and third terms that match the reporting times for pupils’ report cards, and these plans itemize what curriculum expectations should be covered over the three reporting periods. These plans include themes and units of study that the teacher deems important for her or his pupils to cover for the curriculum expectations of the grade levels. These are valuable plans for a Teacher Candidate to have
because they give a teacher a framework to use in planning lessons. Teacher Candidates who receive these plans are at an advantage over Teacher Candidates who do not. These plans allow the Teacher Candidate to see at a glance what the teacher wants to achieve with the pupils’ learning expectations over time, making the planning process more logical for classroom application. Associate Teachers also differentiated their support for Teacher Candidates included a progression of teaching lessons over time, such as paying attention to teaching special-needs pupils through plans for accommodations and/or modifications; they delivered lesson plans that Teacher Candidates developed; and they guided Teacher Candidates’ self-assessment and reflective practice of lesson planning. These Associate Teachers differentiated their support and guidance of assessment, planning, and instruction through content and process of lessons.

Teacher Candidates included their own “touch” in the lesson, applying their creativity when planning the lesson, and learned about effective implementation of lessons over time through teaching. Teacher Candidates completed successful delivery of lessons as perceived by their Associate Teachers.

Associate Teachers gave Teacher Candidates resource material, directing them to other resources, and provided them with their long-range plans that helped them target the content of their lessons on specific expectations in the curriculum. However, even providing Teacher Candidates with resource material may not be enough; Associate Teachers may need to help refocus Teacher Candidates on making the content of their lessons age-appropriate, as described by Bonne and Beth. Each Associate Teacher targeted his or her Teacher Candidate’s learning in a different way: Bonne supported age-appropriate lessons; Beth refocused Teacher Candidates to specific expectations. Lasley and Applegate (1985) specify that “knowing how to organize instruction for large groups of students” (p. 224) is one area that Teacher Candidates find challenging. These effective Associate Teachers specified their support for their Teacher
Candidates as required. Bob monitored his Teacher Candidate’s delivery of the lessons over time to meet the needs of pupils. The content of the lessons included the Associate Teacher’s HSP pupils’ programming, as described by Bob.

Associate Teachers differentiated their support with lesson planning that had an impact on Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates reported on the impact of this support. The resultant learning for Teacher Candidates was that they often learned from Associate Teachers’ positive practices. Associate Teachers reported on this resultant learning of their Teacher Candidates; for example, Bee reports that her Teacher Candidate learned in the process of delivering lessons and assessing pupils’ learning over three lessons. The Teacher Candidate scaffolded lessons, she applied knowledge of pupils’ learning, and she delivered the lessons and she had a good idea of how the pupils progressed over the three lessons covering the balanced literacy program. The scaffolding of the lessons meant that the Teacher Candidate understood that it is important to differentiate the content for pupils. Bob reports that his Teacher Candidate knew how to plan her lessons effectively. His Teacher Candidate benefited from his role modeling: the Teacher Candidate understood that varying the content of lessons and making them interesting, such as using an elaborate cartoon, helps pupils remain alert for learning. His Teacher Candidate knew how to link the mental set of a lesson to the lesson task. The Teacher Candidate is also credited with applying on her own the knowledge learned from her university program to the classroom.

Teacher Candidates reported on the impact of differentiated support by developing their knowledge about the content of lessons. Katy received from her Associate Teacher the lesson planning support she needed, having not yet learned about lesson planning in her university classes. Kay reports on the value of receiving a resource package from her Associate Teacher that supported the content of lessons. Ken needed to build his confidence, so he received a more
direct approach to lesson planning from his Associate Teacher, which helped him regain his confidence. Initially, in a new placement, it was less helpful for him to have so much choice when what he needed was to first teach a lesson. Jerry, Kay, and Katy all benefited from the freedom to take the initiative with their lessons, seizing the moment and opportunity to explore their lesson planning options under the guidance of their Associate Teachers. Lucy reports that she had indicators of pupils’ learning and success. Jerry implemented the theory of backwards designing and lesson planning that he had learned in his university classes; in contrast, Kay talked about the notion of a good teacher and the importance of differentiating the learning. Additionally, Lynn talked about how she reflected on her first practicum experience.

Some Teacher Candidates choose to abandon teaching practices of Associate Teachers whom they perceived as less supportive role models, believing that the Associate Teachers’ practices did not benefit pupils’ learning. These Teacher Candidates lacked the support of their Associate Teachers’ usual teaching practices and skills that would support pupils’ learning. Lori commented that one of her Associate Teachers was more teacher-directed when interacting with the pupils, and she thought this method was less-effective. In contrast, Mary’s Associate Teacher was thought to be less effective due to the lack of usual teaching practices such as planning. Mary commented that these less-effective Associate Teacher’s practices were detrimental to her in learning the teacher role. As well, Kay’s Associate Teacher was less useful in her support of lesson planning by not providing resources. Such practices do not support the Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role.

Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates reported on the process of learning during practicum that had an impact on the Teacher Candidates. Some Associate Teachers anticipated that supporting the content of lessons would be helpful to their Teacher Candidates and would make a difference to their learning in the teacher role. Associate Teachers also
supported their development over time. In the unrelated group of Teacher Candidates, they expected their Associate Teachers’ support and received it. Where Teacher Candidates did not receive lesson planning, assessment, or instructional support, they perceived their Associate Teachers as less helpful. Teacher Candidates successfully managed their relationships with these Associate Teachers through their own disposition and strengths.

It was evident through the stories of the Teacher Candidates and Associate Teachers that those quality interactions both between Associate Teachers and their Teacher Candidates and between Teacher Candidates and pupils in the classroom meant that Teacher Candidates were learning and teaching in the teacher role often more quickly than Teacher Candidates who did not have these interactions. These Associate Teachers’ focused on their Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role, moving their Teacher Candidate forward through intervening in the teacher role, as well as having knowledge of the needs of their own pupils. The Associate Teachers had the ability to focus their Teacher Candidates’ thinking which inevitably strengthened the quality of rapport that the Teacher Candidates had with the pupils. These quality interactions with their Associate Teachers worked as support and guidance, helping them to move forward in the teacher role.

A Rubric for Understanding Curriculum and the Pupil Learner

For this learning category, Understanding Curriculum and the Pupil Learner, I will first present the views of Associate Teachers and then Teacher Candidates.

Associate Teacher Perceptions and Insights

Associate Teachers differentiated their support and guidance for Teacher Candidates by modifying the instructional practices of Teacher Candidates based on conversations and lesson
planning. They also provided choices on what to teach within the framework of learning about the teacher, and employed a team approach with their Teacher Candidates. Associate Teachers supported their Teacher Candidates in the fit between the Ontario curriculum expectations and the Learner. The fit relates to when the teacher employs teaching strategies and instruction based on learning expectations outlined in the Ontario curriculum that are at the level of understanding for the pupil. Associate Teachers varied on how and what they supported, but they were successful in their assessment as teachers to determine the level of impact on the pupils from what their Teacher Candidates were teaching. Some assessed the fit between the curriculum and the learner of individual lessons, integrated units, or engaged in team-teaching with their Teacher Candidates to ensure proper fit between curriculum and learner. Following are examples of Associate Teachers’ support and guidance of their Teacher Candidates in the area of Understanding Curriculum and the Learner. It is important to keep in mind that the Associate Teachers know their students best and provide instructional practices to their Teacher Candidates fitting the curriculum expectations to the individual needs of the pupils, and differentiating their support for Teacher Candidates. Additionally, the Teacher Candidates take ownership of the fit between curriculum and the learner through their teaching approach, but it is the Associate Teacher that must ensure that this “fit” happens, offering differentiated support to their Teacher Candidates.

Rick: My work would be to familiarize the Student Teacher with the curriculum because they would be developing a lesson based on what I’m teaching... They would bring the lesson to me and I would look at it and if there was anything I thought was over [the pupils’] heads. They also need to reach all students not just the middle ground. They have to be able to prepare for the ones that may not understand what they are doing and prepare extra work for those who can complete things quickly. I make sure their lessons are workable on paper, and [also] after they teach it.

In the above excerpts from the transcripts, the Associate Teacher must differentiate their support for their Teacher Candidates by helping them tailor their lesson. Without this support,
Teacher Candidates may be unlikely to develop their own plans effectively.

Rick: In a pedagogical approach you need to know what the [pupil] is capable of [achieving] at what stage in his or her life. You wouldn’t try and teach a math lesson that is beyond them [the pupils]. You need to understand how those math skills are developed. What comes first and how to build upon them. They [the Teacher Candidates] need to know in a math situation for example … you cannot just teach one lesson and expect them [the pupils] to learn it. It will have to be reinforced continually, and that’s the pedagogical approach that I think they are taught at [the university] and they will apply in the classroom… Piaget’s teachings.

In Rick’s support of his Teacher Candidate, he explains that all pupils are unique in their learning abilities. This Associate Teacher individualized his support for his Teacher Candidate with the same understanding of the pupils’ capabilities for learning.

Rick… I think the more background information that the Student Teacher has, the better. They can make decisions which will ultimately improve their teaching. They can see that I’ve made certain decisions based on the background information I have and… decisions on how to reach those students. Maybe (they) know. [There] may [even] be something that I can learn from the Student Teacher on how they reach [the pupil]. I may be jaded after having the pupils for a while. They may find new ways to reach them which can help me.

Rory: I have Grade 6’s; they are 11 years old. The first week I say [to the Teacher Candidate], “I want you to find out everything you can about 11 year olds in different categories of their life. In their mental life, their physical life, their social life so that [you] have an understanding of the pupils you’re working with.” It actually helps me [it helps me understand] later on whether it be a lesson, some things not happening or something going on, you know, why did that happen? Let’s remember what’s going on [in the life of an 11 year old] physically… socially and … whether they’re embarrassed… whether they have high energy and they can’t sit for 45 minutes. So I always try to bring it back to who the pupil is and what were the tasks that I gave them.

Rhonda: I see where the student [Teacher Candidate] is, and based on things that I can see, or based on things they might mention themselves, I see myself as responding… as it arises. I see it very much … as [similar to when] you’re in the classroom and you’re [teaching your pupils]. One of the things that I feel very strongly about… teaching is it should be responsive. Listen to where the students [pupils] are, listen to their [pupils] needs and help them [the pupils] get to the next stage. I think it’s the same with the Student Teacher.

The impact of this differentiated support facilitated the Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. For example, Beth reported on the successful application of her Teacher Candidate’s individual lessons, as well as on the success of the pupils:
I know he got discouraged very quickly and wanted to do everything. So once we sat down and just moved slowly, with backwards planning. I know it was really hard concept for him to understand – like that backwards mapping – knowing what you want and going back… But once he got the idea, the lesson plans were amazing, and the kids were very engaged and the kids were very successful. He knew what he was looking for and the kids knew what they were expected to do. It was very exciting and he was very successful. He ended up feeling he had a really good placement.

Another Associate Teacher also reported on the learning of his Teacher Candidate with an integrated unit:

'It wasn’t integrated for the sake of integration. It really made sense the way she did it. The tasks were smart… it was obvious that she was applying the things that they were teaching at teacher’s college because of just holistically all the lessons. (Bob)

What seems to have motivated this differentiated support among these Associate Teachers is their demonstrated knowledge of subject content, and their understanding of what the needs of their pupils were.

**Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions and Insights**

Teacher Candidates learned about the fit between the curriculum and the learner in this learning category in two ways. First, Teacher Candidates better understood through collaborating and team-teaching with their Associate Teachers. Second, Teacher Candidates learned about the fit between the curriculum and the learner by their Associate Teachers providing them with space to explore the teacher role. It is not known in all the excerpts from transcripts whether or not the Associate Teachers intentionally allowed their Teacher Candidates some space to explore the teaching role, or this occurred by chance, but the resultant learning for the Teacher Candidate was positive. The following excerpts from transcripts are evidence of these assertions:

Darcy: …What she put on my evaluation was how she experienced the practicum and for her it was like having a colleague in the room that you were team-teaching with. [Compared with this Teacher Candidate’s second placement], I got no feedback at all until I got my final evaluation.
Kay: *It was so collaborative. The team-teaching was so well in place you know as grade teams they [also] had division teams.* It was very well developed. There were small team meetings that happened…There were weekly team [meetings] again identifying any students at risk. It was *very collaborative and everybody sat around the staffroom table and ate together at lunch. It was entirely different. The classroom that I was in was typical of the level of commitment to student learning. My AT was absolutely amazing and the classroom culture was extremely conducive to student learning.* The kind of ownership the kids took over the classroom, and only grade three, they truly took …and there are exceptions, but overall it was a climate that was really lovely and really working for every student in that class.

For Kay, she learned about attending to students at risk through the process of team-teaching occurring in the school. By the nature of a collaborative approach or team-teaching, the Associate Teacher can seek out information from the Teacher Candidate to find their common ground. Since Teacher Candidates are unique in their contributions to classroom cultures, the Associate Teacher customizes support for them. The differentiated support for the Teacher Candidate is inferred, but not explicitly stated here. The Teacher Candidate expresses that the experiences with the Associate Teacher are effective given the amount of team-teaching happening.

Danika…. *So much of lesson planning is being creative and coming up with great [lessons], but at the end of the day I want to know... what’s the end goal and how will I get there. So in order to begin lesson planning I’d like to know and in some way assess that, evaluate that… it’s only 4 weeks that you’re in there, so it’s not like you’re addressing so many curriculum expectations. But...it would be unfortunate where a teacher candidate went in - did their thing, it was all flash. It was great, but then the Associate Teacher... after the teacher candidate leaves [has to fix things]. I don’t want the Associate Teacher to have to come in and sort of fix up all the gaps. It should be sort of a compatible fit where both benefit.*

Danika had her own perspective on how to engage with her Associate Teacher. She appeared to seek out feedback with her Associate Teacher that would ensure she is assessing her lessons effectively. This collaborative approach to teaching is how this Teacher Candidate’s Associate Teacher differentiated her support with her. The Associate Teacher figured out what the Teacher Candidate needed and provided that structure through a team-teaching approach to
the Teacher Candidate’s learning:

Mary: I volunteered in my kids’ school all the time they were growing up, so that’s one of the things that made me decide that I wanted to be a teacher. I did a lot of tutoring with curriculum that I made up myself that really seem to work well for kids with reading difficulties, and got no respect from the teachers at all so this is why I wanted to get my stamp of approval, to say I’m going to change a great deal about my ideas about teaching. In fact, I’ve had them validated here. At least I have the paper qualifications to prove that I am one now, so that makes a difference.

It appears that Mary had space to explore the teacher role by chance. It does not appear that her Associate Teacher offered her that space, but rather didn’t appear to pay much attention to her growth within the teacher role.

Katy: ...I was helping students to understand by providing different examples, you know it’s all that ‘teacher’s speak’, all those things that I was doing but I didn’t realize I was doing it... I didn’t realize that I was looking at things from a teacher’s perspective until [after] I got to teacher’s college. This year is when I can say that... I wasn’t necessarily thinking about the pupils and what they needed from me, not the way that I do now. Now, if pupils look at me with a blank stare, then I understand [either] I said something [in too] complicated [a fashion], or they’re not paying attention they’re bored, or this is [maybe] too easy for them. I can think of it that way; what are they thinking of me? I don’t think I did that when I was volunteering.

Katy suggests that while in her Associate Teachers’ classroom working with the pupils, her Associate Teacher has provided her with space to explore the role of teaching with her students in the classroom. This Teacher Candidate suggests that it is through her experience during practicum that she was learning to focus more on the needs of the pupils in her care. This end result may not have happened if she hadn’t been offered the space to explore the teaching role by her Associate Teacher. She was ready to explore the teacher role on her own.

Kay: Well the second practicum you were just doing more so more teaching, more planning, more evaluation and I guess more in the context of the larger year. Whereas I experienced in the first practicum just really focused on individual lessons so I wasn’t really thinking like a teacher. I mean I was in the individual lesson, but I wasn’t thinking as a teacher that had the overall picture.

Kay experienced a progression in her exploration of the teacher role from first to second
practicum. Her Associate Teacher allowed her to explore the teacher role to the extent that in the second practicum she believed that she was “thinking like a teacher”.

**Conclusion**

Associate Teachers supported their Teacher Candidates in the *fit* between the Ontario curriculum expectations and the learner. Associate Teachers differentiated their support and guidance with Teacher Candidates by modifying the learning expectations for individual pupils’ needs, and assessing pupils’ level of engagement with the curriculum through Teacher Candidates’ instructional practices. Rick supported his Teacher Candidates’ growth and development of individual lessons as a process. He ensured the fit between curriculum and the learner through his expectations that his Teacher Candidate should plan for the needs of all pupils—not just plan for the middle ground. He expected a level of engagement with the pupils’ learning over time. If pupils did not understand the learning objective the first time, as is often the case, he expected his Teacher Candidate to continue adapting the lesson objectives for pupils’ learning success. While Rick supported his Teacher Candidate through individual lessons, Bob supported his Teacher Candidate by requesting integrated units. In addition, both differentiated the process of learning for their Teacher Candidates. In contrast, Rhonda differentiated the process of Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role as responding to the needs of the Teacher Candidate as the need arises. This Associate Teacher’s highly responsive approach is similar to the way he supports his own pupils’ learning in the classroom.

Providing choice on what to teach offers the Teacher Candidates opportunities to interpret the fit between curriculum and the pupils, to ensure success. Furthermore, Kay reports on her team-teaching experience during practicum. This collaborative experience supported her initiation into the professional community in the school system. Niemi (2002) claims that “teaching and
learning cultures in schools are socially constructed” (p. 777). This Teacher Candidate was at an advantage over Teacher Candidates who did not have this collaborative experience with an effective Associate Teacher.

The impact of this differentiated support made a difference to both the Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates in these unrelated groups. For some of these Associate Teachers, reciprocal learning was a spin-off of their interactions with their Teacher Candidates. Rick reported that he may be jaded from interacting with his own pupils over time, so he takes the opportunity to learn from his Teacher Candidates because they may have new and better ways of reaching the pupils. The resultant learning through this process facilitates both Associate Teachers’ and Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role.

What appeared to motivate this differentiated support among these effective Associate Teachers was their demonstrated knowledge of subject content and skill in understanding the needs of their pupils. They were motivated to ensure that their Teacher Candidates had adequate background information on the pupils, because they anticipated that this information would help their Teacher Candidates make informed decisions about the pupils’ learning. However, Rick and Rory had different views as to how their Teacher Candidates received background information on the pupils: Rick gave his Teacher Candidates the background information, but Rory requested that his Teacher Candidates seek out general background information on Grade 6 pupils. The anticipated resultant learning for the Teacher Candidates appeared to be the same even though their approach differed.

A Rubric for Involvement in School/Community Life

For this learning category, Involvement in School/Community Life, I will first present the views of Associate Teachers, then Teacher Candidates.
Associate Teachers’ Perceptions and Insights

Associate Teachers differentiated support and guidance for their Teacher Candidates in the area of Involvement in School/Community Life in practical ways, based mainly on the Associate Teachers’ own participation in a learning community in their school. Some Associate Teachers engaged in some of the activities while others reviewed opportunities through dialogue with others. Associate Teachers’ participation includes extra-curricular participation as well as community participation as in curriculum nights with parents.

Rick: [STs] also have the opportunity to partake in a field trip and extra-curricular activity such as a curriculum night or a parent interview and can develop their own relationship. They watch me; they develop their own skills.

Larry: We are OFIP School. A couple of years ago our EQAO scores were not that good. OFIP is an organization that comes in and they help you with some strategies to raise your EQAO scores, but it’s not only for Grade 3. It’s this whole school-wide thing where we do moderated marking and things like that. So we usually do three per year. So each term we do a school-wide focus so, for example, it may be on non-fiction. So there’s a lot of teamwork in the academic area.

Bee: Even outside of the classroom when we would go into the hallway or have a staff meeting, they were present and they would be able to relate to other people on staff. They were more comfortable not just with me, but with other people on staff. The spring Student Teacher that I had was able to get close enough to the vice-principal and he came in and observed her and gave her a reference letter. So in terms of confidence and being able to plant her feet I think she did a very good job of that.

Beth: Well, I have them shadow me initially with any supervision and duties that I have encouraging them to arrive at school early. They wouldn’t necessarily have to come as early as I would or stay as late as I would, but just spend as much time shadowing to see what my day was like, making them feeling welcome to come to any extra-curricular things that I was involved in. On their own, as time went on, I wouldn’t do this probably in the first placement, but in the spring placement having the students spend some time with other staff members to see some of the other extra-curricular and maybe spend some time in the Special-Ed classroom or kindergarten classroom, have an opportunity to observe them.

Rory: One of the things I do is challenge the Student Teachers to …as group do something. That may sound odd, but do something in the school that makes their presence
known that goes outside the classroom. So there’s been a variety of results in that situation for instance, one group of Student Teachers decided they were going to take a few days and create a big banner with a bunch of students. So they made a banner that’s now up on stage. One group decided in pairs they would do different clubs for their block. Two did a dance club, one did an art club, one did a sports club. I challenge them, as a group, to develop …some sort of community, and when I say community something that goes outside the classroom that involves more than just the [pupils] they work with, and challenge them to get involved in school life.

Bee: They participate in after school and extra-curricular activities such as clubs like the homework club so they can do that if they want. My fall Student Teacher, I think one of her assignments was to participate outside the classroom, so she went to the vice-principal and he assigned her to prepare the display case outside the office so that’s one of the things that she did and the spring Student Teachers, I think she helped in one of the sports teams. The fall Student Teacher attended one of the math workshops with me. The spring Student Teacher attended the ECO-SCHOOL committee with me. So that equity committee. I think both were able to attend at least one staff meeting. Spring Student Teacher was also able to attend a literacy workshop… The spring one, the sports team, she sought out the phys-ed teacher and asked if she could participate in co-coaching.

Rick: There are opportunities depending on the time of the practicum. We had a program called Arts Alive where the Student Teachers got together and presented a workshop. What some of the students [did] is offer an after-school class in reading or something along those lines. There are opportunities that either can be created by the Student Teacher or they can take advantage of.

What seems to have motivated this differentiated support was the Associate Teachers’ own professional participation in the school as teachers. They were role models for their Teacher Candidates; they understood that developing professional rapport with parents and the community was important to the teacher role. The following quotation demonstrates one Associate Teacher’s views on his professional responsibility:

Berry: I think [having a school perspective is] just a component of understanding how the school operates as an entire community. You’re not an isolated component. You’re building on the skills that you’ve come [with] and you’re also preparing for what’s ahead of you… [Teacher Candidates need to]… understand that one classroom fits in to the whole component.

Teacher Candidates' Perceptions and Insights

The impact of involvement in the school/community life facilitated Teacher Candidates’
learning in the teacher role, and was reported by Teacher Candidates as supportive. There were also experiences of Teacher Candidates that were not as beneficial to them because they did not participate in the life of the school. Here are representative excerpts from transcripts:

Jerry: [The AT] had an excellent reputation in the school. I was looking forward to it. He’d been teaching school for about 11 years. In total he'd been teaching about 17 years. I mention that because he was very well liked. He was well established and he had an excellent reputation and that positively affected my practicum experience. [This was fortunate] because [in] my first practicum I was just able to observe in many ways. Jerry suggests that his successful practicum experience was directly influenced by the reputation of his Associate Teacher and his reputation in the school. He notes that he was looking forward to the experience. He makes the comparison between practica and suggests that he received what he felt he needed in the second practicum. The Teacher Candidate implies that his Associate Teacher in his second practicum differentiated his support with him based on his needs.

Lynn: The students themselves… were very affluent. They had certain expectations within the school, but I found the students quite respectful and very engaged. The students that I was working with were very involved in a lot of extra-curricular activities, books, sports, and different clubs within the school, and there was always something happening either during the lunch hour or after school, so there was a lot of opportunities for the students [in the classroom] then [there were opportunities] for myself as a Student Teacher to become involved in the extra-curricular life of the school. [For the spring practicum, the difference lay]… [in] the expectations, and …type of homework that could go home. Not a lot got returned in my second placement, if something went home. [However] there were some students that were very keen… at my spring practicum… I found more inter-school assistance, so the older kids would come down and help the younger kids… they would have reading buddies, [and a] mentor program within the school, whereas [in] my fall school there wasn’t as much of that. Lynn: The students themselves… were very affluent. They had certain expectations within the school, but I found the students quite respectful and very engaged.

Drew: [Very different schools]. Just in terms of different programming. There was one program that was happening. It was just being spearheaded in my first practicum…[It] had to do with peace-making. My AT was involved in that. But she didn’t tell me about… [it]. That would have been something that I would have liked to be involved in because I’m really interested in the conflict resolution aspect of teaching. But it was sort of “to go outside the classroom”, and that wasn’t included. With the second practicum they were starting to prepare for a spring fair. Sort of all happened around us. But we didn’t really know… So there wasn’t really the opportunity to kind of get in there -…[it] would have been nice to know a little bit more that was going on…Information that came to the teacher sometimes didn’t get passed from the teacher to us and that made it difficult. I
feel that’s part of their [the ATs] roles to know what’s happening, so if you want to get involved, [they can say], “Here go ahead.” I mean they always say we need more people to be involved, so it just seemed funny when they have these extra bodies in the school and don’t... [use them]!

In the above excerpts from transcripts, Lynn and Drew both had expressed disappointment in the lack of opportunity to become involved in the life of the school.

Cory:  I would say we have to fit in to the existing culture, so if the teachers are really friendly and you know joking around like they were at the second school… the Student Teacher should try to fit in with that. We should be a shadow as long as the teachers will tolerate us… I’ve heard of Student Teachers who disappear or Student Teachers reading magazines while their teacher’s teaching…You wouldn’t think that we need to be told that but apparently so, so they should, it’s our job when we’re there so that the teacher whose teaching she or he should have our undivided attention.

In the above excerpt from transcripts, Cory identifies the need for Teacher Candidates need to fit into the existing culture of the school. This implies that Associate Teachers are also adjusting to the needs of their Teacher Candidates.

Lynn, describing how the Associate Teacher leads Teacher Candidates to the next steps] I would say in the moment when you’re doing your practicum they’re helping you do the immediate day-to-day plans that as an Associate Teacher I think that part of their role is to help you see the big picture of how you will get your kids to report cards, how you would deal with parents. [Help you with] a report card interview how you would track your student achievements from one term to the next and also how you plan your year from September to June. How you build in your lesson, working through units and how they build on each other and how to do cross-curricular integration and then how to prepare your kids for the next grade. So that’s more from a school perspective.

Lynn suggests that Associate Teachers differentiate support for Teacher Candidates by helping them move to their next step in their learning in the teacher role. Each Teacher Candidate has their own experiences and according to this Teacher Candidate, it is the role of the Associate Teacher to lead the Teacher Candidate forward in their experiences.

Lynn: …[In second practicum] they did include me on a variety of staff meetings. I don’t know if I contributed much, but they did include me in there divisional meetings, and there was one meeting where they would discuss numbers for the next year, so whenever my Associate Teacher went to a meeting with whomever, I was included in on that including a team meeting for bringing a child to team.

Kay:  Well, [the university] did have a mid-point day like you’d go back to [the
university] for an afternoon or whatever. That was valuable for me the first practicum. And it was sort of rejuvenating to understand their experiences a little bit because I was feeling so not connected. So I feel that was important for that learning. My second [practicum] I didn’t make it because we had a field trip that day and so I was totally fine with that.

**Conclusion**

It is evident that there is a wide variation in what constitutes Associate Teacher support in this learning category. Those Associate Teachers that did involve their Teacher Candidates in the life of the school anticipated that through their role modeling practices, they were supporting and affirmative impact on the Teacher Candidates’ resultant learning. However, Associate Teachers differed on what they role modelled to ensure that their Teacher Candidates met the applicable standard of practice in this area of their practicum evaluation. They differentiated the process of learning about the school and ways that their Teacher Candidates can become involved. That is, their role modelling behaviours may well allow the Teacher Candidate opportunities to have ownership of their school involvement, to interpret involvement as a positive contribution to school culture, and to adapt themselves appropriately and professionally in the school environment.

These Associate Teachers were role models for involvement in extra-curricular activities and academic activities, for academic foci for the school, and through their professional rapport with staff members and parents/guardians connecting their community involvement. The Associate Teachers differed on which extra-curricular activities they were involved in. For example, Rick participated in extra-curricular activities like curriculum night, while Beth participated in other events. Beth also felt it was beneficial for her Teacher Candidates to spend time in the special education environment and observe. Both Berry and Bob participated in a school-wide focus. They differed in their support for school involvement—Bob reported on the extensive teamwork in his school in the academic area to boost EQAO scores.
All these Associate Teachers differentiated their role modeling practices for school and community involvement to support the standard on the Teacher Candidates’ practicum evaluation. They understood that developing rapport with parents/guardians/caretakers and community is an important aspect of the teacher role and that it is an expectation of the ITE program when evaluating Teacher Candidates’ involvement. As positive role models, these Associate Teachers support Teacher Candidates’ growth and development as teachers. Because of their positive role modelling practices, these Associate Teachers provided an advantage to Teacher Candidates in learning the teacher role. Similarly, Teacher Candidates who reported that they would have benefited more from involvement in the life of the school would seem to be at a disadvantage.

Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that it is important for Teacher Candidates to be included in the life of the school outside the classroom. These Associate Teachers were role models for participation in activities. They supported learning in the teacher role as a process over the time of the practicum. Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that interacting with staff members through different opportunities is part of the teacher role, and these opportunities support Teacher Candidates’ evaluation during practicum in this learning area. Associate Teachers agreed that inclusion in the life of the school is part of the teacher role, but they differed on how their Teacher Candidates interacted with staff. For example, Teacher Candidates interacted with staff during staff meetings, team meetings, committee meetings, sports teams, art club/activities, curriculum night, or field trips. Teacher Candidate interaction was largely dependent on the Associate Teacher’s own participation in the school. Teacher Candidates agreed that interacting with staff members is important to their growth in the teacher role. In this unrelated group of Teacher Candidates, they had similar opportunities interacting with staff, as, for example, in their interactions during staff
A Rubric for Classroom Management

In this learning category, Classroom Management, I first present the perceptions and insights of Associate Teachers, then Teacher Candidates.

Associate Teachers Perceptions and Insights

Associate Teachers support for Teacher Candidates in the area of Classroom Management in different ways. Orientation gave Teacher Candidates a chance to develop rapport with the pupils, and to observe and participate in classroom routines and transitions. Associate Teachers varied in how they differentiated support during orientation. Some Associate Teachers had their Teacher Candidates lead small activities, like reading a book to the pupils; other Associate Teachers let their Teacher Candidates lead simple routines and transitions, like snacking and getting ready for recess. The building of rapport between pupil and Teacher Candidate that began in orientation continued regularly during the practicum block. Associate Teachers also varied in how their Teacher Candidates developed skills to be responsible for the class and manage pupils’ behaviours and misbehaviours. This group of Associate Teachers was skilled in differentiating their support and guidance with their Teacher Candidates by gauging the level of freedom required to be in control of the class that the Teacher Candidates could manage at any given time on any given day. The degree of Associate Teacher support was dependent on the abilities of the Teacher Candidates to control the class. For example, Bob discussed his Teacher Candidate’s skill in the area of classroom management: “I guess one area that she maybe wasn’t as competent was classroom management.” Associate Teachers
differentiated their support for Teacher Candidates, and for the most part, Teacher Candidates seemed to be good classroom managers. The presence of easier-to-manage pupils did not appear to be specific to any grade or division. What seems to have driven this differentiated support among this group of Associate Teachers was their assessment as teachers for monitoring the responses of their pupils, as shown in the following statement:

Bob: I guess one area that she maybe wasn’t as competent was [classroom management]. She wasn’t bad in classroom management by any stretch, but I don’t think she was as assertive as she needed to be with the classroom that she had and she definitely progressed there. We definitely differed on this. She had her idea of how she wanted to be in classroom management which was totally fine as long as she gets the kids to not misbehave and definitely she worked on that and the kids were better behaved.

Associate Teacher support represented the product of Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. That is, this supportive group of Associate Teachers allowed Teacher Candidates to take ownership of their learning process by offering them control of the classroom with as much freedom as possible. The following excerpts from transcripts are representations of these assertions:

Quin: To me it’s letting them be. I don’t know if it’s part of my role, or just part of some people’s character. If you don’t feel you have to control everything, and it’s just a classroom, then it’s their classroom also and they’re another teacher. No two people are alike. So letting them have their own independence or individuality, [is my way].

Rhonda: What I really try to do is to find out as much as I can about the individual as possible because I want them while they’re in the classroom to feel that they can take risks, that they can be creative, and have as much control of the teaching situation as they want to do.

Berry: The job as an Associate Teacher is [to] act as sort of a mentor and role model, and to create a safe and caring environment for Student Teachers to be able to come in and hone their practice. I would say to my own pupils in the classroom that’s where [you] have the opportunity to make mistakes. It’s from the mistakes that we learn, so we allow them to try different things, see different avenues, and see what reaction they get from the learning environment in the classroom.

Bob: Ideally you want to move them towards the point that, by the end you’re very confident that they can take the class by themselves, without you stepping in or anything like that.
Associate Teachers gave ownership to their Teacher Candidates in the learning process during practicum. For example, Teacher Candidates had opportunities to select areas for teaching such as language arts; Teacher Candidates were involved in what the pupils were doing in the classroom; they were responsible for transitions like giving out snacks and getting ready for recess, and Teacher Candidates applied advice from their Associate Teachers for lesson implementation. The following two excerpts from transcripts are representative of this assertion.

Rhonda: It’s quite easy because we’ve had the [orientation] days. [Teacher Candidates] can see coming up what we’ve done or I can tell them what we’ve done and where we’re going... it’s only once a week. But if they know they’re going to be responsible for the language arts program in the first week then they get a chance to say, “I was thinking about this do you think it will work?” [Orientation] days are very important. They’re also a very good opportunity to have the Student Teacher work informally with the [pupils]... so taking on some responsibility for conferencing one-on-one, taking a look at some of the work they’re doing ... so that you get a sense of where the Grade 7 students are at, and the sorts of things that are typical for them, and get a sense of who the individuals are within the class. ... They’re already warmed up to the situation they’re going to be teaching in - often teaching a couple of classes during that time. My experience is Teacher Candidates want to be doing rather than sitting and listening. So [orientation] time is really useful, I think, in that process.

Larry:  What I do each day [is]… take notes while the students are teaching …and [add] how they felt the lesson went and how they think they could improve, or need to improve, or what they would do differently next time. Then I offer suggestions.That’s also the whole [issue of] discipline and transitions and all those kinds of things. So that’s not really teaching. That’s part of the day, so I go through all those things too. And I give the students’ those responsibilities as well. They’re responsible for transitions as well, so they have to get the kids ready for recess and bring them in, and distribute snack and all those kinds of things. She [the Teacher Candidate] did a poetry unit so she would prepare her lessons ahead of time, and then I would sit with her and go through them. We would talk about anything she was worried about - what she had that she thought might not work well, I would indicate things that maybe I thought may work differently, and give some advice. [I would say], “instead of reconstructing this poem with the class, why don’t you give it to … them in… groups and let them work on it on their own, instead of with you - so those types of things...I find that Student Teachers are very teacher directed. They really want to stand in front of the class and teach. I understand that because it’s the easiest way to maintain discipline. You know, once they [the pupils] all start talking it’s really hard for make them focus. So I understand how they prefer to be in front of the class, but that’s not my style and I don’t think that’s good for the kids. So, whenever I see that lesson, I try to redirect it so it’s more kid-focused rather than teacher-focused.

Associate Teachers agreed on support for their Teacher Candidates in this learning area
as a process. Teacher Candidates need to develop rapport with the pupils when learning in the teacher role. They provided opportunities for their Teacher Candidates during orientation that allowed Teacher Candidates to get to know the pupils better, leading transition times and routines with the pupils. The Teacher Candidates’ resultant learning in the teacher role was that they could manage the dynamics of the classroom more or less effectively.

**Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions and Insights**

Teacher Candidates explored strategies in the learning area of classroom management. They varied in their perspectives of their Associate Teacher’s support or lack of support. Here are representative examples.

Cory: … The [orientation] days helped [me] figure [things] out. I have to say when I went into the first practicum he [the AT] was so bad at his classroom management - there were so many students not engaged at all with anything he did. I knew I couldn’t do worse.

Samantha: I think he commented on when I changed my teaching style and how he thought it was effective. He didn’t have much music experience so he couldn’t really help me with how to teach music, but that didn’t bother me at all because I was pretty confident in my own abilities. But I think if I had been someone with… no specific [music] experience, I probably would have [been] lost, unsure how to lead the class - if I couldn’t read the music or play it as an example for the students. So I think in my situation it worked out quite well, but in another situation it might not.

Katy: I guess it comes out sounding negative [business relationship with AT] because it was so different for me with her as opposed to the first [practicum] case. But I mean she was doing what I needed her to do. She was watching what I was doing. She gave me lots of feedback on what I was doing. She did a page of notes every day, every time I taught, she sat there. She watched what I was doing. She watched my interactions with the [pupils] so there were lots and lots of feedback there.

In the above excerpts from transcripts, Cory did not benefit greatly from his Associate Teacher’s support while Samantha and Katy did benefit from their Associate Teachers’ support in the area of classroom management. Both Associate Teachers appeared to differentiate their support for these Teacher Candidates through the careful observations of their Teacher Candidates’ teaching. For Samantha the careful observations were in order to acknowledge her
changed teaching style that was more effective. For Katy, the careful observations from her
Associate Teacher resulted in an extensive amount of feedback for her.

   Katy: ...we did so many super cool things... that we had done in... [university] [...but] I had never done when I was in elementary school, and thought it would be so great if I was able to do it....He [the Associate Teacher] had been teaching for 10 years and she [the other Associate Teacher] had been teaching for 25 years and they both felt comfortable in their job sort of thing. In both cases there were times when I took their advice and... once I thought about it I’ll make some changes to it, but in other times there was stuff we’d done in... [university] and I thought, “This could work, this could be a lot of fun”.

   Katy infers support from her Associate Teachers by suggesting that what she wanted to try in the classroom could work. She admits that she has taken advice from the expertise of her Associate Teachers.

Samantha, in her second practicum] There was one boy who always liked to speak out of turn, and he didn’t really like to sit for long, and he was always very excited about things. The teacher’s strategy to stop him from doing any of that right away and to give him very few warnings like to keep him in at recess a lot and to keep him in after school. I didn’t always feel comfortable with restricting him so quickly. I thought sometimes another strategy might work, but then he had been with that student for quite a while and so it was kind of hard for me to even try to initiate anything because I didn’t really feel comfortable because it was his classroom and I didn’t want the students to be confused as to who really the teacher was there….occasionally I gave him a bit more leeway and in other cases I felt it was more appropriate to emulate [the Associate Teacher’s] responses, rather than try some of my own. [Interviewer: Because his responses worked?] They did, but sometimes I just wasn’t comfortable using them….but then that was my first experience with that grade level and that ….environment.

   Samantha’s Associate Teacher supported her by role modeling effective strategies for classroom management.

   Sarah: I remember that when I was working on my practicum from [the university] some of our courses had given us homework. Certain projects to work on while we were doing our student teaching, and for my first practicum. I found my Associate Teacher very flexible on allowing me to gather [pupils] for whatever activity I needed to do.

   Sarah’s Associate Teacher supported her with classroom management by giving her the opportunity to work with smaller groups of pupils to finish her project assignments from the university.
Conclusion

Associate Teachers differentiated their support for their Teacher Candidates when establishing rapport with pupils. For example, Teacher Candidates observe classroom routines and transitions, or Teacher Candidates practiced being responsible for the classroom as a whole. Orientation provided these Associate Teachers with the opportunity to get to know their Teacher Candidates and mingle with them during orientation days. Rhonda and Beatrice both supported Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role in different ways during orientation by encouraging involvement with their Teacher Candidates. Teacher Candidates worked informally with pupils; they were responsible for transitions, getting the pupils ready for recess and bringing them inside the classroom. In addition, Teacher Candidates’ got pupils ready for snack. These Associate Teachers supported Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role through integrating them into the classroom. These Associate Teachers also gauged the level of freedom to control the class that their Teacher Candidates could manage at any given time. They differentiated their support as a process to support Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. The degree of Associate Teacher support was dependent on the abilities of the Teacher Candidates to control the class at a given time. Quin, Berry, and Rhonda all supported their Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role by gauging what level of freedom to offer their Teacher Candidates for controlling the class. This freedom to control the class has offered the Teacher Candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in different ways. Teacher Candidates were free to try out their ideas and apply their knowledge of the university theory under their Associate Teachers’ guidance. Rhonda admits that she sets up her Teacher Candidates for success by helping them feel comfortable about taking risks.

The differentiated support as a process of learning in the teacher role made a difference to
the Teacher Candidates’ growth and development as teachers. Larry anticipated that through his support, his Teacher Candidates would be able to manage the classroom on their own. Teacher Candidates’ getting to know pupils in the classroom meant that pupils became easier to manage over time. Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed on learning as a process in this category of classroom management. In these unrelated groups of Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates, freedom to control the class and to try one’s ideas was an important part of the learning process for both groups. For Associate Teachers, they differed on degree of control they offered Teacher Candidates. For Teacher Candidates, they were given variable degrees of control of the class from their Associate Teachers. Both groups recognized the value of providing space for Teacher Candidates to grow in the teacher role. What remains unclear when speaking about the Associate Teachers support and the resultant learning for Teacher Candidates in the teacher role is pinpointing where the successes specifically originated. That is, are the successes more based on the skills of the Associate Teachers’ differentiated support, or the abilities of the Teacher Candidates? It is only possible to say that the successful resultant learning of the Teacher Candidates is based on a combination of both Associate Teachers’ skill and Teacher Candidates’ skill in the process. The Associate Teachers’ differentiated support appeared to move the Teacher Candidates forward in their learning about effective classroom management.

**Chapter Summary**

Associate Teachers supported and guided their Teacher Candidates through the content of what was taught; through the process of learning in each of the indicators within the categories on the evaluation; and through the product of the actual lessons produced represented by how Teacher Candidates took ownership of their learning. For example, in Assessment, Planning, and
Instruction, Associate Teachers provided support for the content Teacher Candidates are required to learn in their Pre-service program, but Associate Teachers differed in their support of the content to be learned. Some Teacher Candidates were provided with an information package to begin their practicum.

Associate Teachers monitored the fit between the curriculum and the pupil by ensuring that the content taught by Teacher Candidates was meaningful and engaging for pupils. Teacher Candidates learned about the background of pupils so that they were able to fit the curriculum to the pupils’ needs through a structure of team-teaching and collaboration with their Associate Teachers.

Associate Teachers were role models of participation in the school/community life and were open to their Teacher Candidates’ participation: Associate Teachers provided shadowing opportunities for their Teacher Candidates; they provided appropriate pacing for the learning of needed skills in the teacher role, or they engaged in team-teaching with their Teacher Candidates. Associate Teachers supported Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role represented as a product or outcome of learning by permitting Teacher Candidates to take ownership of their learning, partly through their relationship with their Associate Teachers. How Teacher Candidates approached their assignments, such as taking the initiative in content areas, or taking control of the classroom, also made a difference to Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role.

In Classroom Management, Teacher Candidates had opportunities to get to know pupils better because Associate Teachers provided structures in the classroom that allowed this to happen. The impact of the Associate Teachers support varied because of the abilities of their Teacher Candidates. In classroom management, the resultant learning for Teacher Candidates was that they could manage the dynamics of the classroom more or less effectively. Teacher
Candidates could work with smaller group sizes which supported more effectively managing the dynamics of the group. Teacher Candidates received feedback implying that Associate Teachers were carefully observing their teaching. Associate Teachers also role modeled effective classroom management strategies. Those Associate Teachers who differentiated their support were considered positive role models.
Chapter Five: Data Analysis: Participatory Dialogue

Introduction

In this study, dialogue serves to provide Teacher Candidates with information on what practices are the Teacher Candidates’ strengths, Teacher Candidates’ practices that need to be improved, what may be continued practices, and/or what needs to change, all of which can affect the success of the Teacher Candidates learning in the teacher role. This chapter details the specialized dialogue that Associate Teachers use to support and guide their Teacher Candidates during practicum in the framework of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation in four of the seven broad categories. The categories represented in the data are: Assessment, Planning, and Instruction; Understanding Curriculum and the Learner; Involvement in School/Community Life; and Classroom Management. This chapter parallels Chapter 4 in structure. The impact of Associate Teacher support on the resultant learning for Teacher Candidates is described from the perspective of both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates in these unrelated groups. Not all Associate Teachers talked about this impact and not all Teacher Candidates talked about their resultant learning from how their Associate Teachers supported them. Therefore, each category only has a selected number of excerpts from transcripts. What is apparent is that Associate Teachers who were supportive role models support their Teacher Candidates differently than Associate Teachers who were not supportive role models. Associate Teachers as supportive role models differentiated their dialogue through content, process, and product differentiation described in each category.

A Rubric for Assessment, Planning and Instruction

Associate Teacher Perceptions and Insights
Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates in the areas of Assessment, Planning, and Instruction. Associate Teachers varied on the content of their dialogue with Teacher Candidates. For example, Associate Teachers had ongoing discussions and debriefings about lesson planning appropriate to the needs of the pupils and gave feedback. Associate Teachers used questioning techniques to better understand the intentions of the Teacher Candidates and what content of lessons was relevant to the pupils. The following excerpts from transcripts support these assertions:

Berry: I think you have to say, “This is what I’m doing,” because if not you’re assuming they’re getting [the Teacher Candidates] it by osmosis - which might work for some people, but I think you have to say, “This is what I’m trying to do”, or “This is my modeling”, or “This is what I’m purposely doing”, so that Teacher Candidates get the justification and maybe you start bringing in… encouraging the Teacher Candidates to ask relevant questions like, “What did you think about Gardner’s? Why did we plan this lesson with these components to it?.” “How does that relate to that, zone of proximal development?” [It’s] about, if we make our lesson too hard, are we scaffolding correctly for the student? So we start taking some of those knowledge ideas and showing STs where the pupils are. Even sometimes I think looking at the curriculum [is useful]. I think, many people when they first get into teaching they think, “Ok I’m going to take the textbook (clap) and it’ll work for me. You need to know where your students are and whether that, the textbook is above or below them, and how are you actually going to approach that? … I think it [the AT’s guidance] needs to be explicit. These are the ways I’m going to accomplish this, and this is why I’m doing it.

Bonne: Don’t just go through I’ve got this lesson plan and I’m going to teach it come hell or high water. I want them to be thinking on their feet. As they’re watching and teaching the lesson they realize the kids aren’t on target or on board with them, change it, stand up have them do a little movement game and bring them back or just go on and I’ll come back to this later. I mean find a way to see what the limitations of the kids are, what the abilities of the kids are, and think on your feet and be really, really fluid in your teaching. That’s something that I think they learn to do. I’ve seen lessons going in the toilet after five minutes, but they still teach for the full 15 minutes and I say, you could have bailed after the first five minutes and come to me and said, they weren’t listening anyway, I was wasting their time, they weren’t getting the ideas, I’d rather rework it and try it again as oppose to plowing through for 15 minutes and ending up being a task master and the kids being upset and fidgety.

Beth: I would encourage them to talk to me about what they really liked about their lesson, how they felt it went... pointing out some of the really positives of the lesson… And hopefully getting them to the point where they recognize where the weak areas are,
and where they need to improve. If they don’t, then talking to them about it. “This is where you need to go now.” Then we would plan... We would plan the next day’s lesson and how we would restructure that, where you would go from there and what you would add on. I find that the third week is usually the most difficult. That’s where they[STs] take this little jump up to 75% of the instructional day. This is where they generally cry, and get really really tough on themselves, and they [the STs] think that they’re horrible people and nobody [the pupils] got it...[then] you have to reinforce [with] what was wonderful about their lesson. What was really great about their lesson, when you did such and such. Once again you’re boosting them, thank god. Maybe model, or do this; maybe give them a little bit of a break; the next day...show them. I find it’s very similar with working with the pupils; you want them to focus on the positive, but you also address areas of need.

Berry: If it’s a lesson plan I would say, “These are one or two items that I think are missing in your plan, I’d like you to integrate them.” They would generally give it back to me... [having] integrated it. If it’s a practice type thing then I would expect that in their next lesson we would see modeled, the thing that we talked about... [we would then] talk about the difference between the two lessons for the pupils within the classroom. [I would say], “So, OK. I’ve asked you to focus on at-risk kids. Did you do it? How did it work? Do you think that those students got your idea? What were the key ideas?” [The Teacher Candidate would] then integrate those and... [later] we come back and we revisit that Associate Teachers talked about assessment, and how assessment is useful to guide teaching practice.

They talked about Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences, or presented Teacher Candidates with research relevant to a particular pupil. The following excerpts from transcripts show this assertion:

Berry: I often will share with the student our data, what our school improvement plan is and why, and what the background behind it is, so that they have an idea of why are we doing some of the things that we are doing in this classroom, so that they know some of the background behind... the planning, ... what the school says are our priorities and why. ...Teacher Candidates also [need to] know some of those components.

Berry: “How do you use assessment to guide your practice?” [I] talk with STs about the different types of assessment - what it is, and how you’re using those with different groups of [pupils] in the classroom - so they see you working with your high kids, they see you working with your at-risk kids. They understand that you’re planning out how you’re working with each of those individual groups, and how you’re gradually going to release things.

Berry: I’ll engage them in Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences and things like that so that they have an understanding of the frequency of assessment or what is the goal of assessment so that they understand what they’re background knowledge is and how they know that will improve effective teaching.
Berry: I think you have to say to them what theory explains to what’s going on in the classroom. They need to know, often one of the things that I’ll do if I have someone in September. The first practicum block is I’ll talk to them about specific students in the classroom. If there’s an autistic student or an ADD student I’ll give them research that I’ve read in that area and say these are strategies that I feel are going to work so they know where that’s coming from and they can take that knowledge, I often at the beginning with have a little collection of articles on 3-part lesson on goals and assessment say, and I say, these are things I feel are important components of the classroom program, so they see where that theory is and how it’s applied.

Associate Teachers discussed with their Teacher Candidates the grouping of pupils in a way appropriate to pupils’ needs, as in the case of pupils studying English as a Second Language (ESL), and in the situation where pupils can support one another; they also talked about what differentiation means as a theoretical concept and its application to the classroom. As part of ongoing discussions, Associate Teachers were not only focused on the learning needs of their Teacher Candidates, but also were cognizant that lesson content was engaging for pupils as a process of learning over time. These are representative excerpts from transcripts:

Bee: I had ESL students, Home School Program students (HSP), and about three students receiving resources. So those are three different programs. For the ESL students, because she had already observed me pairing the ESL students with stronger Mandarin speakers she was able to take advantage of that and say, ok, here are the students that should pair up with one another. This is the same with HSP students so her grouping was same ability grouping that’s how she managed that.

Rhonda: We talk about what differentiation would mean, and for example, the grayness as well as taking a theoretical concept and then applying that in the classroom. One of the discussions I’ve had in the past for example with differentiation is do you differentiate with every project that you give and say if you have oral strengths you can present this orally and if you have written strengths you can present this in a written way? or do you differentiate over the course of the year so that everyone gets a chance to try different areas and skills that within the course of the year, every student has a chance to shine in an area that they really relate with or do well in or are comfortable in. We have a lot of conversations like that and how does that look in a real classroom? What can you do? What can you maybe not do? What you can do as a beginning teacher and know you want to do it more in the future, but you’re not quite ready to take on and how many balls can you have in the air at the same time if you like. So we do a lot of that, and I would say that in the last couple of years, literature circles and differentiation of learning have been big things.

Berry: As they’re delivering their lesson you give them suggestions of what they can do there and then [say], “Have you thought about that student over there he looks completely unengaged.” So it’s current and you’re completely trying to draw their attention to that. And so to me that’s sort of the first 2 weeks in the process.

What gave rise to this dialogue was apparently the Associate Teachers’ professional approach to the learning of another adult: They are positive role models for the Ethical Standards
in Teaching. This group of Associate Teachers wanted to share with the Teacher Candidates their knowledge about the teacher role in assessment, planning and instruction. They also appeared to hold themselves accountable to some extent for their Teacher Candidates’ success in learning the teacher role. They wanted the Teacher Candidates to be successful in the role of teacher, sometimes charting their path to the successful completion of the practicum course.

The degree of dialogue between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates affected the extent to which Teacher Candidates developed in the teacher role: Teacher Candidates that engaged in considerable dialogue with their Associate Teachers were at an advantage over other Teacher Candidates because they were able to benefit from the expertise of an experienced teacher. For example, Teacher Candidates could bounce ideas off their Associate Teachers for appropriateness to the teaching and learning process and could ask questions of the Associate Teachers. Here is a representative excerpt from the transcripts:

Bee: … In terms of language and writing we had spoken about it earlier because I am very passionate about language, and I had shared the experience I had that [pupils] have to learn writing principles and conventions within the context of their own writing… pieces. So I like[d] that she applied that writing theory and literacy theory into those lessons.

Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions and Insights

The resultant learning for Teacher Candidates in this learning category was in area of content in the teacher role, in the area of process, and product. Teacher Candidates learned in the teacher role from both effective and less supportive Associate Teachers. However, less supportive Associate Teachers did not support their transition from Student Teacher to professional teacher. Here are representative excerpts from transcripts:

Samantha ... Second practicum feedback less useful than the first... I think it’s just more because we talked more in-depth about how my lesson was progressing and my relationship with the students, and I felt like I got more feedback out of that [first] experience rather than the second. I also found that we would do more discussion of what
my lessons were going to be in the future. I would [give] my ideas for the lessons, and she would give feedback and say, “oh well, [you] try this... I would suggest you do it a different way.” Then I would avoid a less successful lesson. Whereas, [in] the second practicum, [the AT] wasn’t as talkative in that sense. I didn’t always want to ask more and more questions because sometimes I felt like I was taking up his time. ... I didn’t want to be intrusive that way, so I found that his feedback when he gave it was more after the fact. He would say, “Oh well, I wouldn’t have done this this way because blah blah blah,” but it was less preventable I guess you could say.[ST3-5] In my first practicum, I received very detailed written reports each time I [taught], and after I read it at the end of the day, my teacher would discuss with me about what I can improve on, and she mentioned both the positive and less supportive so I would know what I did well, and what I needed to improve on, and also I asked her a lot of other questions that arises when I am in a school environment. I didn’t really think about [it] until I was there. Stuff like age appropriate grouping of [pupils], and other classroom management techniques, and ways of evaluating subjective work such as artwork, and music and drama classes.

Kay: …as I say, he had this journal. He had this notebook, like an exercise book, and wrote [notes] every time I did a lesson and took those few minutes after to give me feedback and it was incredibly valuable.

Katy: I guess it comes out sounding negative [business relationship with Associate Teacher] because it was so different for me with her as opposed to the first [practicum] case. But I mean she was doing what I needed her to do. She was watching what I was doing. She gave me lots of feedback on what I was doing. She did a page of notes every day, every time I taught, she sat there. She watched what I was doing. She watched my interactions with the [pupils] so there were lots and lots of feedback there. I never spoke to her really throughout the day at all. It only happened at the end of day. So at the end of the day, then I would get [the feedback]. We would sit down when the pupils were gone. It was just sort of her telling me, “I thought this, I thought that.” I would say, “Thank you”, and we would move on to what was happening tomorrow. “Do you have everything you need?” “Do you need to get you anything, in terms of resources?” Whether I did or not, [The question was asked] and that was it.

Jerry: I definitely had feedback as I went along. The feedback was kind of cool the way it worked out. It was kind of interesting. I got a lot more feedback when I first started. My first lesson was the most feedback I ever got… for sure my first practicum. I never thought about this before but maybe it’s just as important to give students a lot of feedback sooner. I got a lot sooner. I never thought about it that way because I got a lot of feedback right away and I was able to improve my teaching practice. For example, I was talking over pupils and not waiting for them to be quiet and not establishing my presence. The Associate Teacher taught me that. He told me that really early on. He needed to because that was really important to improve my teaching practice. I carried that through and it was difficult to work from, but least I was able to work from [it] and establish quiet [in the class] before talking.

Associate Teachers who were not as effective role models did not appear to support the growth and development of Teacher Candidates in the teacher role. They did not provide choices
on what to teach, they did not apply the Associate Teachers’ expected expertise as teachers, and the Teacher Candidates did not benefit from their planning practices. Following are representative excerpts from transcripts:

Darcy: In my second practicum she didn’t say a word for a whole month about what I was doing. I did what I wanted within certain restrictions. She was certainly very adamant that I teach the exact math book in all the lessons and that I couldn’t miss a question. She also was very prescriptive about how many sheets the kids had to fill out, worksheets, and that the pupils had to complete them. So I worked within those structures because I wasn’t able to move her otherwise. But I also had a fair amount of freedom within how I did that teaching. There was no feedback. There was no mentorship…She actually seemed quite uninterested in both me and the pupils. We’re talking about a woman who was on Face-book all day on the computer.

Mary: I designed an art lesson…that’s another thing she’d say is that you can do a lesson on such and such, but it didn’t seem to have any relation to what she was doing, and so I would prepare it, and she would say, “Oh, we don’t have time for that today.”

Kay: The first Associate Teacher didn’t seem to really know [how to plan]. She didn’t have a long-term plan. In fact, she mentioned that there was no way she was going to submit one, and she ended up telling the principal that her computer crashed and she lost it. She got tearful saying, “I can’t do it again”… playing this really weird mind-game that she didn’t have it. But she told me she was refusing to do it… she didn’t have a long-range plan, so whatever!

Conclusion

Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates in the area of Assessment, Planning, and Instruction as appropriate to the needs of the Teacher Candidate. In some instances, Associate Teachers differentiated the timing of their dialogue with their Teacher Candidates. For example, they provided feedback to their Teacher Candidates immediately after their lesson, as Kay did, or Associate Teachers provided feedback to their Teacher Candidates at the end of the day, as Katy did. Associate Teachers engaged with their Teacher Candidates in ongoing dialogue. They used explicit language to explain what they are doing, and supported Teacher Candidates’ process of learning in the teacher role by guiding them to think on their feet while they are teaching. In other words, they supported their reflection-in-action. Part of this
learning process is for Teacher Candidates to find ownership of what they are doing. Associate Teachers want Teacher Candidates to change what they are doing mid-lesson if they believe that the lesson is not progressing well. The behaviour of Associate Teachers in guiding Teacher Candidates to “think on their feet” supports Teacher Candidates learning in the teacher role. Effective teachers attend to all the needs of pupils; and sometimes during lesson delivery, all pupils’ needs are not met, so the teacher must change his or her immediate approach. This behaviour reflects being responsive to the needs of the pupils at all times.

Associate Teachers shared school data; they also talked about different types of pupils’ assessments and the frequency of assessment; they engaged in conversations about the multiple intelligences; they discussed theory and what theory explains; they shared knowledge of special needs pupils and offered their Teacher Candidates research to be read in that area; and they modeled pairing-up pupils with more capable pupils with their Teacher Candidates and talked about what they were doing. Associate Teachers explored what differentiation means and how it reflects in the classroom.

These Associate Teachers also attended to the affective aspects of learning in the teacher role. They comforted Teacher Candidates’ emotional needs, boosting them according to the needs of the Teacher Candidates. Associate Teachers also gave explicit instructions to Teacher Candidates on what to include, and or what to attend to, in their lessons, and encouraged and sometimes instructed the Teacher Candidate to reflect on those pointed directions and resultant learning from reflective practice. The encouragement of reflection supported the Teacher Candidates’ ownership in the process by having them make their own comparisons with subsequent lessons. These effective Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates for assessment, planning, and instruction through content, process, and product of lessons.
Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue in the content of lessons in several ways. They used explicit language about what they were doing; they asked questions put to their Teacher Candidates; they shared school data; they talked about types of assessment; they discussed the multiple intelligences; they reviewed theory, what it means, and its application to the classroom; they talked about special needs pupils and knowledge of them related to their learning; and they talked about what differentiation means. Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue in the process of learning in the teacher role. Associate Teachers differed on the timing of feedback given to their Teacher Candidates—for example, after a lesson, in mid-lesson, or at day’s end. Associate Teachers were responsive to the needs of the Teacher Candidates: They used explicit instruction and then followed up with their Teacher Candidates on the implementation of these instructions encouraging reflective practice. This process entails both the process of learning and the product of learning. The instructions from the Associate Teacher are such that he or she anticipates that the Teacher Candidates interpret what is said, and act accordingly in order to meet the target standards of their evaluation. They encouraged Teacher Candidates to gain ownership in a process of learning in the teacher role and follow explicit instructions to meet target standards.

Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue in content areas like language (writing conventions); in meeting lesson objectives when Teacher Candidates delivered lessons; and when Teacher Candidates delivered lessons, as Katy did. Her Associate Teacher watched her deliver lessons, observed her interactions with pupils, provided her resources, and checked whether she needed anything for the next day. This specific content feedback had an impact on Teacher Candidate’s learning in the teacher role, as was evident from the Teacher Candidate’s comment that the Associate Teacher was exceptionally helpful. Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates reported on the impact of this support to help Teacher Candidates learn and
grow in the teacher role. The Teacher Candidates often learned from Associate Teacher practices, like applying writing theory to writing principles and conventions within the context of a pupil’s own writing piece, or making sure they were prepared for lessons the next day. To cite another example, Jerry corrected the fact that he was talking to pupils without first waiting for them to be quiet. He got advice from his Associate Teacher on how to establish his presence with the class. The product of his learning in the teacher role is the result of his attention to what he needed to do in order to succeed and reach his target standard on his evaluation in the area.

Associate Teachers’ dialogue had an impact on learning in the teacher role as a process. The impact of Associate Teacher dialogue also supported Teacher Candidates’ own initiatives, such as the Teacher Candidate’s asking the Associate Teacher pointed questions, such as: who was receptive to answering questions, age-appropriate groupings, classroom management, and evaluating subjective work of the pupils as in the case of Lori. These Associate Teachers conversed with their Teacher Candidates in the content areas that had an impact on their learning in the teacher role. Other Teacher Candidates reported on the impact of the Associate Teacher’s dialogue, but the specific content of the dialogue is unknown—as in the case of Kay, who described the feedback as *incredibly valuable*. Samantha reported that she benefited much from one of her Associate Teachers who was most talkative with her, describing her first practicum as more useful or successful because of the dialogue with her Associate Teacher. She described the dialogue as more preventative than dialogue exchanged after the fact.

Teacher Candidates reported that some Associate Teachers did not dialogue about issues related to teaching and learning or the Teacher Candidates’ progress and learning in the teacher role, as in the cases of Darcy and Mary. Both of these Teacher Candidates were at a disadvantage when trying to learn in the teacher role because their Associate Teacher’s did not converse well with them. Mary specifically was at a disadvantage in the content, process, and product of
learning in the teacher role, a fact that provided her a less supportive experience, although she
did manage to structure her lessons for content in agreement with the Ontario curriculum
expectations. She managed her curriculum expectations and her relation with her Associate
Teacher in such a manner as to complete successfully the practicum course. Kay appeared to be
placed with an Associate Teacher who did not plan in a way that would help the Teacher
Candidate. A teacher is expected to plan for the learning needs of all pupils. This Teacher
Candidate did not benefit from her Associate Teachers’ expertise in the area of planning, but
nevertheless managed her curriculum expectations through her relationship with the Associate
Teacher to meet her own target standards for the practicum course.

In these unrelated groups of Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates, both groups
agreed on what behaviours of the Associate Teachers supported and guided the Teacher
Candidates in the teacher role in this learning category. Associate Teachers supported their
Teacher Candidates in the teacher role in the content area, in the process of learning in the
teacher role, and in the product of learning. The unrelated group of Teacher Candidates also
agreed on the support of their Associate Teachers in these areas.

In the content area, for example, Associate Teachers dialogued with their Teacher
Candidates about specific lessons, and about assessment. Teacher Candidates also asked specific
questions of their Associate Teachers. In the process of learning, both groups asked questions
over time. Both groups agreed that watching the Teacher Candidates’ interactions with pupils
was important. Associate Teachers watched the engagement of their pupils during lesson
delivery. Teacher Candidates also reported that their Associate Teachers watched their
interactions with pupils as did Katy and Samantha. For the product of learning, both Associate
Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that their own active engagement in the learning of the
Teacher Candidate is important. Teacher Candidates benefited from the active engagement of
their Associate Teachers. The resultant learning for Teacher Candidates was ownership of their learning in the teacher role. Both groups differed on their reporting of Associate Teacher practices with Teacher Candidates’ reports of Associate Teachers who were not supportive role models. The resultant learning for Teacher Candidates who were paired with these Associate Teachers was the successful completion of the practicum course, but without the knowledge, skill, and growth in the teacher role that comes from the support of an expert in the profession. In this regard, the practicum course was less successful for this group of Teacher Candidates.

**A Rubric for Understanding the Curriculum and the Pupil Learner**

In the area of Understanding Curriculum and the Pupil Learner, through dialogue with their Associate Teachers, Teacher Candidates gained knowledge of pupils in the classroom in practical terms. Through discussion, Teacher Candidates had opportunities to fit the Ontario curriculum expectations to the learning needs of the pupils. They became familiar with how to structure their lessons according to the diversity of pupils’ needs, but with variable success. Associate Teachers varied the subject matter of their discussions with Teacher Candidates to ensure that pupils understood the assigned curriculum objectives. They discussed theory; knowledge of the pupils and of pupils’ level of understanding the expectations on the curriculum; what the Associate Teacher was teaching that was effective and what the Teacher Candidate was teaching that was effective, as well as how they were teaching it, and how flexible was the schedule of teaching in meeting pupils’ needs. In particular, Associate Teachers gave Teacher Candidates ongoing specialized feedback that was essential to the Teacher Candidates’ growth and development in the teacher role. These Associate Teachers were skilled at recognizing the feedback that would support Teacher Candidate growth depending on the needs of their Teacher Candidates. For example, Teacher Candidates who had no classroom experience were given
considerable step-by-step feedback to improve their skills, while Teacher Candidates who had classroom experience were given less guidance. Associate Teachers were skilled in the timing of feedback, the frequency of feedback, the content of the feedback, and the amount of feedback they provided their Teacher Candidates at any one time. They were skilled in their pacing of conversations, and, generally, in their daily delivery of feedback to their Teacher Candidates.

**Associate Teacher Perceptions and Insights**

Associate Teachers’ disposition and attitude affected how they interpreted their role and their ability to provide ongoing feedback to Teacher Candidates. These Associate Teachers also acknowledged that ongoing dialogue and feedback with their Teacher Candidates is their professional responsibility in the Associate Teacher role. Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates reported on the intended impact of their specialized feedback. They sought to support Teacher Candidates’ success as their usual practice with their own pupils and by communicating what they were doing, and they expected that providing positive, constructive feedback to their Teacher Candidates enabled them to grow, and move to the next stage. They made Teacher Candidates aware of at-risk pupils. They expected their Teacher Candidates to learn from their inviting approach in the teacher role, and observe teaching practices that benefit pupils. One Associate Teacher in this sample acknowledged the learning impact of not providing Teacher Candidates with dialogue.

The following below are representative excerpts from transcripts:

**Berry:** If [the Associate Teacher] didn’t provide feedback, I don’t know what good the role would be because [the Teacher Candidate] wouldn’t even know if [the Teacher Candidate] did a good job or a bad job. [The Teacher Candidate] could probably tell a little based on the students’ reactions and how much work they’ve done.

**Berry:** I think that at-risk and assessment components are things that still require a lot of significant growth. I don’t think that that’s natural. I think that that takes you a long time to be able to pull those ideas together. I don’t think that that happens within 1 year of
teaching. I think that takes many years of experience, so certainly those are often as I’m talking with students to remind yourself to think about ways that you can deal with things like boys and reading and boys and writing and things like that so they know where the issues are.

Berry: I’m there to give them constructive or positive feedback: to enable them to grow to, become stronger teachers and stronger people within the profession so that they have [good] experience... [and good] exposure in the profession.

Beth: You want your class to be successful but you also want your teacher candidate to be successful as part of that plan. You want the two of you to be working well together. Having those feedback sessions at the end of the day … it’s supportive in nature. But, at the same time, they [the STs] understand that you are accountable for pupil learning. It can’t just be fluff, or something that can be written off.

Rory: I find giving verbal feedback in conversations, but I also give written feedback and again write down the strengths I’ve seen and then make suggestions on how I think they can take that to the next step further and then ask them to try and implement that in the next lesson that comes along.

Rick: If they see me working with a group of children and one [child] is acting up a little or they think they could [help?]. I don’t want them to jump in, but they would normally do and what they have done in many situations in the past is say, XXXXX [AT first name] or “ Mr. XXXXX , how about I work with this child over here that would be really excellent.” If I was in someone else’s classroom and I was learning from them before I would intervene I would ask and say to the teacher, I’ve noticed that perhaps this is someone that I could work with. What do you think about me taking this child? and I would do this in any situation teaching or the playground. I would always make sure that I am not dissing the person who is in charge. If I’m working in my son’s daycare for example, even though I am a teacher and I see a situation develop if it’s not an emergency teacher, I would ask the daycare teacher if this is something that they would feel comfortable having me do. So that is something that I would think that Student Teachers who have volunteer experience as most of them do should have developed is the ability to see a situation so they [the Student Teacher] can work and talk with the teacher first and then we use that proactive-ability to work.

Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions and Insights

Associate Teachers’ feedback had a significant effect on the Teacher Candidates as well as the Associate Teachers. The following excerpts from transcripts by Teacher Candidates show that they managed their university curriculum expectations through their relationships with their Associate Teachers. The Teacher Candidates were supported in the content of what they were teaching. They were also supported as a process of learning in the teacher role through on-going dialogue about the teaching and learning processes, resulting in a team-teaching experience or
Katy: [Associate Teachers] know the age group better… My Grade 7 class was a really immature…seven class, so I might have thought that they were ready for a certain story or a certain kind of vocabulary…[but] he [the AT] knows them. He knew them when they were in Grade 6 [being such a small school], so he could say, “they’re not ready for that.” “It will go right over their heads.” And the same with the second practicum, where…the school was split. They had a French immersion group, so all the level 3s and 4s were doing French immersion, and all of our class [were] 1s and 2s… and mostly boys, so the dynamic of that class was [of] a much lower level class…. [there] were sort of things that, you know, had to be much more visual. All that stuff… really applied in the classroom because pretty much everyone was a level 1 and 2. She [the AT] understands that better; she knows the kids better.

Darcy: explains …I put theory to my Associate Teacher particularly in my first practicum and she was very interested in it so we had lots of good discussions. But she didn’t bring the theory to me, I brought the theory to her. We talked about the students all the time. It wasn’t just her sitting and talking about me, we were talking about how that teaching worked with the learning. So we were always talking about students and what worked for them, what happened in the classroom that day, what happened with the students, how do we help the students, ask the student why, that kind of thing. That’s about teaching.

Darcy…what she put on my evaluation was how she experienced the practicum and for her it was like having a colleague in the room that you were team-teaching with.

Associate Teachers did not consistently dialogue with their Teacher Candidates as a means of supporting their professional growth and development, and therefore, some Teacher Candidates did not benefit from the expertise of an experienced teacher. For example, the absence of dialogue about how the Teacher Candidate was implementing the lesson plan meant that the Teacher Candidate had to discover on his or her own the fit between the curriculum being taught in the lesson and the level of understanding of the pupils to achieve the lesson objectives. Less supportive Associate Teachers were characterized as being disengaged from active learning in the classroom, and by not giving the Teacher Candidate feedback until the final evaluation. The resultant learning impact for these Teacher Candidates was a poor practicum experience in the teacher role, not because of the Teacher Candidate’s lack of initiative but
because of the actions of the Associate Teacher. The Teacher Candidates appeared to have responded successfully, thus managing their university curricular expectations and their relations with these Associate Teachers who were not positive role models. The absence of dialogue meant that Associate Teachers who were not supportive role models were not engaged in the Teacher Candidates’ learning process. Following are examples:

Lynn: I think I got a little bit more [feedback] in my second practicum. In my first practicum where I felt I didn’t have the confidence to just kind of go with my gut. I felt I needed a lot more feedback then I was getting. I think part of it was just my AT’s style. He was just good with [kids] - if the kids are happy, he was happy. It was all good. [from the AT’s perspective]. Why do anything more explicitly when he could observe things going smoothly? [But] I wanted more direct feedback as opposed to – “yah, it was a great lesson.” I think I wanted more [like] “When you did this, that worked, but if you had done this [you] could have gotten there”, I don’t think I got that at all in my first practicum.

Darcy: In my second practicum, it was with a teacher that was really, really, disengaged!!!!!...There were a number of students that really struggled.

Darcy: this Teacher Candidate’s second placement] I got no feedback at all until I got my final evaluation.

The fact that Associate Teachers were disengaging produced two learning impacts for Teacher Candidates. The first impact resulted in Teacher Candidates not benefiting from the expertise of Associate Teachers concerning the fit of the Ontario curriculum and the learning needs of the pupils. Regarding the second impact, Associate Teachers being unengaged meant that there was a lack of Associate Teacher initiative in trying to understand what the Teacher Candidates were learning in their university program. This unrelated group of Teacher Candidates was left to understand on their own the university curriculum applied to classroom practice. Furthermore, the use of focused dialogue between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates meant a greater likelihood that Teacher Candidates would grow and develop in the teacher role based on the seven broad performance competencies, as a benchmark to successful initiation. However, Teacher Candidates’ growth and development in the teacher role was
undercut by the Associate Teachers’ lack of knowledge about the theory their Teacher Candidates were currently learning. Nevertheless, Teacher Candidates’ growth in performance competencies were impacted by the Associate Teachers’ own practical theory of teaching rather than the university’s optimal presentation of a theory-to-practice connection. In other words, while Teacher Candidates benefited considerably by the scale of dialogue with their Associate Teachers, their growth and development may have been influenced more by the Associate Teachers’ practical knowledge of teaching than by the Teacher Candidates’ theoretical foundation learned in their university courses.

Conclusion

Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates in the fit between the Ontario curriculum expectations and the learner. The Associate Teachers differed in their approach to dialogue in this category related to content, process, and product, or outcome of learning in the teacher role. They differed in the content of their discussions with their Teacher Candidates. Associate Teachers were proactive in their discussions with Teacher Candidates—for example, informing them that it takes a long time to acquire the skills needed to assess at-risk pupils and teach special needs pupils, as in the case of Berry. The specialized content in the dialogue supported the Teacher Candidate in the teacher role and the resultant learning that is expected from the Teacher Candidate in order to meet target standards on the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation. In contrast, Rory provides suggestions and feedback in conversations with his Teacher Candidates on how Teacher Candidates can take something to the next step. The Associate Teachers varied in their process of learning with their Teacher Candidates. Rory provides suggestions and feedback to his Teacher Candidates in conversation. In contrast, Rick aims for Teacher Candidates to show their initiative to volunteer to help individual pupils who
are having difficulty. Both Associate Teachers gave support for the process of learning, but with a different approach. For product of learning, Rory gives evidence that he encourages his Teacher Candidates to learn from his conversations with them by adapting and interpreting his advice, finding ownership in that advice applied to practice, and moving to the next step to achieve the target standard for the practicum. Additionally, the affective aspect of learning in the teacher role is made evident by Beth: she wants to be able to work well with her Teacher Candidate, implying that she feels somewhat accountable for the progress of her Teacher Candidates in learning the competencies in the teacher role.

For this unrelated group, the impact of the specialized dialogue with the Associate Teachers made a difference to the Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. Associate Teachers reported on the resultant learning of their Teacher Candidates and their expectations of their learning progress in the teacher role, as in the case of Berry. He expects that his constructive or positive feedback will enable his Teacher Candidates to become stronger teachers within the profession. Another Associate Teacher relates his view of the impact on learning when Associate Teachers do not provide feedback: he advocates for Associate Teachers engaging in the learning process by providing significant feedback. This study provides evidence that specialized dialogue in the areas of content, process, and product is most beneficial to Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role.

The impact of specialized dialogue with Teacher Candidates made a difference to Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role as reported by Teacher Candidates. Katy learned from her Associate Teacher based on the Associate Teachers’ knowledge of the Grade 7 class. This content knowledge of the Associate Teacher made a difference to the Teacher Candidates’ approach or process of lesson planning. For example, the Associate Teacher advised her not to use a particular story and a certain kind of vocabulary in class because of the maturity and
academic achievement of the pupils. Similarly, for other Teacher Candidates, the impact of learning was in the areas of both content and process learning. Darcy explained her theory to her Associate Teacher, who was receptive to this content, and the Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate conversed continually about the pupils’ learning. She reported that the resultant learning for her was a team-teaching experience. This process of learning supported her benefiting from the expertise of her Associate Teacher and the fit between the curriculum and the learner.

Teacher Candidates reported on the impact of Associate Teachers who were not supportive role models on Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. These Associate Teachers did not provide feedback to their Teacher Candidates; that they lacked in the quality of content feedback, such as saying “yah, it was a great lesson” Lynn; and that the Associate Teachers who were not positive role models did not help the Teacher Candidates manage the pupils in especially difficult situations. These Associate Teachers were ineffective in their content with their Teacher Candidates, in their process of learning with their Teacher Candidates, and in the product or result of the learning process to achieve the Teacher Candidates’ target standards through a process of learning.

Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that Associate Teacher support in the content area in the teacher role is important. Associate Teachers who were supportive role models provided information to their Teacher Candidates in the content in the teacher role. For example, Associate Teachers gave pupil assessment information, or other content information to enable Teacher Candidates to grow in the teacher role. Teacher Candidates also reported on the support of content information such as gaining knowledge of Grade 7 pupils. Associate Teachers differentiated support for their Teacher Candidates in the process of learning in the teacher role because their engagement with their Teacher Candidates was unique to their own expertise.
Teacher Candidates did not benefit from unengaged Associate Teachers who lacked the initiative to understand what they were learning in their university courses. Associate Teacher initiatives to engage themselves in the Teacher Candidates’ learning process were intended to be helpful, to guide, and to support their Teacher Candidates’ development in the teacher role.

**A Rubric for Involvement in School/Community Life**

**Associate Teacher Perceptions and Insights**

Associate Teachers involved their Teacher Candidates in various ways: They welcomed Teacher Candidates into their schools, they introduced them to staff, they gave staff handbooks to the Teacher Candidates, and they discussed the community as a whole. In addition, through planning small activities, Associate Teachers integrated the Teacher Candidates more and more in the classroom each time they were at the school. Associate Teachers also created an environment to enhance Teacher Candidates’ confidence over time, with the result that Teacher Candidates also improved their relationship with the school community. Here are representative excerpts from transcripts:

Beth: In my role as an Associate Teacher the first thing I would do is meet the students, and try to make them feel as [comfortable as possible in our school], giving them the tour of the school, *introducing them*, providing them with a staff handbook so they can read what the different procedures are [giving them] student lists and talking about the community as a whole. What the community involvement is - I sort of give them the big picture.

Berry: As they come through their [orientation] days I’ll ask them to plan *little activities* to integrate them into the classroom,… [create] a brief picture book or a newspaper article. So each day they come in, their days are more and more integrated into [the work]. And so when they get to their [practice] days they’ve already had experience in terms of the pupils. [Also] in terms of myself and maybe [some] other people within the school community, so that they have a sense of how… [my class] operates.

Rick: I did [detect stages from neophyte to professional] in almost all cases that [Student Teachers] develop confidence in their abilities [and] their teaching improved. Their relationship with the school community improved to the point where many come back for a visit and are mobbed by the kids.
Bob: I think it depends on them. We had a family science night where a couple of Student Teachers actually volunteered and actually came that night and did an activity along with the other teachers. But it had a lot to do with these teachers being really excited. They were also good friends so they liked working with each other. Another Student Teacher helped with basketball with a different teacher that wasn’t his Associate Teacher. My Student Teacher worked on the play with the set design with a different teacher so there were definitely opportunities. So one of the jobs of the Associate Teacher is to let them know this is what we have going on this month, if any of those things are of interest to you feel free to [get involved]. I can introduce you to that person [too].

Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions and Insights

Some Teacher Candidates reported that their Associate Teachers did not dialogue with them about what was going on in the school even though Teacher Candidates wanted to become involved. As a result of this lack of dialogue in one of the two practicum placements, the Teacher Candidates did not have the opportunity to participate in school-wide activities, interact professionally with colleagues and parents, and provide learning assistance beyond regular scheduled class time. Here are two excerpts from transcripts supporting these claims:

Drew: There was one program that was happening. It was just being spearheaded in my first practicum...[It] had to do with peace making. My AT was involved in that. But she didn’t tell me about...[it]. That would have been something that I would have liked to be involved in because I’m really interested in the conflict resolution aspect of teaching. But it was sort of “to go outside the classroom”, and that wasn’t included. With the second practicum they we starting to prepare for a spring fair. Sort of all happened around us. But we didn’t really know... So there wasn’t really the opportunity to kind of get in there -...[it] would have been nice to know a little bit more that was going on...Information that came to the teacher sometimes didn’t get passed from the teacher to us and that made it difficult. I feel that’s part of their [the ATs] roles to know what’s happening, so if you want to get involved, [they can say], “Here go ahead.” I mean they always say we need more people to be involved, so it just seemed funny when they have these extra bodies in the school and don’t... [use them]!

Lynn: …I think that the Associate Teachers are already people who are involved within the school life. They are division chairs. They are persons with responsibilities or whatever you call them… I think sometimes if there’s juggling and something has to fall through the cracks it will be the Student Teacher especially if it’s someone they don’t have great concerns about. So I think well [someone] saying, “…you have to meet…once a week for 15 minutes looks [good] on paper. I don’t know if that would actually translate in reality in the classroom especially because [of] the way the practicums are set up
[because] they both fall over reporting periods…Report cards are due over both those times and it puts an incredible amount of stress on the teachers so they’re already busy as it is. Plus they’ve got to worry about my evaluations…I don’t know if the timing of the placements matter, but I just found that report cards became a general overriding focus during the practicum. It was a good experience for me to see, but it did take an incredible amount of time on the teacher’s part that maybe if they didn’t have to do that they could have dedicated a little bit more time to their Student Teacher.

**Conclusion**

Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates as a process of Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. This effective group of Associate Teachers engaged in dialogue with their Teacher Candidates about their schools and the community as a whole. They welcomed their Teacher Candidates, conversed with them, and introduced them to staff. They integrated them into the school culture and the classroom through dialogue, and they witnessed changes in confidence that supported their initiation into the school culture.

Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates mostly in the form of a process of learning over time, as Beth, Berry, and Rick did. However, the Associate Teachers differed in their approach to the process of initiating their Teacher Candidates into the learning community in the school.

The lack of specialized dialogue about how they may get involved in the life of the school had an impact on Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role in this area. This lack of dialogue stifled the Teacher Candidates’ ability to learn about the broader picture of the school community. Not becoming involved in the school community hindered their achievement on target standards in specific areas. These standards are: provides learning assistance beyond regularly scheduled class time; participates in school-wide activities (e.g. clubs, sports, meetings, choirs, school events), where possible; and interacts professionally with colleagues and parents. The lack of dialogue meant that Teacher Candidates’ product of learning about the
whole school community and school culture was limited.

Associate Teachers initiated their Teacher Candidates into the teacher role and a learning community in their schools by introducing them to staff, and generally trying to make their Teacher Candidates feel comfortable in a new culture. They agreed on this process and they were effective in their role. Teacher Candidates agreed that expanding their learning outside the classroom was part of learning in the teacher role, but reported on a distinctive difference with their Associate Teachers; some felt a lack of opportunity in this learning category. They clearly wanted to become involved in the life of the school and were blocked by their Associate Teachers.

A Rubric for Classroom Management

Associate Teachers’ Perceptions and Insights

Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates in the area of Classroom Management. Associate Teachers in this sample varied by how they initiated their Teacher Candidates into the classroom — such as during orientation and when talking about classroom routines, the degree to which Teacher Candidates could take control of the class, and how Associate Teachers responded via dialogue based on the individual skill-set of the Teacher Candidates. The questioning practices of Associate Teachers supported initiation into the teacher role, as in the following case:

Beatrice: If they’re confident and they have a good rapport with the kids then they... [aren’t,] maybe they’re a little shy or quiet with the kids - then they have more difficulty getting ...attention. So I give them different options. I had a student who had a rain-stick ... and she would turn the rain-stick. So I recommended that as a way of getting their attention. Generally I ask them if they know how to do it. If I have a criticism that they haven’t done something, or done something that’s not right, then I’ll make sure that they know how to do it properly.

The impact of dialogue about classroom management was reported by both these
unrelated groups. Direct questioning by Associate Teachers provided insight into the Teacher Candidates’ level of understanding about classroom management. An example of a question to a Teacher Candidate is, “How do you feel when you’re talking to them and they just keep on talking?” A typical reply from the Teacher Candidate is, “Well, it’s really frustrating and I don’t know what to do.” From this knowledge of the Teacher Candidate, the Associate Teacher has some level of understanding of what may be a next strategy for this Teacher Candidate so as to improve his classroom management skills. This dialogue was essential to the growth and development of the Teacher Candidate in the teacher role as a process. The timing of this dialogue may be during lessons, immediately after lessons, or debriefing at the end of the day. Teacher Candidates varied the time of their dialogue with their Teacher Candidates in order to impact the Teacher Candidates’ learning about classroom management that was specific to the Teacher Candidates’ individual learning needs. A Teacher Candidate who did not know how to proceed mid-lesson got prompts from the Associate Teacher mid-lesson when the feedback was most useful. The following examples elaborate:

Beatrice: I think she really went from being sort of a deer in the headlights to having more confidence, to being more willing to take some risks. I think she had a long way to go still before she had a handle on everything. But she really worked hard on her discipline. She really worked hard on her routines, and getting the kids to listen to her, and I think she was really successful in that. I think... those things are very important because as I said before, you can’t be an excellent teacher if you don’t have good discipline. Her lessons were really improving, coming along. She was really thinking about how to evaluate; what she did at the end of her lesson. She was working things into her lesson to evaluate how well she was doing, and they were improving. I would say that she made good progress over the 4 weeks.

Beatrice: I’ll ask them... “I noticed you did such and such, why did you do that?” But I don’t phrase it that way. I usually say, “What might you do differently? or “Have you thought about doing something different?” I ask questions especially when it comes to discipline. I find STs have a hard time with that. I’ve had students this year who would just start talking, and the kids would all be talking, and wouldn’t be listening to him at all. So it’s sort of, “Have you thought about a different way of getting their attention?”, or “How do you feel when you’re talking to them and they just keep on talking?” “How does that feel?” He [replied], “Well it’s really frustrating and I don’t know what to do.” So then I can say, “Ok, well let’s try this, this, this, this, and this.”
Bob: I would tell her if you tell a kid to do something you really have to follow up on it as soon as you tell them I don’t know to go from this chair to that chair. If they don’t do it, and other people see that they haven’t done it, and all of a sudden you’re authority is shot. So, first of all, don’t ask them to do something if you don’t care. just let it go. But if you do care enough to ask them then you really really have to enforce it…There were a couple of instances where she took a kid’s toy away and the kid brought out a new toy and you really can’t let him do that because basically the kid is sending you a message that I don’t have to listen to you…I think she improved really well on that….also we agreed that you [ST] don’t have to do it in the way I do it. You don’t have to keep a kid in at recess and talk or whatever. You can do it in whatever way you want as long as the result is that they have to do what you say, you’re the teacher.

**Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions and Insights**

Teacher Candidates learned from their dialogue with their Associate Teachers in this learning category. Here are representative excerpts from transcripts:

Lori: From my feedback that she gave me, I realize[d] that I need a quicker way to get the class’s attention. … my Associate Teacher gave me some advice on that, and when it didn’t quite work out she brought in a kind of musical instrument that I can play and then the [pupils] would gather their attention quicker, so she would show me different gadgets for getting the classroom’s attention back. It really helped!

Sarah…I think that’s crucial, whether it’s…feedback so that you can improve what you’re doing, change what you’re doing, or keep up what you’re doing, because Student Teachers need to know what’s working well, what’s not working well, and the areas of improvement. I found it very helpful for me.

Lori: learned specifically to change what she was doing and use another technique to get the class’s attention. She reports that her Associate Teacher gave her advice and suggestions. The impact of her learning was specific to her evaluation form in this learning category, and [Sarah] improved what she was doing.

Teacher Candidates’ lack of dialogue with their Associate Teachers revealed both a positive impact on their learning in the teacher role and a less supportive one, as in the excerpts from transcripts that follow. The positive impact was characterized by the fact that Teacher Candidates knew the pupils well enough to attend to their learning needs in spite of the Associate Teachers’ absence from class, like Lynn. She claimed that this knowledge was superior to that of the supply teacher who was in the classroom. The positive impact was also characterized by
Teacher Candidates’ knowledge of the pupils that allowed her to anticipate what the pupils’
needed. The following excerpts from transcripts elaborate:

Lynn: For me, being in that Grade 6 classroom was really difficult at first. It was a real
step outside my mental picture of what we’d be doing in a classroom. Again my
background was with younger children and I’ve always put a lot more scaffolds [in place]
and I’ve always had a lot more control over the environment than I’ve had with the
students. I guess it’s that understanding...of particular students in your class. I guess that
made me feel like a teacher - that I knew what I needed to do for each individual student
to get them to where they needed to be. Again, I knew what they needed to learn. I knew
how I needed to take the lesson that the Associate Teacher had left and adapt it for which
students. [I knew] who could sit with whom; who was having a bad [day]... that I could
pick up on it and knew this wasn’t normal behaviour for this child... who needed
something from me and the other [supply] teacher in the room didn’t understand that.

Samantha ...when I was planning my lessons I found that the more experience I had, I
kind of anticipated what would be a better way to run the lesson. When I understood the
dynamics of the class - I don’t think that took very long...But I found it was easier. Once I
was familiar with that grade level, after a few days, it was a lot easier to plan the lesson. I
guess I thought I was [now] thinking like a teacher because I would kind of anticipate in
some way what would be good to do with students.

Darcy: I don’t know how to explain it. It’s classroom management in general and how to
respond to the classroom. I think the most surprising thing for me was how the mood of
the pupils could change from day to day. One day the class could be great and just crazy
the next day. So it was really about being able to adjust [yourself], your [own] classroom
management styles in the moment and to the day. It was really about being aware of the
interpersonal dynamics in the room all the time.

Darcy: I think it’s fundamental to be in a daily discussion [with the AT]. We give
children daily feedback. We need to give teachers daily feedback if they’re teacher
candidates. You just cannot not say anything for two weeks, fill out a form and then wait
another two weeks and fill out another form. This is not going to, in any way, contribute
to the Student Teacher’s development!!!!

As a result of the lack of dialogue with their Associate Teachers, Teacher Candidates may
not have realized what opportunities they were missing, given their management of the class. For
example, Teacher Candidates said, “I knew how I needed to take the lesson that the Associate
Teacher had left and adapted it for which students,” or “When I understood the dynamics of the
class – I don’t think that took very long...But I found it easier,” or “I don’t know how to explain
it. It’s classroom management in general and how to respond to the classroom.” These Teacher
Candidates managed the class on their own without Associate Teacher intervention. For these Teacher Candidates, the lack of dialogue was not an issue. What made the resultant learning successful for these Teacher Candidates was the fact that they took control of the class without Associate Teacher intervention. However, what hindered the growth of these Teacher Candidates in the teacher role was the lack of information by the Associate Teacher that what the Teacher Candidate was doing with the pupils was effective.

**Conclusion**

Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates in their efforts to establish rapport with pupils, with variable success. Often, especially in this area of learning in the teacher role, the dialogue with the Associate Teacher is crucial because the Teacher Candidate must simultaneously manage the intellectual needs of the pupils and their social needs, and pay attention to the dynamics of the classroom. For example, Beatrice links the Teacher Candidates’ efforts for effective classroom management with their level of confidence. The quiet manner of the Teacher Candidate may present more of a challenge in classroom management. Nevertheless, Associate Teachers expected that their efforts supported the Teacher Candidates’ growth in the teacher role.

The use of specialized dialogue had an impact on Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role, as reported by both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. The impact on Teacher Candidates’ learning was reported by Associate Teachers, but the reported impact differed among the Associate Teachers. The resultant learning for Teacher Candidates was in the area of evaluating pupils’ progress and assessing whether or not they were improving based on the Teacher Candidates’ efforts to work on routines and get the pupils to listen over time, as Beatrice reported. In contrast, Associate Teachers gave advice to their Teacher Candidates about
classroom management, as in the case of Larry’s efforts to impart upon his Teacher Candidate to follow through with what work she required of the pupils in order to maintain her authority over them. This content knowledge about classroom management made a difference to the Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role. Teacher Candidates also learned about classroom management by teaching and by being in charge of the class. The degree to which Teacher Candidates were in charge of the class depended partly on the skill-set of the Teacher Candidate. Some Teacher Candidates needed explicit advice, as reported by Larry and Beatrice.

The impact of specialized dialogue on Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role was also reported by Teacher Candidates. The resultant learning from the Associate Teachers’ dialogue was in the area of content knowledge about classroom management, in the area of a learning process about classroom management, and in the area of the product or the result of Teacher Candidates’ efforts to achieve target standards in this area of their evaluation. Teacher Candidates learned in the teacher role about classroom management as a process, as reported by Drew, Sarah, and Lori. Sarah reports on the helpfulness of her feedback: The feedback appeared to have supported the results she achieved in her teaching. She apparently interpreted the feedback in such a way as to successfully achieve the target standards in this area. What is unknown is the degree to which the Teacher Candidates achieved the standards, and which standards need further improvement.

The lack of dialogue for Teacher Candidates had both a supportive impact on their learning in the teacher role and a less supportive impact. The impact was positive when the Teacher Candidate used the opportunity of the Associate Teacher’s absence to step into the teacher role with confidence in what she was doing, as Lynn did. She knew what she needed to do for each pupil in the classroom and knew where each pupil should be. This opportunity afforded her content knowledge, processing of practical knowledge, and product knowledge by
adapting what she did to meet her university curriculum target standards. What was lacking was dialogue about what she was doing in the teacher role. Nevertheless, this practice supported her perception of herself as a teacher. The supportive impact meant that Teacher Candidates were actively engaged in their own learning in the teacher role. The supportive impact was different for Samantha, who learned that her skill of anticipating pupils’ needs was the mark of an effective teacher. Lack of dialogue had an undesirable impact on Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role, given the lack of opportunity to learn from the experience of a classroom teacher, providing they had knowledge to share with Teacher Candidates.

Associate Teachers provided feedback to their Teacher Candidates and engaged in their learning, but I could not determine at all times what their comments were and how their discussions supported Teacher Candidates’ growth and development in the teacher role. They engaged in reflection-in-action, but I was not privy to all their reflections with their Teacher Candidates. In essence, much communication was reserved within the Associate Teacher/Teacher Candidate relationship. Here are a few excerpts from transcripts of this assertion:

Bee: I would say that [reflection-in-action]… while I ‘m making comments about while they’re actually teaching. I would say, while they’re doing it because afterwards it’s just debriefing… and saying, this is what I thought at the time.

Beth: So when they’re teaching I try to jot down a few notes, but try to do it in a non intrusive manner so they’re not conscious of me writing notes, like I don’t’ want to sit there and write all kinds of things, so I would do little post-it notes and jot down, and once again move around the room doing different things so that they don’t think I’m just sitting there staring at them, and feeling very self-conscious…also not always on negative, but also jotting down some things that I thought were great that I thought went really well, and starting with that what I thought their strengths were, and once again encouraging them to get me that lesson plan at least one day ahead so that we can go over it together, and look, and maybe whooh, that might not work and so you can maybe do some trouble shooting ahead of time, and set them up for success.

Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that learning in the teacher role in this category is through a process that includes specific content for Teacher Candidates to learn in the
teacher role. For example, Associate Teachers using explicit questioning strategies, or offering advice to their Teacher Candidates when needed. The high level of ownership in the process by this unrelated group of Teacher Candidates was characterized by their ability to take greater control of the classroom, and meant they were less reliant on their Associate Teachers in spite of a lack of dialogue with Associate Teachers reported by the group of Teacher Candidates. What was not clear are two things: one, whether the abilities of the Teacher Candidates prompted a placement in a learning situation where Associate Teachers who were not supportive role models may have been present; two, the Teacher Candidates successfully managed their relationship enough to complete the practicum course.

Chapter Summary and Discussion

Chapter 5 presents the data for the second part of the data, focusing on how Associate Teachers used specialized and differentiated dialogue with their Teacher Candidates during practicum. The evidence for this chapter’s conclusion was presented using the framework of the four learning categories on the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation and the standards set by the ITE program for achieving them. Each category has indicators that enable Associate Teachers to assess whether their Teacher Candidates are developing as expected; Associate Teachers must also assess whether Teacher Candidates need further development, need remediation, or are at risk of failing. Teacher Candidates had expectations about what they perceived their experience should be, based on these categories and on opinions about what they had actually experienced. The Teacher Candidates shared successfully their experiences with their Associate Teachers. The themes of Teacher Candidates managing their university curriculum expectations and of their practical experiences are discussed in Chapter 5, also.

Discussed, therefore, are the contrasting views of the Associate Teachers and Teacher
Candidates; the pros and cons of their reported experiences; the possible reasons for their
different views; and the ways that Associate Teachers provided support that was deemed helpful
to some Teacher Candidates but less helpful to others. Since the Associate Teacher group and the
Student Teacher group profiled in this study are unrelated, not everyone reported on all aspects
of this discussion. For example, not every Associate Teacher commented on the impact of his or
her support or resultant Teacher Candidate learning, but some may have discussed how they
supported and guided their Teacher Candidate. For this reason, data are presented for each
conclusion that provided evidence to support the conclusion, and the details of the discussion are
based on this presentation of data.

This discussion lies in the framework of the ways Associate Teachers used dialogue and
of the impact of this dialogue on the Teacher Candidates’ resultant learning described by both
Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. What was clear was that Associate Teachers use of
dialogue supported and guided their Teacher Candidates in ways different from Associate
Teachers who were did not. The result of Associate Teachers’ support and guidance was growth
in the teacher role. Next, this discussion concerns the context of the four learning categories on
the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation. Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with Teacher
Candidates through the content of what was taught; through the process of learning in each of the
indicators within the categories on the evaluation; and through the product of the actual lessons
produced and implemented. For example, the Teacher Candidates used their creativity when
planning. It is noted that the representative excerpts from the transcripts in each of the categories
listed above are not mutually exclusive to that category. Because learning in the teacher role is a
process, the categories overlap in skill development. I have isolated specific information but
have incorporated the entire quotation to retain the robustness of the excerpt from the transcript
itself.
Associate Teachers as supportive role models differentiated their dialogue through content, process, and the resultant learning of differentiated support described in each category. Content differentiation means that Associate Teachers who were positive role models talked about a variety of instructional material. They talked about what choices Teacher Candidates had on what to teach. They also conversed with their Teacher Candidates about leveled instructional materials when addressing special needs pupils, when addressing at-risk pupils, and when addressing differentiated content difficulty for pupils’ achievements using a leveled system of difficulty, as outlined in the Ontario curriculum. Process differentiation among this group of Associate Teachers is shown by the Teacher Candidates seeking ownership in their learning in the teacher role. Their expectations and interpretations of what the process of learning with their Associate Teachers would be are balanced by their efforts to adapt to their circumstances, school, and their relationship with their Associate Teachers in two practicum placements. In the process of learning in the teacher role, this group of Associate Teachers appeared to meet expectations for the Standards of Practice for the teaching profession. Associate Teachers who were less supportive role models created challenges for Teacher Candidates, who attempted to ensure their own success of the practicum course by managing their curriculum expectations with their relationship with a less supportive Associate Teacher. Product differentiation meant that the Associate Teachers as positive role models supported the achievement of the Teacher Candidates’ targeted standards during practicum. The manner in which the Teacher Candidates achieved the objectives varied among the Associate Teachers and depended on the learning needs of individual Teacher Candidates.

Also described in this chapter are what appears to be the effects of the Associate Teachers’ support and what appeared to be missing when Associate Teachers did not offer support. This chapter provides contrasting views of both Associate Teachers and Teacher
Candidates and the pros and cons of their reported experiences; it discusses possible reasons for their different views and describes how Associate Teacher support helped some Teacher Candidates but not others.

This group of Associate Teachers used ongoing focused dialogue with their Teacher Candidates to support their development and growth as teachers and the gradual enhancement of their competencies. Teacher Candidates benefited considerably by the scale of dialogue with their Associate Teachers to support their initiation into the teaching profession. Their growth in the teacher role, however, was influenced more by the Associate Teachers’ practical knowledge of teaching than by the Teacher Candidates’ theoretical foundation learned in their university courses – perhaps because the Associate Teachers lacked knowledge of the Teacher Candidates’ university course theory. The ITE university program requires that Associate Teachers maximize the learning of Teacher Candidates through the assessment and evaluation processes. These processes include not only the mid-point assessment and final evaluation, but also the maximizing of learning through providing ongoing feedback to Teacher Candidates through a variety of means – such as debriefing, journaling, providing feedback on lesson planning, and providing daily feedback. This Associate Teacher support is documented in a program guide that all Associate Teachers receive on the first day they meet their Teacher Candidate for orientation. All the Associate Teachers provided ongoing feedback to their Teacher Candidates on most of the four broad categories. Providing ongoing feedback to Teacher Candidates is an acknowledged process within the ITE university program. What undermined the process of dialogue between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates was the fact that some Associate Teachers did not engage in discussion with their Teacher Candidates or provide ongoing feedback to them, as was evident from the Teacher Candidate comments in the unrelated group in categories reported. Consequently, Teacher Candidates resorted to a framework of learning
how to teach through trial-and-error, with variable success. Although a trial-and-error approach to learning may work for some learners, not all the Teacher Candidates in this sample used it with success. Associate Teacher/Teacher Candidate dialogue made a difference to the learning progress of Teacher Candidates by supporting Teacher Candidates in their efforts to make theory-to-practice connections either independently or with the guidance of their Associate Teachers.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the interviewed Teacher Candidates reported on their own dispositions and attitudes, supporting their own successful completion of the practicum course in spite of difficult interpersonal situations with their Associate Teachers and the lack of differentiated dialogue with their Associate Teachers. The dialogue was provided by the Associate Teachers who were positive role models and who were interviewed for this study. The unrelated group of Teacher Candidates learned from their Associate Teachers. Many of the Teacher Candidates who reported Associate Teachers were not positive role models managed their own university curriculum expectations and their relationships in order to complete successfully the practicum course. The resultant learning for many Teacher Candidates with positive role models made a difference to their learning in the teacher role. The experiences of other Teacher Candidates with Associate Teachers who were not positive role models were less than successful.
Chapter Six: Summary and Implications

Introduction

This chapter has two sections. In the first section, I discuss the conclusions, referencing the conceptual framework described in Chapter 2. From the findings, I will discuss the four categories of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation that were represented in the data. As previously stated, each learning category is not entirely discreet. It is noted that these conclusions relate just to this sample and this ITE program.

In the first section, I will describe the distinctive characteristics and the impact of the differentiated support of Associate Teachers on the Teacher Candidates’ resultant learning among the categories represented in the data. In the second section, I will describe the distinctive characteristics and the impact of the Associate Teachers’ dialogue on the resultant learning of Teacher Candidates among the categories represented in the data.

The chapter presents a discussion of the cause of this support and dialogue among the Associate Teachers; some distinction in how differentiated support and dialogue was practiced among the Associate Teachers; and what was lacking when the differentiated support and dialogue were not there. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss the implications of this research for both teacher-education programs and Associate Teachers. Then I discuss areas of further research. This group of Associate Teachers demonstrated specific skill in differentiating their support and specializing their dialogue with their Teacher Candidates as an effective approach to their Associate Teacher role.

The Value of Differentiated Support

The first major finding is that differentiated support proved essential to the successful completion of the practicum according to the participants. The university program requirements
for the assessment and evaluation of the performance and growth of Teacher Candidates during practicum are described in a document provided to Associate Teachers; it outlines the abilities that Teacher Candidates should demonstrate as teachers. While the role of Associate Teachers is to determine the teaching competence of Teacher Candidates using prescribed indicators of performance, the document provided to them does not specify the tailored differentiated approaches that Associate Teachers should give their Teacher Candidates. Yet the Associate Teachers who were interviewed felt they were successful in differentiating their instructional approach and guidance for Teacher Candidates to promote achievement of the indicators for teaching, leading to successful completion of the practicum.

In addition, several Teacher Candidates reported different experiences with their Associate Teachers, claiming that, in one of the placements, their Associate Teacher did not differentiate their instruction or their learning in the teacher role, thereby undermining the Teacher Candidates’ learning. The differentiation of guidance and support of Teacher Candidates they felt made a difference to the facilitation of the Teacher Candidates’ learning as teachers. This group of Associate Teachers differentiated their guidance with their Teacher Candidates in various ways.

First, I discuss the distinctive characteristics of each category by reporting on the various ways that Associate Teachers differentiated their support in each category. It is noted here that because this study sought to explore ways Associate Teachers supported and guided their Teacher Candidates, no attempt was made to determine the scope of differentiation or dialogue that Associate Teachers provided. In other words, I am reporting only on the range of differentiation and dialogue found, not on the scope of differentiation. Assessing the scope may, however, be a topic for further investigation. Second, I show how the category overlaps other categories.
In addressing Assessment, Planning, and Instruction, Associate Teachers supported the lesson planning of their Teacher Candidates. Associate Teachers differed on how they differentiated this support by either giving resources to their Teacher Candidates like their long-range plans, or directing their Teacher Candidates to materials and resources to support lesson planning. Associate Teachers also differed on their perceived impact of support in the teacher role. For example, Associate Teachers observed that pupils were always engaged in lessons delivered by their Teacher Candidates, or the successful delivery of a series of language lessons as evidenced by the pupils’ achievement of lesson objectives.

The overlap of the category is shown by agreement among Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates that learning to become an effective teacher is a process that takes time. Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that supporting content learning in the teacher role is important in this category. Associate Teachers agreed on the support of skill development as a process, but differed on how they supported the process. For example, Bonne gave her Teacher Candidate the choice on the way she covered the expectations, or Bob supported the successful progression of the Teacher Candidates’ lesson delivery for HSP pupils. In other words, all these Associate Teachers supported the process of learning in the teacher role even though their approach to this support differed from one another.

In the unrelated group of Teacher Candidates, they explored choices in their process of learning in the teacher role in this learning category. Providing choices on what to teach was an important contributing factor to how Teacher Candidates achieved ownership in the process. Teacher Candidates’ ownership in the process was an important contributing factor for a successful practicum as evidenced by the Teacher Candidates.

While some Associate Teachers explained and described the support they gave their Teacher Candidates, other Associate Teachers talked about the impact of that support and
guidance on the resultant learning of Teacher Candidates in the teacher role. The impact of this support was also reported by the unrelated group of Teacher Candidates in this study.

This group of Associate Teachers demonstrated a disposition towards differentiated support. They modelled teaching practices that made their differentiated support possible, with the result that Teacher Candidates improved in the teacher role over time. These Associate Teachers wanted a Teacher Candidate in their classroom and sought to provide a comfortable learning environment for him or her. Their disposition and attitude were the impetus to adapt and differentiate their guidance and support.

These Associate Teachers had a predisposition towards supporting an adult learner in their classroom, a predisposition that made a difference on how the Associate Teachers approached their Associate Teacher role. Their predisposition towards supporting an adult learner meant that these Associate Teachers sought to understand their Teacher Candidates’ interests and assess their prior knowledge for the teacher role before they began teaching in the classroom. They role-modeled practices that were usual to them as teachers. Yet where it appeared that Associate Teachers did not want a Teacher Candidate in their classroom, there was little or no differentiation of support; the Associate Teacher attitude appeared to have an effect on how the Associate Teachers approached their Associate Teacher role.

The overlap in the category, as in the categories to follow, is also represented by what the Teacher Candidates reported. The impact of the Associate Teachers’ differentiated support was also reported by the Teacher Candidates. The learning outcome for Teacher Candidates was either to learn from their Associate Teachers’ practices or to abandon the teaching practices of those Associate Teachers whose practices they perceived as not benefiting pupils. For some Teacher Candidates, what was lacking with their Associate Teachers’ support were the usual teaching practices and skills of their Associate Teachers to support pupils’ learning. For the
Teacher Candidates who were not supported by their Associate Teachers, there was lack of the process of learning in the teacher role as defined by teaching standards in Ontario.

Associate Teachers differentiated support and guidance for their Teacher Candidates in practical ways in the area of *Understanding Curriculum and the Learner*. For this expectation, Associate Teachers supported their Teacher Candidates in the *fit* between the Ontario curriculum expectations and the Learner. The *fit* is when the teacher employs teaching strategies and instruction based on learning expectations in the Ontario curriculum that are at the level of understanding for the pupil.

There are distinctive characteristics to how Associate Teachers supported their Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role in this category. Associate Teachers varied on how and what they supported, but they felt that they were successful in their assessment as teachers to determine some level of impact on the pupils from what their Teacher Candidates were teaching. Some Associate Teachers assessed the fit between the curriculum and the learner of individual lessons and integrated units, or engaged in team-teaching with their Teacher Candidates to ensure the fit of curriculum and the learner, but all effective Associate Teachers supported their Teacher Candidates in a process of learning as teachers.

These Associate Teachers ensured that their Teacher Candidates had the needed background information on the pupils in the classroom to support the fit between the curriculum and the learner, but they differentiated their support with their Teacher Candidates. For example, Rick gave his Teacher Candidate the needed background information on the pupils, but, in contrast, Rory requested that his Teacher Candidates seek out background information on Grade 6 pupils in general, wanting them to learn everything they could about the life of the Grade 6 pupil. Rick was more tailored in his request: He wanted his Teacher Candidates to have specific information about the pupils in his classroom. What seems to have motivated this differentiated
support among these Associate Teachers is their demonstrated knowledge of subject content and skill in understanding what the needs of their pupils were.

What seemed to curtail Teacher Candidates’ learning when Associate Teacher support was absent was the fact that Teacher Candidates employed a trial-and-error approach to determine the fit, with variable success. The lack of Associate Teacher support meant that skill development in the teacher role was through complete ownership of the process for Teacher Candidates without Associate Teacher intervention. In this process of learning, Teacher Candidates did not benefit from the expertise of their Associate Teachers. The Teacher Candidates were provided with a classroom for their practicum placement to learn on their own initiative.

Associate Teachers differentiated support and guidance for their Teacher Candidates in the area of Involvement in School/Community Life in practical ways based mainly on the Associate Teachers’ own participation in a learning community in their school. The ways that the Associate Teachers participated in the life of the school were distinctive characteristics of differentiated support in this category. Data in this category focused on the Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role as opposed to pupils’ learning or the impact on pupils’ learning. Their own participation in the life of the school, like attending meetings or interacting professionally with their colleagues, was part of their own professional role as teachers. The act of participating in school-wide activities and interacting professionally with colleagues and parents is also part of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation during practicum.

These Associate Teachers differentiated their support through a process of learning as teachers. They identified, through their own participation, that part of the learning environment for teachers is not only the classroom but also the school. Teacher Candidates were involved in the life of the school over time, and were included in school-wide activities to support their
initiation into the teacher role and profession. Associate Teachers differentiated their support for their Teacher Candidates depending on what was happening in the school at that time. Individual Associate Teachers offered multiple opportunities for Teacher Candidates to interact with staff. For example, Bee’s Teacher Candidates connected with staff in the hallways, at staff meetings, or at an ECO-SCHOOL committee meeting.

Other opportunities not based on the Associate Teacher’s participation included helping with a sports team, co-coaching, attending literacy and math workshops, and helping with the homework club. These learning opportunities for Teacher Candidates offered them a whole-school connection that learning in the classroom did not. These opportunities offer Teacher Candidates a perspective on how the school operates as a whole, enabling them, for example, to witness cooperative learning or collegial learning among staff members. One representative Associate Teacher commented that his Teacher Candidates “also have the opportunity to partake in a field trip and extra-curricular activity such as a curriculum night or a parent interview and can develop their own relationship. They watch me, they develop their own skills” (Rick). The impact of involvement in the school/community life facilitated Teacher Candidates’ learning as teachers, and was reported by Teacher Candidates as supportive and helpful.

This differentiated support was motivated by the Associate Teachers’ own professional participation in the school. They were role models to their Teacher Candidates, as previously mentioned. They understood that developing professional rapport with parents and the community was important to the teacher role. When Associate Teachers were not role models for school/community life and/or did not themselves participate in the school’s professional community, their Teacher Candidates’ lacked the opportunity to connect the classroom to the larger school community. Consequently, the Teacher Candidates’ learning seemed less significant compared with that of their colleagues who had Associate Teachers that were role
models. They still were engaged in the process of learning, but the quality of learning in the teacher role may not have been up to the standards of the profession.

Associate Teachers differentiated their support for Teacher Candidates in the area of *Classroom Management* in practical ways, as when Teacher Candidates were building rapport with pupils, or when Teacher Candidates developed their skills when controlling and managing the class. The overlap in this category is represented by the Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role as a process, as in other categories.

One distinctive characteristic of differentiation in this category was that Associate Teachers supported the Teacher Candidates’ development of building rapport with the pupils. Associate Teachers agreed that it is important that Teacher Candidates develop rapport with their pupils, but Associate Teachers varied on how they should provide this support and opportunity in the classroom. For example, during orientation, Teacher Candidates got to know pupils through the routines or transitions. Associate Teachers also agreed that Teacher Candidates need to experience some control of the class, but the degree of control they would offer their Teacher Candidates depended on the skill-set of the Teacher Candidates. For example, Rhonda offered as much control of the class as the Teacher Candidate could manage.

Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that offering Teacher Candidates sufficient freedom to explore their own ideas is important to the growth and development of the Teacher Candidates as teachers. Orientation gave Teacher Candidates a chance to develop rapport with the pupils and observe and participate in classroom routines and transitions. Some Associate Teachers had their Teacher Candidates lead small activities, like reading a book to the pupils; other Associate Teachers let their Teacher Candidates lead simple routines and transitions, like snacking and getting ready for recess. The building of rapport between pupil and Teacher Candidate that began in orientation continued regularly during the
practicum block.

Another distinctive way that Associate Teachers supported their Teacher Candidates was the degree of control of the class. Associate Teachers also varied in how they supported their Teacher Candidates developing skills to be responsible for the class and manage pupils’ behaviours and misbehaviours. This group of Associate Teachers was skilled in differentiating their support and guidance with their Teacher Candidates by gauging the level of freedom to be in control of the class that the Teacher Candidates could manage at any given time on any given day. The degree of Associate Teacher support was dependent on the abilities of the Teacher Candidates to control the class. Associate Teachers agreed on supporting Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role as a process which began at orientation and continued throughout the practicum block.

Over time, one impact on Teacher Candidates’ learning of developing rapport with pupils was that the pupils were more easily managed when the Teacher Candidates were teaching, as evidenced by both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. The presence of easier to-manage pupils did not appear to be specific to any one grade or division. What seems to have motivated this differentiated support among this group of Associate Teachers was their assessment as teachers to monitor the responses of their pupils.

Associate Teachers evaluate their Teacher Candidates on all learning categories of evaluation. The document given to Associate Teachers at the time of the practicum outlining how Associate Teachers should support their Teacher Candidates does not include the tailored differentiation evidenced in this study. Yet it is clear that the most effective Associate Teachers adapted and differentiated their guidance and approach to the learning needs of their Teacher Candidates during practicum in distinctive ways in each category of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation, and in ways that overlap each category. We now know that the Associate Teachers in
this study are examples of exceptional practice: they offered differentiated support to their Teacher Candidates during practicum.

**The Role of Participatory Dialogue**

The use of dialogue by Associate Teachers throughout the practicum is essential to support the learning process of Teacher Candidates about teaching in the classroom. This group of Associate Teachers used ongoing focused dialogue with their Teacher Candidates to support their development and growth as teachers and the gradual enhancement of their competencies. Teacher Candidates benefited considerably from the dialogue with their Associate Teachers to support their learning in the teacher role was extensive.

The ITE university program requires that Associate Teachers maximize the learning of Teacher Candidates through the assessment and evaluation processes. These processes include not only the mid-point assessment and final evaluation, but also the maximizing of learning through providing ongoing feedback to Teacher Candidates through a variety of means—such as debriefing, journaling, commenting on lesson planning, and providing daily feedback. This Associate Teacher support is documented in a program guide that all Associate Teachers receive on the first day they meet their Teacher Candidate for orientation. All the Associate Teachers provided ongoing feedback to their Teacher Candidates on most of the broad categories. Their ongoing feedback to their Teacher Candidates was an essential part of their dialogue to support the growth and development of the Teacher Candidates.

Some Associate Teachers did not dialogue with their Teacher Candidates or provide ongoing feedback to them, as was evident from the Teacher Candidate comments in that group. Consequently, Teacher Candidates resorted to a framework of learning how to teach through trial-and-error, with variable success. Although a trial-and-error approach to learning may work
for some learners, not all the Teacher Candidates in this sample used it with success in the teacher role. While learning what not to do arguably is still beneficial to the Teacher Candidates, the use of dialogue reduces the need for the trial-and-error approach and appears to produce much more effective results with the Teacher Candidates.

The four broad categories represented in the data showed Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role through focused dialogue with their Associate Teachers. Associate Teacher/Teacher Candidate dialogue made a difference to the learning progress of Teacher Candidates by supporting Teacher Candidates in their efforts to make theory-to-practice connections either independently or with the guidance of their Associate Teachers. I make a direct effort to isolate some of the specialized dialogue among this group of Associate Teachers. I also show how this group was successful in supporting Teacher Candidates’ growth and development as teachers through focused dialogue. First I discuss the distinctive characteristics of dialogue in each category, and then the overlapping characteristic of dialogue in each category represented as the process of learning in the teacher role.

Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates in the areas of *Assessment, Planning, and Instruction*. Associate Teachers supported their Teacher Candidates in the content, process, and product of learning in the teacher role. Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates reported on their Associate Teachers’ support in the content area. For example, both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates asked specific questions related to assessment, lesson planning, or instruction. The asking of specific questions is the distinctive characteristic of the category in the content area related to assessment, lesson planning, or instruction.

Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that the degree and frequency of dialogue as an ongoing process were significant contributing factors in the learning of Teacher
Candidates. Both of these unrelated groups agreed that it is important for Associate Teachers to watch how their Teacher Candidates interacted with their pupils and how the pupils were engaged in their lessons, observations that could become a topic of dialogue between them over time. Additionally, both groups supported the product of Teacher Candidates’ learning in the teacher role through their own active engagement. Associate Teachers who asked specific questions of their Teacher Candidates, who frequently engaged in in-depth dialogue with their Teacher Candidates over time, who watched their Teacher Candidates interactions with pupils, and who were themselves actively engaged in the professional learning of their Teacher Candidates, were more effective in their role.

However, Associate Teachers differed in their support and guidance for Teacher Candidates in this learning category as reported by both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates. Less supportive Associate Teachers were characterized by practices that did not benefit Teacher Candidates’ practical knowledge, skills, or growth as teachers. Teacher Candidates’ with less supportive Associate Teachers might complete the practicum course, but without the content practical knowledge, skills, and growth in the teacher role that results from the productive interactions with an expert teacher in the profession.

It seems that the dialogue in the Associate Teachers’ professional approach to the learning of another adult was motivated by the fact that the Associate Teachers were role models to the ethical standards in teaching. The degree of dialogue between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates affected the extent to which Teacher Candidates learned in the teacher role, with the result that Teacher Candidates who had experienced considerable dialogue with their Associate Teachers seemed to be at an advantage over other Teacher Candidates, given their greater opportunity to benefit from the expertise of an experienced teacher and their greater sense of the theory being taught to them in their university courses — theory about assessment, lesson
planning, and instruction practices. For example, Teacher Candidates could bounce ideas off their Associate Teachers for appropriateness to the teaching and learning process. That was because the Teacher Candidates were able to assess their ideas with their Associate Teachers, and the Teacher Candidates developed the skill of determining how well pupils grasped the lesson objectives they had presented to the pupils.

As well, Teacher Candidates could gauge the right fit of their lesson plan activities to the diverse needs of the pupils. Teacher Candidates are learning information that is useful to them as teachers, but there are no measurable results of learning in the teacher role. This is not to say that Teacher Candidates’ did not engage in such needed activities as journaling and debriefing, only that in this study these produced no measurable resultant learning in the teacher role.

In the area of Understanding Curriculum and the Learner, through dialogue with their Associate Teachers, Teacher Candidates gained practical knowledge of pupils in the classroom. Through dialogue, Teacher Candidates had opportunities to fit the Ontario curriculum expectations to the learning needs of the pupils. Associate Teachers agreed on an intended purpose of support for Teacher Candidates to grow and develop in the teacher role, and for Teacher Candidates to be successful as they reported. In this category of learning there are also content areas that represent the distinctive characteristics of the category, process and product learning.

In the content area, Associate Teachers focused on At-risk pupils and assessment practices. Teacher Candidates learned from their Associate Teachers in this content area and the fit between the curriculum and the learner. For example, Teacher Candidates learned to more effectively match the pupils’ understanding of a concept with curriculum expectations, beginning with what the pupil already knew.

Teacher Candidates reported on Associate Teachers’ lack of engagement in their learning,
resulting in two outcomes for Teacher Candidates: One, Teacher Candidates did not benefit from the expertise of their Associate Teachers; and two, Teacher Candidates were left on their own to figure out the appropriate fit between the curriculum and the learner. The lack of Associate Teacher engagement in the learning of Teacher Candidates is characteristic of less-effective Associate Teachers.

This group of Associate Teachers was actively engaged, and skilled at recognizing what feedback would support Teacher Candidate growth depending on the needs of the Teacher Candidate. For example, Teacher Candidates who had no classroom experience were given step-by-step feedback to improve their skills, while Teacher Candidates who had classroom experience were given less step-by-step guidance. Associate Teachers were skilled in the timing of feedback, the frequency of feedback, the content of the feedback, and the amount of feedback they provided their Teacher Candidates at any one time. They were skilled in their pacing of conversations, and generally in their daily delivery of feedback to their Teacher Candidates. Their disposition and attitude towards their Associate Teacher role affected how they interpreted their role and their ability to provide ongoing feedback to Teacher Candidates.

These Associate Teachers also acknowledged that ongoing dialogue and feedback with their Teacher Candidates is their professional responsibility as Associate Teachers. They reported the intended impact of their specialized feedback that occurred over time. Given that feedback occurred over time, the impact is represented by the overlap of the category. They sought to support Teacher Candidates’ success as their usual practice with their own pupils, and they expected that providing positive constructive feedback to their Teacher Candidates enabled them to grow and to help them move to the next stage. One Associate Teacher in this sample acknowledged the learning impact of not providing Teacher Candidates with dialogue:

If [the Associate Teacher] didn’t provide feedback, I don’t know what good the role would be because [the Teacher Candidate] wouldn’t even know if [the Teacher Candidate]
did a good job or a bad job. [The Teacher Candidate] could probably tell a little based on the students’ reactions and how much work they’ve done. (Larry)

However, comments by the Teacher Candidates showed that less supportive Associate Teachers did not consistently dialogue with their Teacher Candidates as a means of supporting their professional growth and development, and therefore, some Teacher Candidates did not benefit from the expertise of an experienced teacher. For example, no dialogue about how the Teacher Candidate was implementing her lesson plan meant that she had to discover on her own the fit between the curriculum being taught in her lesson and the level of understanding of the pupils to achieve the lesson objectives.

The absence of dialogue meant that less supportive Associate Teachers were not engaged in the Teacher Candidates’ learning process. The impact of dialogue between Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates needs to be more explicitly acknowledged than it currently is in the context of the ITE university program, because it is through dialogue with the Associate Teacher that the Teacher Candidate makes sense of theory in practical terms. Additionally, a greater focus on the learner outcomes through the dialogue process is warranted for both the Teacher Candidates’ learning and the pupils’ learning.

Two learning impacts resulted from disengaged Associate Teachers occurring over time. The first learning impact for Teacher Candidates resulted in Teacher Candidates not benefiting from the expertise of Associate Teachers about the fit of the Ontario curriculum and the learning needs of the pupils. Regarding the second, the term disengaged Associate Teachers meant there was lack of Associate Teacher initiative in trying to understand what the Teacher Candidates were learning in their university program. This unrelated group of Teacher Candidates was left on their own to try to understand their university curriculum applied to classroom practice. Furthermore, the use of focused dialogue between Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate
meant a greater likelihood that Teacher Candidates were initiated into the teaching profession based on the seven broad performance competencies, as a benchmark to successful initiation as reported by participants.

However, the extent of initiation into teaching may have been undercut by the Associate Teachers’ lack of knowledge about the theory their Teacher Candidates were currently learning, a shortcoming compounded by the disengagement of Associate Teachers in general.

Associate Teachers used specialized dialogue with their Teacher Candidates in the area of Classroom Management. In this category, one distinctive characteristic was, again, the asking of questions. Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that asking explicit questions about classroom management is important, but they differed on the types of questions asked. Direct questioning by Associate Teachers provided insight into the Teacher Candidates’ level of understanding about classroom management. An example of a question to a Teacher Candidate is, “How do you feel when you’re talking to them and they just keep on talking?” A typical reply from the Teacher Candidate is, “Well, it’s really frustrating and I don’t know what to do.” From this knowledge of the Teacher Candidate, the Associate Teacher has some level of understanding of what may be a next strategy for this Teacher Candidate to improve his classroom management skills. The dialogue was essential to the growth and development of the Teacher Candidate in the teacher role.

Another distinctive characteristic in this category was timing of the dialogue between Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate. The timing of this dialogue may be during lessons, immediately after lessons, or during debriefing at the end of the day. Associate Teachers varied on when their dialogue occurred with their Teacher Candidates in order to impact the Teacher Candidates’ learning about classroom management. A Teacher Candidate who did not know what to do mid-lesson got prompts from the Associate Teacher mid-lesson when the feedback
was most useful. Teacher Candidates learned from feedback from their Associate Teachers that was offered to improve what they were doing, continue with what they were doing, or change what they were doing when classroom management strategies were not working.

Teacher Candidates’ own initiative in learning in the teacher role supported their ownership in the product of learning. Teacher Candidates felt that they were able to be successful with their classroom management in spite of their relationships with less-effective Associate Teachers. As result of the lack of dialogue with their Associate Teachers, Teacher Candidates may not have realized what they were missing, given their management of the class. For example, Teacher Candidates typically said, “I knew how I needed to take the lesson that the Associate Teacher had left and adapted it for which students,” or “When I understood the dynamics of the class – I don’t think that took very long…But I found it easier,” or “I don’t know how to explain it. It’s classroom management in general and how to respond to the classroom.” These Teacher Candidates managed the class on their own without Associate Teacher intervention. For these Teacher Candidates’, Associate Teacher dialogue would serve to support the continuation of what they were doing in the classroom.

However, in supporting teachers as life-long learners, the Associate Teacher dialogue needs to be of significant quality to promote further learning in the teacher role by the Teacher Candidate. In other words, it is the Associate Teacher’s role to have greater knowledge in the teacher role to support further learning of the Teacher Candidate even though reciprocal learning may be effective. For some Teacher Candidates, what curtailed the growth of these Teacher Candidates in the teacher role was the lack of validation by the Associate Teacher that what the Teacher Candidate was doing with the pupils was effective. The lack of dialogue meant lack of intervention by the Associate Teacher, and often lack of validation of practice by the Associate Teacher.
For the area of *Involvement in School/Community Life*, through dialogue with their Associate Teachers, Teacher Candidates gained knowledge of the whole school community and school culture in practical terms. Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates agreed that support in this learning category is important in the teacher role. For example, Associate Teachers supported their Teacher Candidates by introducing them to staff, and through dialogue with their Teacher Candidates about how they should get more involved. Involvement in the school was an issue for the Teacher Candidates in this unrelated sample. They reported on lack of opportunity in this learning category, and some Teacher Candidates were prevented by their Associate Teachers from participating.

Associate Teachers used focused dialogue with Teacher Candidates that was part of general conversation between two professionals related to, or unrelated to, the broad categories on the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation form. Associate Teachers were role models of professional behaviour and practiced the Ethical Standards in the Teaching Profession throughout their usual teaching practices and school engagement practices within their learning communities that facilitated the Teacher Candidates’ growth and learning in the teacher role. For example, they talked about reflective practices, about the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation itself, and about areas of strength and areas for improvement.

They also engaged in collaborative practice on what to teach the pupils and which specific expectations they would cover, and talked about how to become involved in the school in areas of interest. Their proper professional demeanor was obvious, a demeanor that laid the foundation of welcome for a Teacher Candidate in their classroom. Dialogue promoted reciprocal learning for both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates, with both parties having a predisposition to talk about teaching and learning in the context of the classroom.

What undermined the process of dialogue was Associate Teachers’ knowledge, or lack of
knowledge, of the university program curriculum. The Associate Teachers possessed knowledge of the university curriculum only to the extent that the Teacher Candidates shared that knowledge; otherwise, Associate Teachers relied on their own theoretical foundations and practical experiences to support their Teacher Candidates. This lack of knowledge about the current theory that Teacher Candidates were learning in their university ITE program limited the capacity of Associate Teachers in this sample to support the application of the theoretical foundation of Teacher Candidates in the classroom. In this learning category, the overlap in categories is represented through reciprocal learning among Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates through a variety of vehicles – like team teaching, and participating in non-paid volunteer work.

Associate Teachers evaluate their Teacher Candidates on all learning categories of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation. Associate Teachers receive a document at the time of the practicum that outlines for Associate Teachers the tools they can use to communicate with their Teacher Candidates. Conclusion Two identifies that Associate Teachers used focused dialogue with their Teacher Candidates throughout the practicum. This specialized dialogue was an instrumental component in Teacher Candidates’ learning and growth in the teacher role. We now know that the Associate Teachers in this study provide an exceptional example of the benefits of the focused specialized dialogue they offered Teacher Candidates during practicum.

The impact of differentiated support and of dialogue on the professionalism of Teacher Candidates is worth noting although not sufficient evidence in the data warranted individual attention of this learning category. The evaluation for professionalism was more of an issue for the Teacher Candidates than Associate Teachers. The supportive Associate Teachers in this study were positive role models of the Ethical Standards of Practice and showed substantive evidence of support for and guidance of their Teacher Candidates. Associate Teachers who were
not positive role models did not support and guide their Teacher Candidates in the ways that effective Associate Teachers did. For example, there is no evidence to support the view that Associate Teachers who were not supportive role models engaged in reflective practice, inquiry, or collaboration for professional growth; they did not support their growth and development in the teacher role.

Associate Teachers used focused dialogue with Teacher Candidates that was part of general conversation between two professionals related to and sometimes unrelated to the broad categories on the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation form. Associate Teachers were role models of professional etiquette and for the Ethical Standards in the Teaching Profession throughout their usual teaching practices and school engagement practices within their learning communities, facilitating Teacher Candidates’ growth and initiation into teaching. For example, they talked about reflective practices, about the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation itself, and about areas of strength and areas for improvement. They also engaged in collaborative practice on what to teach the pupils and which specific expectations they would cover, and discussed how to become involved in the school for areas of interest. It was obvious their demeanor was professional; it laid the foundation of welcome for a Teacher Candidate in their classroom.

Dialogue promoted reciprocal learning for both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates, both parties having a predisposition to talk about teaching and learning in the context of the classroom. What sometimes undermined the process of dialogue was the Associate Teachers’ lack of knowledge of the university program curriculum. The Associate Teachers possessed knowledge of the university curriculum only to the extent that the Teacher Candidates shared that knowledge; otherwise, Associate Teachers relied on their own theoretical foundations and practical experiences to support their Teacher Candidates. This lack of knowledge about the current theory that Teacher Candidates were learning in their university ITE program limited the
capacity with which Associate Teachers in this sample were able to support the application of the theoretical foundation of Student Teachers in the classroom.

The impact of dialogue between Associate Teachers and Student Teachers needs to be acknowledged more explicitly than it currently is in the context of the ITE university program, because it is through dialogue with the Associate Teacher that the Student Teacher makes sense of theory in practical terms and learns from the experience of classroom teachers in content, process, and products of learning in the teacher role. Additionally, a greater focus on the learner outcomes through the dialogue process is warranted for both the Teacher Candidates’ learning and the pupils’ learning.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Given the nature of this study as an exploratory investigation, six recommendations emerging from this research for the recruitment and training of Associate Teachers for the ITE Program and the evaluation of Teacher Candidates are inherently limited and suggestive.

Recommendation #1: Associate Teachers need to be further trained to differentiate their support for Teacher Candidates with a measurable resultant learning for both Teacher Candidates and pupils in their care.

Evidence in this study suggests that effective Associate Teachers differentiated their content, process, and product of learning with their Teacher Candidates in the learning categories reported on in the data. For example, in the area of *Assessment, Planning, and Instruction*, Associate Teachers provided concrete materials and resources for lesson planning to support their Teacher Candidates. The Associate Teachers also talked extensively about their Teacher Candidates’ planning and implementation of lessons. The Associate Teachers’ differentiation and dialogue depended on the skill-set of their Teacher Candidates. Training Associate Teachers
to effectively support the content, process, and product of learning with their Teacher Candidates means that they need to acquire the skill of being responsive to the learning needs of their Teacher Candidates – much like teachers need to acquire the skill of being responsive to the learning needs of the pupils.

The Associate Teachers can be responsive to the learning needs of the Teacher Candidates in a great variety of ways. For example, Associate Teachers can give step-by-step lesson feedback and prompts in order for the Teacher Candidates to transition themselves into the teacher role. The skill of the Associate Teachers at being responsive to the Teacher Candidates’ learning as teachers means that Associate Teachers need to first understand the adult learner. Associate Teachers need to recognize that Teacher Candidates, who are adults, have experiences, strengths, weaknesses, and goals when learning in the teacher role. Associate Teachers who are responsive to the learning needs of Teacher Candidates acknowledge Teacher Candidates’ strengths and weaknesses in content, process, and the product of learning in all categories of their final evaluation. For example, Teacher Candidates who feel comfortable taking more ownership of their teaching practice, and thus directing the resultant learning or product of their learning in the teacher role, may show initiative as strength. In this study, supportive Associate Teachers were responsive to this initiative, or strength of the Teacher Candidate, and offered their support and guidance to their Teacher Candidates to further transition them in the teacher role, resulting in a more successful practicum for the Teacher Candidate.

Recommendation #2: Recruiting practices of Associate Teachers should include group discussions about usual teaching practices.

Given the number of Teacher Candidates that need placements, individual interviews with Associate Teachers are not practical. However, the connection between effective teaching
practices and Associate Teachers is evident in this study. This group of Associate Teachers talked often about their own pupils in their classroom and how they supported and guided their learning. As well, they discussed openly their support for their Teacher Candidates and how this experience resembled somewhat what they do with their own pupils. The transparent conversations among Associate Teachers reveal how they view their own accountabilities in the learning of their own pupils. For example, the Associate Teachers provided ongoing feedback to their pupils as they did with their Teacher Candidates. This approach to recruiting Associate Teachers is about exposing what is occurring in the classroom with pupils and considering how this can translate into support with Teacher Candidates. The exposure of potential Associate Teacher practices needs to occur through focused conversations with teachers. Essentially, this recruitment strategy would be designed before the teacher is in his/her role as Associate Teacher.

Recommendation #3: Both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates initiate reciprocal learning during practicum. The resultant learning for Teacher Candidates is the opportunity to benefit from the expertise of their Associate Teachers. As revealed in this study, Teacher Candidates reported that some of their Associate Teachers did not want to dialogue with them, were disengaged in what they were doing, and were ineffective role models for their profession. A structure where reciprocal learning occurs serves to strengthen the bond among professionals and give Teacher Candidates, new to the orientation to teaching, a sense of what kinds of learning they can hope to implement when they are teachers themselves. If Teacher Candidates are to have opportunities to be initiated into a professional learning community, then they need to engage in one. Professional learning communities, team teaching, participating in unpaid volunteer work in schools, and participating in learning cycles in schools, are all ways that teachers may continually learn and assess or reassess their effectiveness.

Recommendation #4: There should be a greater emphasis on recruiting motivated
Associate Teachers. The dearth of teachers willing to volunteer as Associate Teachers means that the search for willing participants can be a struggle for both the ITE program and a school board. Teachers become Associate Teachers for a number of reasons not always apparent. One reason for the lack of Associate Teacher volunteers is the added work demand on these teachers compared with the limited benefit to taking on a Student Teacher – that is, the role is not worth the effort. To overcome this challenge, the ITE program, perhaps in partnership with school boards, can seek ways to lessen the work load on Associate Teachers, provide a more enriched support system for all learners in the process during practicum, and seek ways to continue to acknowledge the efforts of teachers. Teachers can be motivated in different ways to become Associate Teachers. For example, Associate Teachers may seek career advancement through their experience, or principals may be pressured by superintendents or board personnel to recruit Associate Teachers in their schools. On the other hand, the ITE Program recruits Associate Teachers to support a Teacher Candidate in the Associate Teacher’s classroom. The school board’s agenda may not be compatible with the ITE Program. The ITE Program needs to understand what motivates teachers to become an Associate Teacher. How will knowing the motivations of the Associate Teacher be a good thing for the ITE program? Recruiting practices listed above offer the ITE program flexibility in recruiting effective Associate Teachers for the role. This, in part, places some accountability with the Associate Teachers that measures one of their contributions in the role. A partnership between a university and a school board is more than just having ITE personnel visit once in a while; it should benefit both parties. The ITE program benefits by having Associate Teachers accept Teacher Candidates in their classroom regardless of the learning experience for either Associate Teacher or Teacher Candidate. The long-term benefit for the Board of Education needs to be more explicitly recognized.

Recommendation #5: The ITE Program must be explicit on what its personnel are
looking for in future teachers. What skills and talents and dispositions do they want their Teacher Candidates to possess? For example, one Associate Teacher commented that he works best with Teacher Candidates who are open-minded. Is being open-minded a disposition that is desirable for teachers in general? Is being flexible with the schedule of teaching a necessity? Evidence from this study suggests that these traits are important. Additionally, Teacher Candidates need to be responsive to the pupils’ learning needs in their teaching practices. The ITE program (as in all Education Degree Programs, I believe) must ensure both the recruitment and training of future teachers so that they are responsive to the learning needs of all pupils.

Recommendation #6: The evaluation form for Teacher Candidates be revised to more effectively reflect differentiation and dialogue for learning in the teacher role as well as the product of learning that has been achieved resulting from the efforts of both the Associate Teacher and Teacher Candidate. There is a clear purpose to Teacher Candidates learning in the teacher role, and there needs to be a clear purpose and direction to the support for Teacher Candidates’ learning as teachers. As is evident from this study, Associate Teachers differentiated their support and dialogue with Teacher Candidates over time as a process of learning. It is not clear from the current evaluation of Teacher Candidates how many times the Associate Teacher needs to see a skill before he or she gives an assessment rating. It is recognized that Associate Teachers have busy schedules, so an evaluation form that is short and simple may be most suitable; however, the evaluation form needs to acknowledge more explicitly the work and dedication that Associate Teachers give their Teacher Candidates and the resultant learning for Teacher Candidates. An evaluation form needs to show growth and development of teachers over time and from one practicum experience to the next. The current assessment checklist does not accomplish this. From the data presented and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, it is possible to understand how Associate Teachers differentiate their support and dialogue with Student
Teachers in the categories presented. This data are evidence of what type of assessment may be more useful to both Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Results from this study suggest that the broad categories on which the Teacher Candidates are evaluated have both distinct characteristics unique to that category related to the conclusions, and that the categories overlap. As both a researcher for this study and a teacher, I do not believe that Teacher Candidates’ level of understanding about these evaluation categories goes deep enough. While differentiation and dialogue were proven to be present in this study among this exceptional group of Associate Teachers, I do not believe that the skills and expertise of Associate Teachers as teachers working closely with pupils has been tapped into through the process of supporting Teacher Candidates in their classrooms as evidenced in this study. A clear overlap was found among the categories when speaking about the impact on pupils’ learning as well as on Teacher Candidates’ learning, but the depth of impact was limited for a number of reasons, reasons not explored in this research, topics for further research. For example, the depth of impact may be related to the length of the practicum and the limited time that Teacher Candidates’ work with pupils. This speculation suggests a question: Would a longer practicum result in a deeper impact on student achievement across all the categories on the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation? That is, if there were a longer practicum, would it have a more significant impact on student learning as the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation relates to the conclusions of this study? What further evidence on differentiation and dialogue for a longer practicum would enhance the experience for Teacher Candidates? Based on the results of this study, a longer practicum time for Teacher Candidates’ to have impact pupils’ learning seems reasonable given their support from exceptional Associate Teachers.
Current training programs for Associate Teachers may be the topic of further research, which could focus on the unique characteristics of both differentiated support and of dialogue for each of the learning categories of the Teacher Candidates’ evaluation. Attention to these unique characteristics will channel the efforts of Associate Teachers with specific focuses for their support of Teacher Candidates during practicum.
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## Appendix A

### Approval Timeline for Research

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<td>May 2, 2008</td>
<td>Departmental Ethics Approval granted</td>
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<td>May 5, 2008</td>
<td>Ethical Protocol submitted to the university Ethics Review Board (ERB)</td>
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<td>May 16, 2008</td>
<td>Ethical Protocol approval granted by the university ERB for STs. Next approval for STs was pre-service at the university.</td>
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<td>May 15, 2008</td>
<td>All copies of Board of Education documentation submitted for meeting of Associate Teachers (May 30, 2008)</td>
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<td>May 28, 2008</td>
<td>Approval granted by pre-service program. Access to STs was granted through option coordinators at university in an in-house meeting May 30, 2008.</td>
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<td>June 2, 2008</td>
<td>Board confirmation email that all supporting documentation received (informally 9:30am). Board approval granted and study may commence with Associate Teachers.</td>
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<td>June 3, 2008</td>
<td>Board of Education formal letter of approval issued, then given to the university’s pre-service department. Notification now sent to principals of participating schools as appropriate. Associate Teachers’ recruitment to the study started.</td>
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Appendix B

Teacher Candidates’ and Associate Teachers’ Interview Schedule

Introduce students as: code #

Read to each candidate before interview begins:

This interview has three parts for a total time of about one hour.

Part I should take about 20 minutes. I’d like you, in that part just to describe your recent experiences as a student teacher. You did two teaching blocks: start with the fall block and then the spring block.

Through the interview I may give you prompts by asking you specific questions about what you are saying. However, I’ll interrupt you as little as possible.

In the second and thirds parts of the interview, I will ask you specific questions related to the literature, theory-to-practice connections, and your practicum experience.

Part I:

Prompts: >use only as necessary

>What did you have the students do?

>Was it required or your own innovation?

>Tell me about the school culture (inviting?)

>Classroom culture (grades), School, culture

>Would you say this was a really successful teaching task?

1. Start now telling me about your fall practicum and then the spring one

>What was the most memorable teaching task?

>Describe your relationship with the associate teacher.
>Probe to elicit descriptions of various positions ("roles" try not to be too direct)

>What do you think your associate teacher thinks of you?
Part II:

1. The pre-service program at this university has different components. Is there one course you particularly remember applying in your practice teaching? More than one? Which ones?
> If necessary remind the candidate of the components in the program
> Did your associate teacher help you make the theory-to-practice connection? How? When?
> Give an example if needed (try not to be too direct)
> What did you think of yourself doing this? (try to elicit direct examples: evaluator?
supervisor? mentor?)

2. Do you feel that something (anything?) was missing from your practicum experience?
> What do you wish you had done differently? (eg. in your position as teacher?)
> What do you feel the associate teacher could have done differently? (In her position of
___________, elicit “roles” without saying it)
> What do you feel you could have done differently in your ________(position) as
___________?
> Give an example if needed (probes to start describing what their “roles” may be)
> What was your best practice?

3. Would you say you have a particular style of learning?
> Some routine way of going about learning a task? Describe it.
> Does your personal style relate to how you set about a teaching task?
> Do you think your style of teaching relates well to the associate teacher’s style?
> Tell me more about where and how this similarity of style worked well for you.
> Was there a time when it did not work well?
Part III: These questions specifically relate to the experiential learning framework for my study. What I want to know is how this theory might contribute to your understanding of what is happening in practice.

1. Tell me about any teaching-related experiences you had before you entered the pre-service program.

> Did it help in any specific way during your practice teaching in the classroom?

> Would you have behaved in much the same way if you’d never had this experience?

> What positions were you in? (elicit “roles”)
2. What actual responsibilities were you given in these early experiences?

> Do you feel the earlier experiences bring something special to your teaching?

> Did the associate teacher discuss these experiences with you?

> Was she or he open to your ideas?

> Did you feel that this early experience helped change your perspective to that of a teacher from that of a student? (change in “role” – try not to be too direct)

> Was there some point in you teaching practice that you think, you started to think like a teacher? Explain.

> Was there some point where you started to apply pedagogical principles learned from your courses at the university to the students?

> Can you give me a specific instance?

3. We know a student teachers’ time in practice teaching is pretty pressured, but did you find yourself at any time, reflecting on what you had done, were doing, or how might you do it better?

> Discussion with the associate

> What do you feel was an early teaching experience that you later used to your advantage? Why?

> Did it help you subsequently in some other teaching task? How?

> Did you ever feel that some practicum experiences were a waste of time?

> Did you ever feel that you were a shining success?

> They say that we learn more from our failures then our successes. From your practicum experience, do you think that’s true?

> Did your associate teacher encourage you to periodically reflect on what you had done?

> Did you get the impression that associate teachers are reflective persons?
4. Concluding question: What happened that really made a difference to your teaching?

>Probe to be selective in responses

>Describe the most important or significant or earth shattering aspects of the experience.

***********
Interview Schedule for Associate Teachers

Read the following to each associate teacher before interview begins.

This interview has three parts. The total time for the interview is about one hour. For the first part, lasting about 20 minutes, I’d like you just to describe your recent experience as an associate teacher. Tell me in as much detail as possible. I may give you prompts throughout by asking you specific questions on what you are telling me, but I’ll interrupt you as little a possible.

In the second and third parts of the interview, I’ll ask you more specific questions related to the literature, theory-to-practice connections from the university program, and questions related to the practicum experience itself.

Introduce Associate Teachers code #

Part I: Describe your recent experience as an associate teacher. Tell me in as much detail as possible.

Part II: Now begin with one recent supervision and then go on to discuss others in the past.

1. Do you generally assign teaching tasks to student teachers?
   >What teaching tasks are generally performed well?
   >What badly (poorly)?
   >Do student teachers initiate many teaching tasks? Tell me about some.

2. Do you feel that part of your job as an Associate Teacher is to help the student teacher make the theory-to-practice connections?
   >If yes, give an example
   >If no, why not?
   >Did you try?
> Did the candidate agree? disagree? understand?
3. Was there a pedagogical principle that the student teachers applied successfully?

> Give an example if needed

> Were there ones he or she had difficulty with?

> Thinking about student teachers generally, can they reasonably well apply pedagogical theory to the teaching tasks you assign?

4. There are two teaching blocks of approximately four weeks. Do you think that’s enough practice teaching?

> What is more important to you-quality or quantity (limiting time) of practice teaching when learning how to be a professional teacher?

> Are some things repeatedly missed?

> What would you change? Delete some? Add some?

> What do you feel should be changed for the student teachers?

> What would you have them do differently?

5. How would you describe your style of learning?

> Does it usually relate well to the student teacher’s style?

6. Do you think your teaching style is highly correlated with your learning style?

7. How about your student teachers’ learning styles. Do you think their teaching styles are highly correlated with their learning styles?

> Examples?

> Would you employ any of your student teachers?
Part III:

The next questions relate to the theoretical framework of my thesis—i.e., theories of experiential learning, and constructivist theory. In the literature the authors talk about stages the learner goes through as he or she tries to make sense of what he or she has to do. The researcher is/has learned about various theories about how people learn. My questions relate to these stages.

1. Tell me something about your experiences in teaching

   > Tell about when you were a student teacher.

   >(grade levels, # of years, other boards)

   >first class you taught (as an example)

   >other teaching-related experiences

2. Thinking about a recent student, what did you know about his or her background?

3. What responsibilities did you give her/him?

   >Was this usual?

   >Why did you choose it?

   >Try to elicit any responses as “roles”
4. Did s/he offer to do anything of her/his own volition?

5. Did you detect any progression through stages from neophyte teacher to professional teacher?
   > If yes, please explain.
   > If no, did that worry you?
   > Prompt with an example if needed (try not to be too direct, change in “roles” as student to professional teacher)

6. Did you notice the student teachers beginning to move their thinking to the children in your class and concentrate on the students’ learning?

7. Did h(she) deliberately focus on the objectives of the lesson?
   > If yes, explain.
   > If no, afterwards, was this pointed out to the student?
8. Have you noticed an obvious stage when student teachers start to apply the pedagogical principles that they learned in the university courses?
> If yes, what do you watch for?
> If no, what do you do then?

9. Do you think it’s part of your job to illustrate theory-into-practice for the students?
> If yes, how did you support this process?
> If no, why not? Any reasons?

10. Would you say that you engage in reflection in your own teaching practice?
> Since teachers are busy- when do you take time for reflection?

11. Do you think student teachers employ reflection much?
> From your observation, can you give me an example?

12. Some authors refer to reflection-in-action others refer to reflection after action, would you say you reflect much about the student teachers’ work? When?
Appendix C

Proposed Blank Table For Pre-service Staff (sample)

STUDENT TEACHER LIST

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Appendix D

Email to Make Arrangements for
Meeting Time and Place for Interviews

Dear (Name),

Your participant code # is __________

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. I understand that you are now involved in your internship as part of your program and are very busy. I appreciate your time and cooperation.

The purpose of this email is to suggest arrangements for the interview.

I am scheduling interviews late April, May during the day or in the evening. Please let me know which of the suggested dates below would be convenient for you. If none of these is suitable, I will also be available on the weekend if these days fit your schedule better. Below I have included dates during April and in May. Please let me know which day or evening works best for you. Interviews will take place on university premises.

Please respond by typing the date and time on the line at the bottom and return to my email address at kathleen_ronsyn@yahoo.ca

Thank you in advance, and I’ll look forward to seeing you,

Kathleen
Possible Dates and Times for Interviews:

Interviews are about one hour long

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In April:

- April 28 (Monday) 9am, 12noon, 4pm, 7pm
- April 29 (Tuesday) 9am, 12noon, 4pm, 7pm
- April 30 (Wednesday) 9am, 12noon, 4pm, 7pm

In May:

- May 1 (Thursday) 9am, 12noon, 4pm, 7pm
- May 2 (Friday) 9am, 12noon, 4pm, 7pm
- May 3 (Saturday) 2pm, 3pm
- May 4 (Sunday) 2pm, 3pm

Code #____ I choose: _________________________________
Appendix E

Participant Consent Form for Teacher Candidates

(to be presented on institutional letterhead)

I agree to participate in the research study for the doctoral thesis of Kathleen Ronsyn entitled:

An Inquiry into the Practicum: Student Teachers’ and Associate Teachers’ Perceptions of
Their Evolving Roles and Those of Each Other

I understand the following items about this study:

One of the purposes of this research is to gain knowledge of, and insight into, the practicum experiences of elementary teacher candidates from the descriptions of the practice activities and supervision. Your participation is a valuable contribution to further understanding perceptions of both groups.

Participation in this research study is voluntary, and I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason, without penalty. Confidentiality is guaranteed, and there are no known or anticipated risks associated with this research study. Care has been taken to avoid any accidental disclosure of the interviewee’s identity and any linkage to the information and views recorded. The researcher cannot control any disclosure by chance that is outside of her control. However, she alone will know the associate teacher’s name attached to his or her code. All references to
the individual’s interview material and the rating questionnaire (examples attached) will be by code. Only the doctoral researcher will have access to the list of names and their codes. The list will be destroyed when the doctoral oral examination of the candidate’s thesis has been passed.

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records. After the PhD oral examination has been successfully completed this form will be destroyed.

Participants can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273, for information about their rights as participants.

If you have any questions regarding this study please contact the researcher, Kathleen Ronsyn doctoral candidate, at kronsyn@oise.utoronto.ca. My supervisor [name], can be contacted at[email] or [phone]. Please check the following circle ( 0 ) if you wish to receive an executive summary of the results of this study when it is available after the defense. Please provide a contact address for me to send you this summary. I will only use contact information to send you the executive summary.

___________________  ___________________  __________
Participant’s Printed Name  Participant’s Signature  Date

___________________  __________
Kathleen M. Ronsyn, Researcher  Date
Appendix F

Letter of Invitation to Participants

(to be presented on institutional letterhead)

Dear (Name),

I am a doctoral student at the University’s Educational Administration program; and I am
working on my PhD thesis. My thesis has been approved both by my department, the university
ethics committee, and the pre-service department.

Your name is on the list of 48 possible volunteer interviewees supplied by the university pre-
service office. The names on the list were randomly chosen from the entire elementary program
class of 2007/2008. I am seeking 16 teacher candidates to be interviewed for this research and as
many as possible of my sample of 48 to complete the questionnaire.

The title of my thesis is: An Inquiry into the Practicum: Student Teachers’ and Associate
Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Evolving Roles and Those of Each Other

It involves:

(1) a questionnaire. You will rate (on a scale of 1 to 5) the degree of agreement or disagreement
with a number of statements about the practicum. These statements have been derived from the
educational research literature.
(2) interviews with a sample of teacher candidates and associate teachers about their experiences of the practicum:

Participation is voluntary

The interviewees will be referred to only by code

The transcripts of the interviews will be identified only by code

Completed questionnaires will be labeled and identified only by code

Participants may refuse to participate

Participants may withdraw from the study, at any time, without penalty

Feel free not to answer any questions

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with the study. The researcher cannot control any disclosure by chance that is outside of her control. However, the researcher alone will know the candidate’s name attached to his or her code.
(For example, the first student teacher to be interviewed will be student teacher ST 1; and in option one of the program, and if the candidate will qualify as Primary/Junior, h(she) will be assigned the code ST-1-1-1. This will be the only identifier to appear on the transcript of his/her interview).

The interviews will be one on one. They will take place in a room in the university building. They will be taped, and then transcribed into hard copy. A copy of the transcription will be sent back to the interviewee to be signed for verification. If you wish, you may also add, delete or make other hand-written changes to clarify points. The signed commented copy will then be returned to me.

Following the defense, the thesis parts or all of the thesis may be submitted for publication and or presented at a conference. Anonymity will be maintained.

Data are kept in a secured location by the researcher, and kept for 5 years and then destroyed. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data during the study.

Will you please participate in my research project by agreeing to be interviewed? Even if your answer is, “no”, please complete and return my questionnaire in the envelope provided.

If you are interested, please reply promptly. Then I’ll send you information about the interview questions, and suggestions about possible days and times for the interview.
Thank you,

Kathleen Ronsyn
Appendix G

Information Letter to Associate Teacher

Thesis Title: An Inquiry into the Practicum: Student Teachers’ and Associate Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Evolving Roles and Those of Each Other

Dear (Name)____________,

My name is Kathleen Ronsyn. I am a PhD student in the University’s Education Administration program. My thesis research has been approved and passed the ethics review for the pre-service in elementary teacher education program as well as the department and university ethics. Your name appeared on a random sample of associate teachers provided by the university pre-service program staff in one board in Ontario. There are over 100 names on this random list. I am seeking 16 associate teachers to be interviewed for this research and as many as possible of my sample of 48 to complete the questionnaire. This is an invitation to participate in this research.

One of the purposes of this research is to gain knowledge and insight into the multiple roles of associate teachers who support teacher candidates in their practicum experience. Your participation is a valuable contribution to further understanding perceptions of both groups.

Participants will have a semi-structured one-to-one interview lasting approximately an hour. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed.

I hope you will enjoy being interviewed. Feel free to not answer any question. You may
withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. You may refuse to participate.

After transcribing the interview, I will send the transcript to you at your school. You may add information, extend, or make your changes. Then, please send the transcript back to me within the specified time using the stamped addressed envelope. I will follow up by email to your school or to the address or phone number that you provide.

Complete confidentiality is guaranteed. You will be given an individual personal code, which will appear at the top of your transcript and questionnaire – for example, AT (associate teacher), 1, (option 1 or 2) level (P/J-1 or J/I-2). Example code: AT 1-1-1, AT8-1-1, AT1-2-2, AT8-2-2

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me by email at kronsyn@oise.utoronto.ca. If you agree to participate please email me and I will send you the consent to participate form, and will email you to arrange the interview.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ronsyn, PhD Candidate

Department of (Name of department)

(Name of University)
Appendix H

Participant Consent Form: Associate Teacher

(to be presented on institutional letterhead)

I agree to participate in the doctoral thesis of Kathleen Ronsyn, An Inquiry into the Practicum: Student Teachers’ and Associate Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Evolving Roles and Those of Each Other

I understand the following about the study:

One of the purposes of the research is to gain insight into the multiple roles of associate teachers who support teacher candidates in their practicum experience within the elementary initial teacher education program at one Ontario University. The practicum experience will be investigated from both the associate teacher’s and teacher candidate’s perspectives by interviewing a sample of sixteen members of each group.

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with the study. The researcher will ensure there is no disclosure of your participation in this project. You will be identified only by code. If any of the information you provide is quoted or otherwise individually used or commented upon, it will be identified by code.

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your reference.

Participants can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or
416-946-3273 for information about their rights as participants.

Please check the following circle ( 0 ) if you wish to receive an executive summary of the results of this study when it is available after the defense. Please provide a contact address for me to send you this summary. I will only use contact information to send you the executive summary.

Following the defense, the thesis parts or all of the thesis may be submitted for publication and or presented at a conference. Anonymity will be maintained. Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records. After the PhD oral examination has been successfully completed this form will be destroyed.

Data are kept in a secured location by the researcher, and kept for 5 years and then destroyed. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data during the study.
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me by email at kronsyn@oise.utoronto.ca. My supervisor [name] may be contacted at [email] or [phone number].

___________________  __________________  __________
Participant’s Printed Name  Participant’s Signature  Date

___________________  __________________
Kathleen M. Ronsyn, Researcher  Date
Appendix I

Covering Letter to the Board of Education

Dear (Name),

My name is Kathleen Ronsyn. I am a PhD candidate in the University’s Educational Administration program. My thesis research project, “An Inquiry into the Practicum: Student Teachers’ and Associate Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Evolving Roles and Those of Each Other” has been approved and ethically reviewed by both my department, the university ethics, and the pre-service program. It involves interviewing a sample of 16 associate teachers, who are employed in schools of your board. Those interviewed will be volunteers drawn from a random list provided by the university pre-service program staff. The interviews and the information they provide will be identified by code. Any reference to the Board or its schools will be in terms of ‘a school of an urban board in Ontario’ Confidentiality of information and anonymity of provider are both guaranteed.

This letter accords with guidelines for doing research with Board X. It supports specified criteria and permission from the board to conduct my doctoral research. The criteria I will specify in this letter relate to the relevance of my research to education, my research methodology, and how I intend to protect the privacy and confidentiality of staff in Board X and the university teacher education students in its schools.

Relevance to Education:

All Faculties of Education in Universities in Ontario offer the B.Ed consecutive degree program. The pre-service elementary program is a vital part of teacher education. The
partnership between university faculty members, associate teachers, and teacher candidates in the program is an on-going relationship. My research aims to gain greater insight into the perceptions of both teacher candidates and associate teachers of the practicum portion of the teacher education program at one Ontario University. The study is in accordance with Board policies and priorities relating to research in your board. Participation of your board is minimal in that the task involves only 16 associate teachers who have participated in the pre-service program at the university; they would be interviewed on their own time and at a location convenient to them, perhaps at their respective schools or on the university premises. An executive summary of the results of the questionnaire portion of the study will be available to each associate teacher who chooses to participate. The executive summary would be sent to the associate teacher at a destination of his or her own choice.

Research Methodology:

The theoretical framework for this study is derived from the literature on experiential learning as well as the educational literature on teacher education and practice teaching using a constructivist approach. Implicit within this theoretical framework is reflection on teaching experience. My interview protocol uses semi-structured interviews with flexibility for participants to expand on their thinking as they describe their experiences. At the end of the interview, the participants will be asked to complete (alone) a rating (1 to 5 point) questionnaire about practice teaching students and associate teachers, whose items are taken from the related literature.

Protection of staff and students:
This study has been approved as to research design and both by the department and the pre-service program, as to ethical considerations by the university. The Board is identified only as “an urban Board in Ontario”, the program as “a pre-service teacher elementary consecutive program in one of the Ontario universities”, the associate teachers’ schools are not identified and participants, are referred to only by code. I alone have the sample list of names of possible participants. The participants are members of a sample list provided by the university pre-service staff. Volunteers who participate will be identified by code. They will be referred to by code throughout my data collection activities and in my thesis. Copies of informed consent letters were included in my proposal at the time of my department hearing and are approved. Participants are informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time. I am informing the Board of Education that the associate teachers are employed by Board X.

I wish to thank the External Research Review Committee for its consideration to conduct research in your board of education.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me by email at kronsyn@oise.utoronto.ca. My supervisor [name] may be contacted at [email] or [phone number].

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ronsyn

Researcher

Department of (Name of department)
Appendix J

Letter to Dean of Pre-Service Elementary Teacher Education

Dear ___(name)__,

My name is Kathleen Ronsyn. I am a PhD candidate in University’s Educational Administration program. My thesis research project, An Inquiry into the Practicum: Student Teachers’ and Associate Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Evolving Roles and Those of Each Other, has been approved and ethically reviewed by the department. The research involves interviewing a sample of 16 student teachers about their practicum experience, and also interviewing a sample of 16 associate teachers who are employed with the Toronto Board, which will be referred to as “an urban Board of Education in Ontario (Board X).” Those interviewed will be drawn from two random lists provided by the University pre-service program staff. All the information provided will be identified by code. Reference to the University program will be “a consecutive pre-service elementary education program of one of the universities in Ontario.” Confidentiality of information and anonymity of providers are both guaranteed.

The criteria that I specify in this letter outline both the relevance of my research to education and my research methodology, and explain how I intend to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the teacher candidates in the pre-service program at University and the associate teachers in Board X.
Relevance to Education

All Faculties of Education in Universities in Ontario offer the B.Ed consecutive degree program. The pre-service elementary program is a vital part of teacher education. The partnership between university faculty members, associate teachers, and teacher candidates in the program is an on-going relationship. My research aims to gain greater insight into the perceptions of both teacher candidates and associate teachers on the practicum portion of one of these programs.

Research Methodology

The theoretical framework for the study is taken from the literature of experiential learning as well as the educational research literature on teacher education and practice teaching using a constructivist approach. Implicit in this theoretical framework is reflection on teaching experience. My research design uses semi-structured interviews, with flexibility for participants to expand on their practicum experience throughout the interview. At the end of the interview, both groups of participants will be asked to complete a one-page questionnaire. These items are drawn from the issues and views expressed in the related literature.

Protection of staff and students and Participation of Agencies/Institutions

This study has been approved by the Educational Administration program and my department at University after the ‘hearing’ at a seminar judged by two ‘external’ faculty members of the department who are not involved with my thesis research. The proposal will then be checked by the University’s ethics committee and reviewed for approval by the pre-service Department of the University. Following receipt of all approvals, I will seek approval from the Board of
Education to conduct interviews with associate teachers. There is minimal participation by board personnel in the project, so minimal demands are made on the associate teachers in the board. Throughout, The Board will be referred to as “an urban board of education in Ontario (Board X), the program as “a consecutive pre-service elementary teacher education program of one of the universities in Ontario (The Program). Participants will be volunteers from a list of names of student teachers and associate teachers drawn up by the University staff of the pre-service department, who will be invited to participate by a letter of invitation. Those who volunteer will be provided with detailed information about what is involved. Participants will be assigned codes, and will be referred to by their code throughout my data collection activities. All participants will give informed consent. All identifying information for both associate teachers and teacher candidates, The Board and The Program will be by code. I alone will have access to the names on the two sample lists. A copy of my thesis proposal is attached as well as a copy of the university of Toronto ethical review form.

Following my department’s ‘hearing’ in Educational Administration, feedback was reviewed with my supervisor and suggestions were incorporated into the final proposal.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me by email at kronsyn@oise.utoronto.ca. My supervisor [ name] may be contacted at [email] or [phone]

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ronsyn
Researcher

Department of (name of department of University)

(Name of University)
Appendix K

Letter of Information to Principals of the Participating Associate Teachers’ Schools

Dear (Name),

I am a doctoral student in the Educational Administration program of the University. My research on the perceptions of teacher candidates’ and associate teachers’ aims to gain insight into the perceptions of both groups on the practicum portion of the consecutive elementary teacher education program of the University.

This study has been approved by my department at the University, the pre-service department and the University. There is minimal participation by board personnel in the project, so minimal demands are made on the participants and your school. From your board, only the associate teachers will participate in this study, and only one teacher from your school is involved. Participants are assigned a code for identification purposes. You will most likely not know which teacher in your school is participating; his or her identity is not revealed. Anonymity is assured both to the student teachers who are interviewed and to the associate teachers.

Those who are interviewed volunteer to participate in the study and may withdraw their participation at any time.

After it was approved by the university, the study commenced with the student group of participants. The study has gone through the External Research Review Committee process and has been approved by your board of education. I enclose a copy of the approval for your records.
An interview with the associate teacher in your school will take place over the next few months at a location of his/her choosing off school property. The associate teacher’s school time will not be infringed upon. The interview, which takes about an hour, will take place after hours.

An invitation letter and consent letter was signed by the participating associate teacher. If you would like a copy of the consent and invitation letters, I will provide you with an unsigned copy of each. If you have questions about my research or require further information, please call me at the number or email below. My supervisor [name], may be contacted at [email address] or [phone number]

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ronsyn, Researcher

416-966-0489, kronsyn@oise.utoronto.ca