Investigating the Practices of Literacy Teacher Educators

by

Belinda Longe

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Belinda Longe 2017
Investigating the Practices of Literacy Teacher Educators

Doctor of Philosophy 2017

Belinda Longe
Graduate Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
University of Toronto

Abstract

This research investigated the practices of six literacy teacher educators and explored the influences on their teaching practices in their literacy courses. This qualitative case study involved two interviews for each participant and classroom observations for some of the participants over a three-year period. Four main findings emerged from this research. First, participants’ vision for teaching, and their vision for teaching literacy was not static. The participants’ visions evolved over time and was influenced by their teaching and research experiences. Second, the participants emphasized continuous learning as an integral part of their vision, both for themselves and for their student teachers. They recognized that in their role as literacy teacher educators, a commitment to on-going learning was essential and fostering that commitment to life-long learning in their student teachers was equally important. Third, the participants had a range of pedagogical approaches that they implemented, although there were some approaches that were common across participants. Fourth, the participants focused on infusing components of balanced literacy into their literacy course and many drew on children’s and young adult literature as a springboard for teaching literacy concepts. The analysis of the
data includes a discussion of the conceptual framework for the study and gives a brief overview of the interconnectedness of the concepts of social constructivism, vision for teaching literacy, and the elements of a pedagogy of teacher education.

Implications for literacy teacher educators include developing literacy courses that aim to broaden student teachers’ notion of what counts as literacy. Other implications include encouraging literacy teacher educators to remain responsive and adaptive in their literacy teaching, and creating opportunities for literacy teacher educators to regularly review, participate, and conduct scholarly research in the field of literacy teacher education, which could inform and improve their practice.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of my sister Nicole Simone Longe and my Auntie Marcelle Eglantine Longe. They both influenced my life in profound ways and my desire for continuing to pursue higher education. They are both deeply missed and are always in my thoughts and prayers.
Acknowledgements

As I reflect on my thesis journey, I am overcome with a sense of relief. At times, I was overwhelmed by all the research and writing that still had to be completed and now I feel like I can breathe again. I would not have made it this far, without the encouragement of a number of people who have shown me a tremendous amount of support throughout this journey.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Clare Kosnik. Clare never gave up on me and spent countless hours reading and suggesting revisions to chapters, mentoring me, and guiding me to the very end of this process. I have learned so much from Clare and I will always value her experience and advice, but most of all her friendship. I must also thank the members of my thesis committee for their insights and support, especially Dr. Margaret Early, the external examiner for her thoughtful comments and feedback on my study.

I would also like to thank my father, Winfield Longe, and my mother, Anita Longe. I have been blessed with their constant faith and encouragement at every stage of my life. They have always believed that I could achieve my goals and I hope that I have made them proud.

I must extend an enormous thank you to my amazing husband Andrew. He has provided me with unwavering support, listened to my concerns, and loved me unconditionally through my numerous drafts and revisions. He believed in me, even when I didn’t believe in myself. I must also thank my two beautiful children Grace and Benjamin, for sacrificing pancake breakfasts on weekends so that I could go to the library to work on my thesis and for still loving me after I missed out on afternoons at the park. I love all of you so deeply and I look forward to making new memories with all the free time I will have, now that the hard work is done.

Finally, I must also extend a sincere thank you to my six participants who generously shared their time, thoughts, and experiences with me so candidly. Without their participation, this research would not have been possible.
# Table of Contents

Investigating the Practices of Literacy Teacher Educators ........................................... i

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii

Dedication .............................................................................................................................. iv

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................. v

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... xv

List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ xvi

List of Appendices ............................................................................................................... xvii

Chapter One Introduction ..................................................................................................... 1

  Purpose of the Research ....................................................................................................... 4

  Research on Teacher Education .......................................................................................... 7

  Teacher Educators .............................................................................................................. 8

  Research Questions ............................................................................................................ 10

  Significance of the Study ................................................................................................... 11

  Positioning the Researcher ................................................................................................. 12

  Definition of Terms ............................................................................................................ 14

  Organization of Chapters in the Study .............................................................................. 15
Chapter Two Literature Review ........................................................................................................ 16

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 16

Literacy ............................................................................................................................................. 16

Changing Conceptions of Literacy .................................................................................................... 17

Traditional Ways of Teaching Literacy .............................................................................................. 20

New Literacy Studies and Multiliteracies .......................................................................................... 26

Importance of Literacy and Consequences of Low Literacy ............................................................. 30

Teacher Education ............................................................................................................................ 33

History of Teacher Education in Ontario and Canada .................................................................... 34

Context of Teacher Education in Canada .......................................................................................... 36

Teacher Education Program Models ................................................................................................ 38

Pressure for Reform .......................................................................................................................... 40

Quality of Teacher Preparation ......................................................................................................... 42

Literacy Teacher Education Programs ............................................................................................. 46

Teacher Educators ............................................................................................................................. 47

Literacy Teacher Educators ................................................................................................................. 52

Conceptual Framework ...................................................................................................................... 57
Vision................................................................................................................................. 58

Social Constructivism ........................................................................................................ 60

Pedagogy of Literacy Teacher Education ........................................................................... 61

Chapter Summary .............................................................................................................. 62

Chapter Three Methodology and Research Design ............................................................. 64

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 64

Qualitative Research Methodology ...................................................................................... 64

Research Problem ............................................................................................................... 67

Research Questions ............................................................................................................. 67

Selection of Research Participants ....................................................................................... 68

Case Study Approach .......................................................................................................... 69

Data Collection .................................................................................................................... 70

Data Collection: Interviews ................................................................................................. 71

Data Collection: Interview Design ...................................................................................... 73

Data Analysis: Grounded Theory ......................................................................................... 76

Data Analysis Using Grounded Theory: Interviews ............................................................. 77

Data Analysis: Document Analysis ..................................................................................... 79
Research Limitations .................................................................................................................. 80
Ethical Considerations .............................................................................................................. 81
Chapter Summary ..................................................................................................................... 82
Chapter 4 Overview of Participants .......................................................................................... 83
Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 83
Clara ........................................................................................................................................... 85
Introduction to Clara .................................................................................................................. 85
   Educational Background ........................................................................................................ 85
   Professional Experience ......................................................................................................... 86
   Beliefs About Teaching ......................................................................................................... 86
   Developing Literacy Course Priorities .................................................................................. 87
Jane ............................................................................................................................................ 88
Introduction to Jane .................................................................................................................. 88
   Educational Background ........................................................................................................ 88
   Professional Experience ......................................................................................................... 89
   Beliefs About Teaching ......................................................................................................... 90
   Developing Literacy Course Priorities .................................................................................. 90

ix
Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................................................. 137

Chapter Six .................................................................................................................................................... 139

Cross-Case Analysis and Discussion ........................................................................................................ 139

Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 139

Pedagogical Approaches ............................................................................................................................. 140

Experiential Learning ................................................................................................................................. 149

Building Community and Building Relationships ....................................................................................... 151

Linking Assessment and Assignments ......................................................................................................... 159

Course Content ............................................................................................................................................. 169

Components of Balanced Literacy .............................................................................................................. 170

Use of Children’s Literature ....................................................................................................................... 177

Cumulative Findings: Returning to the Conceptual Framework ............................................................... 182

Social Constructivism .................................................................................................................................. 184

Vision for Teaching Literacy ....................................................................................................................... 184

Developing a Philosophy for Teaching Literacy .......................................................................................... 184

Continuous Learning .................................................................................................................................... 188

Identity .......................................................................................................................................................... 191
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy of Literacy Teacher Education</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing and Responding to Diversity</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of Texts and Resources</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Reflection</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7 Discussion and Recommendations</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Literacy Teacher Educators</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Literacy Teacher Educators</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Education Programs</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education in Ontario</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Reflections About Being a Literacy Teacher Educator</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Research Study</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking Theory and Practice</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry and Collaboration</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focussed Professional Development .......................................................... 224

References ........................................................................................................ 225

Appendices ........................................................................................................ 257
List of Tables

Table 1. Overview of Participants and their Approaches to Literacy Teaching 84
Table 2. Ways LTEs Build Learning Communities 163
Table 3. Assessment Practices of LTEs 179
List of Figures

Figure 1. Standards for Reading Professionals vs. Lenski et al.’s Program Priorities ................. 24

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework .................................................................................................. 58

Figure 3. Vision for Teaching reciprocal influence on Philosophy of Education ...................... 135

Figure 4. Social Constructivism, Vision and Pedagogy of Literacy Teacher Education are interrelated concepts that influence each other ................................................................. 183

Figure 5. Pedagogy of Literacy Teacher Education .................................................................... 194
List of Appendices

Appendix A  Letter of Introduction ................................................................. 257

Appendix B  Informed Consent Form for Literacy Teacher Educators .................. 260

Appendix C  Interview Questions: First Interview ............................................. 262

Appendix D  Observation Form ........................................................................ 265

Appendix E  Invitation of Participants Via Email ................................................ 266

Appendix F  Second Set of Interview Questions .................................................. 267
Chapter 1
Introduction

In the fall of 2007, I was hired on secondment by Abbey University (a pseudonym) as a literacy teacher educator to teach in the one-year post-baccalaureate education program. Abbey University is a research-intensive university and highly regarded both nationally and internationally. It was recognized as a global leader in graduate programs in teaching and learning, teacher education, and education research. Additionally, it had one of the largest post-baccalaureate and master of education programs in the country. It was here that I began to reflect on the complex role of preparing elementary school teachers to teach literacy. I understood that as a literacy teacher educator I would play a critical role in the education of future teachers across the province through my literacy teaching, discussions, and development of curriculum for student teachers enrolled in this teacher education program. I felt that my role was extremely important, due to the fact that many of the graduates from our teacher education program would eventually be hired to teach in elementary schools throughout the province, across the country, and potentially around the world.

As a novice literacy teacher educator, I had assumed that my love of reading, my knowledge of children’s literature, and my prior experience in education was sufficient background to enable me to develop a thorough and comprehensive literacy course. I was mistaken. My transition to becoming a teacher educator was overwhelming and fraught with many unanticipated challenges. Trying to decide which topics to cover in the limited amount of time I had required thoughtful consideration. Hagger and McIntyre (2006) stated that in teacher education “it is always necessary to be selective, to prioritize” (p. 56). How do you decide which topics to include and which topics to exclude? How much time does each literacy concept require? Most beginner teacher educators have to find their own way and this can lead to a lonely and difficult introduction into their new profession (Guilfoyle, 1995; Murray & Male, 2005; Ritter, 2007).
The literacy course that I taught in the teacher education program was 36 hours in total; this felt like an inadequate amount of time to provide sufficient depth and breadth to the monumental subject of literacy. It became apparent very quickly that the demands of being a teacher educator were quite different from the demands placed on an elementary classroom teacher. Merging my prior knowledge and experience into a new identity of literacy teacher educator was difficult. Wenger’s (1998) theory of identity begins with the premise that “identification takes place in the doing” (p. 193). My knowledge of literacy clearly influenced my practice and identity as a novice literacy teacher educator. I was doing things based on what I knew from my experiences as a classroom teacher and administrator, and the more I learned as I taught literacy in the teacher education program, the more I realized I needed to do and learn in my new role as a literacy teacher educator. My identity had to shift and eventually transform to address the complexities of being a literacy teacher educator.

Wood and Borg (2010) concluded that the journey from teacher to teacher educator is “a rocky road” (p. 17). The road that I travelled was rocky at times; I searched for external supports and relied heavily on my classroom teaching experience to illuminate the path to teaching literacy. I approached teaching literacy with what I considered to be a balanced approach, and I used young adult and children’s literature as a platform for teaching reading and writing concepts. I felt pressure from the student teachers to address other dimensions of literacy such as media literacy, multiliteracies, and computer literacy. These concepts were not significant components of my literacy course because I did not have as much knowledge in those areas. I was fortunate that some of my teacher education colleagues in the program at Abbey University shared their literacy resources, textbooks, and course outlines in addition to providing emotional support during my secondment. However, the experience was still challenging in many ways. Although I was very experienced with over 10 years of teaching in the classroom at the time, the complexity of teaching student teachers the fundamentals of literacy instruction was far greater than I had anticipated. I had a growing understanding that teacher educators needed to have subject
knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and disciplinary knowledge. Literacy teacher educators also needed to have an understanding of the barriers children face acquiring literacy skills and had to teach these concepts to the student teachers.

Further, literacy teacher educators seemed to need to have an understanding of critical literacy, multiliteracies, and computer literacy in addition to the traditional understanding of literacy. It became clear to me that I was inadequately prepared to assume this important role because I lacked comprehensive knowledge in some of these areas of literacy. I also struggled because I lacked awareness of the scholarly resources that would have provided me with this information. Being a good classroom teacher was not going to translate into being a good teacher educator. My lack of awareness of the literature in the field of teacher education and “best practices” in this field, in particular, the emerging body of research on the transition to teaching in teacher education programs, further exacerbated the situation.

I reflected on my brief orientation into the faculty of education. There was no discussion of current research in the field of teacher education, nor of frameworks for designing courses on teaching literacy to student teachers. The orientation focused on the logistics of the program: course options for student teachers; creating a timetable; core subjects required; time requirements for each course; possible assignments that would be appropriate for the different courses; and some information about how to access technology equipment. There was very little discussion about course content or how to prioritize the material to be covered. There was an underlying assumption that the skills and expertise of classroom teachers naturally transfer to teaching in higher education, which was highly problematic. At Abbey University, many of the teacher educators came from a classroom teaching background, some were on contract, and some were professors. Their literacy teaching had evolved as they gained more experience in the role of teacher educator. One of two major pathways that people tend to take into teacher education is directly from post-graduate research, and the other is from being an experienced classroom teacher (Berry, 2007; Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006).
I had to construct a new identity and expand my knowledge as a teacher educator from my identity and skill set as a classroom teacher in this new context of teacher education. I could not rely solely on my classroom teacher knowledge of how to teach children to read and write through the exploration of novel studies, picture books, poetry units, and book reports. The context of literacy teaching in a teacher educator program required a much broader perspective than the classroom context did. The role of literacy teacher educator was much more complex; in particular, it required an understanding of the underlying processes of how to teach student teachers to understand the complexities of literacy learning in children while also “teaching about teaching” (Loughran, 2008). My new role as a teacher educator required me to do, to think, and to learn simultaneously. I possessed knowledge about literacy teaching (disciplinary knowledge) but needed to also have knowledge about teaching about teaching (pedagogical knowledge), and had to become immersed in the discourse of teacher education.

Murray and Male (2005) described the transition from teacher to teacher educator as a move from first-order to second-order practice. Indeed, they suggest, “Initially, in teacher education, the teacher educator relies on deep knowledge and understanding of the classroom as her or his disciplinary knowledge. The content of teaching revolves around personal values, beliefs, and biographies” (p. 126). However, even a novice teacher educator realizes that there is a distinction between teaching about teaching and teaching literacy. Conflict arises when the teacher educator begins to recognize that first-order practice is not sufficient for teaching students about teaching, and that a teacher educator needs to include the practices and discourses of both teaching children in a classroom and teaching student teachers (Wood & Borg, 2010).

Purpose of the Research

This research study explores how six literacy teacher educators approached teaching their literacy courses and how their background experiences, both personal and professional, prepared them for this role. Through semi-structured interviews, reviews of course outlines, and classroom
observations with six literacy teacher educators from four universities in one Canadian province, this study aimed to explore the professional practices and backgrounds of literacy teacher educators in order to develop a greater understanding of how they teach, what they teach, and what influences their teaching in literacy teacher education. By collecting and analyzing data about the personal and professional experiences of the six literacy teacher educators, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influenced their vision for their courses and why they prioritized certain content areas within the subject of literacy while excluding others. Moreover, I was interested in understanding the pedagogical strategies that they implemented in their literacy courses. Fisher (2009) described teacher educators as follows:

Faculty members in higher education who have primary responsibility for the instruction of student teachers, are the ones most typically referred to as teacher educators. They teach courses about learning, child development, curriculum development, as well as methods of instruction and assessment, and they supervise and mentor [student teachers] in practicum experiences and student teaching (p. 34).

Koster (2002) refers to the outcomes and roles by defining a teacher educator as:

Someone who teaches at a teacher education institution or supports students’ fieldwork in schools, and contributes substantially to the development of students towards becoming competent teachers (p. 7).

For the purposes of this study, I defined a literacy teacher educator as one who teaches student teachers how to teach literacy in a teacher education program. My experiences as a novice teacher educator led me to question my depth of knowledge about literacy and teaching literacy, as well as the educational background required in order to become an effective literacy teacher educator.

Consequently, my work as a novice literacy teacher educator set the stage for my research because it was in this role that I began to ask questions about literacy teacher educators, their professional influences, and their rationales and priorities for course development. I began to wonder if we were providing student teachers with sufficient skills, knowledge, and preparation
to be able to teach their future students effectively. I wanted to understand how I might improve my own teaching as a literacy teacher educator and how I might support other teacher educators in improving their teaching as well. Murray and Male (2005) interviewed 28 teachers who had become teacher educators. The study by Murray and Male (2005) found that the process of becoming a teacher educator involved three key aspects, including, developing a personal pedagogy of teacher education, learning to work in the higher education context, and beginning to conduct research and developing an inquiry-based attitude (p. 135). According to Murray and Male (2005) these three aspects take years to develop and the process is neither systematic nor linear. Indeed, the manner in which these develop is likely to be affected by the educational institution, the expertise of the faculty, and the supports in place for conducting research. I felt strongly that literacy teacher educators must think very carefully about literacy instruction in teacher education because the implications of their literacy teaching are far-reaching. Indeed, if literacy teacher educators are not able to equip student teachers with the tools they require to navigate teaching literacy in their classrooms, how will student teachers be able to give quality literacy instruction to their future students?

While a body of literature around teacher education and teacher educators exists, it often overlooks the particular qualities, experiences, and skills that literacy teacher educators would benefit from having in their complex role of teaching about literacy and teaching about teaching. In the next few sections, I will provide a brief overview of the existing research on teacher education and teacher educators and discuss the limited research that focuses specifically on who teacher educators are and what they do. This study will attempt to address some of the gaps in existing research by exploring the backgrounds of six experienced literacy teacher educators and contribute to the growing body of research in this field.
Research on Teacher Education

According to Ducharme and Ducharme (1996), teacher education programs and faculties are paradoxically viewed as “both the cause of all school problems and the source of many of its solutions” (p. 705). While much of the recent research on teacher education has been conducted in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner, 2003), many of the findings of US-based studies are applicable to the Canadian context (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008).

A number of studies on teacher education have highlighted the important role that policy and institutional context play in improving teacher education (Fullan & Scott, 2009). Many researchers (Goodlad, 1990; Zeichner, 2003) have argued that effective teacher education programs require ample financial resources and other infrastructure supports. Individually or in combination, the presence or absence of these factors may impact the ability of teacher education programs to produce exemplary teachers. While there are different models of what effective teacher education programs might look like, the challenge is to ensure that elements of program excellence included in teacher education programs are aligned with those models indicated in contemporary research (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005).

Teacher education programs are the first step in a life-long journey of learning, and they are often sites with complex agendas and multifaceted challenges. They prepare student teachers for the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills. However, critical features of teacher education programs, including curriculum and pedagogies, differ among institutions. Additionally, time constraints within a teacher education program further complicate teacher educators’ attempts to provide depth and breadth for student teachers (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, & LePage, 2005). Teacher education programs and the teacher educators who work in these programs are faced with the multiple challenges including: adequately preparing student teachers to teach in a global context; teaching diverse learners; bridging the gap between
pedagogical theory and classroom practice, and; finding innovative ways to improve student achievement.

In order to examine teacher education programs, we must look closely at the teacher educators who teach in these programs and look at how they are preparing student teachers to become teachers.

**Teacher Educators**

Teacher educators come from different backgrounds and often work in very different settings (Lunenburg, 2010). The level of expertise of teacher educators can vary widely both within and across faculties of education. In the past, very little attention was paid to what teacher educators knew and what they should be required to know (Martinez, 2008). However, over the past 10 years, an increasing number of studies on teacher educators have been published (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996; Livingston, 2014; Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004; Murray & Male, 2005; Snoek, Swennen, & Van Der Klink, 2011) and research on the teacher education or pre-service learning for teachers has begun to receive more attention.

For example, Bullock and Ritter (2011) conducted a collaborative self-study on the transition from teacher to teacher educator. Being a teacher educator has many facets and requires a complex array of skills and knowledge. In a 2009 study, Ritter found that becoming a teacher educator is a continual process of learning about teaching “through sustained inquiry into practice” (p. 59). By reflecting on and examining the purpose of his own teaching through self-study, he came to understand that he could refine and improve his practices as a teacher educator. This type of self-assessment is another way that teacher educators can shed light on some of the essential qualities that may be missing in teacher educators. Other studies have since provided further insight into the professional backgrounds of teacher educators (Kosnik, Dharamshi,
While most individuals understand that teachers are required to think about and perform many tasks, often simultaneously (Britzmann, 2003; Hargreaves, 1994; Kennedy, 2005), little research has investigated the reality that teacher educators face with little to no training to prepare them to perform successfully. Most teacher education programs do not have a process for ensuring that teacher educators can meet the demands of adequately preparing student teachers for the 21st century. Cochran-Smith (2003) argued that there needs “to be more attention to what teachers of teachers themselves need to know and what institutional supports need to be in place in order to meet the complex demands of preparing teachers for the 21st century” (p. 6). Teacher educators frequently report not having been well prepared for teaching at the university level (Ducharme & Ducharme, 1999; Loughran, 2006), noting that they were often left to their own devices to develop their courses.

Literacy teacher educators must consider issues of pedagogy, the principles of effective literacy teaching, diversity, instruction, and current literacy research initiatives in preparing their curricula. Compounding these challenges is the isolation in which most literacy teacher educators work and the limited opportunities for collaboration. Hence, both new and experienced literacy teacher educators working in isolation tend to develop their courses in ad hoc ways (Lenski, Grisham, & Wold, 2006). Beyond the support of colleagues, engagement with scholarly work is also important for teacher educators. Indeed, as Zeichner (2005) suggests:

> If a new generation of teacher educators goes into their roles with knowledge of the scholarly literature related to the work of teacher education and with the dispositions and skills to study their practice to make it better, novice teachers and their students will benefit (p. 123).

The process of becoming an effective teacher educator is complex. Developing the mindset and skills of a literacy teacher educator requires a clear understanding of pedagogical theories and
curriculum in relation to reading, writing, and oral communication. Literacy as a discipline is a complicated subject to teach, and as a result, there are a range of factors to consider in every setting (e.g., length of course). Indeed, a number of choices need to be made by literacy teacher educators in the design and delivery of their courses.

Literacy courses play an important role in helping student teachers to acquire a set of tools for teaching literacy in general (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). In order to improve the professional practice of literacy teacher educators, it is important to study this group, to explore their beliefs, their educational backgrounds, their professional influences, and the courses they develop.

Research Questions

To better understand how literacy teacher educators approach their work and the impacts of their own identities, three central research questions guided this study. The questions were:

1. **How do literacy teacher educators develop a vision for their courses?**

How do they explain their vision? What are the ways that teacher educators enact their vision in their literacy course?

2. **To what extent does the personal and professional background of a literacy teacher educator influence his or her vision?**

Do they have biases in the creation of their courses? Are there limits to what they can teach? Do their personal experiences allow them to address all perspectives and create an inclusive environment to meet the needs of all their students?

3. **How do teacher educators prioritize topics in their literacy courses?**

How do they decide what is essential and what is not?
Due to the limited amount of time each literacy teacher educator (LTE) has for his/her course, decisions must be made around what to include and what to exclude. How much time is spent on certain topics? Do priorities change from year to year? Do the student teachers in the class affect the choices made about what to teach, what to discuss?

By framing the research study around these questions, my goal was to gain a deeper understanding of literacy teacher educators themselves, of what shapes their course construction, and what influences the faculty of education where they taught might have had on their courses.

Significance of the Study

There have been few if any educational initiatives aimed at improving the practices of literacy teacher educators in Ontario. Research on teacher educators and their professional backgrounds and experiences is a growing area, but at the time I began this research study there were few studies in this field. By researching the professional lives, priorities, and experiences of literacy teacher educators and how this influences their courses, I hope to contribute to the body of knowledge in this area and to the field of teacher education. Insights gained from this research may assist literacy teacher educators to improve the content and effectiveness of their literacy courses. Studying literacy teacher educators is important because teacher education programs rely on teacher educators to prepare student teachers for working in diverse classrooms. Some contend that teacher educators indirectly influence student achievement because they are instrumental in preparing beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2008). For example, when they privilege particular instructional strategies and give priority to certain topics, they influence what student teachers will do in their own classrooms. Some of the research on student achievement links teacher quality to the level of expertise of the classroom teacher (Darling-Hammond & Futrell, 2008). If we take this one step further, we may find a link between teacher quality and the quality of teacher educator (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2014). This is important because effective literacy instruction is a cornerstone of effective teaching in every classroom. It is my
hope that this research study will contribute to the body of knowledge in this field and that it will encourage teacher educators to reflect on how they approach the teaching of their literacy courses. This could lead to higher levels of efficacy in teacher education and an increase in the professionalization of teacher educators. This study may also have positive implications for classroom teachers and their students. It could also lead to improved funding and resources for teacher educators and teacher education programs by heightening awareness of how additional resources, training, and time could address some of the gaps in literacy teaching. Moreover, this work could lead to policy changes in the recruitment, selection, and training of beginning teacher educators.

Positioning the Researcher

The questions I raise in this study are rooted in my practice as a literacy teacher educator and in the literature on teacher educators. Currently, I am an elementary school principal who works every day with teachers to enhance their instructional practices and to build capacity around literacy teaching in an effort to improve student achievement. I have held various roles in the education system over the past 20 years. I began my career as an elementary classroom teacher in 1994, became a literacy co-ordinator in 2002, and eventually moved into administration. Throughout my educational career, I have always had an interest in professional development for teachers and been curious about the role and qualifications of teacher educators in teacher education programs. There were many occasions when I observed beginning teachers struggle to deal with the complexities of teaching literacy to their students and I often wondered how I could support these teachers in improving their literacy programs.

As a novice teacher educator at Abbey University, I came to realize how much I still needed to learn about literacy and teaching literacy in teacher education. It was also during this time that I began to question some of the choices that I made in my first year as a literacy teacher educator. I recognized that within my own literacy course, I had chosen to model instructional strategies
and teach topics with which I was most familiar, topics that focused on my own personal interest in children’s literature and poetry as an avenue for teaching literacy. I came to the stark realization that one literacy course could not adequately prepare student teachers for their role as a classroom teacher. Further, the workload for a literacy teacher educator was heavy and the learning curve was steep. Although I was committed to the process of inquiry required to support my growth and development as a teacher educator, the opportunity to engage in sustained inquiry was limited. Research has shown that simply having a high degree of literacy oneself is insufficient to ensure excellence in teaching literacy (Cunningham, Zibulsky, & Callahan, 2009). My own experiences as a literacy teacher educator supported this finding and it became evident to me that teaching the fundamentals of literacy and sharing an understanding of literacy concepts required greater expertise than I had.

My educational background and my professional experiences shaped my interpretation of the data gathered in this study. My views and assumptions about literacy teacher educators were greatly influenced by my experiences as a classroom teacher, as a principal, and as a novice teacher educator. These personal views and assumptions have been my lens, and they have shaped my research process. However, the insights I have gained as a result of this study have challenged some of my initial assumptions about becoming a teacher educator. My professional experiences have been helpful in this regard, because they allow me a perspective that adds value to this context: both an objective and a subjective view. Loughran (2004) emphasized the importance of teacher educators paying attention to their [personal and professional] experiences and suggested that learning through researching these experiences would help teacher educators develop a deeper understanding of how to approach teaching about teaching.
Definition of Terms

In this section I define the terms used throughout the dissertation. The terms that will be defined in this section include, teacher educator, literacy teacher educator, student teacher, teacher education program, balanced literacy, and vision.

*Teacher Educator:* A teacher educator is an individual who teaches in a higher education institution and prepares student teachers to teach in an elementary or secondary classroom.

*Literacy Teacher Educator:* A literacy teacher educator is an individual who prepares student teachers to teach literacy in a teacher education program.

*Student teacher:* Student teachers are enrolled in a teacher education program and are learning to become elementary or secondary classroom teachers. Upon completion of the one-year post-baccalaureate Bachelor of Education teacher education program, student teachers are eligible to teach either at the elementary or the secondary level in the province of Ontario.

*Teacher Education Program:* The teacher education programs in this study are university-based programs where student teachers upon graduation become certified to teach Primary/Junior (P/J) grades Kindergarten to Grade 6, Junior/Intermediate (J/I) grades 4 to grades 8, and Intermediate/Senior (I/S) grades 7 to 12.

*Balanced Literacy:* I define the components of balanced literacy as including reading aloud, guided, shared, and independent reading, as well as writing aloud, guided, shared, and independent writing, which often take place in a Readers’ or Writers’ workshop.

*Vision:* Vision is defined as the purposeful direction that literacy teacher educators have for their literacy courses which encompasses their philosophy and their beliefs about literacy and beliefs about teaching literacy.
Organization of Chapters in the Study

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. In Chapter One I have set the context for the study, provided a brief overview of relevant research, discussed the purpose of the study, and articulated the research questions. In Chapter Two, the literature review discusses in detail the literature around teacher education, teacher educators, and literacy teacher educators, and explores some of the current issues and challenges facing literacy teacher educators and teacher education. The conceptual framework for this study is outlined at the end of Chapter Two. Chapter Three describes the methodological approach of the study. Chapter Four gives an overview of the participants and highlights their personal stories as these connect to their identity as literacy teacher educators. Chapters Five and Six present the results of the analysis of the interviews of the six literacy teacher educators. Chapter Five focuses on the specific theme of vision that emerged from the study. Chapter Six considers the pedagogical approaches and course content of the participants and includes a cross-case analysis and discussion of the findings. In Chapter Seven I discuss the implications and offer some recommendations for literacy teacher educators, teacher education programs, and the Ontario Ministry of Education. Finally, I offer some personal reflections about the work of literacy teacher educators, discuss the limitations of the study, and share some recommendations for future research.
Chapter Two
Literature Review

Introduction

Much has been written about literacy and teaching literacy to children. However, there is much less research focused on those who teach student teachers, the teacher educators (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Loughran, 2008; Martinez, 2008). As described in Chapter One, this dissertation investigates the practices of six literacy teacher educators from four different teacher education programs. In order to examine existing scholarly work in the field, this literature review focuses on the following areas: definitions of literacy, the field of teacher education, teacher education programs, teacher educators, and literacy teacher educators (LTEs). The review begins with a brief overview of the changing concepts of literacy, definitions of literacy, traditional ways of teaching literacy, and the importance of literacy in our society. The chapter continues with an outline of the field of teacher education, the history of teacher education in Ontario, the current context of teacher education in Ontario, and some standard models of teacher education programs. In third section contains a brief discussion about the pressure to reform teacher education and concerns about the quality of teacher preparation. The fourth section focuses more specifically on literacy teacher education programs, specifically the context in which literacy teacher educators work. Finally, the literature review ends with a discussion of the role of teacher educators in the preparation of student teachers, a discussion of the conceptual framework that I used to analyze the data, and the emerging research about literacy teacher educators, the main focus of this dissertation.

Literacy

Although most education professionals know that literacy is important for children to fully participate in school and society and they know that conceptions of literacy have continued to
evolve over time, many do not know much about what literacy teacher educators are teaching or how literacy teacher educators are teaching in their literacy courses (Kosnik & Beck, 2014, White Paper, Frameworks for Literacy Reform, International Literacy Association, 2016). This is in part due to the fact that in the field of literacy there are increasingly wide ranges of concepts, skills, and applications of literacy theory that can be taught to student teachers (International Literacy Association, 2016; International Reading Association, 2003; Menna, 2016). This makes it increasingly difficult for teacher educators to know if they are making the right choices to adequately prepare student teachers to teach literacy in Ontario schools.

Given the complexity of these issues, and in order to explore what LTEs in faculties of education across the province of Ontario are teaching, it is valuable to first explore the following areas: the changing concepts of literacy including multiliteracies and new literacy studies; the general importance of literacy, and; the consequences of low literacy skills for individuals and our society.

**Changing Conceptions of Literacy**

Research in the field of literacy is wide-ranging. However definitions of *literacy* vary depending on the context in which the word is being used (Roberts, 2005). The original Latin term, *literatus*, refers to a person of scholarly or literacy attainments (Turner, 1978). In the 1700s and 1800s education was not available to everyone, but as education became more available to the general population in the 1900s the population of literate people grew around the world (Gordon & Gordon, 2003). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined “a literate person” in 1958 as “one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life” (Global Monitoring Report, 2006, p. 153). This was the first internationally agreed upon definition of literacy, and although certainly not consistent with conceptions of literacy today, it reflected a conception of literacy that was appropriate for society at that time.
In the 21st century definitions of literacy are much broader and involve more complex understandings of what being literate means. The National Assessment for Adult Literacy (NAAL) (2003) in the United States defines literacy as “the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s potential” (https://nces.ed.gov/naal/fr_definition.asp). However, UNESCO’s statement about literacy has changed significantly since 1958. UNESCO (2004) defined literacy as:

The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute, and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society (UNESCO Education Sector Position Paper, p. 13).

UNESCO’s contemporary definition reflects an understanding that literacy involves more than the ability to read and write, as it also implies that the ability to read and write is socially, culturally, and/or politically relevant. When comparing UNESCO’s current statement with their 1958 statement, there is an acknowledgement by UNESCO that the way people communicate with each other and share information has changed significantly over the past 50 years. Individuals no longer need to rely solely on books and print media as primary sources of information because communication technologies have changed the way people share information with each other.

Similar to the UNESCO definition, in a 2011 joint study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) literacy was defined as:

The ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home, at work, and in the community – to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential (OECD & Statistics Canada, 2000, p. x).

This definition echoes UNESCO’s statement about literacy in its breadth and its conception that 21st century literacy is more than simply understanding the printed word; being able to read,
speak, and write in a specific language is no longer a sufficient measure of literacy. People need to be able to read and interpret words, symbols, and images in various forms, and be able to access a variety of multi-media platforms in order to communicate effectively.

Pointing to the importance of literacy, the International Literacy Association (2016) stated, “literacy is the essential education, the learning through which all other learning takes place” (p. 2). According to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE):

> Literacy is a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. The 21st century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies (http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/21stcentdefinition).

NCTE, OECD, and HRSDC all recognize that as society and technology change, literacy also changes. Many scholars (e.g., Dubin & Kahlman, 1992; Heath, 1991; Tompkins, 2003) and literacy promotion organizations, such as the National Centre for Literacy Education (NCLE), recognize that definitions of literacy must be expanded to include more than the ability to read and write, they must include other forms of communication and the contexts in which they are used.

Reflective of the breadth and complexity of literacy today, the Ontario government produced a document in 2013 called *Paying Attention to Literacy K - 12* that defined literacy as:

> The ability to use language and images in rich and varied forms to read, write, listen, speak, view, represent, discuss and think critically about ideas. Literacy enables us to share information and to interact with others. Literacy is an essential tool for personal growth and active participation in a democratic society.

Within this document, they discuss the concept of literacy as involving the capacity to:

- Access, manage, create and evaluate information
- Think imaginatively and analytically
- Communicate thoughts and ideas effectively
- Apply metacognitive knowledge and skills
• Develop a sense of self-efficacy and an interest in life-long learning (p. 3).

For this study, the working definition of literacy that I used for my research aligns with the Ontario government’s definition in their document *Paying Attention to Literacy K - 12*, (2013). I define literacy as the ability to use and comprehend language and images in a variety of forms to speak, listen, read, write, and think critically about ideas in order to communicate with others, share information, and actively participate in society.

**Traditional Ways of Teaching Literacy**

The teaching of reading in elementary education has been a contested area for many decades, with various groups and scholars advocating for and against specific instructional approaches and foci (Booth, 2009; Fountas & Pinnell, 2000; Pressley & Allington, 2015). The argument over teaching children to read using phonics versus a whole language approach, for example, is a long-standing one and the dispute continues today.

Phonics dominated reading instruction from 1910 until about 1930 (Harrington-Lueker, 1996). Advocates of the phonics approach emphasize the importance of developing students’ abilities to sound out words and helping students develop the alphabetic principle (Juel, Griffith, & Gough, 1986). However, this approach can be problematic as many English words do not have a one-to-one sound/symbol relationship and many words in the English language cannot be pronounced correctly using phonetic rules.

The field of teaching reading shifted from a focus on phonics to a whole language approach when Dr. William S. Gray, an esteemed educator and literacy advocate, argued for greater balance in elementary reading programs. Dr. Gray was considered the leading expert on reading for the first half of the 20th century. He introduced the Dick and Jane series in the 1930s. This series used the *look-say* method of reading. However, in the 1960s there was a broad public
perception in the United States that students reading achievement was declining as a result of inadequate literacy instruction (Baumann, 1998).

Thus, the whole language movement began in the late 1960s “in response to the ways in which the ‘back-to-basics’ effort was being applied to teaching reading” (Stice, Bertrand, & Manning, 2007, p. 79). Educational reformers of this time believed that reading should be natural which meant, “children should learn to recognize whole words, rather than learning phonetic analysis and sounding out unfamiliar words” (Ravitch, 2001, p. 216). As educators did more research on how children learned to read there was a move away from the strictly phonetic approach. Proponents of whole language emphasized the importance of helping new readers to use their prior knowledge to make meaning from a text (Calkins, 2001; Goodman, 1986). Following this approach the teacher is expected to provide an environment for literacy learning that combines speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Fullan, Connelly, & Watson, 1989).

Decades later, researchers such as Chall (1989) and Delpit (1988) agreed that whole language instruction was not a comprehensive model for reading instruction. The conclusion was that the most effective instructional approaches for teaching reading involved a combination of phonics instruction and reading comprehension strategies. Chall (1967) suggested that “[c]hildren need to learn how to decode, that is, to learn the relationship between letters and their sounds, and they also need to read good children’s literature in the early elementary grades” (p. 308).

Though the reading debate continues today, most literacy scholars propose a more balanced approach towards literacy teaching (Rasinski & Padak, 2000, 2012; Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005). This concept of “balanced literacy teaching” involves literacy instruction that includes aspects of both phonics and whole language. As Bingham and Hall-Kenyon (2013) noted, “balanced literacy instructional practices are often enacted through the use of specific instructional routines such as guided reading, shared reading, interactive writing, literacy centres and independent reading and writing” (p. 16). These instructional practices are described at great
length by researchers such as Fountas and Pinnell (2000), Pressley and Allington (2015), and Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998, 2005). In their books, they highlight some of the fundamental components that are essential when implementing balanced literacy teaching in a classroom. These include reading and writing aloud, guided and shared reading and writing, and independent reading and writing.

Literacy teacher educators play an important role in developing the knowledge base, both theoretical and practical, associated with the components of balanced literacy teaching in their literacy courses. However, developing an effective knowledge base is an on-going challenge for many reasons, one of which includes time constraints. It is difficult for student teachers to acquire the depth of knowledge required for effective literacy teaching because of the limited amount of time spent in teacher education programs and courses (Buckland & Fraser, 2008). Grossman, Schoenfeld, and Lee (2005) echoed the view that it is not possible for teacher educators to teach student teachers everything they will need to know as professionals. Therefore, Grossman et al. (2005) argued “teacher educators should focus their attention on key issues related to the teaching and learning within a subject matter, and on equipping them with the tools to continue their inquiries” (p. 229). In this case, helping student teachers acquire core knowledge for teaching literacy should be one of the primary goals of LTEs. As Bingham and Hall-Kenyon (2013) stated:

> Effective literacy instruction requires that teachers possess sound literacy expertise that allows them to adapt their literacy instruction to meet the specific challenges and needs of the age group that they teach (p. 24).

Interestingly, one of the most consistently replicated findings in research is that teacher expertise, not teaching method, is the greatest contributor to student success (Kidd, Vallaume, & Greene Brabham, 2003). Due to the broad range of learning needs, styles, and cultural contexts that children bring to a classroom, it is essential that student teachers acquire a variety of instructional approaches in order to teach literacy effectively. However, as Moats (2009) noted “[e]vidence
regarding the best ways to teach teachers of reading is much less robust than the evidence for teaching reading itself. Policy mandates for the improvement of reading instruction should be coupled with greater efforts to improve teachers’ knowledge and skill” (p. 393).

Working towards improving students’ achievement in schools must include consideration of the preparation of the teachers who teach students. A study by Lenski, Ganske, Chambers, Wold, and Dobler (2013) examined the literacy course priorities of nine initial teacher education programs in order to decipher what made their literacy programs effective. The findings of this study suggested that all nine of the programs emphasized teaching literacy theories, instructional practices, and uses of assessments. However, it was unclear from Lenski et al.’s (2013) study if all teacher education programs incorporated all six standards or to what degree certain standards were emphasized. Nonetheless, the program emphases that emerged from Lenski et al. align with the Standards for Reading Professionals (SRPs) as identified by the International Reading Association (2010). Indeed, both studies align in indicating that teaching foundational knowledge about literacy theories is integral within a teacher education program; that instructional practices (and curriculum materials in the SRP) must be emphasized; and that assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation are important components of any teacher education program. The diagram below indicates the areas of alignment.
The SRPs are considered an important framework for the development of literacy teacher education programs. The SRPs originally had five key standards with specific elements for each standard. In 2010 a sixth standard was added to the list. The revised six standards for reading professionals include:

- Foundational knowledge.
- Instructional strategies and curriculum materials.
- Assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation.
- Literate environments.
- Professional development.
- Diversity (IRA, 2010).

These standards are performance-based not course-based and can be used as guiding frameworks for literacy teacher preparation programs. It is important to note that the ILA Standards for Literacy Professionals are currently under development for 2017.
In the United States of America, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001’s “Reading First” provision attempted to improve reading instruction in American schools with the aim of closing the achievement gap. Many aspects of this proposal were based on the report from the National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000), *Teaching Children to Read*, yet there were many flaws in the NRP report. For example, it did not examine research that specifically addressed the challenges faced by visible minorities, English language learners (ELL), or students speaking non-standard dialects of English. The NRP report also did not take into account the influence that motivation and engagement have on reading and excluded all non-experimental studies such as correlational and ethnographic studies of students actually learning to read in classrooms (Allington, 2002). Thus, the NRP report failed to indicate why the NCLB initiative was problematic because it was based on flawed research and reflected a lack of diligence on the part of the government. As well, it did not take into account that poor results were often connected to unqualified teachers with little or no expertise in teaching reading (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006).

Having qualified teachers in the classrooms can have a positive impact on student learning, especially for those students who have the greatest need for support and intervention (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). Qualified teachers are an integral part of improving student achievement because teachers need to have the ability to make instructional decisions in line with the needs of the students in their classrooms. Maloch et al.’s (2003) study followed 101 student teachers through their first year of teaching through three different types of teacher education programs. The study by Maloch et al. (2003) explored the understandings, beliefs, and decision-making processes of beginning teachers and found that “Seventy-eight percent of the reading specialization program teachers had an awareness that instructional decisions would have an impact on student learning, whereas only 21 percent of the general education graduates reported this” (p. 442).

Additionally, the researchers found that:
Teachers who had a specialization in reading were more responsive to the needs of their students and were able to draw on their knowledge and experiences from their teacher education programs to assist students and make more informed decisions as compared to general education teachers (Maloch et al., 2003, p. 444).

It is likely that the debate over how to teach children to read and write will continue long into the future as proponents of each approach have a vested interested in its success. Having an awareness of the historical debates around teaching reading and other literacy concepts is important information for literacy teacher educators, as they play a central role in teaching the developmental process of learning to read, and in preparing classroom teachers how to teach their future students to be literate.

**New Literacy Studies and Multiliteracies**

Beginning in the 1980s, New Literacy Studies (NLS) offered a view of literacy as “situated in social, institutional, cultural, and historical contexts” (Jocson & Thorne-Wallington, 2013, p. 7). Education scholars in the field of new literacy studies (e.g., Heath, 1991; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Mills, 2010; Street, 1993, 2008) believe that in order for individuals to be active participants in society they must possess what Heath (1991) called *literate behaviours*. Literate behaviours consist of literacy practices that require more than the technical skills of being able to read and write; they are more abstract in nature and go beyond what the text says. As Heath (1991) stated, “Literate behaviours are ways of going about learning that treat language as both the medium and the object of study” (p. 40). Understanding literate behaviours as developing competency in interpretation forces us to broaden our definition of literacy. According to Street (2006), “New Literacy Studies represents a shift in perspective in the study and acquisition of literacy from the dominant cognitive model with its emphasis on reading to a broader understanding of literacy practices in their social and cultural contexts” (p. 37).

This broader view of literacy by NLS gave power to non-dominant forms of literacy and broadened the scope of who was considered to be literate in our diverse society. In recent years,
the field of NLS has addressed literacy as “a repertoire of changing practices for communicating purposefully in multiple social and cultural contexts” (Mills, 2010, p. 247). The premise was that social groups construct knowledge and literacy practices in order to interact and communicate with each other. As the environment and context change, for example home versus school, the type of literacy and knowledge required to interact competently can also change. As Roswell (2006), suggests, “NLS calls into question the notion of a singular model of literacy…it allows us to appreciate that literacy exists outside of school” (p. 1). Further social media innovations, such as texting and online face-to-face conferencing have changed the way people interact and communicate with each other. These technological tools impact conceptions of literacy and have situated individuals in a society where basic literacy skills now include the ability to navigate multiple sources of information using a growing range of technological innovations, sometimes simultaneously. For example, in classrooms smart boards have replaced chalkboards, iPads have replaced notebooks, and the Internet has become a virtual encyclopedia for the 21st century.

Research in new literacy studies suggests that “in practice, literacy varies from one context to another and from one culture to another and so, therefore, do the effects of the different literacies in different conditions” (Street, 2003, p. 77). This is in contrast to other views of literacy that seem to impose the dominant culture’s view of literacy onto other cultures or groups. Addressing the changing landscape of literacy remains a challenge for literacy teacher educators.

As McLean and Rowsell (2013) noted, “Teacher education programs can be places that convince student [teachers] to broaden notions of what literacy is, or they can be places that stridently and determinedly retain status quo” (p. 2). While there is clearly no consensus on a definition of literacy, notions of literacy that go beyond traditional understandings of literacy continue to be discussed in academic communities today. Therefore, as conceptions of literacy become more complex, a much broader view of literacy is required in schools and in teacher education programs (Mills, 2009). Expanding conceptions of literacy requires new terminology and approaches. Multiliteracies is a term that was originally coined by the New London Group.
(NLG) and framed in the context of their discussions about literacy, literacy teaching, and learning (NLG, 2000, p. 9). The NLG proposed a new approach to literacy pedagogy in response to the globalized and rapidly changing communication environment and the media platforms that were emerging in society.

The New London Group asserted that teaching multiliteracies involves a commitment to four pedagogical components: situated practices, overt instruction, critical framing, and application (NLG, 2000). Situated practice refers to learning opportunities that are grounded in personal experiences that are meaningful to the students. Overt instruction refers to educators explicitly teaching students the meta-language to talk about designs and to share strategies that will assist with comprehension of various modes of communication. Critical framing is teaching students to recognize that social or cultural context influences a particular text or graphic and that there is not one universal truth about the meaning of any text or graphic. Finally, application involves students taking what they have learned about designs and using it new ways and in new situations (Westby, 2010, p. 67). Kress (2000) correctly noted that teaching literacy needs to expand to address the emerging forms of literacy and ways in which we communicate. In order to do this, teacher educators must broaden their own understanding of what literacy is and how multiliteracies affect student teachers’ learning and their lived experiences.

Two scholars who contributed to the work of NLG, Cope and Kalantzis (2000), also noted that there were many types of literacy that needed to be addressed as part of literacy teaching that went beyond traditional teaching. These scholars felt that incorporating multiliteracies into literacy teaching was essential in order to keep pace with new developments in communication technologies. Another key issue for this group of literacy scholars was that literacy pedagogy needed to be more inclusive of cultural difference (NLG, 2000). Thus, the NLG attempted to address two related trends, the changing landscape of literacy and the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of learners.
The importance of culture and context was also emphasized by Street (2003), a well-known scholar in the field of New Literacy Studies, when he argued that conceptions of literacy were ideological, culturally located, and embedded in particular worldviews. Thus, New Literacy Studies scholars such as Street (2003) and multiliteracies scholars such as the NLG (1996) see literacy as being embedded in the day-to-day practices of a person’s life, thus constituting a social practice, not just technical skills. Therefore, a multiliteracies approach encourages literacy educators to adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of literacy learners in multi-modal ways that are more relevant to the culture of the students and contexts of their lives. Proponents of a multiliteracies approach proceed from the premise that “teaching literacy as a stable, autonomous system of linguistic conventions and rules is no longer adequate for the multiple forms and modes of communications in our society” (Kress, 2000, p. 183). However, the concept of multiliteracies is not clearly understood by all literacy teacher educators, and this makes it a challenge to teach it in teacher education literacy courses (Rowsell, Kosnik, and Beck, 2008). Nonetheless, both multiliteracies and New Literacy Studies have revealed the need for a more complex understanding of literacy, and indicate a need for literacy teacher educators to adapt their teaching strategies and reimagine their thinking about what literacy teaching looks like in a 21st-century classroom.

While there are many components of multiliteracies, examining each of them in turn is beyond the scope of this study. However, I will endeavour to discuss one aspect of multiliteracies, the use of multi-modalities, as it applies to this research. Mills (2009) suggested, “multimodality expresses the complexity and interrelationship of more than one mode of meaning, combining linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural, or spatial modes” (p. 106). Multi-modalities or multi-modal ways of making meaning include sounds, animations, visuals, moving images, and spatial dimensions (Mills, 2009). Multi-modality has implications for literacy teacher educators as it requires them to reframe the way they think about the teaching and learning of literacy, to move beyond balanced literacy education. Marshall (2013) noted, “If we are convinced that literacy is
a multimodal practice then what is important is the processes that we teach in the classroom rather than the end product” (p. 157). Marshall made the point that teacher educators must embrace the notion that the teaching of multi-modal practices requires creating space for student teachers to use different forms of literacy as part of their learning, and that traditional methods of teaching literacy may no longer be adequate.

Importance of Literacy and Consequences of Low Literacy

Literacy achievement impacts the ability of individuals to make decisions, pursue their goals, and fulfill their potential as contributing members of society. Literacy is fundamental to our ability to participate in society and negotiate our way in the world. Literacy provides people with the tools that are required to interact and construct meaning in the outside world (Booth, 2001, 2002; Brock & Wallace, 2006). Bartlett (2008) discussed the concept of “development discourses” on literacy, stating that “definitions of literacy are not innocent: they incorporate beliefs and assumptions that have political implications” (p. 739). With this statement Bartlett (2008) seems to imply that the political implications include separating people into different social categories based on tasks that they may or may not be able to do in comparison to others. Development discourses sometimes simplify the concept of literacy into a discrete set of skills, with no regard for the social context of literacy.

Contrary to this approach, a report by the Canadian Literacy and Language Research Network (CLLRN, 2009), called the National Strategy for Early Literacy, “literacy is foundational for positive health outcomes, success in school, lifetime employment, and income” (p. 5). Thus, literacy skills are not only important for participating in modern society, but also literacy is a key determinant of social, educational, health, and economic success for individuals and countries (Jamieson, 2006). Similarly, research by McCracken & Murray (2009) showed that people who have low literacy skills experience serious disadvantages in our society; low literacy skills affect individuals in a variety of ways (Hamilton, 2005). Examples of low literacy skills include the
inability to read and understand a recipe or the inability to read instructions on prescribed medication. Incarceration is an example of a cost of low literacy that affects individuals and their families throughout their lifetime. For example, Correctional Services of Canada (CSC) reported that four of every five offenders have achieved less than a Grade 10 education (CSC, 2006). A study by Boe (2005) found that as many as 8 out of 10 inmates had completed less than a high school diploma, and 5 out of every 10 had completed less than Grade 10. On an economic level incarcerating individuals is costly to society. CSC reported that in 2010 the average annual cost of incarcerating an individual was $102,000.

Low levels of literacy are not just a problem for poor or marginalized populations such as Indigenous peoples or immigrant families, although these populations historically have shown lower literacy rates (CLLRN, 2012). In Canada, 42% of adults between the ages of 16 and 65 have low literacy skills (www.literacy.ca). Low literacy is an issue for every family member because the effects of low literacy are pervasive. For example, adults with low literacy tend to have lower salaries and more difficulty finding and keeping employment (CLLRN, 2012). Canadians with low literacy skills were found to be two-and-a-half times as likely to be in fair or poor health compared to Canadians with higher literacy skills (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008, p. 2). In addition, there are other hidden costs to society for low literacy levels; these can be classified as opportunity costs and intergenerational costs. Opportunity costs include economic, social, cultural, and political benefits foregone as less than 20% of people with low literacy are employed in Canada. Moreover, people with low literacy levels tend to earn less money, and are less likely to vote or do volunteer work. Intergenerational costs refer to the tendency of literacy gaps in one generation to be passed on to the next generation (Maxwell & Teplova, 2007). These statistics, frightening as they may be, highlight some of the negative consequences of low literacy levels for individuals and for Canadian society.

These statistics are also relevant to this study because literacy teacher educators play a central role in society: preparing student teachers to teach literacy to children in Ontario schools.
Research by Maloch et al. (2003) indicated that the quality of literacy teacher education programs affects the quality of literacy instruction that student teachers provide to their students. Literacy teacher educators are, in essence, laying the foundation for quality literacy instruction in Ontario schools, and subsequent literacy levels in society.

The role of literacy teachers is especially important because for many children, the acquisition of literacy begins in the classroom. Preschool children with few early literacy experiences such as being read to daily or being exposed to picture books at home or in the library, often begin school at a disadvantage (Cunningham & Allington, 2007) and teachers need to bridge the gap. Studies show that by Grade 3, more than one in every three Ontario students fails to meet provincial standards in reading and writing (EQAO, 2006). As the CLLRN stated:

> Classroom experience is a critically important determinant of how well Canadian children will learn to read. Improving the way reading and writing are taught in Canada is therefore the single most important consideration for increasing literacy outcomes for Canadian students (National Strategy for Literacy Report, CLLRN, 2009, p. 18).

Increasing literacy achievement leads to a more equitable society, greater stability, and opportunities for self-actualization. This could result in a fairer and more just Canadian society for everyone.

The connection between literacy and social justice can be seen in the work of world-renowned scholar Paulo Freire, who frequently spoke of the important role that literacy plays in people’s lives. Freire (1970) argued, “Literacy is a means, a process, that enables individuals to think, to consider ideas, and to reflect upon their world” (p. 205). He viewed the acquisition of literacy as a social justice issue and pointed out that often the oppressed and marginalized are literate in other ways within their own communities and social groups, but may lack the literacy of the dominant culture. Freire reminds us that for many people, their experience of literacy may be disconnected from their social and cultural reality which makes it harder to function in
mainstream society. For Freire (1970), literacy involved being able to “read the word and the world” (p. 206). Freire (1970) saw illiteracy as an injustice because of the ramifications it has for individuals and society. These ramifications include the inability to make informed decisions for themselves or others to fully participate in a democratic society. In an expanded sense, literacy can be viewed as a tool for the empowerment of an individual and thus affects his or her ability to fully engage with the world.

In 1966, UNESCO established the Experimental World Literacy Program and designated literacy as a fundamental human right (UNESCO, 2008). This global movement supports Freire’s position by suggesting that the human rights of individuals are violated when they do not have the opportunity to acquire literacy and participate fully in society. This also illustrates one of the reasons why having an expanded definition of literacy is so important and why definitions of literacy are dependent on the context. Globalization and innovations in technology are influencing our understanding of literacy. By turning our attention to the factors involved in the preparation of literacy teachers we can create an educational environment that has the potential to improve levels of literacy for all members of society.

Teacher Education

More than 30 years ago, educational psychologist Nathaniel Gage asserted, “the importance of teacher education is commensurate with the importance of teaching” (Gage, 1978, p.42). The implication of this statement is that we should make every effort to ensure that teacher education is providing comprehensive programs that adequately prepare student teachers for the multifaceted task of teaching. The intent of teacher education programs is to prepare student teachers to become effective teachers (Imig, Wiseman, & Imig, 2011, p. 399). The better we prepare student teachers for the challenges of the classroom, the more likely we will foster an educational climate for student success. The next section of the literature review begins with a discussion of
the history of teacher education in Canada, followed by a discussion about the context of teacher education in Ontario, and ends with an overview of the program models in Ontario.

History of Teacher Education in Ontario and Canada

Formal teacher training in Canada dates back to 1847, with the opening of Upper Canada’s first Normal School in Toronto. Normal Schools provided academic, professional, and practical training to student teachers. These schools taught educational history, philosophy, teaching methods, classroom organization, and management (www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/education/common-school-act-01.aspx). Normal Schools placed teacher education under the control of the Ontario Department of Education (ODE). In 1953 the Normal Schools came to be called teachers’ colleges under the jurisdiction of the ODE.

Historically, the development of teacher education programs in Canada was largely determined by supply and demand. The post-war baby boom resulted in a shortage of teachers in the 1950s and 1960s. To expedite the training of the larger numbers of teachers, one-year teaching diplomas could be earned immediately after high school graduation. In 1966, the Minister of Education William Davis announced that the government would transfer responsibility for the preparation of elementary teachers from the Ontario Department of Education to universities (Fullan, Connelly, & Watson, 1989, p. 12). The intended goal was to improve the quality and range of teacher education programs offered in Ontario.

When school boards started to experience declining enrolment in the late 1960s and early 1970s, employment opportunities for teachers became more limited. As enrolment declined, decisions had to be made to address the surplus of teachers. To this end, R.W.B. Jackson was commissioned by the Minister of Education in 1978 to prepare a report on declining school enrolment. One chapter of this report focused on the implications of declining enrolment for
teacher education programs. Over 20 recommendations were made to the Minister. Two recommendations that are particularly relevant to my study are highlighted here:

- Faculties of education should diversify their programs to graduate persons who are qualified for education-related roles other than classroom teachers.

- Each faculty of education be encouraged to develop a substantial program of in-service and professional development offerings for practicing teachers (Jackson, 1978, p. 146).

The goal of the first recommendation was as a result of the teacher surplus and aimed to provide alternative vocations for teachers that would allow them to use their qualifications in related fields such as daycare, social work, or community literacy programs. The goal of the second recommendation was intended to encourage systematic and on-going further education for all teachers. In essence, the hope was to foster a pursuit of continuing education throughout a teacher’s lifetime. This philosophy of instilling a desire to pursue life-long learning is consistent with many of the teacher education programs that are currently running in Ontario, and in most cases, is an overarching goal of teacher education programs.

Although teacher education in Ontario changed dramatically in the 1960s with the move from Normal Schools to universities, the perception that teacher education was simply a “training” program persisted. In the 1980s, teacher education began to be perceived more as a “professional learning” program (Grimmett, 2008, 2009). Professional learning placed a greater emphasis on accountability and raising the status of the teaching profession, whereas training implied a standard technical approach to teaching is all that is required. However, in many institutions, teacher education is still viewed as lower in status than other graduate programs and teacher educators are often maligned as inferior researchers and scholars (Zeichner, 2005).

In 1989, Fullan & Connelly released the report, *Teacher Education in Ontario: Current Practice and Options for the Future*. This report was commissioned by the Ontario Teacher Education Review Steering Committee to “examine current policies and programs of teacher education in
Ontario” and was regarded as the blueprint for teacher education programs in Ontario (Fullan & Connelly, 1989, p. 2). The context of teacher education had changed in Ontario with the move to the university setting and more emphasis was being placed on provincial policy and teacher education program development. This change has been well documented in the literature by Fullan (1998, 2009) and Grimmett (2008, 2009).

Since 2000, Ontario has experienced a surplus of teachers coupled with declining enrolment, similar to the situation in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Pearce (2012), “teachers who have recently graduated from teacher education programs find themselves entering a grim employment market” (p. 6). This is an issue across the province of Ontario and the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and faculties of education have only recently begun to address it by reducing the number of admissions in an effort to reduce the number of teachers graduating into a high unemployment situation (OCT, 2013).

Context of Teacher Education in Canada

In Canada, teacher education is a provincial not a federal responsibility, and in Ontario teacher education falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. There is no national body that connects the provincial and territorial education ministries. This is in contrast to the United States, where there is a Federal Department of Education. In the United States, the Federal Department of Education plays a central role in the development of education policy, even though individual states regulate public education (Walker & von Bergmann, 2013). National policies, such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, have had huge implications for teacher education across the United States. By comparison, in Canada education is a provincial responsibility. Therefore, Canada has no national policy, national strategy, or national organization that has responsibility for primary, secondary, or post-secondary education, meaning no overarching national strategy exists for teacher education either.
However, one national association exists that focuses on teacher education called the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE). The ACDE is comprised of deans, directors, and chairs of education departments in Canadian universities and university-colleges. Their mandate includes a commitment to addressing important issues around education policy and practice across Canada. In 2005, ACDE developed an accord on *Initial Teacher Education in Canada*. ACDE’s suggests teacher education programs should include the following broad characteristics:

- the development of situated practical knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and academic content knowledge; an introduction to research and scholarship in education; and a commitment to preparing teachers for their continuing professional development (ACDE, 2005, p.1).

ACDE views teacher preparation as part of a developmental process that is on-going and life-long. Furthermore, the ACDE views its role as multi-faceted and it has broad goals of enhancing the profile of teacher education programs in Canada, and highlighting the strengths and contributions of these programs both across Canada and internationally.

It is my view that teacher education programs should provide the foundation for student teachers to begin their teaching career with the prerequisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions to create meaningful learning opportunities for children in Ontario schools. In 2008, Gambhir, Broad, Evans, and Gaskell, published a report *Characterizing Initial Teacher Education* which noted:

Teacher education programs in Canada tend to be viewed as the first foundational stage in the professional development process. Programs are expected to provide an introduction to critical knowledge bases, skills and practices that will assist prospective teachers to develop a fundamental understanding of high quality student and teacher learning and performance (Gambhir et al., 2008, p. 7).

I agree with Gambhir et al. (2008) that teacher education is a foundational stage, and as such, the learning of teachers must continue beyond the program. As teacher education programs strive to provide a solid foundation for learning, they must also work towards fostering a climate that
instils a thirst for on-going learning in student teachers, with a goal of understanding how to create high quality learning environments.

All teacher education programs in Canada are university-based, and universities across the country graduate over 18,000 teachers each year (Van Nuland, 2011). Since Canada has two official languages, French and English, student teachers can attend a teacher education program in either language, depending on the institution. Graduation requirements for teachers in Canada vary significantly across provinces and territories. In Ontario, where this study is located, there are currently 18 different teacher education programs. Each of these programs has received accreditation from the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). The scope of this regulatory body includes: licensing teachers; setting standards of practice and conduct for teachers; investigating and hearing complaints against teachers, and; accrediting teacher education programs and program models. However, the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ministry of Education (MOE), do not play a role in determining the qualifications for the teacher educators in teacher education programs, nor are there any standard requirements or certifications for the teacher educator role in Ontario.

Teacher Education Program Models

Similar to the United States, there are wide variations in the structure, length, program requirements, and overall quality of teacher education programs across Canada. These program variations can influence program delivery and times allocated for courses, and shape student teachers’ practicum experiences (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008). In Ontario, teacher education programs are either consecutive or concurrent. A consecutive program is an undergraduate post-baccalaureate program. Historically, most consecutive programs were one year, although there were some two-year post-baccalaureate master of arts and master of teaching programs in the province. However, as of 2015 all teacher education programs in Ontario were expanded to two year programs. One of the reasons for the change in duration of the program was to address the
surplus of qualified teachers who were flooding the job market, while enrolment in many Ontario school boards continues to decline. Another reason for increasing the program length was to provide more time for learning and practice teaching placements for student teachers to acquire more experience while under the guidance of an experienced teacher or associate from the faculty of education (Transition to Teaching Report, OCT, 2013).

Students can enrol in concurrent programs directly after graduating from secondary school or can transfer to one from a college or other university program. The concurrent teacher education programs combine a four-year undergraduate degree and a one-year teacher education degree into one extended program of study that is typically five years. Depending on the program, student teachers may be given practicum (teaching) placements every year for varying lengths of time.

All teacher education programs in Canada require some form of practicum placement in a school setting (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Falkenberg, 2010). Individuals enrolled in teacher education programs can complete their certification in the Primary/Junior (P/J) division (Kindergarten to Grade 6); Junior/Intermediate (J/I) division (Grades 4 to 10); and the Intermediate/Senior (I/S) division (Grades 7 to 12). In Ontario, the type and number of courses that student teachers must take vary from program to program.

There are no part-time teacher education programs in Ontario, full-time studies are the norm, and are there no alternative certification routes to becoming a teacher in Ontario. This is unlike the U.S., where programs such as Teach for America place uncertified teachers in low-income schools. In the U.S., the push for deregulation of teacher education is strong, and there are a number of private, not-for-profit and for-profit credentialing options for teachers. Grossman and Loeb (2008) found that more and more individuals are entering the teaching force in the United States through non-university-sponsored routes with very little, if any, preparation. The main reason for encouraging individuals to enter the teaching profession via non-certification routes
vary but is often as a result of a shortage of certified teachers; in many cases the shortages of teachers are due to poor working conditions and low teacher salaries in low-income areas. Regardless of the entry route, lack of certification is concerning because it has ramifications not only for the children in the classes of those uncertified teachers, but also for teacher educators. In my view these non-certification programs devalue the knowledge, skills, and expertise of teacher educators and overlook the important role that they play in preparing student teachers to teach. Zeichner (2005) noted that the distinctions between traditional university teacher education programs and alternative certification routes are clear-cut. The short time frame of alternative programs contributes to the inadequate preparation of teachers for working in schools. However, the trend has been, and continues to be, that alternative certified teachers tend to work in low-income communities and low-performing schools in the United States. As a result, the quality of teaching in these schools is often inferior and the attrition rates can be quite high (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

In the United States, teacher education exists in many different shapes and is constantly evolving. Programs are experiencing extraordinary challenges as competing visions for how to educate student teachers are being promoted by government, various think tanks, professional societies, and special interest groups (Imig, Wiseman, & Imig, 2011). Some of the challenges have been influenced by changing demographics in the population, declining enrolment, changes in political leaders, and calls for reform (Townsend, 2011). In the next section, I discuss some other issues facing teacher education including the pressure to reform teacher education overall. I then move on to highlight some characteristics of exemplary teacher education programs and next steps for teacher education.

Pressure for Reform

There are a number of issues facing teacher education programs in Canada and the U.S. While much of the recent research on teacher education has been conducted in the United States
(Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner, 2013), many of the findings of the U.S.-based studies are applicable to the Canadian context. Societal expectations of teachers and teacher education have changed significantly since the 1990s (Crocker and Dibbon, 2008). Teachers are often seen as the central figures of any reform in education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). In the 1990s, the Royal Commission of Learning (RCOL) largely influenced the educational climate in Canada. The commission outlined four key strategies for large-scale reform in education including: new school and community alliances for the education and development of children and youth; early childhood education; the professionalization and continuing development of teachers, and; the use of new information technologies in education (RCOL, 1994). Today, teachers are expected to prepare students to participate in the 21st century with exceptional literacy, numeracy, and technology skills which puts the educational system under enormous pressure. According to the OECD, teacher education is seen as the key to producing better-qualified teachers who are able to educate students to meet the demands of 21st century life (OECD, 2005).

Some of the major problems with teacher education in Ontario are not related to teacher quality. Rather, problems include: the oversupply, underemployment, and unemployment of teachers, especially in urban areas; low status of the profession, and; the low position of faculties of education within universities (Walker & von Bergmann, 2013, p. 88). Provincial policy can play a role in addressing these issues. For instance, policy changes that reduce the number of spaces for student teachers and lengthen the duration of teacher education programs can have an impact on oversupply, which was implemented in Ontario in the fall of 2015. More supports for beginning teachers, including professional development and formal mentorship in their first five years of teaching, may contribute to improving the status of the profession. In Ontario, the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) attempts to provide additional supports for new teachers. Studies on teacher education (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Grimmett, 2008) have highlighted the
important role that policy and institutional context play in improving teacher education (Fullan & Scott, 2009). As Wiseman (2012) noted:

Policy affecting teacher education arises from a wide range of sources, including public perceptions and attitudes, federal initiatives, current trends in schools and higher education, the visions and whims of politicians and the professions own initiatives (Wiseman, p. 88).

The tension that exists within policy debates centres on issues of reform. The issues include the struggle on one side for deregulation of teacher education, mostly by neoliberal reformists, and on the other side, a push for greater autonomy, self-regulation, and professionalization from teacher education institutions, and the professionals within these institutions, (Walker & Von Bergmann, 2013). Often overlooked in these policy debates are contextual pressures that teacher education programs are subject to which include institutional cultures, local communities’ needs, and historical expectations of programs.

In many cases, pressure for reform of teacher education originates from the assumptions that individuals, institutions, and organizations have about the best ways to improve children’s achievement in schools. Teacher educators play a vital role in this reform process, and as a result, the quality of the preparation of student teachers lies at the centre of these issues (Murray & Maguire, 2007).

Quality of Teacher Preparation

Over the past 20 years, viewpoints concerning the quality and effectiveness of existing teacher education programs have become increasingly polarized and politicized (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013). There is a perception by some critics that teacher education programs are not preparing student teachers adequately. Critics include the general public, parents, teachers, policy analysts, politicians, and academics from within the profession. Teacher education programs have been criticized for “a lack of academic rigour, for gaps between preparation and practice, and for an ineffective process and product” (Russell, McPherson, & Martin, 2001, p. 37). Other criticisms
include the inadequate preparation of student teachers for teaching in a global context, including teaching diverse learners, programs that do not adequately address the links between theory and practice, and programs offering fragmented and disconnected courses (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust & Shulman, 2005; Hirshkorn & Geelan, 2008; Kosnik & Beck, 2006; Wiseman, 2012; Zeichner, 2010). Calls for reform as a result of these criticisms emanate from a variety of stakeholders, including government policy-makers, special interest groups, and academics. However, many critics highlight the shortcomings of teacher education programs without substantial evidence to support their claims (Levine, 2006). Program successes are often overlooked and teacher educators are left to defend or explain the academic policies, curriculum, and practices that are being implemented in their programs to a general population who have only a superficial understanding of the issues (Loughran, 2011).

Furthermore, although several attempts have been made to reform and improve the quality of teacher education, the pressure on teacher education programs to graduate more highly qualified teachers is still increasing (Swennen & van der Klink, 2009). To add to the increasing pressures on teacher education, the U. S. Department of Education proposed federal teacher preparation regulations in December 2014. These regulations have served to create more turmoil in teacher education. The new policy mandates require individual states to assess and rate every teacher preparation program every year using four performance assessment levels (exceptional, effective, at-risk, and low-performing), and states are expected to provide support to “low-performing” programs (Kumashiro, 2015). These regulations appear to be short-sighted in that once again the knowledge, skills, and expertise of teacher educators are being devalued, and the complexity of the situations in which they work is being overlooked.

Many view the professionalization of teachers as a way to address teacher quality and improve student achievement. In the United States, the main argument in support of professionalization of the teaching profession is that it will address inequities that currently exist in the education system by raising standards for teaching and teacher education. Zeichner (2003) stated:
The professionalization agenda is about raising the status of teaching as a profession, halting the process of issuing emergency teacher licenses and halting alternative certification routes that fail to provide adequate preparation for teaching…higher standards of entry and exit into teacher education programs… external examinations of teachers’ content knowledge, extended programs of five years, and professional development schools (p. 499).

Professionalization advocates have been successful in implementing some of these proposals through the support of organizations like the former National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), now known as the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). However, the implementation of these measures is costly and requires a commitment from the federal government and teacher education accreditation institutions to resist pressures for deregulation from special interest groups, reformists, and policy analysts. The other risk of professionalization is that teaching standards may be defined in a way that ignores research about what teachers need to know and do, and in ways that are top-down, prescriptive, and not responsive to individual children’s needs or interests. Although they are often overlooked, teacher educators play a critical role in education reform and their voice is integral to the process. Indeed, teacher educators play a crucial role in determining the quality of teachers at the primary and secondary level (Liston, Borko, & Whitcomb, 2008).

However, the debate over how best to prepare student teachers will likely continue through the next decade. In their study, Priorities in Teacher Education, Kosnik & Beck (2009) undertook a longitudinal study of 22 teachers who had completed seven years of teaching and 24 teachers who had completed four years of teaching, as well as a review of the literature. From their findings the researchers suggested a reorganization of teacher education programs around seven priorities: program planning; pupil assessment; classroom organization and community; inclusive education; subject content and pedagogy; professional identity, and; a vision for teaching. One of the key issues highlighted by these researchers was that teacher educators tended to focus on “breadth rather than depth” in their courses, and as a result, student teachers did not feel prepared to teach.
Beck and Kosnik’s (2009) findings align with research by Milton et al.’s (2007), who found that less than half of the student teachers in the study believed that they had the skills to teach reading, and many of them did not feel confident teaching literacy strategies such as linking reading and writing. This reinforces the fact that the quality of instruction in teacher education programs has implications for teacher quality and student achievement. As Williamson (2013) noted, “Visionary teacher education necessarily embraces the paradox that we must prepare teachers for the schools that we have while simultaneously preparing them for the schools that we want” (p. 136). In order to address this paradox teacher education programs must look broadly at their goals for student teachers and develop a shared understanding of their purpose.

According to a study by Darling-Hammond (2006), exemplary teacher education programs share the following features:

- A common clear vision of good teaching permeates all course work and clinical experiences.
- Well-defined standards of practices and performance are used to guide and evaluate course work and clinical work.
- Extended clinical experiences – at least 30 weeks of supervised practicum and student teaching opportunities in each program, linked to course work using pedagogies that link theory to practice.
- Curriculum that is grounded in knowledge of child and adolescent development, learning social contexts and subject matter pedagogy, taught in the context of practice (p. 41).

Darling-Hammond (2006) found that teacher education programs that incorporate these features have a greater likelihood of graduating teachers who are prepared to engage a diverse group of learners across a variety of situations. In the next section I discuss literacy teacher education programs and discuss aspects of exemplary literacy teacher education programs highlighted in the literature.
Literacy Teacher Education Programs

The field of teacher education is broad, and for purposes of this study, it is important to look more closely at literacy teacher education programs, the context in which literacy teacher educators’ work. In a study conducted by the International Research Association (2005) posited that quality literacy teacher education programs should contain these basic foundations:

- Be flexible, adaptive, and responsive to students’ needs.
- Be field-based, and include supervised relevant field-based experiences.
- Offer content that is easily transferred to future classroom instruction.
- Implement a clear theoretical orientation to literacy instruction.
- Have a vision-driven plan for preparing future teachers of quality, and a comprehensive curriculum that guides candidates.
- Should encourage candidates to view themselves as life-long learners (p. 32).

This aligns with the work of Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005) who stated, “We understand that [student] teachers continually construct new knowledge and skills in practice throughout their careers rather than acquiring a finite set of knowledge and skills in their totality before entering the classroom” (p. 3). Literacy teacher education programs should be viewed as places where knowledge is co-constructed, critiqued, and further developed. In 2003, the IRA commissioned a study to explore aspects of effective reading teacher preparation programs across the United States. The study surveyed over 900 teacher educators across the United States, identified eight exemplary reading teaching preparation programs, and highlighted eight critical features in these programs. These eight critical features are: assessment; apprenticeship; autonomy; community; content; resources and mission; personalized teaching, and; vision. No feature was considered more important than another, nor did every teacher education program reviewed exhibit all eight features identified. The commission’s study was one of the first studies to discuss structural and conceptual aspects of teacher education programs. This is relevant to this research study because one of the main research questions of this study is about LTEs vision for teaching literacy. With respect to vision, the IRA (2003) study reported that effective teacher
educators develop their programs around a vision of literacy, quality teaching, and quality teacher educators. Moreover, “the vision infuses the content, pedagogy and decisions of the program. It is embedded in the thinking, actions and expectations of the programs administrators, faculty and students – and often extends beyond them into the community” (p. 9). Vision will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

Teacher Educators

In order to address issues of teacher preparation in teacher education we must also look at teacher educators because they have the important role of teaching teachers. Wisniewski and Ducharme (1989) described the significance of the role of a teacher educator by suggesting that “the quality of education is directly related to the quality of classroom teachers, and the realization that the quality of teachers is directly related to their preparation for teaching” (p. 3). However, until the last two decades, this group of professionals has not been widely researched and in fact the role of teacher educators has often been overlooked (Martinez, 2008; Murray, 2011).

In 2004 the Special Interest Group published the International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004), which was the first extensive collection of studies about teacher educators’ work and their professional development (Lunenberg et al. 2014, p. 3). The study noted that teacher educators primarily work in teacher education programs and teach student teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels. Teacher education scholars Swennen and van der Klink (2008) provide a broad definition of teacher educators as “those teachers in higher education and in schools who are formally involved in pre-service and in-service teacher education” (p. 3).

Employing a broader definition, Murray et al. (2009) discuss the role of teacher educators beyond teaching student teachers in higher education to include: curriculum design; supervising student teachers on their school placements; working with school- based mentors; engaging in
scholarship and research, including writing for publications, and; academic administration (Murray, Swennen, & Shagir, 2009). Given the broad range of tasks, it is impossible to argue that the role of teacher educators is anything but complex. Indeed, Wideen, Mayer Smith, and Moon (1998), suggest that “The teacher educator has to be able to help the student teacher address prior beliefs, as well as come to understand the cultural and learning demands of the pupil, the school and the teaching context” (p. 170).

In their book, *The Professional Teacher Educator*, Lunenberg, Dengerink, and Korthagen, (2014) identified six professional roles of the teacher educator, which include teacher of teachers, researcher, coach, curriculum developer, gatekeeper, and broker (p. 22). Within each of these roles, they identified critical features which further defined the roles and the behaviours associated with those roles. The complexity of these roles and their associated behaviours and expectations is further evidence that teacher educators are faced with a unique set of challenges in preparing student teachers within the time constraints and structure of a teacher education program.

For these reasons, the role of teacher educator is not easily defined. Responsibilities can vary widely depending on their teaching environment, institutional expectations, research commitments, and professional status. Teacher educators have a dual responsibility, “not only do they teach their student teachers content, they teach about teaching” (Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005, p. 111). Their role frequently involves teaching, learning about teaching, mentoring, and research. These variables add to the complexity of the role. Further, many teacher educators have administrative responsibilities that are not necessarily included in the job description of teacher educator which may include placement and supervision of teachers during their practicum, maintaining relationships with the school district, and keeping in contact with relevant professional organizations (Lunenberg, Dengerink, & Korthagen, 2014).
Another factor that contributes to the complexity of the role of teacher educator is that there is no formal training required to become a teacher educator. As Cochran-Smith (2003) noted, there is no formal educational route to becoming a teacher educator. Many who enter the profession of teacher educator begin their careers as elementary or secondary teachers and then transition to the role of teacher educator (Berry, 2007; Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006). This transition is often overwhelming and fraught with many challenges. In the literature, a few studies have begun to shed light on the challenges arising from the transition from teacher to teacher educator. Davey (2013) discussed how teacher educators described the scope of their work as “bigger, broader, and deeper” than their work as former classroom teachers (p. 165). The participants in Davey’s (2013) study found that their role as teacher educators encompassed a multitude of responsibilities that were very different from teaching. According to Davey (2013) these responsibilities included “teaching across different sectors, teaching ever-broadening course content, furthering their academic qualifications, and building a credible research and publication profile (p. 175). This aligns with work by Williams, Ritter, and Bullock (2012) and Williams et al. (2012) who reviewed the self-study literature on becoming a teacher educator. They found that the process of becoming a teacher educator is complicated and that beginning teacher educators face a range of personal and professional challenges trying to navigate their new role. These challenges include developing a new identity and developing their own pedagogy for teaching. Williams et al.’s (2012) findings suggest that teacher educators with prior teaching experience will often draw upon those experiences and their former identity as a teacher, and these influence their identity as a teacher educator. It was clear that navigating these multiple identities was a challenge.

Identity is a concept that has been explored extensively by Wenger (1998, 2000). Wenger argued that identity is the sense that individuals create of themselves within a social context. This aligns with the notion that teacher educators’ identities are shaped by their previous experience and is widely supported in the literature (Boyd & Harris, 2010; Murray & Male, 2005; Wood & Borg,
Studies have shown that many teacher educators felt that their experience and identity as a teacher gave them credibility when initially working with student teachers (Bullock, 2007; Skerrett, 2008). However, teaching in a teacher education program is very different from teaching children and adolescents, and as such, I share the opinions of Bullock (2007) and Ritter (2007) that reliance on teacher identities brings assumptions about teaching that may not be appropriate for higher education, although they will likely influence their teacher educator identity.

Murray and Male (2005) suggest, “The work of teacher educators demands new and different types of professional knowledge and understanding, including more extended pedagogical skills, than those required of classroom teachers” (p. 126). The researchers describe the shift from teacher to teacher educator as “moving from being first-order practitioners—that is school teachers—to being second-order practitioners” (Murray & Male, 2005, p. 126). Also, the literature clearly indicates that teaching in elementary and secondary schools requires different pedagogies and skills than work in higher education (Bullock & Christou, 2009; Dinkelman, 2002; Murray & Male, 2005). This supports the notion that a good teacher will not necessarily be a good teacher educator.

In addition to the challenge of reframing one’s identity from classroom teacher to teacher educator, there are other challenges in becoming a teacher educator, one of which includes developing a vision for teaching literacy and a pedagogy of teacher education. Loughran (2006) defined pedagogy of teacher education as “not merely the action of teaching, more so, it is about the relationship between teaching and learning and how together they lead to growth in knowledge and understanding through meaningful practice” (p. 2).

Loughran (2006) emphasized the relationship between teaching, learning, and knowledge building, and how this relationship requires opportunities for meaningful practice that involve teacher educators and student teachers. This view shows that there are two challenges in
developing a pedagogy of teacher education: teaching about learning, and teaching about teaching. Further, there are practical challenges for teacher educators such as prioritizing topics, navigating institutional norms and priorities, continuing research around areas of professional interests, and finding the appropriate balance between theory and practice to meet the needs of the student teachers. Bridging the gap between theory and practice is a challenge that is often described in the literature.

In a study of teacher educators by Goodwin et al. (2014), the participants acknowledged the importance of “bridging knowledge and practice” (p. 292), and said it was foundational to their work. However, many of the study participants also reported that they had not received any preparation related to how to do this bridging, and hence continued to wrestle with this tension. Other studies have indicated that the perceived gap between theory and practice is actually artificial (Hirschkorn & Geelan, 2008). Teacher educators may not be explicit about their use of theory to teach certain concepts, but in fact they are frequently drawing on theory when they are implementing various pedagogical approaches. The challenge for teacher educators is to make the implicit, explicit, for the student teachers in their courses. As Lunenberg et al. (2014) noted, “Teacher educators should be able to make principles and theories explicit and underpin their behaviour through explicit modelling” (p. 70).

In an attempt to address the complexity of the role of teacher educators, various organizations, such as the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) in the U.S. and the Association of Dutch Teacher Educators (VELON) in the Netherlands, have proposed standards for teacher educators. In fact, ATE has had standards in place for teacher educators since 1992. The ATE categories of standards include: cultural competence; scholarship; professional development; program development; collaboration; public advocacy; teacher education profession, and; vision. These standards for teacher educators were intended to “distinguish the role of teacher educators from the role of other professionals involved in the education of teachers” (2008, p. 5). The Association of the Dutch Teacher Educators in the Netherlands has standards for teacher
educators that include six different fields of competence with the most recent version developed in 2003. The six fields of competence are:

- Interpersonal.
- Pedagogical.
- Organizational.
- Working with colleagues in the organization.
- Working in a wider context.

These VELON competencies can be interpreted as things teacher educators can do to improve the quality of their own teaching. Many of these are similar to the ATE standards. The Association of Dutch Teacher Educators (VELON) developed standards for teacher educators in part because “they wanted to have an instrument that would make the quality of the teacher education profession transparent” (Koster & Dengerink, 2008, p. 138).

Some critics have suggested that establishing standards for teacher educators is overly prescriptive (Kumashiro, 2015). Other critics suggest that such standards do not take into account the complexity and unpredictability of teaching (Korthagen, 2004; Zeichner, 2005). The standards debate is a useful one in that it encourages teacher educators to examine more closely the work that they are doing, and to consider whether they should be doing the work that others espouse. While standards may serve to further professionalize the role of teacher educator, they also run the risk of creating a checklist of requirements that can undermine the profession and the unique vision of teacher educators and lead towards de-professionalization.

**Literacy Teacher Educators**

Literacy teacher educators (LTEs) are responsible for teaching literacy to student teachers, who in turn, teach literacy to children. As Rogers (2013) noted:

Those of us who have the privilege and responsibility of teaching literacy teachers are charged with designing learning experiences that support their development of
The knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to work confidently with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This charge has never been more pressing (p. 7).

The task of preparing student teachers to teach literacy in today’s schools can be particularly daunting. Literacy teacher educators are faced with teaching student teachers a wide range of literacy strategies, concepts, and skills. In addition, teacher educators work towards developing a disposition in their student teachers that embraces the notion that all children can learn. In a collaborative learning environment, LTEs are sharing and developing knowledge, while at the same time trying to dispel myths and assumptions about teaching and teaching literacy. The student teachers in the courses often bring varied experiences and prior knowledge about teaching literacy. In many instances student teachers come with the mindset that they already know how to teach. Lortie (1975) refers to this problem as the “apprenticeship of observation,” which is when student teachers falsely believe that they know how to teach because they witnessed a great deal of teaching during their primary and secondary education (Grossman, 1991; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014; Westrick & Morris, 2016). However, as children they experienced one aspect of teaching but they were not privy to the thinking behind the teaching. Lortie (1975) argued that student teachers’ images of teaching are based on ideas formed from their individual experiences and these experiences do not include the underlying aspects of teaching that are “hidden” from students and student teachers. However, while it is often difficult to dispel student teachers’ notions of what teaching is and should “look” like, this is part of the work of teacher educators. Teacher educators are tasked with sharing the reasoning and insights behind the pedagogical choices they make in the classroom. Loughran (2006) supported this idea by arguing:

If students of teaching are to genuinely ‘see into teaching,’ then they require access to the thoughts and actions that shape such practice; they need to be able to see and hear the pedagogical reasoning that underpins the teaching that they are experiencing (p. 5).
Without understanding the thinking that supports the pedagogical approaches implemented in their courses, student teachers will not be able to grasp the complexity of the knowledge that underlies a teacher educator’s practice. Part of the complexity of an LTE’s work involves reframing their student teachers’ beliefs about literacy as an evolving concept and introducing pedagogical approaches that address the needs of a wide range of learners. An important aspect of reframing beliefs involves the ability to reflect on one’s practice. In fact many scholars believe that reflection is essential to learning (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983; Shulman, 1988). To be clear, reflection on practice is complex and systematic; it is not a simple process. The process of reflection must be purposeful and creates the possibility for learning, change, and growth to take place. Dewey (1933) argued that reflection is a complex, rigorous, intellectual, and emotional enterprise, that takes time to do well. Teacher educators often integrate the process of reflection into many aspects of their courses based on the premise that reflection is a useful tool for learning from and improving on one’s teaching practice.

The complex work of LTEs has often been overlooked in the research literature but that has begun to change. Over the past 10 years, there has been a growing body of research specifically focused on teacher educators (Korthagen, 2004; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Swennen & van der Klink, 2010). While much of this research about teacher educators has focused on the transition from the role of teacher to teacher educator (Bullock & Christou, 2009; Murray & Male, 2005), some of the more recent research has examined the backgrounds of teacher educators and what they teach in their courses (Kosnik et al., 2014; Lunenberg, 2010; Williamson, 2013). My research study seeks to understand specifically how LTEs enact their vision for their literacy courses and what influence their professional backgrounds and educational experiences have on their literacy course development and literacy teaching pedagogy. As Kosnik & Menna (2013) noted, research has a tremendous influence on the work of literacy teacher educators. Research often guides their literacy teaching and informs their priorities when working with student teachers. As a result, many literacy teachers have begun to rethink the ways in which literacy
teaching is enacted in their classrooms (Stagg Peterson, 2013; Williamson, 2013). The work of literacy teacher educators includes teaching about teaching, teaching about literacy, encouraging a balanced approach to teaching, addressing diversity issues, exploring critical literacy, and modeling various pedagogical approaches. Yet this diverse list does not capture all of the work that is involved in being a literacy teacher educator. As Wold et al. (2006) noted “Teacher educators have had to learn to adopt new research and technologies, adapt to the changing nature of literacy, and consequently, work more collaboratively with schools so innovations become feasible in schools” (p. 39).

Many literacy teacher educators strive to work collaboratively with schools in addition to creating collaborative learning communities and making inquiry a central focus of their literacy course (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Simon & Lytle, 2006). Simon (2013) contended that literacy classrooms should be sites for research and inquiry. Simon (2013) suggests, “For teacher educators, an inquiry-based approach involves encouraging student teachers to question ideas about writing developed within and outside of their classrooms, as a basis for generating their own theories of writing and approaches to teaching” (p. 120).

The role of inquiry in the practice of literacy teacher educators, then, is integral not only to their learning but also influences how student teachers are taught. Cochran-Smith (2003) referred to this as inquiry as stance. Cochran-Smith (2003) clarified that “Taking inquiry as stance means teachers and student teachers working within inquiry communities to generate local knowledge, envision and theorize their practice, and interpret and interrogate the theory and research of others” (p. 8). According to Cochran-Smith (2003) inquiry is seen as both social and political and requires teacher educators to consider their position or stance through which they are constructing knowledge and the relationship knowledge has to their actual practice. Using inquiry as stance is complex and requires teacher educators to think about and evaluate their own work, beliefs, and practices and be open to new ideas, directions, or tensions that might emerge through this process.
Although the context in which literacy teacher educators work can vary quite broadly, they share some common goals for literacy teaching. These include preparing student teachers to teach a diverse population; instilling a desire for continuous learning; finding creative ways to engage a wide range of students; building on the knowledge that student teachers have; developing an understanding of the multi-modal contextual nature of literacy, and; reflecting on their practice (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1996; Kosnik et al., 2013).

Reflection is another important component of a literacy teacher educator’s practice. The ability to reflect on their practice and learn from their previous teaching experiences aids in the process of continuous learning. Reflection on one’s work, in this case teaching, also allows for growth and change over time which will benefit not only the teacher educator, but also the student teachers that are learning with and from the teacher educator.

In her Foreword to *Literacy Teacher Educators, Preparing Teachers for a Changing World*, Susan Lytle, Professor Emerita of Education, University of Pennsylvania, made a number of statements in support of literacy, teaching, literacy teacher educators, and literacy teacher education. I have included some of those statements as they shed light on some important aspects of the work of literacy teacher educators and are relevant to this study. Lytle (2013) noted that:

- Literacy, teaching, and literacy teacher education are critical social practices.
- Learning from and with students occurs in social, cultural, and highly political spaces.
- Teaching is complex; it is not composed of a set of discrete strategies or routines or even practices, no matter how studied or complicated the description.
- Teaching involves the intentional forming and reforming of frameworks for understanding and enacting practice (p. xvi).

Lytle’s (2013) broad statements seem to capture the essence of what literacy teacher educators strive to do in their practice and lays out the challenges that are inherent in preparing student teachers to work in different contexts. As a profession, literacy teacher educators must continue
to reflect on their practice, to learn from their experiences, and to work collaboratively to address the most effective way to prepare student teachers.

Conceptual Framework

In this section I will give an overview of my conceptual framework that I used as a lens to conduct this study. I applied the concept of vision, social constructivism, and a pedagogy of literacy teacher education as a framework to examine the work of the literacy teacher educators in this study. I begin this section by discussing how the concept of vision is relevant to the work of LTEs. I see vision and pedagogy of teacher education as having reciprocal influences on each other. As the LTEs develop their vision for teaching, their pedagogy changes, evolves, and influences new directions for their vision of teaching. All of this occurs under the umbrella of social constructivism.
Vision

The concept of vision is one that continues to surface in the literature about teacher educators. In a self-study, Ritter (2009) found that the development of his vision as a teacher educator was influenced by four sources of tension and growth: completing graduate coursework; engaging in the work of teacher education; interacting or collaborating with peers; and; studying his practice as it developed and unfolded (p. 58). Ritter’s (2009) vision evolved over time and with experience, and its evolution gives credence to the notion that one’s vision is influenced by one’s beliefs which in turn can influence one’s practice (Russell, 1997).

Hammerness (2008) introduced the concept of teachers’ vision as, “teachers’ images of ideal classroom practices” (p. 3). This concept of vision can be applied to teacher educators, who often have a vision for their own teaching that manifests itself through the pedagogical choices that they make and the beliefs they have about teaching. Often the vision for literacy teacher
educators’ work is rooted in their own practices as former classroom teachers and on their own research (Kosnik et al., 2013, p. 196). According to Hammerness (2006), vision can be used as a guide for moving forward but also, as a tool for reflection on past practices. Further support for this concept comes from Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) who noted:

The teacher who lacks clear goals and a sense of purpose is likely to have difficulty making sensible, consistent decisions about what to teach, when, and how. Yet teachers’ goals must be developed based on more than their own individual interests (p. 172).

Applying this to teacher educators, one can see that having a clearly defined vision plays an important role in their professional work and development of their practice.

Case studies of other teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2006) have also found that exemplary programs are built around a clearly articulated, shared vision of teaching and learning. An important distinction is that my research study focused on the vision of the teacher educators and did not examine the vision of the teacher education program in which they worked, or the relationship of their personal vision to their program’s vision.

Thus, vision can be defined in many ways, and one should not assume that there is a single right way to define it. For the purposes of this study, I define vision as the purposeful direction that literacy teacher educators have for their literacy courses which encompasses their philosophy about teaching, their beliefs about literacy and their beliefs about teaching literacy. This aligns with research by Hammerness (2006) and Kennedy (2006) that suggested when making decisions teachers should draw upon their own personal vision of education. The eight programs that were highlighted in the IRA (2003) study had a vision for teaching reading that either involved the faculty working together to collectively shape a vision for their program, or had an individual within the program who had taken on a leadership role for infusing a vision for literacy, teaching, and teacher education (p. 4). Vision in these exemplary programs was constantly evolving and changing based on reflection, research, and experiences of the faculty.
Social Constructivism

Constructivism is a meaning-making theory (Vygotsky, 1978). The term “constructivism” is often used interchangeably with “interpretivism” (Merriam, 2009, p. 9). Constructivists are interested in understanding the social and cultural conditions that shape our thoughts and actions. The constructivist paradigm maintains that individuals create or construct their own knowledge through the interaction between what they already know and believe to be true, and the ideas, events, and activities with which they come into contact (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Richardson, 1997). Social constructivism contends that an individual’s construction of knowledge is the product of social interaction, interpretation, and understanding (Vygotsky, 1962). For my study, the social constructivist paradigm is relevant because in many instances their approach involved co-constructing knowledge with their student teachers through the lessons and activities that they engaged student teachers in during their literacy course. Social constructivists recognize that the relationship between teaching and learning is reciprocal and is influenced by the prior experiences and knowledge that both the learner and the teacher, in this case teacher educator bring to the interaction. As Gordon (2008) suggests, “Constructivists believe that what is deemed knowledge is always informed by a particular perspective and shaped by a specific ideological stance” (p. 324). This implies that knowledge construction requires individuals to exchange ideas and information, which will be based on their own perspectives and involve meaning-making that is formulated based on their own experiences. The creation of authentic learning experiences for student teachers was a goal of all the literacy teacher educators in my study, regardless of whether they adopted the constructivist paradigm as a framework for their teaching. Thus, it is important to recognize that the ways in which the LTEs may apply the principles of constructivism often vary. Indeed, as Gordon (2008) notes, “Constructivists believe that for genuine, authentic learning to occur, individuals must be actively engaged in discussing ideas, interpreting ideas, and constructing knowledge” (p. 324). Constructivist teaching environments are intended to be spaces where there is a balance between teacher-directed and student-directed
learning and the teacher, or this case teacher educator, is an active participant in the learning process (Adams, 2006; Marlowe & Page, 2005; Gordon, 2008).

Pedagogy of Literacy Teacher Education

In a (2014) study of 28 literacy teacher educators by Kosnik, Menna, Dharamshi, and Miyata they found that there were three important elements that literacy teacher educators enacted in their development of a pedagogy of literacy teacher education. These included valuing and responding to diversity, using a range of texts and resources, and authentic reflection on practice. Kosnik et al. (2014) acknowledged that these proposed elements seem obvious, but when approached holistically these elements could provide a “powerful learning experience” for student teachers (p. 27). Further they found that a holistic approach contributed to greater coherence in literacy courses. Coherence has been an issue not only within literacy courses, but also within literacy teacher education programs. Hoban (2005) discussed the importance of a “multi-linked conceptual framework to promote coherence in the design of a teacher education program design” (p. 2).

Research by Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald, and Ronfeldt, (2008) supports the notion that effective teacher education programs have a coherent conceptual framework with interrelated elements that support the overall program. Lack of coherence has often been cited as a criticism by student teachers and those proposing reforms to the current state of teacher education (Levine, 2006; The Teaching Commission, 2006). Hammerness (2006) acknowledged that it is difficult to discuss coherence without defining it and without having an understanding of the initial vision of a teacher education program. Hammerness (2006) looked at both conceptual and structural coherence as important elements of “understanding the shared understandings of the STEP vision across teacher educators of the program” (p. 1244). Teacher educators should carefully consider
the elements of coherence when developing a vision for their literacy course, and coherence was another lens that I used to analyze the data from my participants.

Additionally, the Ontario government in their document Paying Attention to Literacy (2013) suggests,

> The development of literacy is a complex process that involves building on prior knowledge, culture and experiences in order to instil new knowledge and deepen understanding (2013, p. 3).

This discussion around the pedagogy of literacy was directed at educators of students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, but has implications for those who work in teacher education as well. As McLean and Rowsell (2013) noted, “Teacher education programs can be places that convince student [teachers] to broaden notions of what literacy is, or they can be places that stridently and determinedly retain status quo” (p. 2). While there is clearly no consensus on a definition of literacy, notions of literacy that go beyond traditional understandings of literacy continue to be discussed in academic communities today.

The concepts of vision, social constructivism, and pedagogy of literacy teacher education are frameworks that I will use to discuss the findings from the data.

**Chapter Summary**

This study investigates the practices of literacy teacher educators and explores the influences their professional backgrounds and experiences have on their literacy teaching. The literature review covers a wide range of topics because of the broad nature of literacy and literacy teaching. The field of literacy is complex and the impact that the acquisition of literacy skills has on a person’s future has been well documented. As well, the important role that literacy plays in society cannot be overestimated. In order to explore the work of the six literacy teacher educators
who participated in the study, I examined definitions of literacy, traditional ways of teaching literacy, and the importance of acquiring literacy skills to function in our society.

Further, in order to address the work of literacy teacher educators, it was necessary to begin to explore the changing notions of literacy, the context of literacy teaching in teacher education programs, and the work of teacher educators. The literature reveals that the work of literacy teacher educators is complex and can be wide-ranging and factors such as institutional parameters (e.g. course length), prior experiences in teaching and/or research, and personal vision play an integral role in literacy teacher educators’ work. It also reveals that pedagogy should be thought of as more than just the act of teaching (Loughran, 2006). Teacher educators’ pedagogy goes beyond instructional approaches and should encompass teaching and learning about teaching through practice, with the understanding that this is an iterative process.

The literature review reveals that the work of literacy teacher educators involves many challenges and requires a disposition towards continuous learning and reflection on practice in order to stay abreast of current literacy initiatives and teaching practices. It is clear that the work of literacy teacher educators is complex and requires a commitment to on-going learning about content, pedagogy, research, and practice, and to reading and writing scholarly work in the field of teacher education. Finally, the conceptual framework that I have applied to this study involves examining the data from my participants by taking into account their overall vision for teaching literacy, social constructivism and its relevance to the work of teacher educators, and a pedagogy of literacy teacher education which consists of three important elements that may contribute to greater coherence within a literacy teacher educators’ course.
Chapter Three
Methodology and Research Design

Introduction

In Chapter One I introduced the questions that led me to pursue this study about literacy teacher educators. Those research questions were best addressed using qualitative research methods and a grounded theory approach. In this chapter I provide an explanation of qualitative research and briefly explain the principles of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), the philosophical orientation that influenced this study. This will be followed by a description of the four key characteristics of qualitative research, the research problem, and the research questions. The discussion then moves to how the research participants were selected and an explanation for the use of case studies. This is followed by a discussion of the qualitative methods that I used to collect the data. Next, I discuss the grounded theory approach that was used to analyze the data and explain why this method was appropriate for this study. To conclude the chapter I share the research limitations and ethical considerations that shaped the study protocols.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Researchers who conduct qualitative research are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences and make sense of the world (Merriam 2009, p. 13). Qualitative research has emerged as a common methodology for conducting research in teacher education for several reasons. First, researchers are able to collect information through conducting interviews of small or large numbers of participants. Second, researchers are able to observe participants in a variety of contexts. Finally, researchers can undertake an analysis of documents and other relevant artifacts in order to discover how people make meaning (Creswell, 2013). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994):
Qualitative research focuses on making sense of the meanings people bring to their natural settings, and the interpretation of phenomena that occurs in those settings. It involves collecting information about personal experiences, reflections on life history, interviews and observations of people’s lives (p. 2).

Qualitative researchers must think carefully about how they will collect, interpret, and analyze data, and position their research before they can determine the most appropriate approach to pursue their research. Creswell (2013) noted that conducting qualitative research begins with four key considerations. These are the researcher’s assumptions, a consideration of the researcher’s worldview, the choice of a theoretical lens, and a definition of the research problem (p. 37). In particular, the second consideration, the choice of worldview or philosophical orientation, informs how the researcher frames the work. For this study of literacy teacher educators, constructivism (Moll, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978) was the philosophical orientation that aligned most closely with my worldview.

As noted in Chapter Two, constructivism is a meaning-making theory (Vygotsky, 1978). As a researcher, it is essential to understand how one’s philosophical orientation, personal beliefs, and values may influence and guide the analysis and interpretation of data. For these reasons, I chose to apply qualitative research methods to my study and follow the principles of constructivism. Constructivism allowed me to take into account the experiences and perspectives of the research participants and my own perspectives as the researcher. As the researcher, my beliefs, attitudes, and experiences as a former literacy teacher educator influenced how I interpreted the data collected. Being conscious of one’s philosophical orientation and the influence it may have on the interpretation of data is important, just as having a clear understanding of the key aspects of qualitative research is important.

Merriam (2009), a noted scholar in qualitative research methodology, outlined four key characteristics of qualitative research: the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the
The first characteristic of qualitative research Merriam (2009) describes assumes that individuals construct reality as they interact with their social worlds. The researcher focuses on process and meaning and attempts to understand how their participants make sense of their own lives, with a focus on their process of meaning-making (p. 14). To understand meaning-making it is important that the issue or problem is examined from the perspective of the participant, not the researcher. This is what is often referred to as the *emic* or insider’s perspective, versus the *etic* or outsider’s view (Merriam, 2009, p. 14).

Second, Merriam (2009) noted that in qualitative research, the researcher is the “primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (p. 15). The advantages of this approach are that the researcher can be immediately “responsive and adaptive” to data collected. This allows the researcher to communicate with participants to ask for further clarification, check with participants for accuracy of interpretation of the data, and explore concepts in more detail.

Third, Merriam (2009) pointed out that the process of conducting qualitative research is inductive. The qualitative researcher gathers data to build concepts or theories. The researcher moves from broad to narrow as they try to induce findings from the data, based on information gathered from interviews, documents, and/or observations. Information from all the data sources can be combined in themes, categories, or theories.

Lastly, Merriam (2009) pointed out that qualitative research is “richly descriptive” (p. 16). It allows the researcher to use words and pictures rather than numbers to convey what has been learned. It includes descriptions of the context, the participants, and the activities involved in the study. Indeed, Merriam describes how “The quotes from participants contribute to the descriptive nature of qualitative research” (Merriam, 2009, p.16). Data in the form of quotes from
documents, field notes, and participant interviews can be used to support the findings of the study.

Similar to Merriam (2009), Creswell (2013) viewed the researcher as the key instrument for data collection through examining documents, observing behaviour, and interviewing participants. Creswell (2013) stated, “Qualitative research is more exploratory in nature. It is a distinct methodological approach to inquiry that explores a social or human problem” (p. 300). Along the same lines as Creswell (2013), Corbin (2008) suggested that qualitative research allows researchers to access the inner experience of participants and to discover how meanings are formed through and in culture. Using a qualitative research methodology best suited my purpose of investigating the influence of background experiences on the practices of literacy teacher educators.

Research Problem

Literacy teacher educators play a key role in preparing of student teachers to teach literacy. Little is known about the professional background and experiences of literacy teacher educators and the knowledge that they bring to the education of future teachers of literacy.

Research Questions

Research questions reflect the most significant factors to study from the researcher’s point of view. They are intended to guide the inquiry and to clarify what the study is intended to illuminate (Maxwell, 2005, p. 67). Research questions should be designed to “find answers to issues that seem important but remain unanswered” (Straus & Corbin, 1990, p. 37). My research questions enabled me to explore how the personal and professional backgrounds of my participants influenced their literacy teaching. The following research questions framed my study:
1. How do literacy teacher educators develop a vision for their courses?
2. To what extent does their personal and/or professional background of a literacy teacher educator influence his or her vision?
3. How do literacy teacher educators prioritize topics in their literacy courses?

Selection of Research Participants

The six participants in this study were selected and invited to participate based on the following criteria:

- Currently working in a faculty of education in Ontario.
- Completed an Ed.D. or Ph.D.
- Currently teaching literacy methods courses at the elementary or secondary school level.
- Have at least five years of experience teaching literacy methods courses in a faculty of education.

Participant selection was not based on tenured or untenured status, gender, age, or ethnicity. All prospective participants were initially sent, via email, an introduction letter (see Appendix A) outlining the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. Those who responded positively to the email were then contacted by phone to set up a date and time for the first interview. Out of ten teacher educators that I approached, six agreed to participate: four females and two males. Five of the six interviews were conducted in person, and one was conducted over the phone due to geographical constraints. The participants came from four different universities in the province of Ontario, four were tenured, and two were on contract at the time of the study. Each had more than 10 years of experience as a literacy teacher educator. Three of the participants were conducting large-scale research studies at the time of data collection. All of the institutions in which the literacy teacher educators were employed offered provincial
certification in teaching at the elementary or secondary level. Only two of the six participants allowed me to observe them teaching a literacy class. In these two cases, we made arrangements for the observation to occur on the same day as the interview immediately after class. The interviews were the basis for the development of the case studies. Given that my goal was to hear the participants’ perspectives, self-reporting was appropriate in this study.

Case Study Approach

In this study, each case was developed to present each participant’s story. Although the sample size was small, my hope was that the six participants would provide a sufficient amount of information for investigating the practices and backgrounds of literacy teacher educators.

Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). A bounded system is a definable setting or context. My case studies were bounded by the context of each participant’s work as a literacy teacher educator. Case studies allow the researcher to use a variety of data collection methods such as interviewing, observation, reports, and document analysis (Creswell, 2007, Merriam, 2009). Case studies also allow the researcher to organize information within a certain context. Creswell (2007) identified three different types of case studies that are common in qualitative research: instrumental case study, multiple or collective case studies, and the intrinsic case study. In a single instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to highlight the issue. In a collective (multiple) case study one issue or concern is selected, but the researcher selects a number of cases based on that one issue. Finally, in an intrinsic case study the focus is on the case itself (p. 74). This research employs a multiple case study to examine the literacy teacher educators’ experiences and the influences on their vision for teaching literacy.
The use of collective case studies was important because it allowed me to gain greater insight into the literacy teaching practices of all the participants, the broader context in which their work was situated, and how they developed and taught their courses. The elements for the case studies included: an introduction to the participant including their educational background, professional experience, a discussion on their beliefs about teaching, and the ways in which they develop literacy course priorities. Looking at these diverse elements allowed for depth through allowing the participants’ perspectives to be heard. Thus, as Merriam (1998) suggests,

Case studies are used to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than specific variables, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice and future research (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

In pursing this multiple case study, a number of data collection procedures were employed, which are described in the next section.

Data Collection

In this study, data was collected through two semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. Course outlines of literacy courses were also collected to allow for artifact analysis. Finally, two of the participants took part in observations to allow for triangulation of the data. Triangulation of data is a technique that facilitates the validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources (Merriam, 2009). These data collection tools were employed as I felt that they would allow for collection of data most relevant to my research study. The collection of data is not a neutral process (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Data collection requires the active participation of the researcher who determines which information is relevant and what it means in relation to the research questions (Merriam, 2009).
Data Collection: Interviews

Interviews are valuable research tools that provide a wealth of useful information to the researcher. Interviews allow participants to share their unique perspectives, based on their own experiences, because interviews allow participants the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about the issue or situation under study. Kvale’s (1996) traveller metaphor applies to the interview process in this research study. Kvale (1996) saw “the interviewer as a traveller on a journey that leads to a tale being told upon returning home (p. 4). Kvale said the journey may lead to new knowledge and new understandings for the traveller. Throughout the interviews, I acquired knowledge and insights that helped me to construct a deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences as literacy teacher educators. Further, the act of interviewing my participants lent itself to the creation of rich descriptions using quotes from the participants. This is another important aspect of qualitative research.

There are three main types of interviews used in qualitative research: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews in this study. Each of these three types of interviews has advantages and disadvantages. First, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to have some flexibility in the posing of questions and also allow participants to express their views more fully. Second, during semi-structured interviews all participants are asked the same questions, although probe questions can vary from participant to participant. Third, participants may provide unexpected insights and perhaps lead the research in a different direction than originally intended. Finally, semi-structured interviews can provide reliable, comparable, qualitative data (Cohen, 2006). Some disadvantages of semi-structured interviews are that the questions can be leading or prescriptive, cause and effect cannot be inferred, and the flexibility of the interview may lessen its reliability (Merriam, 2009).

The second type of interview is the structured interview. Some of the advantages of structured interviews are they are easy to replicate and can be conducted in a short period of time. Often,
the wording and order of questions are predetermined (Merriam, 2009). However, disadvantages of structured interviews their lack of flexibility. There is no allowance for new or probe questions to be introduced during the interview. As a result, structured interviews often lack detail.

The third type of interview is the unstructured interview. Merriam (2009) pointed out that some advantages of unstructured interviews are that they are more exploratory in nature, are flexible, and questions can be adapted and changed based on the participants’ answers. There is no predetermined set of questions for the participant. The disadvantages of unstructured interviews are that the interviewer must know when to probe for more details and must be able to establish a rapport with the interviewee to put him/her at ease when answering questions. Unstructured interviews can be very challenging for a novice interviewer because he or she must be able to guide the interview without a structure to fall back on to elicit a coherent response from the participant.

I selected the semi-structured interview for my study because it has the advantages of both structured and unstructured interviews. All of my participants were asked the same questions, but there were some minor variations in follow-up questions when participants’ responses provided unexpected insights or led me in another direction. I asked probing questions for clarification or to try to elicit a specific example from the participants. For example, Lester shared, “For 25 years I’ve struggled to be a better writing teacher.” His acknowledgement that he was still struggling with teaching writing after so many years of being a classroom teacher and teacher educator was surprising. I had been under the impression that because all of my participants were experienced literacy teacher educators, that writing was an area that would have been a strength for all of them. It led me to focus on continuous learning as an area for the teacher educators. Lester felt that it was important to share with his own learning experiences with student teachers so that they would see that he was still learning and valued learning. Moreover, it allowed for
understanding that teachers cannot know everything there is to know about teaching no matter how long they have been teaching.

**Data Collection: Interview Design**

The interview questions were designed to elicit responses from the participants about their personal views on teaching literacy, course content, priorities, and personal and professional influences on pedagogy. In consultation with an experienced literacy teacher educator, I developed a set of interview questions under five categories for the first interview:

- Professional background
- Course development
- Instructional strategies
- Assignments and required readings
- Institutional supports

The questions were tested with a different experienced literacy teacher educator and then revised according to that educator’s recommendations.

Each participant was interviewed twice for my research study. The first interviews were conducted either at Abbey University beginning in October of 2010, or at the participants’ current university location and continued into the spring of 2011, and the second set of interviews began in the fall of 2011, and continued until the spring of 2012. The first interview was approximately one hour in length and the second interview was roughly forty-five minutes. Each interview was audio-taped, transcribed, and member-checked. Member checking consists of verifying with participants whether or not the data they provided was recorded and interpreted accurately by the researcher. I emailed the transcripts to the participants and asked them to read them over and indicate whether they wanted to make any changes or clarify any information.
In the first interview, questions were designed to elicit information about the participants’ personal and professional backgrounds. For example, participants were asked, “What was your area of study in your undergraduate and graduate degree programs?” as I wanted to discover if there were any connections between their previous areas of study and their current work in literacy teacher education. Other questions included “What courses have you taught and for how long have you been teaching both in higher education and prior?” “What training did you receive to become a teacher educator?” These questions were asked in order to gain an understanding of the personal and professional backgrounds of the participants and how they may have influenced the teaching of their literacy courses. The questions were open-ended, not yes or no. I tried to minimize researcher bias and assumptions in the wording of the questions. I also had to be careful that the participants did not feel judged by the way in which I phrased the questions, as this could have influenced how they responded. I achieved this through developing the questions with a literacy teacher educator and then piloting them with another literacy teacher educator.

Throughout my interviews, participants shared their thoughts and opinions freely and often took some questions in unexpected directions. Charmaz (2014) stated, “Grounded theorists must remain active in the interview and alert for interesting leads” (p. 97). For example, both Lester and Jane acknowledged that there were areas that they did not cover in their courses because they were not familiar with them. Jane said, “Fiction is an embedded component in who I am as a teacher and storyteller but I am struggling to bring in non-fiction.” Lester shared, “I am not teaching some things, I am not doing technology justice the way I should be.” It appeared that all the participants were candid and their responses flowed easily.

The second interview also gave me an opportunity to examine how my participants constructed their vision for their courses and the vision they had for their student teachers, and helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the pedagogy that influenced their literacy teaching. The headings for the second interview included:
It was not possible to cover everything related to pedagogy, so I chose to focus on a few key areas. The second interview had fewer questions and interviews were approximately 45 minutes in length. The questions for the second set of interviews were intended to elicit responses that would expand on the first set of interview questions in relation to the course content, priorities, and vision, and fill in gaps from the first interview. I asked questions such as, “What areas of your literacy course get the most attention and why?” “What are the priorities for your literacy course and why are they important in your course?” I wanted to know if the participants had defined priorities and if they were deliberate in the choices they made about what to teach and what not to teach.

The interview also included questions about their overall goals and vision for the student teachers. As Houston suggests, “Vision is important because it involves literacy teacher educators’ ability to apply their content knowledge, pedagogical strategies and learning theories towards future directions for their courses and research interests” (Houston, 2009, p. 115). I felt that the questions about vision were especially relevant because I wanted to find out if the priorities were connected to their long-term goals for their students or if they were based on their own interests. The second interview was also an opportunity for me to ask questions that arose from the first interview and to probe some ideas more deeply based on my analysis of responses from the first interviews.
Data Analysis: Grounded Theory

In order to make sense of the data collected from the six literacy teacher educators I elected to use the grounded theory method. Grounded theory is different from other types of qualitative research because the focus is on building theory. Also referred to as the constant comparative method of data analysis, grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to describe and analyze patterns in human social behaviour (Glaser, 1992). It is considered an optimal strategy for exploring human behaviour, interactions, and experiences.

The grounded theory method allows the researcher to take an inductive stance and derive meaning from the data as it emerges (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Merriam 2009). For Glaser and Strauss (1967), the defining components of grounded theory include the researcher’s involvement in the iterative process of data collection and analysis, construction of analytic codes and categories from the data, making comparisons during each stage of analysis, and advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis (Merriam, p. 7). Similarly, Punch (2009) described grounded theory as a method, approach, or strategy for research, and a way to analyze data that allows for new theories to be generated from data. Punch (2009) states, “In grounded theory the whole process of data collection and analysis is a tightly woven iterative process involving constant comparison which leads to the gradual development and refinement of theory grounded in the data” (p. 12).

The main principle of grounded theory analysis is that a theory (or theories) emerge from the data. There are two types of codes in grounded theory analysis (Glaser, 1992). The first are substantive codes, the conceptual meanings given to the data in order to generate categories. The second are theoretical codes, codes for the conceptual relationships that are discovered that relate the substantive codes to each other.
In recent decades, grounded theory has evolved. Charmaz’s (2014) constructivist perspective on grounded theory viewed the researcher as “part of the world they are studying, the data they collect, and the analysis they produce.” Charmaz (2014) stated, “We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (p. 17). Her constructivist approach recognizes the subjectivity of the researcher and his or her involvement in in the construction and interpretation of data. According to Charmaz (2010), grounded theorists follow a general set of guidelines:

- Conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously.
- Analyze actions and processes rather than themes and structure.
- Use comparative methods.
- Draw on data in service of developing new conceptual theories.
- Develop inductive abstract analytic categories through systematic data analysis.
- Emphasize theory construction.
- Engage in theoretical sampling.
- Search for variation in the studied categories or process.
- Pursue developing a category rather can covering a specific empirical topic (p. 11).

I felt that this version of grounded theory was the most appropriate research method for this study so I followed the guidelines outlined by Charmaz. Further, having worked as a literacy teacher educator, at the outset of the study, I had a personal understanding of the context in which many of the participants worked and this experience helped me to pay attention to particular responses and make sense of them as they related to teacher education. Through the analysis of the interviews with the literacy teacher educators and the documents that related to their literacy teaching, I was able to “attend to what I heard, saw and sensed while gathering data” Charmaz (2014, p. 3), and analyze data based on these processes.

Data Analysis Using Grounded Theory: Interviews

After completing the first round of individual interviews, all data were transcribed. I reviewed the transcripts from each of the participants and made notes and comments in the margins.
Charmaz (2014) stated that grounded theory coding requires the researcher “to stop and ask analytic questions of the data” (p. 109). It involves at least two phases: initial coding and focused coding. Throughout initial coding fragments of data are studied for their importance, these fragments include words, lines, and segments. Essentially coding is the process of defining what the data are all about. Some codes might describe feelings, while others may indicate events that happened. Initial codes help the researcher to separate data into categories. Examples of codes that were identified in my transcripts include: influences on professional identity, leadership opportunities, graduate student research, listening to students’ needs, challenge of time, community and collaboration, and setting clear goals for literacy. Grounded theory also requires making constant comparisons and finding relationships among the codes that emerge from the data. I reread the transcripts many times and looked for connections between the initial codes. During initial coding, it was important to be open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by the data. Initial codes that emerged from the first set of interviews included pedagogical strategies and vision for teacher educators. The second set of interviews was also transcribed and the data were coded and separated into categories.

The second phase of grounded theory coding is called focused coding. Charmaz (2013) described this phase of coding “as selecting the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data” (p.113). After the initial process of open coding, I began the process of focused coding. Focused coding is used to highlight and develop the most significant codes both within and across cases. In this phase, the researcher is analyzing the data more closely and focusing on a particular direction in order to establish a theoretical direction (Charmaz, 2013, p.140). Focused coding is intended to help researchers organize their data, focus on codes that are most significant, and make decisions about what is important. During this phase of the current study, categories were created based on recurring patterns or themes. Categories that emerged included vision for themselves as literacy teacher educators, vision for student teachers, classroom community, challenges of teaching literacy, and professional
influences. After analyzing these categories, I grouped some of them together under headings such as overall goals for literacy teaching and course pedagogy. I related the category of course content to the category of program coherence. I focused on the areas that I felt were most relevant to the research questions and that would provide significant insights for literacy teacher education.

After the focused coding was completed, the experiences of the participants were compared and contrasted. I created individual cases for each participant and then I employed a cross-case analysis. Cross-case analysis involves examining themes across cases to discern commonalities (Creswell, 2007, p. 245). Cross-case analysis was used to assist me in gaining a deeper understanding of the data and emerging themes. Stake (1995) called this analysis “development of issues” (p. 123). The next step involved creating core categories; these structure the findings chapters. Core categories are significant to research because they become “the central focus of the grounded theory” (Punch, 2009, p. 188). The final core categories that emerged were vision, course content, and pedagogical approaches to teaching literacy. These three categories are discussed in the findings chapters.

**Data Analysis: Document Analysis**

Document analysis was used to supplement the data collected from the semi-structured interviews as I hoped it would provide additional information for the development of the case studies. I collected course outlines, reviewed online documents from the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and faculties of educations, and read recent literature about teacher educators. Merriam (2009) pointed out that “documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem” (p. 163). For example, I anticipated that the course outlines would reveal certain areas related to teaching literacy such as balanced literacy and multiliteracies. In actuality, some course outlines included these topics while others did not mention them at all. In a report prepared for the Ontario
Association of Deans of Education, *Towards a Foundation for Teacher Preparation in Literacy in Ontario*, key elements were identified that should be included in teacher education programs in literacy. Yet I found that many of the key elements identified in the report were missing from the documents I analyzed.

**Research Limitations**

Conducting research is never a neutral process, and my prior experiences inevitably shaped my interpretation of the data that I collected. There are several limitations to my research study but I focus on the three main limitations here. However, there is also some strength within these limitations, and I briefly mention these as well.

First, my sample size was small. There were only six participants. I recognized that because of the small sample, I was not able to generalize to a wider population of teacher educators. Larger samples provide a better opportunity to detect significant differences within a population, whereas small sample sizes make this process more difficult. However small samples allow researchers to probe more deeply into their subjects (Merriam, 2009). Another strength is that because all of my participants were working in the same province at the time of the study, they were working in similar educational contexts, with the same political climate, and under the aegis of the same government policies.

The second limitation to the study is the bias I had as a researcher; I was not a neutral observer. No research study is completely free of bias. At the beginning of the study, I was working as a literacy teacher educator and my experiences are likely to have influenced the way I interpreted participants’ responses to the interview questions and the themes that I focused on as the data emerged. My personal opinions and reflections based on my experience as a teacher educator likely influenced my analysis of the data. For example, I had ideas about what topics were important to cover when teaching literacy and I knew this influenced my perceptions and
understanding of the participants’ work. Consequently my ability to be objective was limited. Merriam (2009) pointed out that by “being a careful observer, and a thoughtful analyst” one can help to offset bias. Also, my prior experience as a literacy teacher educator may have enabled me to ponder insights raised by the participants from an insider’s perspective.

The third limitation arises from the fact that I relied on interviews and documents as my primary sources of data. I had hoped to observe all six participants teaching a literacy class but only two of the six participants agreed to classroom observations. As a result, the observations were not considered a main source of data. I had hoped to observe the LTE’s enacting instructional strategies and discussing concepts related to literacy instruction. However, interviewing the literacy teacher educators allowed me to collect information that I may not have been able to observe in a classroom, “for we cannot observe, feelings, thoughts, and intentions” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). There were also limitations to using documents. Finally, the question of accuracy arose; I had no way of verifying if the topics listed in the course outlines were consistent with what was actually taught during the literacy course, and this was another limitation.

Ethical Considerations

This project was subjected to ethical review and was approved by the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board in June 2010. The approval was renewed in June 2011, June 2012, June 2013, June 2014, June 2015, and June 2016. Participants were asked to submit a signed letter indicating their informed consent in which issues of confidentiality and anonymity were outlined. Pseudonyms are used throughout the study to refer to participants, institutions, and individual programs of initial teacher education. Participation in this study was completely voluntary and participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Copies of both the introductory letter and the consent form are included in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.
Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the main aspects of qualitative research and have provided a rationale for its use in my research study. In the beginning of the chapter, I set the context for the research study and explained why I chose to use a social constructivist approach. Semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data collection and data was analyzed using a grounded theory approach. My rationale for choosing grounded theory to analyze the data was discussed. The research questions, design, data collection, and analysis were also described in this chapter. Finally, the limitations and ethical considerations of the research study were outlined. In the next chapter profiles of the participants are presented.
Chapter 4
Overview of Participants

Introduction

In this chapter I describe the six literacy teacher educators who were the participants in this study by discussing the personal and professional experiences they brought to the career of teacher educator. I have assigned pseudonyms to all participants and to the universities with which they were affiliated to protect their identities and maintain confidentiality. Their pseudonyms are Clara, Jane, Julia, Lester, Linda, and Ryan. All participants were teaching literacy methods courses at the time the data were collected. Five of the six participants had been classroom teachers prior to securing positions at a university in a teacher education program. Four of the six participants in my study had completed a Ph.D., while the other two had completed an Ed.D. While all of the participants held doctorates, possessing a Ph.D. is not a prerequisite for teaching in a teacher education program. For example, I became a teacher educator before I started my Ph.D. However, I decided to select participants who held a Ph.D. or an Ed.D. because I wanted to interview a sample of teacher educators who had a background in research. I hoped that this would make it more likely that my participants would be able to respond in-depth to my research questions. The next section includes the profiles of each participant; these profiles are presented alphabetically.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th># of Years Teaching at University</th>
<th># of Years Teaching as a Classroom Teacher</th>
<th>Major Focus for Literacy Course</th>
<th>Notable Features of Teaching Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clara (Elementary)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Children’s Literature</td>
<td>Social Constructivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous Perspectives</td>
<td>Reader Response Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane (Elementary)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Literature Based teaching</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia (Secondary)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Multiliteracies</td>
<td>Technology Infusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Digital Presence</td>
<td>Multimodalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lester (Elementary)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Children’s Literature</td>
<td>Drama and integrating the Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda (Elementary)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Literature based</td>
<td>Reflective Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan (Secondary)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Collaborative Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Practitioner research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clara

*I think sometimes storytelling helps them understand, individual cases may spark a kind of empathy in them and an understanding of why we have to address the needs of every student in our classroom.*

Introduction to Clara

Clara had been an educator for over 40 years when I interviewed her for my study. As a child, she had enjoyed reading and loved listening to stories that her great aunt told her and her brothers and sisters. As a result of these positive experiences Clara developed a passion for children’s literature. This passion led her to pursue a career as an elementary school teacher. Later, children’s literature became a central feature of her work as a literacy teacher educator. Clara’s strong commitment to improving literacy teacher education was evident in her efforts to stay abreast of current literacy initiatives, research and regularly attend academic conferences in teacher education.

Educational Background

After Grade 11, Clara attended Teacher’s College, where she completed a two-year diploma program. During her early years as a classroom teacher, she took night courses to complete her undergraduate degree. Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Clara enrolled in full-time, post-secondary studies to complete her master of education in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Reading Disabilities. During her interviews with me, Clara shared that it was a guest lecturer in one of her master’s course who suggested that all the graduate students should consider pursuing a Ph.D. Clara identifies this as a turning point in her life because this was something she had never previously considered. The lecturer’s suggestion gave her the confidence to apply to a doctoral program. She was accepted and subsequently completed her Ph.D. with a specialization in language education and curriculum studies.
Professional Experience

Clara began her career as an elementary middle school teacher when she was only 19 years old. She spent 16 years teaching in public school before becoming a literacy consultant for her local district school board. Eventually, she was seconded from her position as a literacy consultant to the ministry of education where she was responsible for curriculum development for district school boards across the province of Ontario.

Clara later left this position to become a full-time graduate student. She attended graduate school in the United States. As a doctoral candidate, Clara conducted a large-scale research study on the role of professional development in transforming literacy practices in the classroom. Her study involved interviewing more than 50 teachers in one state. Upon completion of her Ph.D., Clara returned to Canada and secured a tenure-stream position in a teacher education program at a university in Ontario. During her tenure as professor, she continued to conduct research on teachers and professional development, teachers and collaborative inquiry, and teachers’ understanding of social justice. Clara taught undergraduate courses in media, multi-media and multiliteracies and graduate courses in literacy and qualitative research methods, while also supervising master and doctoral students in their thesis work.

Beliefs About Teaching

Clara believed that literacy teacher educators should maintain knowledge of current literacy research, evolving concepts of literacy, and new literacy teaching strategies. She felt that literacy teacher educators should continually reflect on and be conscious of their own developing philosophy of education. Clara approached literacy teaching from a social constructivist perspective with an emphasis on reader response. She believed that having a sound knowledge of curriculum theory is also an asset for teaching and that literacy teacher educators should have at least three to five years of classroom teaching experience. In Clara’s view, previous classroom
experience would also assist teacher educators in modeling lessons and strategies to their student teachers.

Clara believed that, while not a requirement, having completed a Ph.D. in literacy or language education would be an asset for literacy teacher educators. In part, this was due to her strong sense that literacy teacher educators should continue to conduct research and pursue learning opportunities in the context of professional development as there is always more to learn about literacy teaching and learning.

Developing Literacy Course Priorities

Clara found that at the beginning of a school year most of her student teachers thought about literacy only in terms of print literacy. Student teachers did not consider other types of literacy, such as text messaging, digital literacy, or watching movies, activities that they engaged in every day, as forms of literacy. Clara wanted her student teachers to develop a vision that would encompass all that literacy could be. In her interview with me, Clara noted, “The boundaries of teaching literacy have changed over time.” She hoped that by offering her student teachers a broader understanding of evolving concepts of literacy she could help them to further develop their ability to teach the range of literacy skills required for children today.

Almost every lesson Clara taught in her literacy course included children’s literature. She used children’s literature as a tool to explore various literacy concepts. She focused her time and energy on teaching about language processes and child development. Clara’s lessons were designed to model strategies to promote a child’s development in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing skills for her student teachers. She said,

I want student teachers to get the sense of literacy as being multi-modal and that there are a range of kinds of texts they can use, and that their students can respond through multi-modal ways to the texts they use.
Another priority for Clara was assisting student teachers to develop an understanding of how social constructivism could inform their practice and how it could be applied to their own teaching and learning. Ultimately, she wanted student teachers to leave her literacy courses “feeling engaged, motivated, and excited to go out and try the strategies and concepts they had learned,” in their own classrooms. It was Clara’s hope that her student teachers would become independent, thoughtful literacy teachers who planned their classes based on the learning needs of their own students.

Jane

*You cannot go into depth in teaching everything.*

Introduction to Jane

Jane reported having worked in the education sector for over 40 years when I interviewed her. She began her career as an elementary school teacher, working for 31 years for a local district school board before becoming a teacher educator. As a teacher educator, Jane taught literacy courses in a one-year teacher education program at the same university where she completed her own education degrees. Her commitment to education was long-standing; she reported caring deeply about her work and her student teachers. Throughout her entire career Jane continued to pursue opportunities for learning by obtaining additional course credentials and attending conferences.

Educational Background

Jane completed her undergraduate degree part-time in the 1970s while she was teaching in an elementary public school. During her time as an elementary classroom teacher, Jane also completed a number of Additional Teaching Certifications. These included primary education
specialist, special education, English as a Second Language, dramatic arts, vocal music, and
gifted education.

Always seeking to learn more, Jane later decided to enrol in a master of education program, and
upon completion went straight into the doctoral program at the same university and obtained her
Ed.D. in literacy.

Professional Experience

Jane taught in the same school district for over 20 years before moving into teacher education.
Over the course of her tenure with the school district, she had a variety of roles, including
classroom teacher, consultant, occasional teacher, and primary resource teacher. As a primary
resource teacher, she organized workshops for elementary teachers and provided individual
support to school staff on a wide range of topics. Jane also taught in-service courses in reading
for teachers at a large urban university in the evenings and on weekends while working as a
classroom teacher.

Jane had been working in a teacher education program for over 10 years before the time of the
study. The program in which she taught was located off campus at a local public school, and was
part of a school–university partnership project. Here, she taught literacy courses for
Primary/Junior (P/J) and Junior/Intermediate (J/I) student teachers. Jane identified herself as a
narrative researcher because this approach resonated with her deeply. In addition to teaching she
had worked outside of the classroom as a professional storyteller for many years. Since
storytelling was a natural approach for her, she incorporated aspects of narrative theory and
practices into her teaching at the university. Jane considered her work at the university an
extension of her classroom teaching in the public schools.
Beliefs About Teaching

Jane believed a literacy teacher educator should be someone who loves reading, who is passionate about reading and writing, and who tries to make sense of texts in our world. Jane believed in life-long learning and felt that it was important to stress to her student teachers that she was still learning along with them, just as they would continue to learn over the whole course of their lives. Acknowledging that she did not know everything there was to know about literacy, she willingly explored new topics and shared her new knowledge with her student teachers by using it as a springboard for discussion. Like Clara, Jane believed in teaching literacy through the use of literature. For example, she used novels, short stories, poetry, and picture books to demonstrate strategies and concepts to support reading development. Her background in storytelling informed her passion for creating an environment in the classroom in which oral language was valued. Jane hoped that student teachers would also use children’s literature in their own classrooms to support and improve children’s literacy. Jane shared, “I want my student teachers to be aware that there are a range of components within a balanced literacy program, you cannot just do read-aloud all the time.” Jane encouraged active engagement with different forms of literature and the use of a range of approaches to help student teachers develop their own classroom practice.

Jane valued collaborating with others but found it difficult to do so from her location off campus. However, she attended professional development sessions to stay connected with the university and always tried to incorporate new information, technology, and resources into her courses.

Developing Literacy Course Priorities

Jane noted that literacy is a very broad discipline. She was aware that she could not cover all literacy topics; however, she tried to demonstrate a balanced literacy approach that included a wide range of topics that her student teachers could explore in greater depth on their own. Jane
articulated clear goals for her literacy course, but these goals were not static. Rather, she attempted to refine her goals as she continued to develop and improve her literacy courses.

Jane was aware that there were gaps in her literacy teaching. She admitted that she struggled with incorporating non-fiction texts into her literacy courses. She knew that student teachers needed to know how to read and understand non-fiction texts that included information such as graphs, charts, and other text elements. In recent years, she had expanded her teaching repertoire to include websites and other non-fiction resources. However, fiction was the central component of who Jane was as a teacher and as a storyteller and she found that talking about non-fiction required more of a conscious effort.

Other priorities in Jane’s practice included developing anchor charts because she believed that these helped student teachers acquire a repertoire of teaching strategies on a given topic. She also believed in creating opportunities for student teachers to get feedback from their peers. In her literacy course student teachers regularly worked in small groups to discuss practical strategies that they might use in their own classrooms. Jane’s commitment to life-long learning was evident in all aspects of her work.

Julia

You can only teach what you know.

Introduction to Julia

When I interviewed her, Julia had been an educator for over 15 years. She reported having had trouble learning to read as a child. In fact, she did not learn to read until she was in Grade Three, despite the fact that her mother was a Kindergarten teacher. According to Julia, a turning point in her development as a reader occurred in Grade Four. After reading The Lion, the Witch and the
*Wardrobe*, Julia developed a love for literature and went on to excel in English in secondary school and later, in her university coursework.

In her professional life Julia had built a reputation as a scholar for her ethnographic studies in the area of multiliteracies. Her research interests included early literacy, multi-modal perspectives in teacher education, digital and media epistemologies, and fostering social inclusion through the development of artefactual approaches to literacy education.

**Educational Background**

After completing her Honours Bachelor of Arts, Julia spent a year abroad in Europe where she completed her qualifications for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Subsequently, she completed a Master’s of Arts in Anglo-American literary relations in comparative literature and went on to complete her Ph.D. in literacy education in 2001.

**Professional Experience**

Julia was unique because she was the only participant in my study who had never been an elementary or secondary classroom teacher. She began her teaching career teaching adults EFL. She later spent a number of years working as a writer and editor in the educational publishing industry.

Julia said that prior to becoming a literacy teacher educator, she had limited background in teaching literacy. In fact, she reported learning to be a teacher educator in literacy while she was a teacher educator. In other words, she developed her practice in the moment, not before she began. She reported that most of her learning at that time was “trial by fire.” She felt fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with experienced teacher educators who taught her about the nature of teaching in higher education.
After working as a novice literacy teacher educator and practicum supervisor at a large Tier 1 university in Canada, Julia moved to the United States. There, she was an Associate Professor at a Tier 1 university, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy education. She also held the position of education co-ordinator at the university and taught English methods courses that covered topics such as literature and multiliteracies, and taught graduate courses in the area of multi-modality.

In Julia’s current work, she is involved in a number of research projects across three countries. Her research areas include; multiliteracies, multi-modalities and literacy, digital literacies, and low-income areas and literacy.

Beliefs About Teaching

Julia described her teaching philosophy as being grounded in a social-cultural perspective. She believed that good literacy teacher educators should be forward thinking about literacy and should develop a thorough understanding of early language acquisition and a deep knowledge of child development. Although Julia herself was not a traditionally trained classroom teacher, she believed that literacy teacher educators should have a minimum of five years classroom teaching experience. She recognized the irony in this statement given that she herself had no elementary or secondary classroom teaching experience and little knowledge of the pedagogy of teaching teachers when she began working as a literacy teacher educator early in her career. She also felt that it would be beneficial if literacy teacher educators considered technology and literacy. She believed in thinking about multi-modalities and multiliteracies.

Julia had a very strong background in research and identified herself most strongly as a researcher. Like most of the other participants interviewed for my study, Julia believed that holding a doctoral degree is an asset because she viewed being a researcher as integral to the role of literacy teacher educator. However, at the time of the interviews, over 10 years later, she was more experienced and more confident as a literacy teacher educator.
Developing Literacy Course Priorities

Julia had taught a variety of courses in a teacher education program over the years. In preparing her courses, she thought carefully about what she believed would be effective pedagogy in order to present content that would be useful to her student teachers. She typically spent the first part of her class talking about theory and then moved on to applications of the theory. She asked questions of her student teachers such as, “So what’s next?” She tried to get her student teachers to think about the connections between theory and actual teaching. She tried to operationalize theory through the activities she organized for the student teachers. Julia recognized the importance of analyzing a classroom activity collectively immediately after engaging student teachers in it. It was necessary for student teachers to reflect on what they did and why it was relevant. This was an important part of the structure of all of her classes.

In her practice, Julia had four key priorities. First, in her courses Julia addressed concepts related to reading development such as print, phonics, phonemic awareness, and semantics. Second, differentiation was also an important topic. Differentiation refers to a wide variety of teaching strategies and lesson adaptations that teachers can use to meet students’ diverse needs and wants. Julia believed this concept was important for student teachers because it brought to the forefront the idea that students learn in different ways. Third, she prioritized integrating different genres across content areas of the curriculum because she felt it was important for student teachers to make connections across subject areas. Her pedagogy on a broader scale included critical literacy, cross-curricular texts, and literacy and technology. Fourth, Julia recognized how important sequencing and planning in advance were to the success of her literacy courses. With experience her ability to develop a coherent plan continued to improve. Although she worked hard constantly refining her course, Julia shared that the student teachers in her courses often presented significant challenges. She reported that sometimes it was difficult to connect with the student teachers because they had such a wide range of interests and needs and many did not seem to participate in the course with serious intent. Many student teachers just wanted practical
skills and were not interested in learning about theory, nor were they interested in learning about the relevance of theory to their teaching practice.

Lester

*I think literacy teacher educators develop by learning what works for them and knowing what the needs of the student teachers are...teacher educators bring some background experience to the context of teaching teachers.*

Introduction to Lester

Lester had been a teacher educator at a Tier I university for over 13 years. Prior to being a teacher educator, Lester had worked as a classroom teacher and curriculum consultant for 25 years. He recalled learning to read at quite an early age and loved to go to the library. He was extremely passionate about the arts, especially drama and oral language. When he became a teacher educator, he wanted his student teachers to appreciate the importance of oral language in the classroom, and this was a significant part of his literacy course. Lester had a long history of enjoying reading, although he reported having disliked taking English literature in high school. He remembered one of his high school teachers telling him that he would never make it out of high school. In retrospect, Lester appreciated how ironic this was now that he was teaching teachers and had earned two post-graduate degrees.

Educational Background

Lester majored in Fine Arts and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Upon completion of this degree, Lester went on to complete his Bachelor of Education degree. About 10 years later, Lester completed his master of education degree. Lester began his doctorate while teaching in-service courses and working as a classroom teacher. The journey to completion of his doctorate was long but worthwhile in his assessment as it informed his teaching in teacher education. He
completed his Ed.D. in 2000. His research focused on the value of written and oral responses to literature.

Professional Experience

Lester began his professional career as a classroom teacher in a large, suburban district school board. Over the course of 25 years, Lester was a homeroom teacher and taught core classes ranging from Grade Two through to Grade Eight. Later on in his teaching career he became a literacy and drama consultant with his school board for Kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers. In addition to being a school district consultant, Lester also worked part-time for a publisher as a writer and literacy consultant. Later he moved on to become a teacher educator.

Lester’s move into teacher education started in the late 1990s when he worked part-time in a teacher education program at an off-campus site. In this program, he taught literacy courses while also working part-time as an elementary classroom teacher at a local public school. Regarding the latter, at that particular time he was teaching a multi-grade grouping of Grades Four, Five, and Six for his homeroom class. He had fond memories of that experience, recalling it as being one of the best times of his career because he was teaching elementary students and student teachers simultaneously. This enabled him to talk about and share the things he was doing in his classroom with his student teachers.

Eventually, Lester became a full-time teacher educator and co-ordinator of a teacher education program at a Tier 1 university. As a literacy teacher educator, Lester was responsible for teaching literacy to a group of about 75 Primary and Junior (P/J) student teachers. His core responsibilities included teaching literacy and social studies courses. Lester also taught in-service courses for experienced teachers for many years. Topics for his in-service courses included dramatic arts for intermediate teachers, children’s literature, and reading. Lester reported that teaching in-service courses prepared him for the role of teacher educator. During his time at the
university, he held a variety of positions (e.g., program co-ordinator, literacy leader), and he taught in both the consecutive and concurrent programs.

In 2010, after many years out of the classroom, Lester elected not to teach literacy in the teacher education program. Recognizing that he was not as current on the latest initiatives and expectations in literacy teaching as he should be, he decided to take a step back. He has since returned to teaching literacy in the teacher education program.

Beliefs About Teaching

My philosophy, my teacher statement with my student teachers is every time you do something, you’re not doing something else. If I’m reading aloud, I’m not doing technology with the kids. I want to help them understand that you have to make your choices meaningful and you have to have your own priorities.

Lester’s philosophy of teaching stems from his belief in a literature-based approach. In outlining possible qualifications for literacy teacher educators, Lester suggested that they should have classroom teaching experience and should have spent time working with children. Otherwise, he believed, they were not authentic educators. While Lester did not believe literacy teacher educators needed to have a Ph.D. in order to teach literacy, he did believe that literacy teacher educators should have some kind of expertise in literacy. This could include being involved in writing literacy curriculum, having experience working for the Ministry of Education, or having previous experience teaching literacy to children. For Lester, any of these experiences would be equally beneficial for a literacy teacher educator.

Lester believed strongly in the value of interaction and collaboration among teacher educators and teachers. Throughout his interviews he highlighted the importance of the professional working partnerships he had established and maintained with teacher colleagues. He accomplished this by co-writing books, initiating and carrying out inquiry-based research projects, and developing and co-presenting workshops. These experiences enriched his teaching practice and helped to shape his philosophy as an educator. Lester valued the inquiry process and
encouraged his student teachers to challenge their own assumptions and beliefs about what was valuable to learn, and to reflect on why they were electing to teach some books over others. He strongly believed that teachers’ curricular choices should be thoughtful and purposeful but also practical.

Developing Literacy Course Priorities

Lester noted that when developing their literacy courses, teacher educators have to choose their course content and priorities carefully, as these priorities must be consistent with the guidelines of the Ministry of Education. Lester used children’s literature as a foundation for his teaching and his courses for student teachers were mostly based on this kind of literature and also reflected his strong interest in dramatic arts. Lester was very deliberate in his curricular choices and focused on helping student teachers develop teaching strategies to address comprehension through the use of poetry, novels, and picture books. He modeled strategies and planned interactive activities during his literacy courses to give student teachers practical experiences and opportunities to experience theory in action.

Lester recognized that some subjects, such as technology, did not get as much attention in his courses as they should as they were not in his areas of expertise. During his interviews, echoing Jane and Julia, Lester acknowledged that it was difficult to give in-depth instruction in all topics. He was unapologetic about the fact that he could not teach every aspect of literacy in depth because he recognized it was impossible because of the time constraints of the course. However, he noted that he would address some topics by facilitating mini workshops within his literacy courses, and, occasionally, he invited guest lecturers to address areas that he felt less adept at teaching. Lester viewed his work as being more practical than theoretical, as he stated, “I think I am more practical than theoretical, but I always emphasize that within my practice, there is theory.” Thus, while theory was important he did try to balance it with practice, but acknowledged that maintaining the balance was a constant struggle.
Linda

*My vision is not achieved through one concrete way. It’s achieved through a variety of ways. Based on what I’m currently reading in journals, talking to colleagues, going to conferences, and listening to students and teachers in my field.*

Introduction to Linda

Linda had worked in teacher education for over 10 years at the time of the interviews. She worked as a co-ordinator and instructor of student teachers in a teacher education program at a Tier I university. Prior to obtaining this position, Linda had been an Associate Professor at a different university in a similar role.

Linda reported a life-time love of literacy and recalled that as a child, her mother read to her daily and that she did very well in school. After graduating from university, Linda worked as a journalist for a local newspaper but the unpredictable schedule, poor job security, and low compensation of this job were not conducive to her lifestyle. She decided to return to school to become a certified elementary school teacher.

Educational Background

Linda completed a Bachelor of Education and a Bachelor of Applied Arts with a specialization in journalism in the 1980s. Many years later, Linda completed her Master of Education degree. Four years after completing her master’s degree, Linda completed her Ph.D. in education. Her doctoral research studied the impact of a tutoring program on student teachers’ development as literacy teachers.
Professional Experience

Linda began her professional career as a teacher with a Catholic district school board where she taught for 14 years. As a classroom teacher, she was always interested in literacy. When Linda was a Grade One teacher, she developed a strong working relationship with the Language Arts Consultant at her school. This Language Arts consultant helped her to develop her reading and writing program and always shared resources and curriculum ideas with Linda. When the consultant informed Linda that she was leaving the district school board to pursue her Ph.D. Linda was inspired. This news planted the seed for Linda to begin to consider pursuing her Ph.D. She began taking in-service courses part-time at the university and completed her reading specialist credential.

After many years of teaching, Linda was seconded to teach in a teacher education program at a Tier 1 university. She worked for four years as a literacy teacher educator and also taught in-service courses to experienced teachers in literacy including primary/junior and primary basic certifications.

After her secondment to the university was completed, Linda worked as a vice-principal in a private school for two years. Later, she left that role and returned to the field of teacher education. Linda began by working as an Assistant Professor in teacher education in a small university. Linda worked in that program for five years. As a professor of literacy, she taught six different courses to student teachers enrolled in the Primary/Junior and Junior/Intermediate teacher education programs. Linda has since left that university and is now working part-time as a literacy teacher educator in a teacher education program at the Tier 1 university where she was originally seconded.
Beliefs About Teaching

Linda believes that literacy teacher educators should be planting seeds and inspiring student teachers to develop a love for literacy. For her, the role of literacy teacher educator must include a great deal of reflection on how to help student teachers understand the importance of teaching reading, “with intensity, and extensively.” Linda felt that teacher educators should be passionate in their practice and should help student teachers develop a broad repertoire of reading strategies. She saw herself as being on a life-long learning journey. The opportunities for her continuous learning were similar to Clara’s: conducting research, attending conferences, working with colleagues, and working with student teachers.

Linda believed that teacher educators should be aware of student teachers’ reading interests in order to help them transfer that interest to their future classrooms. Linda felt that motivation was key to student teachers’ success; by selecting topics that were of interest to them, she could increase their motivation. Linda’s goal was to help her student teachers develop “an intensity about reading that would enable them to become critical readers and thinkers.” Essentially, Linda recognized that if student teachers read but did not think about what they read, they would not be able to apply their knowledge in other contexts. Linda felt strongly that her student teachers must be able to observe and support their future students by cultivating literacy rich environments.

Developing Literacy Course Priorities

One of Linda’s course priorities was for her student teachers to understand that her literacy course was just the beginning of their learning journey, and that becoming a literacy teacher is a process that requires openness to learning new ideas. Linda wanted her student teachers to leave her literacy course confident that they knew how to teach the core essentials in literacy, based on what she learned from research journals, conferences, and current government initiatives. However, she also wanted them to appreciate that there was always more to learn. In her course assignments, Linda tried to ensure that there were always three components—an action
component, a writing component, and a thinking component. Ultimately, she wanted her student teachers to become reflective practitioners.

Community building was another important feature of Linda’s literacy courses. She began the academic year with community building exercises for her student teachers and incorporated many co-operative learning activities in her classes throughout the school year. Drawing on her student teachers’ prior knowledge was really important for Linda. She suggested that student teachers should start with themselves and share who they are as individuals before beginning to take risks in developing a teacher identity. Linda stated, “The relationship piece is very important.” For Linda, lesson plans and learning goals were meaningless if you did not have a relationship with your student teachers. Linda reported that helping her student teachers understand the importance of relationships to effective teaching was a complex task for her. However, she was committed to communicating the centrality of those relationships, because without them, she believed it would be difficult for student teachers to move forward in their careers as teachers. Linda wanted her student teachers to be resourceful so that they could become adept at navigating the complexities of classroom teaching. By developing relationships with librarians and district consultants, and collaborating with other colleagues who could support their teaching, she felt her student teachers would continue growing and learning throughout their careers.

Ryan

_We as teachers stand to learn as much from our students as we teach._

Introduction to Ryan

Ryan had been a literacy teacher educator for over 10 years. He worked at a Tier I university in a large, diverse urban centre in Canada where he was an Assistant Professor. He taught an English methods course in a master’s program that led to both a teaching credential and a master’s degree.
His course examined new perspectives on literacy and literacy pedagogy. Ryan also taught other graduate courses.

Ryan came into teaching somewhat accidentally through his work with youth entangled in the juvenile justice system. Ryan had always been interested in working with “urban” youth. His work in the education system began at Circle Academy where he was initially hired to work as a consultant with a juvenile justice intervention program. The goal of Circle Academy was to create opportunities for youth who had had negative interactions with the criminal justice system. In this role he worked with recovering addicts as well as with students who were disenfranchised from the mainstream school system. Ryan played an integral part in the development of Circle Academy and shortly thereafter became an administrator with this organization.

Educational Background

Ryan’s educational interests and experiences spanned a number of disciplines. He completed two graduate degrees, including a Master’s in Theological Studies and a Master’s in Secondary Education, with certification in English. Upon completion of his master’s degrees, Ryan enrolled in the Alternative Teacher Credentialing program at a state university. Ryan had been teaching for a few years without a teaching certificate. At that time, it was not uncommon for new teachers to receive emergency certification in particular subject areas based on their previous qualifications. Ryan continued his academic studies and completed his Ph.D. in reading, writing and literacy in 2009.

Professional Experience

During Ryan’s tenure at Circle Academy, he took on many different roles. These different roles included administrator, staff advisor to the student council, head of the English department, English teacher, History teacher, and Social Studies teacher. The entire school curriculum at Circle Academy was an inquiry project focused on meeting the needs of marginalized students.
Ryan wanted to help youth who, for a number of different reasons, had “fallen through the cracks.” His intention was to assist students at Circle Academy in realizing their full potential and viewing themselves as highly capable individuals.

During that time, Ryan also collaborated with a local area writers’ project to further develop curriculum for the Circle Academy under the auspices of the Justice Department. Ryan had developed a strong interest in working with students who had developed oppositional attitudes towards schooling. His previous experience had involved working with students who were considered “at-risk,” those who had been involved with the court system, or who had parents who had experienced incarceration or drug abuse.

Ryan left Circle Academy in 2003 and enrolled in a Ph.D. program. During his doctoral studies, he worked as a graduate teaching and research assistant. Ryan worked closely with a professor whose research interests were in inquiry-based learning. Ryan’s primary responsibility as a teaching assistant was teaching literacy courses in the teacher education program to middle and secondary school student teachers. Ryan was also involved in helping to design courses in practitioner research for doctoral students in a specialized Ed.D. program. These courses were developed for current and former teachers, or administrators who were not able to take a full-time course of study. Ryan taught in this program for seven years while doing his Ph.D. and continued to work there after graduation.

After his Ph.D. was completed, Ryan co-ordinated the Master’s Program in Secondary Teacher Education and gave fieldwork seminars at the same university. Eventually Ryan left that university for his current position as an assistant professor in multi-literacies. Ryan’s varied experience was a testament to his intellectual curiosity and commitment to life-long learning.
Beliefs About Teaching

One of Ryan’s fundamental beliefs about teaching was that teaching is deeply intellectual and theoretical work. He said, “It’s impossible to dis-embed ideas, teaching frameworks, and conceptual frameworks for teaching from the practical work of classroom teaching.” Ryan aimed to actualize these principles in his courses through the choices he made as a teacher educator in terms of materials and resources he selected, discussion topics, and the types of questions he posed to his student teachers. He viewed teachers as intellectuals and the process of teaching as one taking place in intellectual and relational contexts. He said:

I believe that teacher education is not simple training, it’s actually helping equip student teachers to interrogate the range of kinds of influences, curriculum, policy that they encounter in the classroom and help to develop their own frameworks for teaching and learning, and to use those kinds of materials critically and effectively.

A large part of what and how Ryan taught revolved around what he termed “interrogating the curriculum.” He did not accept the notion that the standardized curriculum served the needs of all students. Rather, Ryan understood that there were a range of needs and interests both in a classroom and a community, and that teachers must support those different needs by challenging assumptions, by interrogating the curriculum, and by offering students alternatives. Ryan believed that it was just as important to be accountable to the students and community as it was to teach in accord with government-mandated curriculum. He felt that as a teacher educator, it was his responsibility to position himself so that he could critically examine the needs of his student teachers, so he could gain a better understanding of who they were and what they needed to learn in order to teach in the school system.

Developing Literacy Course Priorities

Ryan’s courses were designed to give student teachers opportunities to broaden their thinking about a range of topics including literacy, mandated curriculum, places of inquiry, and student engagement. He intended to create an environment that allowed student teachers to interrogate
the various perspectives presented in literature they read, both professional resources and scholarly articles. For example, Ryan used a theoretical resource called *Teaching for Joy and Justice* because it took into account policy contexts that were relevant in both Canada and the United States. Further, this resource had practical applications for the classroom. Ryan saw this resource that equipped student teachers to both question and challenge policy and curriculum as being useful and important but he recognized that it could also be problematic. He saw it as problematic because challenging policy might cause tension in the workplace and raise issues of compliance with school administrator and school board expectations.

Priorities in Ryan’s literacy courses included “thinking about teaching writing and issues in teaching writing.” In explaining his priorities for his courses, he understood that you have to deal with content and pedagogy simultaneously. For him, pedagogy was infused in every aspect of his courses. As Ryan articulated,

> You never deal with content innocent of pedagogy, any more than you deal with pedagogy innocent of theory. So you can’t talk about the book without talking about how you might think about teaching the book. And you can’t talk about teaching without thinking about what are the implications, what are the underlying beliefs and frameworks? It is a recursive process.

Ryan’s commitments to collaborative inquiry, questioning, challenging the status quo, and exploring multiple perspectives were central to his approach to teaching. Like Lester, Ryan asked many questions during his classes and strived to create an environment where his student teachers were also encouraged to ask many questions. Three elements that seemed to be embedded in Ryan’s philosophy were establishing the connection between literacy and identity, establishing an inquiry-based practitioner-researcher stance, and establishing social justice perspectives. These themes were evident in both his interviews and his course syllabus.
Chapter Summary

This chapter gave a brief overview of the participants and highlighted their educational background, professional experiences, and beliefs about teaching. All of the participants had strong beliefs about teaching, a clear vision of their role as literacy teacher educators, and specific goals for their student teachers. It was evident that all participants drew upon their personal interests and professional research interests to develop their literacy courses priorities.

Common to all participants was the concept that student teachers must continue to learn about literacy and teaching after they graduate, and that it was impossible to teach them everything related to literacy in one course. The participants’ research interests were wide and varied; however, there were a few common elements among them. Commonality could be found in the importance of building relationships, the value of reflecting on their own literacy experiences, and the commitment to continuous learning. The participants’ personal approaches to teaching literacy varied widely but in the end, they had similar goals of equipping student teachers with both theoretical and practical knowledge. However, the balance between theory and practice in literacy courses ranged across a wide spectrum among the participants.
Chapter 5
Vision

Introduction

The main purpose of this research study was to investigate the literacy teaching practices of literacy teacher educators. The three research questions for my study were designed to explore to how literacy teacher educators developed a vision for teaching literacy in their courses; to explore to what extent their personal and professional background influenced their vision for teaching literacy; and; to understand how the teacher educators prioritized topics in their literacy courses.

The findings presented in this chapter are a response to the first research question about vision. For the purposes of this study, vision is defined as the purposeful direction that literacy teacher educators have for their literacy courses informed by their philosophy and their beliefs about literacy and teaching literacy. In this chapter, I explore how the participants in the study enacted a vision for their literacy courses and discuss four key findings that emerged from the cross-case analysis related to vision. These findings are divided into four sections. In the first section I discuss the overall vision the participants had for teaching literacy and explore the concept of vision both as it pertains to participants as literacy teacher educators and to literacy teacher educators in general. In the second section I look at how the participants attempted to enact their vision for the student teachers in their literacy courses. In the third section I discuss the participants’ emphasis on continuous learning as part of developing their vision. Finally, in the last section I discuss how time influences the participants’ vision for their literacy course in that they tend to spend more time teaching topics that align with their personal and research literacy and show how their literacy course content links closely with their interests. The chapter ends with a discussion related to the importance of having a defined vision for teaching literacy.
Vision for Teaching Literacy

As highlighted in Chapter Four, the participants had a wide range of beliefs about teaching literacy and had similarly diverse ranges of professional experiences and educational backgrounds that influenced their vision for their literacy courses. Hammerness’ (2006) concept of vision is relevant to this discussion, as she describes teachers’ vision as entailing “images of an ideal practice,” and this can extend to teacher educators as well. The six participants were asked the question, “How did you decide on the vision for your literacy course?” In response to this question, every participant spoke about their vision having many elements. Some aspects of their vision were consistent across participants, like a vision for lifelong learning, but in other ways they diverged, such as Ryan’s vision for collaborative inquiry. All of the study participants indicated that their area of study in their doctoral programs influenced their vision, which in turn, influenced the topics they prioritized in their literacy courses. As Bransford, Derry, Berliner, and Hammerness (2005) suggest, “without a clear vision of one’s goals and responsibilities as a professional, the metacognitive reflection needed for assessing progress is very difficult (p. 76). Vision plays an important role in teacher education, not only for the teacher educators, but for the student teachers as well. It was not unusual that their prior experiences and personal interests influenced their vision for teaching literacy but this was manifested varied across the six participants.

For example, Ryan’s vision for teaching literacy was largely influenced by both his graduate research in reading, writing, and literacy and his interest in collaborative inquiry. He dedicated a significant amount of time in his literacy course to encouraging student teachers to critically question mandated curricula, to examine their own thinking about reading and writing, and to consider the underlying beliefs and assumptions in the texts that they used in their own classrooms. Ryan identified three significant elements to his approach to teaching literacy: the importance of understanding literacy in the context of identity; the importance of practitioner
research, and; the importance of understanding that local context and social practices affect how we define literacy.

Ryan did not see the job of teacher educator as one that involved providing student teachers with a collection of strategies for how to teach in the classroom. Rather, he focused on assisting student teachers in developing a framework that allowed them to understand that all children or students are not the same. Ryan stated:

> My literacy course is really more of a graduate research course that is investigating literacy in and out of school. Children have different experiences that they will bring to the classroom and student teachers need to learn more about who they are teaching and what context they are teaching in. My job as a teacher educator is not simply to convey knowledge in some sort of Freirean banking model where I have these new student teachers who are blank slates, know nothing, can do nothing and I am going to fill them up with all kinds of good stuff and they’re going to go out and do it. I disbelieve in that strenuously.

Ryan’s vision for teaching literacy began with him asking his student teachers to investigate their teacher identity by writing an autobiography of themselves as literacy learners. He explained,

> I ask the student teachers who are we? What are our experiences with literacy in our lives? What counts as literacy? We look at the research literature but we also look at some ethnographic research to actually investigate the ways that people use literacy in their lives and in the classroom. We look closely at data, we interview adolescents…so the up-front section of the class is really looking at what literacy is, who kids are, and what does all that mean for teaching literacy.

For Ryan, understanding one’s own identity was an important component of learning how to teach literacy, as was the development of an awareness of the children in their classrooms and the contexts from which they came.

Linda’s vision for teaching literacy also included having her student teachers explore their own identity and try to understand how their identity influenced their literacy teaching. These explorations occurred at the beginning of her literacy course. Her vision for teaching literacy included assisting student teachers to understand who they were as literacy learners and explore
the literacy in their lives, both past and present. Linda often spoke about the context of the learning environment as an important component for student teachers to take into consideration. She said,

Teaching literacy is very often going to depend on the background experiences with literacy that student teachers have had…and those experiences are important because they allow student teachers to build upon that base…I ask student teachers what do they feel they need to learn to be ready to teach literacy in classrooms…my vision is not developed through one concrete way and neither will theirs.

Linda indicated that her vision was not static; it was constantly changing based on her on-going experiences. Linda’s vision for teaching literacy also included teaching the developmental stages of reading and writing and creating assignments that would deepen her student teachers’ understanding of these concepts. Linda emphasized the importance of developing a strong reading and writing program with her student teachers and saw this as a skill that would have value and relevance for their own teaching. Like Ryan, helping student teachers understand the importance of their identity as literacy learners and developing an understanding of the reading and writing process were important components of Linda’s vision for teaching literacy. As Wenger (1998) noted identity formation “takes place in the doing” (p. 193).

Linda wanted her student teachers to have an understanding of what she deemed, “the core essentials” in literacy by participating in literacy activities. She described her course in the following way:

The first term deals with reading and writing, the reading processes, Readers’ and Writers’ workshop, and looking closely at what a comprehensive or balanced literacy program should look like in a classroom. The student teachers have to understand what reading and writing is all about…I show DVDs of teachers working in classrooms, doing Readers’ or Writers’ Workshops and I ask the student teachers, what does it look like, what does it sound like, what are the underlying principles of teaching this topic.
Linda also valued feedback from her student teachers and tried to respond to their concerns through her teaching because it was important to her that they left feeling that she had listened to their questions and concerns. Linda shared:

I’ll often take their feedback about what they feel they need to learn more about in their practicum, and then I’ll consider that when I develop my vision for the next part of the literacy course, so part of my vision is based on listening to students.

She felt that one of the best ways to teach student teachers about literacy practices was to put them in an environment where they had the opportunity to work with students directly, especially struggling readers. For example, during their practicum she wanted them to facilitate a read-aloud with their students and she gave them the opportunity to practice this during her literacy course. Linda’s doctoral research was focused on working with student teachers and students who struggled with reading and this component was infused into her current work as a literacy teacher educator.

Clara approached the teaching of literacy from a different perspective. A priority in Clara’s vision was to introduce her student teachers to the concept of developing a theoretical framework. This was done so that they could understand that literacy is context-dependent. In order to do this, Clara introduced the concept of social constructivism early on in her literacy course. Constructivists propose that the learner constructs knowledge and that learning is an active process (Phillips, 1995; Fosnot, 2005). The literature supports the notion that many student teachers benefit from adopting a constructivist view of teaching when learning to teach (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Tang, Wong, & Chen, 2012). Clara also wanted her student teachers to acquire an understanding of other theoretical perspectives such as critical literacy and multiliteracies. Clara shared:

I want to introduce them to theories which I hope will be used as a basis for their curriculum planning, development, implementation and assessment. I want them to get a sense of literacy as being multi-modal, and that there is a range of kinds of texts and that their students can respond through multi-modal ways to those texts.
Clara’s vision for teaching literacy included helping student teachers to recognize the implications of using theoretical perspectives to ground their own teaching and learning. Another important component of Clara’s vision for teaching literacy was having student teachers develop short- and long-range plans using Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum documents. Her intention was that the theories that student teachers were introduced to at the beginning of her course would be used as a basis for their unit planning and development of lessons. Clara invested a great deal of time throughout her literacy course discussing Eisner’s dimensions of curriculum, analyzing sample curriculum units to determine their strengths and weaknesses, and exploring multi-modal unit planning with her student teachers. Clara shared:

I want them to understand what literacy is, and then over the year, I want them to develop a vision of what it means to be a literacy teacher…So I’m giving them starting points, but I want them to be able to develop the capacity to move on independently and do their own planning.

Clara also infused her research interest in multi-cultural children’s literature into her literacy course and used multi-cultural texts throughout her teaching. At the end of the literacy course student teachers were assigned the task of developing a thematic unit using multi-cultural texts. However, before developing their own unit Clara would have student teachers analyze some units together. She explained,

They all have to analyze a couple of units with this analysis tool that I put together … so they start looking at the beliefs underlying the unit, the kinds of activities that are being used, the ways in which kids are being expected to respond, and they all have to choose a novel that they’d like to use as a basis for their own thematic unit plan.

By having her student teachers create a thematic unit, she provided an opportunity for them to apply their knowledge and develop an understanding of how to scaffold learning for their future students. Clara expected the thematic units to include strategies that ranged from shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading, and to integrate listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing skills. Clara felt that by having the student teachers develop and plan curriculum
units she would see whether the student teachers were able to implement and conceptualize their learning.

Julia’s vision for teaching literacy centred on the use of multi-modalities and emphasized the importance of using multiple texts in meaningful ways. This was where her research background in multiliteracies was most evident. Not only did she draw on experts in the field of multiliteracies (Mills, 2005; Street, 2003) as scholarly references for her literacy courses, but she also grounded her teaching in the exploration of texts in multiple ways. She described this focus in the following way:

I want student teachers to think not only about how we use different genres of texts, but also how do you connect content areas across the curriculum…Obviously, I think that having a digital presence or some sort of electronic presence is important, and I want student teachers to think about what that means for literacy… an electronic presence is not just a tool you can use, but actually understanding on a cognitive level how we think in terms of technology.

Julia recognized the importance of having a broad notion of what literacy meant and wanted her student teachers to understand that the concept of literacy was continuing to evolve. This aligns with the work of Kress (2000) and the NLG (1996) in that the approach to teaching literacy by literacy teacher educators must go beyond the traditional methods. In developing her literacy course, Julia shaped her teaching around new literacy studies and multi-modalities. She described how her vision for teaching literacy incorporated multiliteracies and new literacy studies:

In my literacy classes I would talk with the student teachers about reading and writing and we would talk about Shakespeare and English literature. We would also have discussions about the struggles secondary readers have, some writing issues they have, but the majority of the course was devoted to media studies and multi-modalities. For example with media studies we would look at how do you use film in a secondary classroom, and how do you incorporate different forms of technology into the classroom. So we might have a formal essay for students in Grades 9 to 12, or you might ask them to create something like a digital story.
Because Julia had the freedom to explore multi-modalities to a large extent within her literacy course, she drew extensively on her knowledge in this area and this had a significant focus in her literacy course. Fortunately, Julia’s student teachers were receptive to learning about multiliteracies and multi-modalities, and Julia attributed this to their generation having grown up with technology and being digitally literate. Having a vision for their literacy course allowed participants to assess whether they were providing learning opportunities for student teachers that were aligned with their initial goals for their courses. Kennedy (2006) acknowledged that most teacher educators attempt to foster vision in their student teachers, but this creates two problems, she stated:

First, it places them in conflict with their university brethren who expect to see them promulgating knowledge. Second, the particular vision they embrace is too narrowly progressive; it ignores many concerns that teachers try to juggle in their practice and many societal ideals for education as well (p. 205).

It is my opinion that despite these criticisms of vision, having a vision as a literacy teacher educator is integral for developing an intentional course of action to foster student teachers learning.

**Specific Goals for Student Teachers: Reflecting on Their Own Experiences**

Encouraging student teachers to reflect on their own emerging philosophy and apply their reflections to their literacy teaching was a consistent message from all participants. Reflection is a process that can enrich one’s teaching and is often cited in the literature. For example, Dewey (1933) speaks of reflection involving “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or form of knowledge” (p. 118).

Three participants, Ryan, Linda, and Jane, emphasized the importance of reflective practice and inquiry throughout their interviews. For Ryan, his literacy course was intended to be a place where student teachers “thought deeply about whom their future students might be and what that
would mean for how they teach literacy.” He prioritized awareness of self and of their audience in his literacy course. Ryan felt it was important for student teachers to “investigate their autobiographies as teachers and literacy learners” and to reflect on what counts as literacy and why. Ryan shared:

Before dealing with specific topics or specific texts, I want student teachers to deal with frameworks like collaborative inquiry…because underlying definitions of literacy or language or English are ideologies, beliefs and definitions about what counts as literacy and what doesn’t count; whose literacy counts and whose doesn’t count and all of that informs how student teachers approach their classrooms.

The enactment of Ryan’s vision for his student teachers also involved posing open-ended questions that created opportunities for them to reflect on their experiences. He asked his student teachers to “interrogate their institutional autobiographies and interrogate who their students were.” Ryan shared his thinking when he asked his student teachers to think about these issues in the following ways:

Who were we as literacy learners, as adolescent literacy learners, specifically? What kinds of relevant teaching experiences do we bring, what do we bring as a community to the concerns of the class? So who were the kinds of students that we encounter in the schools? What’s at issue for them? All of this is part of an interrogation of what counts as literacy.

Ryan understood that his role as literacy teacher educator was not just to think about his own needs, but also to think with his student teachers about their needs, and the needs of their future students, and this is where his background in collaborative inquiry was most evident. Ryan spoke passionately about his vision for his student teachers when he said:

I am helping to prepare student teachers to position themselves in a way that would allow them to critically interrogate, understand and mobilize information for their own needs and purposes. I spend a good deal of time in my literacy course dealing with frameworks and then a good deal of time on issues related to teaching literature because that is the heart in some ways of the language and literacy curriculum.
Ryan’s approach to teaching literacy involved encouraging student teachers to question, reflect upon, and critique information that they would be using when teaching literacy, and not to be passive recipients of information. Throughout his course, he encouraged student teachers to construct and critique their own knowledge about literacy.

Drawing out student teachers’ prior experiences through activities, discussions, and assignments, and sharing with student teachers how reflecting on those experiences would be useful in their future teaching was also an important component of Linda’s practice. Linda not only saw value in student teachers’ listening to and learning from each other, but also found that helping them reflect on their own background experiences, as one approach to teaching literacy, was important as well. Linda noted:

Student teachers need to understand that they bring a lot to the table and they should reflect on what they know and build upon that knowledge. They need to have faith and confidence…because they know teaching is going to be challenging when they get out there in their own classrooms.

Linda often reflected on her own teaching practice as a classroom teacher and this shaped her approach to teaching literacy. During her interviews she often referred back to her previous experiences, both as a classroom teacher and as a beginning teacher educator, and was aware of how her own teaching practice had evolved. Linda said,

I’m always reviewing current content and speaking with people who are current in the field of literacy, to help build my vision. I will listen to the feedback from student teachers and apply their feedback to my teaching. I am always learning, reflecting, and trying to improve my practice.

Being responsive to her student teachers and attempting to meet their needs was a priority in Linda’s course, but it was also a way for Linda to model how reflecting on your teaching practice was an integral part of learning about teaching. Linda also created opportunities for the student teachers to reflect on their experiences based on activities and assignments they completed, for example, writing reflection papers. She shared:
I have them do a reflection paper the following week on the whole experience [of the assignment process] and whether or not, as a teacher, even though they’ve only had a very brief kind of introduction about what a literature circle is and how it works. I ask questions such as, “As a classroom teacher, have you seen literature circles during your practicums? And now that you’ve had this experience, discuss whether or not you would use literature circles as a teacher.”

While both Linda and Jane tried to incorporate the concept of reflection into their literacy course, Jane had a unique approach that included helping student teachers reflect on their experiences by writing a short reflection on their learning at the end of every class. In order to accomplish this task, student teachers wrote an “exit ticket” at the end of every class that required thinking about what they learned, how they might apply this learning in their own classes, and reflecting on their experience in the class as a student learner.

A more formal task designed to incorporate reflection in Jane’s course was a letter writing assignment. She had student teachers write letters to her describing their literacy journeys from early childhood. Through this assignment she attempted to reflect student teachers’ own thinking back to them. In her written responses to them she encouraged further reflection on their own thinking and learning. Incorporating opportunities for reflection within the context of their learning environment was an important part of Jane’s vision for teaching literacy.

When I’m responding to assignments, I’m trying to offer them models of how that could work for them as a teacher but also for them to turn that back to their future students…it simply gives them another perspective on how to look at the piece of writing…and I use a range of graphic organizers so that they can see a range of ways for kids to reflect. Because graphic organizers help students think about what they’re reading and organize it, and they can really support a range of learners.

Jane also used feedback from student teachers as a way to reflect on her own teaching practice:

I always ask my students to give me feedback on how useful they found my assignments, and I find a range of students find one assignment more important or useful than others, and some students find them all wonderful and some students not as much so.
Jane used this feedback to inform her teaching and was open to modifying assignments to ensure they were meaningful.

For all participants, reflection on their own practice, not just student teacher reflection, was key to their vision for teaching literacy. This aligns with Loughran’s (2005) view that “there is an overarching need for teacher educators to pay attention to their own pedagogical reasoning and reflective practice and to create opportunities for their student teachers to access this thinking about, and practice of, teaching” (p. 9). By providing their student teachers with opportunities to reflect on their teaching and learning by sharing their experiences, and in some cases receiving peer feedback, all participants were assisting student teachers in their journey towards becoming literacy teachers. Their emphasis on reflection served to help student teachers develop and refine their teaching practice.

**Effect of Time Constraints on Enacting their Vision**

For many of the participants, time was a factor that influenced the way in which they enacted their vision and prioritized topics in their literacy course. Time constraints also pushed them to find creative ways to address topics within the scope of their literacy course. For most participants in-class time was an issue, but for Julia who was pursuing tenure, time for teaching was secondary to the time required for her to be effective as a researcher.

Three of the participants, Lester, Jane, and Linda, expressed frustrations about the limited amount of time available in the classroom to teach their literacy course. For example, Lester indicated that the amount of time he had was a factor that influenced his vision because it influenced his choices about what to include in the course. Lester also acknowledged that his areas of personal interest, drama and literature, heavily influenced the choices he made given the limited amount of time he had to teach his course. Lester mapped out his literacy course at the beginning of the term with a view of creating mini workshops for the student teachers for each of his 12, 3-hour classes. Each class within his literacy course was designed like a workshop and
focused on a particular theme, such as shared reading or guided reading; however, it was impossible to teach “everything.” Lester noted:

> I look at my course outline every year and I think about what needs to be done in 36 hours and this is our challenge…I have a three-hour block of time and I have 20 things that I want to do in that time frame…I have to teach reading, I have to teach writing, I have to teach talk, because I believe in talk, I do a workshop on spelling and I have to look at integration issues. I’m responsible for informing the student teachers about guided and shared reading practices and what happens in an independent reading program.

Lester summed up the challenges he faced as a result of the time constraints when he said “Every time you choose a topic, you are choosing not to do something else… If I’m reading aloud, I am not doing technology, so I want to help student teachers understand to make their choices meaningful.”

This challenge was not unique to Lester; it was a major concern for Jane and Linda as well. In fact, many of the participants resigned themselves to only being able to raise awareness of some topics, which often meant focusing on their own strengths and interests and leaving out the topics where they had less knowledge or expertise. Other participants, such as Jane, made similar comments about the challenges of time and the effect the lack of time had on the choices they made for their literacy courses. For example, Jane reported:

> It’s impossible to teach literacy, it’s a contradiction of doing a fairly significant component in a fairly short time that is all encompassing for me…I think some things are squashed in, I could spend more than one class on word knowledge, but in teaching 12 classes, I do not have the time to do that. I go really in depth in the writing and the writing assessment because I am hoping that my student teachers see that they can apply the same kind of approach in other ways in the curriculum… you just can’t go into depth in everything.

Jane’s articulation of her challenges to teach for depth and breadth within the time constraints of her course underscored the need for literacy teacher educators to prioritize the topics for their literacy course. Many of the participants expressed concern about the limited amount of time
available to teach such a vast subject area and felt that, even with advance planning, there were
difficulties in their literacy courses that were neglected. All participants were required to create a
course syllabus, but the way they thought about their long-range plans for their courses varied.
For example, Linda mapped out a detailed plan for each class, just as Lester did. Following this,
Linda attempted to refine each class within her literacy course to meet the needs of the student
teachers and their learning goals for the course. Linda shared:

I plan for a large chunk of time, and when it’s closer to the class, I do the nitty-gritty
details, but I do have a big picture… I guess my goal is I just want to give the student
teachers a taste of what’s out there. You’re not going to leave as a fully rounded
individual that knows about everything, but you will know little bits of a fair amount
of stuff…we all know that reading and writing and oral communication are all such
vast areas that in one course you are not going to cover all of the content that you
want to cover, you have to pick and choose, you have to prioritize.

As a result of designing her literacy course for teaching for breadth rather than depth, Linda felt
strongly about helping student teachers develop competent research skills so they could access
additional resources in the future. Empowering student teachers as researchers meant they would
be able to find information about a specific concept or strategy on their own even if she had not
taught it in her literacy course. Linda described this process in the following way:

I want student teachers to leave the course knowing something about how to teach
the core essentials of literacy and they should know how to talk to their colleagues, to
get feedback from one another, to develop relationships with librarians and the
literacy consultant in their school district, who can support them in their literacy
teaching…I want them to be independent learners.

Julia shared her views about how time influenced her course and her teaching. Julia was
cognizant of wanting to make better use of the time that she had with her student teachers. Her
struggle with time had a different focus from that of the other participants. It involved wanting
more time for planning and thinking about her teaching. Julia’s complex role as a researcher and
teacher educator resulted in her having competing responsibilities. This created tension between
her teaching and her research. The research responsibilities included applying for and securing
grants, conducting large-scale research projects, and publishing articles and books in her field. This meant that Julia could not devote as much time to her teaching, and she explained this in the following way:

The trouble with being tenure-track is you can’t put tons into your teaching. So I put a lot more into my teaching when I was not doing research. Once I got into the treadmill of the tenure-track, it’s about publishing, it’s about grants and you can’t dedicate as much time to your teaching.

This aligns with research conducted by Cole (2000) where she acknowledges that conducting research is necessary if one wishes to further their career in academia, but that conducting research is time-consuming and often labour intensive. Further, many academic institutions have unspoken expectations that teacher educators will publish refereed articles in prestigious journals which often comes at the expense of their professional teaching commitments.

When Julia was teaching her literacy course, she attempted to dissect the three hours that she had into four parts: a preliminary discussion of theory and big ideas; application of theory in an experiential learning activity to engage the student teachers; debriefing the activity, and; discussion. Blocking out time for discussion was important to Julia because she felt “student teachers learn so much from the dialogic stuff.”

Linda, Lester, Jane, and Julia also recognized the limitations that time placed on them as teacher educators in terms of accomplishing their goals and fulfilling their vision for their literacy courses. They were keenly aware that there were topics that they would never be able to address, not only because of time constraints, but also as a result of a lack of expertise or deep knowledge in certain areas. Almost all participants indicated that time, or rather the lack of time, challenged their ability to address a wide range of content in their courses. Because the actual time for teaching for their literacy course was limited both Jane and Linda, stated that “There was not enough time to teach everything,” sentiments echoed by other participants. As Rogers (2013) noted, teacher educators, like pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers, find constraints on their
time and the content of their teaching (p. 16). This may be why the participants emphasized continuous learning about literacy and teaching literacy as an important part of their vision. The participants were mindful of instilling the notion of lifelong learning and empowering the student teachers to be independent learners. Participants wanted the student teachers to be clear that they would not learn everything they needed to know in teacher education, and would have to continue to seek out learning opportunities, learn in practice, and learn from their colleagues. Additionally participants were themselves committed to the idea of continuous learning in their own practice.

Balancing Theory and Practice

In discussing the challenge of preparing teachers to teach literacy, Williamson (2013) spoke of the criticisms about an overemphasis on theory in teacher education. Williamson (2013) stated, “Recent reports charge that much of what has come to be called traditional teacher education is overly theoretical and highly disconnected from the realities of the clinical settings where teachers actually teach” (p. 2). The criticism that there is too much theory and too few practical ideas and strategies is commonly heard from student teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and policy analysts in the field of teacher education (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Levine, 2011). Examining how the participants balanced theory and practice sheds light on another aspect of their vision for their literacy courses.

Julia described the challenges of teaching theory to her concurrent student teachers in the following way:

I think the student teachers in the concurrent education program got so fed up with theory because they were hungry for practical strategies. I had fourth year concurrent education students and they just did not want any more theory and they had zero tolerance for listening to or engaging in theoretical discussions.

This was problematic for Julia because she spent the beginning of each class in her literacy course discussing theory and helping students make connections to the larger ideas behind the
theory. Julia’s current challenge with theoretical disengagement among students was an interesting contrast to her previous work with graduate students in teacher education at another university. Indeed, Julia found the graduate students were more receptive to reading, thinking, and discussing theory in every class, and valued the learning opportunities provided by the theoretical piece. Julia acknowledged:

I always have difficulty with the theory–practice balance because I am very theoretical...so I really need to make sure that there is the application piece in my literacy course. Teacher educators I’ve seen that are particularly good are ones that are able to teach theory, but they can do it in a practical way, and through a lens that allows them to interact and have a relationship with their student teachers. They don’t come in like a sage on the stage.

Four other participants, Lester, Linda, Ryan, and Clara, also discussed the challenge of balancing theory and practice in their literacy courses. Lester described himself as being more practical in his approach to teaching literacy. He shared:

The one thing that has been successful with student teachers that choose to communicate with me is that they love the practical work I do. I think I am more practical than theoretical, but I always emphasize that in my practice, there is theory. I am really choosing deliberately to do what I do and I hope they can understand it...student teachers tend to appreciate the practical and that is always a challenge for an instructor... but they have to understand why I am doing what I am doing, or why I am making those choices and I try to make that clear.

Articulating with clarity the importance of learning theory so that it can inform one’s teaching practice is an on-going challenge that is often cited in the literature. Kincheloe (2004) explained the challenge of bridging the theory–practice gap by describing student teachers as victims. Kincheloe (2004) stated:

Teacher education students are, of course, the most victimized players in the two-culture profession. As they find themselves ensnared in the middle of the conflict, they often encounter conflict between what they were told to do in their university courses and the demands of the school district in which they are teaching. (p. 22)
While the theory-practice divide is perennial in teacher education, (McNamara, Jones, & Murray, 2014; Korthagen, 2007), Ryan was unique in that he embraced this tension in his literacy course and worked to dismantle it in his literacy course. Ryan described teaching as being “deeply intellectual, deeply theoretical,” and thought it was impossible to remove theory from the practical work of being a classroom teacher. He described his role as a teacher educator in relation to teaching theory vs. practice in the following way:

You never deal with content innocent of pedagogy…so the distinction between theoretical teacher education and the practical side of practice is one we made problematic through the process of making our teacher education classroom a concrete experience. It’s not just filled with abstractions.

Ryan believed that teacher educators needed to remove the “barriers and boundaries” between universities and schools in order to address the theory–practice divide and dismantle the notion that these are separate entities. Ryan shared:

Making the world and the university and the barriers and boundaries between them more permeable helps to undo some of these ideas that there’s a theoretical space and a practical space and that teacher education has to deal with one or the other in isolation.

For Linda, bridging the divide between theory and practice was a part of each class in her literacy course. She explained how she structured her classes in order to include theory and practice in her student teachers’ learning experiences. She explained,

I do a fair amount of classroom activities where student teachers are introduced to the theory and the kind of ideological stance of why we might teach in a certain way…for example, if we are going to read to students every day and we’re going to read from different genres, we need to think about why we do that, what’s the importance of doing that? As a follow up, I will give student teachers an assignment where they actually get to put the theoretical ideas into practice.

Linda wanted her literacy course and the theory behind it, to connect to what student teachers were seeing in their teaching placements and worked hard to make her course relevant,
applicable, and practical. Linda’s approach aligned with Clara’s approach to bridging theory and practice. Clara explained:

One thing I tried was I had everybody in the class read the chapter Trevor Gamble wrote on assessment…So they all had to write a personal narrative of a couple of pages explaining what was key in that chapter and how it connected with what they saw in the field.

All the participants strived to make connections between the teaching of theory with teaching techniques and practical strategies to use in the classroom. However, the extent to which they were actually able to accomplish this varied, and some participants were more successful at this than others. Further the pressure from student teachers to focus more on practical activities than on theoretical discussions made it even more challenging for the study participants to address theory in their literacy courses. Korthagen (2007) argues that the gap between theory and practice can be largely attributed to “a gap between professional cultures and that there is strong need for researchers and practitioners to build joint communities, bringing together both a research and a practical focus” (p. 304).

For example, Linda described using co-operative learning activities to introduce theory to her student teachers and explore the ideological stance behind why they might teach in a certain way. She wanted her student teachers to be able to apply the theory behind their practice. Application of what they learned in her literacy course to their own teaching was an important part of the learning process. This aligns with Bullock and Christou’s (2009) view that “theory and practice are embedded in, and necessarily, inform each other” (p. 76). Bullock and Christou do not see a gap between theory and practice but a gap between what teachers, or, in this case, teacher educators are teaching, and what students (student teachers) perceived they are learning. Ryan also supported Bullock and Christou’s (2009) view. Ryan talked about theory and practice not being separate entities, and but ones that are “deeply interconnected.” Lester was aware of the interconnectedness of theory and practice. He noted, “I think I’m more practical than theoretical, but I always emphasize in my practice, there’s theory.”
The LTEs’ teaching practices illustrated Bullock and Christou’s (2009) notion that a disciplined approach to teaching involves recognizing that there is theory in practice, and practice in theory (p. 76). The literacy teacher educators were deliberate in their practice in terms of the choices they made and were hopeful that the student teachers would understand why they were making those choices. However, even when the LTEs thought they were being clear, student teachers did not always grasp the concepts. There was a disconnect between the intention of the LTEs and the perception of the student teachers. This speaks to the gap between what teacher educators are teaching and student teachers are learning (Bullock & Christou, 2009). Lester shared similar frustrations when his student teachers complained in their course evaluations that he had not addressed the concept of balanced literacy, when in fact that was a large component of his literacy course. The student teacher critiques suggest that the LTEs although they thought they were being explicit about how theory and practice are linked, the student teachers did not see the interconnectedness. At times the teacher educators were more focused on practice, so they had to make a conscious decision to make the theory explicit, even if theory was always implicit in their teaching.

**Emphasis on Continuous Learning**

Many professionals in the education sector speak about the teaching profession as one that requires a commitment to life-long learning. If we want to continue to move forward in the field of literacy teaching, earlier concepts and definitions related to teaching literacy must be considered in broader contexts. Priorities and perspectives with respect to teaching literacy change and evolve with new research studies, government initiatives, and curriculum mandates. All the participants in the study shared a disposition to continue to learn and grow in their literacy teaching practice and their role as literacy teacher educator, and they wanted to instil this attitude in their student teachers. Cochran-Smith (2003) described the education of teacher educators as “an ongoing across the lifespan process of learning and unlearning” (p. 23). Lester, for example, discussed how his vision for teaching literacy involved constant revision with a
view to improving his literacy course for his student teachers and keeping things current when teaching literacy. Lester reflected:

I’m challenging myself that in the 21st century there are new directions to take. I’ll confess that I think it’s a challenge for me as an instructor, even though it’s been 12 years since I began as a teacher educator. It’s a challenge to think about how I can improve because the learners are different, the needs are different and the curriculum is different, so I have to address the needs of the 21st century and revise my curriculum accordingly.

Despite his years of experience in the classroom, Lester recognized that because literacy is a constantly evolving field, he needed to actively engage in on-going learning. All of the participants spoke about the concept of continuous learning and acknowledged that it was important not only for their student teachers, but also for them as literacy teacher educators. Continuous learning seems essential if literacy teacher educators intend to stay current in the field of literacy, especially since the field itself is constantly evolving in new directions. According to Hokka and Etelapelto (2014) teacher educators are “expected to engage in continuous professional learning to reshape their work practices and renegotiate their professional identities” (p. 40). This is due to increasing pressure for reforms in teacher education and expectations for teacher educators to have greater accountability for the ways in which they are preparing student teachers to teach.

Linda, for example, discussed the concept of being on a continuous learning journey in the following way:

By the time the student teachers leave this course, they are going to know some things about teaching literacy... but will also understand that their journey is just beginning…they should be able to say that they are still learning and they are going to change the way they teach as they learn, and they are going to look for new resources and new materials and attend workshops and talk to their peers and it is going to be a learning journey of teaching literacy.
From this quote it is clear that it was important to Linda that her student teachers cultivate an attitude that there was always more to learn, and that the learning process would be on-going throughout their teaching careers. She acknowledged that she was still learning about literacy and her student teachers would still be learning about literacy and would need to develop strategies to continue their learning journey when they became teachers.

Developing an awareness of how and where to access additional information was an important part of the process of continuous learning that both Linda and Clara shared as part of their vision for teaching and commitment to on-going learning. Clara talked about student teachers needing to develop independence in addition to cultivating an appetite for continuous learning. Clara expressed her ideas about continuous learning in this way:

> I’ve explained to my student teachers that the course is a springboard to literacy teaching and learning. It’s not the only thing they’ll ever need to learn. I don’t see this course as the end of their work in Language Arts, this is just the beginning of their learning as literacy teachers who will be able to go out there, plan their units, plan their classes, understand child development, and continue to research. The buck doesn’t stop when they walk out of my classroom.

Clara also felt it was important for her student teachers to understand that her literacy course was just a starting point for their work as literacy teachers.

> When student teachers are getting to the end of the teacher education program, they are really going to have to start being more independent about finding resources. There is much more to learn about literacy teaching and learning and they have to recognize that they still need to continue to do research, and they still need to learn through professional development.

Clara found that many student teachers did not realize how much information and resources they had actually compiled during her literacy course. This was surprising to her as she felt that student teachers received a wealth of resources from her throughout her course, starting with the course outline and bibliography and continuing with the resources that she shared in each class. Despite the large number of resources she shared, Clara felt that her student teachers lacked an
awareness of what resources they actually had been given. She was not clear why there was a disconnect between resources provided and those students teachers perceived they had received at the end of the course, but attributed this disconnect to their need for continuous learning.

Jane and Lester also emphasized the value of continuous learning. For Jane, continuous learning was imperative for her, her student teachers, and literacy teacher educators in general. She said:

I want literacy teacher educators to continue to be learners throughout their career and see that peer collaboration with other teacher educators helps them to fine tune their own work, and helps them acknowledge what is important in their literacy teaching.

Lester attended and presented at conferences in order to continue learning and also used these as opportunities to share ideas with colleagues to improve his teaching. Lester commented that for 25 years he made the same statement to his student teachers: “I’ve struggled to be a better writing teacher, through taking notes, through doing research, through reading books, through attending and presenting at conferences.” Lester wanted his student teachers to know that he was always learning and striving to improve his teaching.

Linda expressed a similar opinion. She shared, “Whether they are local conferences or international conferences, we tend to see other teacher educators at conferences and share learning experiences.”

Ryan also talked about the ways in which he continued to learn. He stated:

Community knowledge is a powerful resource for learning and is fundamentally a part of my belief about teaching, that it can’t help but be a fundamental part of the courses that I teach… also part of my excitement in coming to teach here from the U.S. I thought what an amazing community to learn about, what an amazing group of student teachers to be a part of, and what an incredibly diverse community of students across all of these Ontario schools for all of us to learn from.

Jane also wanted her student teachers to see her as a learner and to understand that she was continuing to learn about new literacies and technology, for example, that were not part of her
original frame of reference as a teacher or teacher educator. She shared, “I continue to learn, I attend professional development workshops and I read and I am always trying to find ways to infuse big ideas into my literacy course.”

These are just a few of the remarks made by the participants that demonstrate that they shared a passion for continuous learning, and valued learning from their student teachers, learning from their colleagues, and learning from their community. The emphasis on continuous learning seemed to be an indication that many of the participants also wanted to learn more about teaching literacy, just as they wanted their student teachers to continue learning. This aligns with research by Livingston (2014) that argues “teacher education must be recognised as a process of continuous teacher learning with teachers continually building on prior knowledge and skills and challenging their learning and practice” (p. 222). For many of the teacher educators, acknowledging that there were gaps in their professional knowledge was important and this was also connected to their desire for continuous learning. Research from the OECD (2005) and the European Commission (2007) suggested, “it is necessary to have both high quality teacher education and a coherent process of continual professional development” (European Commission, 2007, p. 5). The LTEs did not want their student teachers to underestimate the complexity of teaching. Moreover, despite their experience and expertise all of the LTES recognized that their capacity to learn and improve upon their own practice was infinite. Berry (2013) described the context for teacher educators professional learning as being an independent by necessity, because they are the only ones that are aware of their individual learning needs. Furthermore, the more deeply they reflect on their practice and professional areas for growth, the more likely they are to pursue knowledge or support in these areas.

In the next section I discuss some of the gaps in professional knowledge and how the teacher educators identified priorities in their program.
Many of the participants indicated that, in spite of their interest and commitment to being lifelong learners, there were gaps in their professional knowledge and a need to prioritize topics. Three of the six participants specifically highlighted gaps related to the use of technology and digital literacy. As a result of these gaps certain topics were not addressed in their literacy teaching or if they were addressed, it was only briefly. For example, Clara indicated that she was frustrated by her lack of technological skills because this impeded her ability to incorporate technology into her vision. She shared:

I think it will take a long time for me to learn the kinds of skills that I would really like to have. First of all, I don’t even know how to do PowerPoints well, and the one thing I would really like to learn more about is how to do a collage on the computer to bring in photographs and images. I wish I had that skill.

Clara also shared her interest in wanting to read more in specific content areas. She noted:

I would like to learn more about spelling and develop more resources around spelling…so as ideas have changed from sort of a speech to print and a phonetic kind of approach, to a more meaning-based approach. I plan to read more about the concept of meaning-based spelling.

Clara’s admission that there were areas she needed to learn more about despite her 44 years in education and expertise in literacy teaching was refreshing. Her desire for learning was on-going.

Jane shared similar sentiments. She knew there were gaps in her professional knowledge, some of which she tried to address within her own literacy course. But as she explained, her vision continued to change and refine as a result of the gaps in her knowledge:

If I weren’t teaching, I wouldn’t be involved in much technology at all. I’m continuing to work on expanding my vision in that area and figuring out how to continue to move forward in literacy by taking into consideration different multi-modalities. I am aware of technology, but I am squeezing myself into it. I’m not a technological wizard, but I refer to websites for my student teachers and I am finding ways to give them more information about digital learning.
Jane saw technological learning as an area for growth and was open to infusing more technology into her literacy course as she learned more about it. In many ways, she felt that her student teachers were more knowledgeable about the use of technology than she was which was in part due to the generation gap. But Jane was constantly working to learn more.

Lester also indicated that the use of technology was limited in his literacy course, although this was not the only area that Lester felt may have received less attention than it should have. In fact, he was very aware of the choices he was making and the challenges that these choices presented. Lester explained:

I’m not doing technology justice the way it should be… the Internet is not a strength of mine, but we have to look at how kids are learning differently. A teacher educator makes a decision about why he or she does something…why do they teach X? What are they not doing? Why is X a priority? Every time you do something you are not doing something else. If I’m reading aloud, I am not doing technology with the kids, so student teachers need to understand to make their choices meaningful.

Lester, Jane, and Clara were aware of what might be called a generation gap in their literacy teaching, some of which could be attributed to gaps in their professional knowledge and some was a result of deliberate choices they had made about what would be a priority in their literacy teaching.

On the other hand, Ryan did not specifically identify gaps in his professional knowledge in relation to the use of technology or multi-modalities, yet he indicated that there was always room for improvement in certain topic areas. He strongly believed in allowing student teachers’ needs and interests guide his teaching. When Ryan took up the position he held at the time of the study, he was excited about the opportunity for learning. Ryan shared “My role is to prepare student teachers to develop sets of lenses for investigating and learning from teaching across a professional life span, and that continues well beyond my class.”
For Clara, Jane, and Lester, acknowledging the gaps in their professional knowledge, especially as it related to the use of technology and multi-modalities, influenced how they determined the priorities for their literacy course. However, all participants were confident in their professional knowledge and were willing to learn more about areas that they were less proficient in.

**Discussion Section**

Teacher educators’ vision influences not only what they teach, but also how they teach. Without a vision for their literacy course, it would be difficult to create learning opportunities that are purposeful, practical, theoretical, and relevant to their student teachers. This is not to suggest that every literacy teacher educator should have the same vision, but it indicates that vision is a critical feature of a literacy course. According to Knight (2008), “Every teacher and all teacher educators have (or should have) a philosophy of education by which they live their professional lives. Each of us has a philosophy of life that we carry into the classroom” (p. 159). Moreover, Knight (2008) goes on to say, “There should be a close connection between one’s philosophy and one’s adopted educational theory in order to avoid mindlessness” (p.159). Knight’s words imply that all teacher educators’ philosophies of education should be reflected in what and how they teach, and teachers and teacher educators should work with a clear purpose or goal in mind. I view the philosophy of teacher educators as an integral part of their vision, and see that their philosophy of education is interwoven with their beliefs about teaching literacy. This is one of the reasons why I think having a vision for their literacy courses is important for literacy teacher educators.
Kennedy (2006), another scholar in the field of teacher education, suggested “Teachers may derive their visions from their ideals, but the visions themselves are not idealistic imaginings, instead, they are detailed plays with scenes, episodes, and characters all organized to lead to a particular conclusion” (p. 207). Kennedy’s (2006) words are not only relevant to teachers, but also to teacher educators. We saw that the teacher educators who participated in this study had roles that were multi-faceted. These ranged from engaging adult learners with preconceived notions about teaching, being responsive to the interests and needs of their student teachers, making relevant connections between theory and practice, and assisting in their development of a professional identity as a teacher. All six participants tried to select and implement the most appropriate strategies and methods for a wide range of learners and thought deeply about the learning opportunities they created for their student teachers.
Hammerness et al. (2009) described vision as “the teacher’s need to have a sense of where they are going and how they are going to get students there” (p. 385). For the participants, their vision guided their practice and influenced the topics they selected to focus on in their literacy courses. Hammerness et al. (2009) saw vision at the centre of the process of learning to teach. The visions of the literacy teacher educators were indicative of their master plan for their literacy courses and highlighted the fact that these teacher educators were mindful of the learning journey for their student teachers and thoughtful about the process of getting to the destination.

Vision was one of the eight critical features of excellence identified by the National Commission of Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation for Reading Instruction in a study commissioned by the International Reading Association (IRA) in 2003. The IRA (2003) study was one of the first to look at structural and conceptual aspects of teacher education programs. With respect to vision, the IRA (2003) study reported that effective teacher educators develop their programs around a vision of literacy, quality teaching, and quality teacher educators. Indeed, in the IRA (2003) report, “The vision infuses the content, pedagogy and decisions of the program. It is embedded in the thinking, actions and expectations of the program’s administrators, faculty and students – and often extends beyond them into the community” (p. 19).

Case studies of other teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2006) have also found that exemplary programs are built around a clearly articulated, shared vision of teaching and learning. It is important to remember that my research study focused on the vision of the teacher educators and did not examine the vision of the teacher education program in which they may have worked, or the relationship of their personal vision to their program vision. Research by Hammerness (2006) found that “many teachers have visions of their ideal classroom that are substantial, vivid, and consistent over time” (p. 3). I believe this is lies in contrast to the work of teacher educators and is an example of how their work differs from teachers. The vision of teacher educators is not static, and often evolves with experience in teaching and knowledge gained from research on practice. This supports research by Loughran (2014) in which he argued,
The development of teacher educators’ knowledge and practice of teaching and learning about teaching is intimately tied to: understandings of identity; the challenges and expectations of the teacher education enterprise; and, the place of scholarship as an important marker of knowledge, skill, and ability in the academy (p. 272).

This research supports the concept of the vision of teacher educators being shaped by their identity and their experiences, but also alludes to one of the underlying but inherent challenges of teacher education – the limited amount of time. Finding enough time to teach a wide range of literacy content, support their teaching with scholarly research, and attend to their additional administrative responsibilities within their teacher education programs is consistent with the challenges experienced by the participants in my own study.

The literacy teacher educators in this study, although not representative of all literacy teacher educators, were engaged in a very complex process of developing and implementing literacy courses for student teachers in a rapidly changing learning environment. All teacher educators are challenged with the binary task of developing student teachers understanding of ideas and concepts and developing their ability to connect what they have learned to their teaching practice (Castro Superfine & Li, 2014). This particular study may indicate that teacher education programs should aim to hire teacher educators with a strong research background in literacy and an understanding of new literacies and digital literacy. Further, teacher education programs should consider providing on-going professional development for teacher educators. Such programs may be especially important in emerging areas of literacy and technology, in order to support quality teacher development, and continue to improve the field of teacher education.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I explored the vision that the participants had for their literacy courses. The findings show that overall vision the participants had for teaching literacy and for themselves as
literacy teacher educators was partially influenced by their area of doctoral study and had some impact on the topics that they prioritized in their literacy courses.

The teacher educators attempted to articulate a vision that balanced theory and practice, but this was a challenge for almost all of the participants. Most focused on helping student teachers understand the practical applications of topics from their literacy course but acknowledged that theory was underlying the choices they made in their course.

The teacher educators’ emphasis on continuous learning was another important part of their vision for their student teachers and for themselves. I view continuous learning connected to professional development. On-going learning was seen to be essential for teacher educators to keep pace with the changing nature of literacy, integral to incorporating new literacies into their literacy courses and necessary in order to be responsive to the needs of their student teachers and the increasing demands of their profession (Loughran, 2014).

In an earlier section I discussed how time influenced the participants’ vision for their literacy course and showed how time constraints played a significant role in their literacy course development. The chapter ended with a discussion about the importance of having a clear vision for teaching literacy. The next chapter is a cross-case analysis of the pedagogical approaches, course content, vision for teaching literacy, and pedagogy of literacy teacher education that the participants enacted in their literacy courses.
Chapter Six

Cross-Case Analysis and Discussion

Introduction

I conducted this research to investigate the teaching practices of literacy teacher educators in teacher education programs. After my own struggles as a beginning literacy teacher educator and reviewing the literature on practices for teaching literacy in teacher education programs, I felt that there were many unanswered questions about the educational background and professional experiences that were most impactful and beneficial for effective literacy teacher educators. Further, I had questions about what course content was most appropriate for a literacy course for student teachers in a one-year teacher education program and often wondered how other literacy teacher educators prioritized the topics in their literacy courses. Throughout this dissertation I sought to explore the personal and professional influences on the participants and how these affected their literacy course priorities. This I hoped would improve my understanding of how literacy teacher educators implement their pedagogical approaches to teaching literacy.

Preparing future teachers is central to the work of teacher educators. This work is complex and teacher educators often adopt different pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, the pedagogical approaches that literacy teacher educators use in the development and implementation of their literacy courses may be influenced by a number of factors. These factors could include the personal philosophy of the teacher educator, research interests, institutional contexts, government priorities, and the diverse needs of student teachers in their literacy course. As Hoban (2005) pointed out:

There is not one best way of educating teachers that would be nonsensical. Teacher preparation programs vary according to the goals, course content, and beliefs of the teacher educators, students and teachers as well as the social-cultural context of schools involved (p. 1).
While the six participants in this study employed a wide range of pedagogical approaches, all aimed to create a positive environment for student teachers. The findings presented in this chapter address the research questions about participants’ pedagogical approaches and course content, and includes a cross-case analysis of the study. The chapter is divided into five sections. In the first section I describe the overall pedagogical approach of each study participant and discuss pedagogical strategies that are common to many of the LTEs literacy courses. This is followed by a discussion of the LTEs course content. The next section of the chapter moves into a discussion of the conceptual framework for the study and gives a brief overview of the link between social constructivism, vision for teaching literacy, and a pedagogy of teacher education. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of the LTEs vision for teaching and the elements of a pedagogy of literacy teacher education. The chapter ends with a discussion of these findings and summary of the main points from the chapter.

**Pedagogical Approaches**

In this section I discuss the pedagogical approaches that the participants implemented in the teaching of their literacy courses. Many view the work of teachers, and by extension teacher educators, as a simple act of transmission of information (Johnson, 2006; Strauss, 2001). Those outside of the profession often do not have an understanding of the complexity of this work, the depth of knowledge required, the numerous decisions to be made, or the varied skills and abilities that a teacher educator must possess in order to teach future teachers. To appreciate this it is necessary to consider the LTEs pedagogical approaches and underlying implications of these choices in addition to their vision for teaching literacy. By taking a closer look at their pedagogical approaches it is possible develop a more complete picture of the complexity of the work of the teacher educator.

All six participants clearly described their pedagogical approaches. At various points throughout the interviews, participants discussed both what they wanted their student teachers to learn, and
what they should be able to do as new classroom teachers. This connects to the complexity of the role of literacy teacher educators, teaching about teaching and teaching about literacy.

Clara was the most experienced literacy teacher educator in my study. She had refined her teaching based on her extensive experience. In describing her pedagogical approach, Clara stated, “I want student teachers to develop a repertoire of strategies as well as the knowledge and skills they need to teach literacy. Student teachers need to learn how to integrate listening, speaking, and reading, writing and viewing.” One of the ways in which Clara actualized this priority was through the use of a variety of resources that included textbooks, articles, novels, and picture books. She modeled many different strategies using novels and picture books, such as predicting and reading aloud, in the hopes that the student teachers would begin to understand the integration of the language processes, and thus understand ways of teaching that would support the literacy development of their pupils. Clara reflected:

In the first term, six out of the nine classes, student teachers are engaged in a Readers’ and Writers’ Workshop. I want them to live what it means to read a novel, to choose a multi-modal activity to respond to that novel. I want them to understand the writing process, assessment, and to see spelling and language use as part of the writing process.

Scaffolding was another important part of Clara’s pedagogical approach. She stressed that student teachers need to see where their children are and then work with them to develop their learning. For example, in her literacy course, Clara would ask student teachers to analyze a textbook from one of their other classes, looking at the “readability” and discussing the features that were built in to support and scaffold the pupils’ learning. Clara said, “I want student teachers to develop an understanding of how to scaffold their students’ learning and also to develop strategies such as shared, guided, and independent reading before they go into the schools to work with children.”
Jane also spoke about the importance of modeling teaching practices for student teachers. Some key components of her pedagogical approach involved teaching concepts, modeling instructional strategies, and engaging student teachers in practical activities. For example, Jane modeled for her student teachers how to have teacher-student conferences and showed them how to provide descriptive feedback on pupils’ writing by engaging the student teachers in the writing process. Demonstrating components of the writing process provided another opportunity for Jane to model not only pedagogical strategies, but also allowed her to demonstrate to student teachers the connections between the government curriculum and a particular topic. Jane stated:

I try and have my literacy class be a model for what I’d like student teachers to do with their own students. I do a lot of modeling. So, for example, my very first day I do a read-aloud and I talk about that read-aloud… I structure and explicitly show what I do before I read the book, during the book, after the book, and I discuss how it leads children into connecting their personal experiences, and leads them into writing. I model these strategies because I know many of the student teachers won’t have had those experiences.

Jane wanted her student teachers to see first-hand the importance of creating opportunities for pupils to write that were meaningful and purposeful, which was part of the government curriculum expectations. She also wanted her student teachers to realize that there were multiple ways of experiencing literacy. Jane created a range of in-class experiences because she felt that student teachers would develop a greater understanding of all the aspects involved in teaching writing if they actually experienced peer conferencing and other stages of the writing process. Jane’s pedagogical approach also included teaching literacy through studying and analyzing literature. She explained, “My vision for teaching began and is very much still about teaching Language Arts through literature.” Jane’s intent was to use literature to offer concrete ideas and model strategies that her student teachers could use in their future classrooms. In describing her goals, she said:

My goals for student teachers are to engage with their pupils in seeing literacy as being part of their daily lives and part of the world. I don’t want them to teach literacy as a Language Arts class and then not consider literacy anywhere else.
Literacy is a part of how they approach Math and Social Studies and all those other subject areas.

Jane’s use of informational texts and other non-fiction texts as sources for studying literature with her student teachers was something that emerged later on in her practice. She wanted to expand her use of non-fiction resources because initially it was not her area of expertise. She viewed it as an area for future growth and learning and embarked on her own personal learning journey to familiarize herself with these genres.

Demonstrating “accountable talk” was another pedagogical strategy that Jane used in her literacy course. Accountable talk classrooms are filled with talk that seriously responds to and further develops what others have said (Michaels et al., 2013 p. 1). Jane viewed “accountable talk” as an important component of a balanced literacy course:

The first thing I try to do is some mini-piece on accountable talk where they are engaged in conversation in the classroom and then we break that down into what does it look like, sound like, feel like… and then we talk about communicating that with their students. Some of the best practices I talk to them about are about “talk” in the classroom.

For Jane’s student teachers demonstrating accountable talk meant being able to justify their opinions and to be actively engaged in conversations that were relevant to the topic at hand. Jane’s pedagogical approach aligns closely with the principles of constructivism. Constructivists believe that individual’s construct their own knowledge based on their social interactions and experiences (Vygotsky, 1962). She asked her student teachers to create their own understanding based on their discussions while using their context to help frame their discussion.

Lester’s pedagogical approach included providing a broad overview of literacy by including a range of topics in his course. Lester was well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his own literacy course and reflected on the implications of his approach for student teachers in their future classrooms. Lester shared:
My course is based on using a lot of literature for the content. I find myself teaching strategies, teaching comprehension, and teaching integration through poetry, novels, and picture books. I’m looking at the curriculum and I want to show what balanced literacy can look like…I’m looking at guided reading, shared reading, and the read-aloud experience, and the same areas with writing. My philosophy comes from all of my literature-based experiences as a classroom teacher... every year I try to improve my course, but I am very aware that it is based on my own priorities and interests.

Lester felt that teacher educators needed to understand not only what worked well for them, but also the needs of their student teachers. He was constantly refining his literacy course, trying new things in an effort to improve his own teaching practice, and broadening his student teachers’ knowledge of literacy. Lester made a point of being very explicit in his teaching because at times student teachers had difficulty grasping the concepts being taught. He described himself as an active learner so he used interactive methods to demonstrate the concepts being taught. Lester found that student teachers responded more positively to the practical and interactive lessons in his course than the straight lectures. Although he described his approach as literature-based, for Lester, the particular type of text used was not as important as the opportunity to extend student teachers’ learning around a concept. However, he did emphasize the use of children’s literature in particular as a way to share teaching strategies and demonstrate concepts such as guided reading that he felt were essential components of literacy. As Lester explained, “My philosophy includes balancing the different strands that we talk about in Language Arts; reading, writing, listening, and speaking and finding a place for literature.” To support his pedagogical approach Lester developed what he felt were practical assignments that would help student teachers understand some of the broader issues in teaching literacy that would also have practical applications in the classroom setting. These assignments are discussed later in the chapter.

Julia’s pedagogical approach included structuring her class so that it included theoretical and practical components. She described her approach as a “flattened hierarchy.” She wanted her literacy course to be interactive and she worked to develop a relationship with the student
teachers in her course that encouraged open communication. Julia described the structure of her classes in the following way:

I always follow the same sequence, successfully or unsuccessfully. It starts with a warm-up activity… so there might be a guiding question or something they do in pairs or individually or small groups. I talk for about 30 minutes about the key topic for the day – this would be the theoretical piece. For example, if the topic was differentiating readers in the secondary classroom, then there would be a longer activity where they would operationalize it, and then there would be a wrap-up…so that's an example of the four chunks of the lesson, and obviously, the timing varies with each class. I also like to have discussions at the end of the class and often I would assign some sort of a culminating activity.

Additionally, because Julia’s background in multiliteracies had influenced her pedagogy, she infused multiliteracies into many aspects of her course. For example, she incorporated the use of iPads, e-readers and I-readers. Julia indicated that because her student teachers were of a generation that had more experience with technology, they were very receptive to learning about multi-modalities and multiliteracies and how these could be incorporated into their teaching. Julia’s pedagogy was also influenced by her research. As a researcher, she led a large-scale research study that investigated the use of technological tools in teaching reading and brought these interests into her literacy teaching practice.

Ryan’s pedagogical approach included a strong focus on inquiry. He encouraged his student teachers to ask a lot of questions about who they are as literacy learners and who their students will be. He wanted his student teachers to investigate what counts as literacy in mainstream society and why and how this can affect their future students’ experiences with literacy. This speaks to the literature on the importance of addressing the evolving concept of literacy and multiliteracies in literacy teaching (Mills, 2010; Street, 2008). Inquiry-based approaches were an essential part of Ryan’s literacy course. Ryan wanted student teachers to be engaged with literacy research by questioning and critiquing it. Outlining this approach, he said:
I think one of the biggest problems in the field is the ways that literacy pedagogy has been so deeply shaped by narrow notions of literacy assessment; which shrink what we think about as literacy, and what we think about as achievement in literacy…As a result teachers have basically been reduced to these kinds of technicians who are just helping to tool these backward mapped narrow curriculum goals towards some kind of winnowed away notion of outcomes.

Ryan wanted his student teachers to challenge traditional understandings of what counted as literacy. He felt that they should be able to review a piece of their future students’ writing assuming that the writer was intelligent and intentional about what they wrote, and value their ideas and ways of expressing themselves. His pedagogy was connected to creating an environment where student teachers would develop meaningful relationships with students in their future classrooms.

Similar to Ryan, Linda also wanted her student teachers to be engaged in thinking about the connections between literacy and their lives in mainstream society. She felt it was important to draw on the student teachers’ prior knowledge and experiences with literacy outside of the classroom. By taking this approach she demonstrated that she valued their knowledge and allowed them to build upon their prior experiences. She always tried to link what she was teaching in her literacy course to what the student teachers were seeing and experiencing during their practicums. Further, if the student teachers could not make the connection, she would explicitly show them by providing concrete examples and making links back to her previous teaching. She described her approach to engage students in thinking through their pedagogy in the following way:

During every class, I will get the student teachers to talk in groups about current issues in literacy. And I always make sure that they’re linking it back to their practicum. So, if we’re doing a lesson about word study, I ask why would you do word study, and what would word study look like, and here are some sample word study activities, and now we’re going to do the word study activities…you would see student teachers going through all those stages.
While the participants shared similarities in their pedagogical approaches such as the use of children’s literature to teach literacy and their emphasis on encouraging student teachers to develop their own philosophy for teaching, they demonstrated differences in their foundational pedagogical approach. Although there is not an internationally shared understanding of a pedagogy of teacher education or a list of common and effective pedagogically approaches, internationally there is increasing attention towards developing competencies for teacher educators (Koster & Dengerink, 2008; European Commission, 2013). Moreover, these competencies that are emerging from this increased attention have strong links to pedagogical approaches. The development and articulation of these competencies may both shed light on the quality of teacher educators’ work, and/or allow for an improved focus on areas for professional development that would be beneficial for this group. Furthermore, in recent years there has been discussion about developing not only a pedagogy of teacher education, but a pedagogy of literacy teacher education.

As noted earlier, in their longitudinal study of 28 literacy teacher educator Kosnik et al. (2014) recognized three important elements were enacted the teachers’ practice. These three elements included valuing and responding to diversity, using a range of texts and resources, and authentic reflection on practice. The LTEs in my study had all three of these elements embedded in the teaching of their own literacy courses, although the ways they worked towards addressing these concepts varied.

In reviewing the LTEs pedagogical approaches in my study, it was clear that there were many important ways in which participants attempted to provide a learning environment that was stimulating for their student teachers. This aligns with studies by Bullock and Christou (2009) and Zeichner (2005) that focused on the pedagogy of teacher educators. For example, many of the LTEs in my study worked at helping student teachers develop their own philosophy for teaching literacy, and this was an integral component of their pedagogy. While the individual philosophies of the LTEs differed, the idea of a central set of beliefs upon which to build one’s
teaching practice was a key element of most of their practice. The pedagogical approaches the LTEs used in their courses were intended to deepen the understanding and enhance the learning of student teachers in both theoretical and practical ways. They did not see their approaches as “tips and tricks,” but as essential elements that would aid in building a strong foundation towards future literacy teaching. The LTEs were not simply trying to transmit information, but saw their literacy course as a place where ideas, theories, and concepts could be exchanged, debated, and questioned in order to further their student teachers learning. The LTEs wanted their student teachers to think critically and analytically about teaching literacy. The LTEs were well aware that they were teaching courses to a diverse group of student teachers and demonstrated clarity in the choices they made and how these choices were important to their teaching practice. These LTEs wanted their student teachers to experience pedagogical approaches that they could enact with their future students in their own classrooms.

However, there was also a tension that existed in the pedagogical approaches of the LTEs, between their intention to share innovative teaching approaches and their emphasis on providing examples of effective instructional approaches that were more traditional in nature. There was also a tension in helping student teachers understand the value of theory and the important links between theory and practice. As Bullock and Christou (2009) point out, “We strive to teach toward the radical middle by encouraging candidates to enact practice based on theory and to construct theory from personal understanding, by working to show them how we are trying to do the same” (p. 77). The LTEs in my study were not always able to address the disconnect between what they were teaching and what the student teachers were learning, but they attempted to provide clarity throughout their courses through responding to questions and feedback on a regular basis.

Furthermore, there were obstacles for the LTEs when trying to implement innovative teaching practices in their literacy courses. These obstacles included their own lack of knowledge about current research and best practices being advocated in teacher education scholarly journals,
limited amount of time allocated by teacher education programs for the teaching of the literacy courses, and for some, their own limited knowledge about multiliteracies or the ways in which information technology could be used to enhance literacy learning in the classroom. Further, there were limited opportunities for collaboration with peers or colleagues due to the structure of the program and the other institutional commitments and responsibilities that these LTEs had within their respective teacher education programs.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is paramount in bringing about change and development in teachers’ prior beliefs and behaviour (Pennington, 1995; Richardson, 1990). This view extends to teacher educators and their student teachers because if the learning experience is based on constructivist principles, then the learning should be reciprocal and interactive. I say this because I view experiential learning as inherently constructivist—learning is contextualized and meaningful to the learner. As we learned in Chapter Five, one common theoretical framework used by Ryan and Clara was social constructivism. Social constructivists believe that learners construct their own knowledge in a social context based on past and present experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Many of the participants attempted to create classroom environments that allowed student teachers to participate in meaningful and authentic experiences. The intent was also for student teachers to draw upon their past experiences and apply their prior knowledge and experiences to the concepts they were learning in relation to teaching literacy. Constructivists envision the learner constructing knowledge in a meaningful way. By extension, when the LTEs use a range of instructional approaches, knowing when each is most effective creates opportunities for more meaningful and authentic learning experiences. This means they must have an element of flexibility in their pedagogical approaches. Flexibility is required to teach in a classroom where the students have diverse needs (Hassett, 2008). Since constructivist theorists believe that knowledge is constantly changing and that learning is an active process, flexibility in the learning environment is an important component.
For example, as discussed in Chapter Five, Clara noted that she wanted her student teachers to use the social constructivist framework when developing a repertoire of strategies for teaching literacy. Indeed, when she taught the concept of literature circles, Clara asked student teachers to analyze each other’s units to see which ones had used a social constructivist approach. By identifying elements of the social constructivist approach, Clara hoped that student teachers would deepen their understanding of this particular framework. Clara wanted her student teachers to learn through experience and share their learning with each other. She explained:

Student teachers are encouraged to articulate to each other why the units were appropriate for learning certain concepts or why they are not very good…I expect them to report on the whole process of developing the unit, and to share how they came up with their ideas for the literature unit, etc.

This use of the constructivist approach allows student teachers to construct new knowledge about teaching by engaging in experiential learning (Kaufman, 1996).

Jane also created a myriad of opportunities for experiential learning to occur in her literacy course. Throughout Jane’s interviews she discussed the importance of modelling her pedagogy. For example, Jane demonstrated how to read-aloud to children and said that teaching student teachers’ various ways to facilitate a read-aloud was an integral part of her literacy course. During the read-aloud, she modeled additional reading comprehension strategies such as predicting, making inferences, and summaries. Jane shared, “I model read-aloud often with my student teachers… so I’m using that as a model of how to read to children, but I’m also using that as an opportunity for experiential learning.” Clara, Jane, Linda, and Lester agreed that the experiential and practical components of their literacy course were extremely beneficial for their student teachers’ learning. This is not to say that Ryan and Julia did not value experiential learning in their literacy courses, but the approach was more prominent in the courses of the other four participants. The other four participants made repeated references to practical experiences within their courses that they used to reinforce the literacy concepts.
Building Community and Building Relationships

Another important aspect of the LTEs’ pedagogical approaches was building community and building relationships among the student teachers in their literacy courses. All six participants, Clara, Julia, Jane, Lester, Linda, and Ryan, discussed the importance of building community within their literacy courses and creating opportunities for student teachers to work together and learn from each other. This echoes the results of a study by Bruce and Stellern (2005) that found “student teachers who were encouraged to work together as a community were more motivated to learn course content, wanted the best for each other, and worked together to maximize each other’s potential” (p. 50). However, building community in a classroom of adult learners presents a number of challenges including creating an environment where people trust each other, and showing a commitment to working together for the benefit of the group.

Clara, the most experienced literacy teacher educator in the study, frequently came back to the concept of building a learning community within her literacy course. She felt this was important because there was such a wide range of ages and experiences among student teachers. Clara shared:

   Building community is important and it is done through shared experiences and experiential learning opportunities that they get when they work in small groups. They have to learn that it is important to work together, and I believe that if they are working with each other, they have to support each other in their learning.

Throughout her literacy course Clara provided student teachers with opportunities for experiential learning. She structured her literacy course so that student teachers worked in small groups creating thematic units, participating in literature circles, and sharing text resources that would aid their literacy teaching. These learning opportunities were created in an attempt to replicate what can happen in a regular classroom and engage the student teachers in practical activities.
Julia shared a similar interest in building community or generating camaraderie. She described her approach the following way:

I like to get along well with my student teachers and to create a sense of camaraderie in the classroom and that's very important to me…there are things that I know but there are things that they know too. For example, if I'm trying a new piece of technology or software, and I don't know how to figure something out, I will say let’s work together here; let’s figure out how to do this together.

Jane was also an experienced literacy teacher educator. She encouraged her student teachers to learn from each other and found practical ways to implement this shared learning in her course. Jane suggested, “Some student teachers think their own experience is the only way of experiencing Language Arts [literacy]… I want them to share each other’s experiences by talking and writing about their own literacy journeys.” Jane valued having student teachers reflect on their learning and saw this as an opportunity for them to learn that there are a range of factors that can affect a child’s literacy development. Jane hoped that her student teachers would develop an increased awareness of, and appreciation for, the rich and varied experiences that all children bring to the classroom by listening to each other’s literacy stories. Sharing knowledge in order for student teachers to learn from each other and reflecting on past experiences were important components of Jane’s literacy course, and a tool that she used to build community in her literacy course.

Linda shared that community building was important to her entire course and that it was something that she hoped her student teachers would replicate in their own classrooms one day. Linda infused lots of group discussions, think, pair, share and cooperative learning activities in her literacy course to facilitate collaboration. Jane shared, “I try and build community by doing group work…I do group work in class because we need to provide structured opportunities for student teachers to learn from each other.”
Lester, like Jane and Clara, also saw value in building community in his literacy course and started the process of building community from the first day of class by having student teachers share personal stories of who they are and where they came from. He felt that all teacher educators should try to build community in whatever way suited them. He explained:

I don’t care how they build community…whether it is a Tribes initiative thing that builds community or they go on a class retreat, but we have to build that community in our class. I have an assignment to build an inquiring learning community where student teachers do some kind of research and share that research with each other, and I think that helps build our learning community because it is a celebration of their learning.

Lester also discussed how he created opportunities for student teachers to build community and work collaboratively in groups so that the learning experiences could be shared, and he hoped that the student teachers would replicate this in their future classrooms. He shared:

I believe very strongly in building a community as a philosophy in classrooms. So how do you build community? You’ve got to have an opportunity for each person to reveal his or her thoughts…

Similarly, Linda emphasized to her student teachers that collaborating with other student teachers on assignments and lesson planning would foster relationships that would support their literacy teaching in the future. Linda shared:

My philosophy basically is that I want the student teachers to learn to work together… I believe we have to build a professional learning community and I try to model that in my course…so my philosophy is let’s learn from one another and try to be supportive of one another.

All of Linda’s classes included student teachers interacting with each other in groups and activities. Linda had her student teachers present their work in small groups rather than to the whole class. Within those small groups Linda encouraged student teachers to ask questions of each other in order to generate discussion that would help them to reflect on what worked well, why it worked or did not work, and to share observations and opinions about what went on in the
classrooms during their practicum experiences. These group interactions provided practical opportunities for student teachers to support each other and share learning experiences in a meaningful way. Linda noted:

One of the ways that I build community is to talk about it explicitly. The student teachers are engaged in co-operative learning activities that involve interacting with one another a lot, so this provides the opportunity for them to develop relationships.

Almost every aspect of Linda’s pedagogical approach involved having student teachers learn from one another and talk to each other about their learning. Building relationships was an important part of Linda’s pedagogy. She incorporated many co-operative learning strategies into her literacy course, which in turn provided opportunities for student teachers to develop their oral presentation skills.

Similar to Linda, Ryan felt that building community was fundamental to the success of his literacy course. His student teachers participated in activities in pairs or triplets. Student teachers were also expected to read and respond to each other’s in-class work and assignments. Earlier in Chapter Five, I discussed Ryan’s focus on having the student teachers write a literacy autobiography. He had student teachers read those aloud to each other and also bound them into a book so that all student teachers had a copy of each other’s literacy stories. Ryan shared:

This is about community building, it’s about reminding them that even though they are in the second year of a cohort program, it’s like they’ve been to camp together. They all think they know each other. They’ve been taking classes together for a year. But it’s about reminding them that actually they don’t know each other in lots of ways, and that a big part of the class is going to be undoing some of what we think we know about each other, as well as what we think we know about our future students and about the field [of literacy] and building these different kinds of connections.

Ryan wanted his student teachers to see themselves as active members of a local professional community and as members of the broader community in the field of literacy. He was always
looking for ways to build community and create opportunities for collaboration within and beyond his literacy course.

Table 2. Ways LTEs Build Learning Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Community Building Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>Student teachers participated in literature circles and other small group experiential learning opportunities; sharing text resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Student teachers wrote and shared their literacy journeys with each other at the beginning of the course. Encouraged social time and networking outside of the classroom as a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>Encouraged student teachers to take a leadership role in the classroom and share knowledge; created a camaraderie amongst student teachers by building relationships through small group interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lester</td>
<td>Student teachers shared personal stories on the first day; Created opportunities for group work and collaboration on assignments and through in class activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Implemented co-operative learning activities and created multiple opportunities for student teachers to work in groups and collaborate on assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Student teachers read and responded to each other’s work and shared their own literacy histories with each other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The examples provided illustrate the different ways that the LTEs worked to build a learning community in their literacy course. In many ways, the concept of building communities presented an opportunity for the LTEs to model how to collaborate with colleagues and share learning experiences, and as Bruce and Stellern (2005) pointed out “maximize their potential.” It is clear from the above quotations from the participants that building community plays an important role in their pedagogical approach to teaching literacy. Fostering a learning community in their classrooms and modeling how to work collaboratively in groups so that learning experiences and insights could be shared and knowledge building could flourish was an important component of the participants’ work. This was a practical tool that student teachers would also be able to implement in their future classrooms. Some participants acknowledged that community building was not easy to do, but they felt it was important to try.

Teacher education scholars such as Bruce and Stellern (2005) and Kosnik and Beck (2003, 2009) have discussed the importance of building community in their work. For example, Bruce and Stellern (2005) argued that teacher educators must create caring communities in teacher education classrooms, a supportive environment, and a sense of belonging in all their student teachers. If teacher educators can actively create these kinds of environments, student teachers are more likely to develop meaningful relationships with their peers and be open to taking more risks in their teaching and learning processes. Kosnik and Beck (2003) noted that when communities are created in teacher education classrooms, student teachers are less afraid to contribute to discussions, feel able to share their true feelings, and are more likely to listen to each other. I agree with Kosnik and Beck that when teacher educators create an environment that is open to sharing ideas (even when they are contrary to popular opinion), it leads to greater engagement of the student teachers in the learning process. My participants shared similar views on community building. Their intention was to create a learning environment that was nurturing, where knowledge was co-constructed, and where respectful dialogue and contrasting opinions
were encouraged. As Kosnik and Beck (2003) noted, “Faculty have to take a lead in establishing the community, setting up communal structures, speaking explicitly about the importance of community, and modeling the kind of attitudes and relationships they believe are essential to community-oriented education” (p. 111).

The perspectives described by the participants and in the literature, indicate to me that building relationships is at the heart of building community. The literacy teacher educators valued the relationships that developed among their student teachers and saw those relationships as an important way to enhance their teaching and learning. Also by actively engaging student teachers in their learning process and by modeling the various ways that community building can contribute to the development of their teaching practice, my participants created collaborative learning environments.

It is interesting to note that while all six participants worked to build community in their literacy course, almost none of them had a strong feeling of community among their colleagues in their respective work places. For Linda and Jane, this had more to do with their geographic location in relation to their colleagues. They were both working away from the main campus of their institutions, which contributed to the lack of community and isolation for these two LTEs. All of the participants indicated that they had very little opportunity to network with colleagues in their teacher education programs. Even when there were faculty meetings or professional development sessions offered in their teacher education programs, they were not well attended, or allowed little time for interaction among colleagues. Jane shared, “I find not all of my colleagues are in attendance, and not all of my colleagues are included when we do have opportunities to get together in meetings.” This may also be indicative of the solitary nature of teaching in higher education. All participants spoke of attending conferences as the main way of connecting with other teacher educators in their field and building relationships among colleagues. However, there are always costs associated with attending conferences. These expenditures include travel,
conference fees, and accommodations, in addition to time away from teaching and other incidentals.

Although the approaches to building community varied, at the centre of this pedagogical approach was the importance of valuing the learning that can happen from listening to others, whose perspectives may differ from their own. Clearly the LTEs recognized that by having student teachers work in a collaborative community they could improve their understanding of their own teaching practice and work towards improving their ability to teach by learning from their interactions within a professional learning community. This aligns with the research by McLaughlin & Talbert (2008) who noted that interaction in communities of practice contributed to innovation and improvement of practice for all participants. What was ironic was that the LTEs did not apply the principles of building community in their own teacher educator circles. They did not actively seek out opportunities to collaborate with their peers within their teacher education program, nor did they share resources or ideas with their colleagues. They emphasized community building for their student teachers, however, this pedagogical approach was not evident in their own practice as teacher educators. Other than attending and presenting at conferences, the LTEs in this study did not build their own learning communities at work. Collaboration has the potential to be a useful tool for teacher educators, but it can also be challenging to implement in a structure that tends to value individual work (Kezar, 2005) as academia frequently does (Kezar, 2005).

The opportunity to work together in an environment where resources, information, and even research are shared was lacking in the teacher education programs of these participants. Many of the participants spoke about their individual work and research, but rarely mentioned opportunities or a willingness to collaborate with other teacher educators. The LTEs did complain about feeling isolated, which makes sense, since the work of teaching in higher education, similar to some classroom environments is not always collegial and is solitary in many ways. This speaks to the barriers that exist within teacher education that make it difficult
for teacher educators to share best practices and dialogue with both novices and experienced member of their profession (Ortlieb, Biddix, & Doepker, 2010). These barriers are often structural and tend to be exacerbated by a competitive environment that puts pressure on teacher educators to conduct research and disseminate findings, (Cole, 2000; Knowles, Cole, & Sumson, 2000; Lee, 2014) while maintaining a teaching workload of large classes of student teachers. Given these factors it is understandable, although not optimal, that the LTEs found very few opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues, but still made concerted efforts to build communities within their own literacy courses.

Linking Assessment and Assignments

Teaching student teachers how to assess their future students’ knowledge and learning was another key component in the teacher educators’ literacy courses. In-class and homework assignments were often used to teach assessment. Many of the participants used a combination of in-class assignments, collaborative projects, written responses to activities, personal reflections, and the development of lesson plans as a core part of their assessment of student teachers for their literacy courses. These assignments were embedded in their courses and were often intended to create opportunities for student teachers to engage more deeply with the content and reflect on their learning in relation to concepts being taught. Variation in assignments across participants’ courses was often a result of differences in student teachers’ needs and interests and LTEs’ interests and priorities.

For example, Linda gave four in-class assignments including: reading aloud a picture book in small groups; facilitating literature circles with student teachers participating in role discussions; sharing and presenting professional resources related to literacy, and; presenting an assignment about oral communication. Linda explained, “My assignments are opportunities for student teachers to share their learning with their classmates in small groups and practice being in the role of teacher, as well as about giving them choices.”
Linda felt it was important for teacher educators to be very clear about the purpose of each assignment and to articulate the value of completing a particular assignment. This is similar to setting a learning goal for a student in an elementary classroom. Linda said:

We [teacher educators] need to think about what it is that we want student teachers to be able to express in terms of their learning and how valuable it is to them and what are the practical components of it, certain considerations like that.

Linda felt that being able to make the connection for student teachers between a particular assignment and its application to the classrooms they would be working in would make the student teachers more prepared and more confident in their role as new teachers. She acknowledged that it was important for student teachers to realize that they should be assessing their pupils using a range of assessment strategies, and that was something Linda modeled in her own teaching. Choice was an important element in her literacy course and she reiterated to her student teachers that choice could also be a motivating factor for some pupils. However, in her course Linda put some limits on the student teachers’ choices by having them choose 1 out of 3 ways to show their learning. Her goals for her literacy course included having student teachers make their own choices about what process and product would be most beneficial for them to demonstrate their learning. Linda’s approach stemmed from her previous experience as a classroom teacher and the knowledge that assessment needs to be on-going. Like the other participants, she wanted her assignments to be meaningful and relevant and she thought carefully about the purpose of each one.

Other participants used assignments that were also practical in nature. Lester explained, “My assignments are not onerous, they are practical.” Lester valued active participation during class and did not put as much emphasis on formal assessments. His in-class assignments were based on the concepts he had taught during the class and topics that he felt would be useful to the student teachers during their practicum placements. Lester saw assessment as more of an informal component because he did not want student teachers to be caught up with marks and
grades; rather, he was more interested in their participation during class discussions and activities. He indicated that he was not the best person to talk to about assessment. Lester said:

I do assess, there are people who ask questions about questions, that’s my informal assessment. Student teachers have assignments, and I try to make them very practical. They have to hand in a word puzzle, they do a response journal to a novel…that gives me a chance to talk about drama and in-role writing and comprehension and independent reading. That’s why I say I don’t put a lot of energy into assessment. But I’m very fair with grades.

Lester’s approach is in stark contrast to what the research says about teaching assessment in teacher education. Research by Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, and Rust (2005) highlighted the importance of student teachers acquiring experience in designing, scoring, and interpreting assessments for a variety of purposes with an emphasis on formative assessment processes. Shepard et al. (2005) identified four pedagogical approaches that student teachers should be engaged in terms of assessment:

(a) Analysis of student work and learning.
(b) Engagement in assessment design.
(c) Examining motivation and learning and how they relate to assessment
(d) Working with standards to design and evaluate assessments for accountability (Shepard et al, 2005, p. 315)

Julia’s pedagogical approach to teaching assessment aligned with some of the research by Shepard et al. (2005). Her methods included class discussions around the importance of using formative and diagnostic assessment tools and engaging student teachers in designing appropriate assessments. She shared:

I think early on, student teachers need to know how to use diagnostic tools … and after they have spent more time in schools, we spend a lot of time in class discussions talking about assessment…

Julia had an understanding that student teachers needed to be able to discuss concepts and apply a theoretical framework to those discussions. She used this framework to teach assessment and she also applied this to the assignments she gave to her student teachers. For example, Julia
emphasized conceptual assignments that asked student teachers to create a multi-modal text, such as a digital story or a short podcast, and then reflect on the experience. Julia explained:

> I don’t like to give a lot of assignments but at the same time, I like to make sure that I have different kinds of assignments. I give them theory, application, conceptual, and then sometimes a wild card one…So I always have the formal essay, but I also always have a text analysis which students can look at an advertisement or a website and use a theoretical framework to interpret it. And I’ll have presentations with smaller groups so that they get more comfortable being in front of their peers.

Jane had a similar approach in that many of her assignments were focused on analyzing pieces of children’s writing, sometimes in groups and at other times individually. She shared:

> In my literacy course none of my assignments are essays, they’re always focused on analyzing the students’ writing… I do have a component of written reflection which in most cases is at the end of the class, and I also use a range of graphic organizers so that they can see a range of ways for kids to reflect on their work.

Variations in their individual courses and assignments emerged from insights gained over time and through the experience of teaching literacy to a diverse range of student teachers. This aligns with research from the International Reading Association (2005). It proposed that literacy teacher education programs should assist future teachers to “become flexible, adaptive, and responsive to students’ needs” (Lacina & Collins Block, 2011, p. 320). In this study, it was clear that the teacher educators were modeling the importance of being adaptive and responsive to their student teachers’ needs by creating assignments and at times modifying assignments in hopes that they would do the same for their own future students. What was not clear to me was if the student teachers found the assignments as relevant and meaningful to their learning as the LTEs intended. The LTEs conceptions of assignments were clearly thoughtful and well-intentioned and had the potential to provide deeper engagement with literacy concepts that were being taught. However, the lack of coherence across the types of assignments they gave speaks to the fragmentation that exists across literacy courses.
Further the participants did not seem to emphasize with their student teachers the importance of knowing the advantages and disadvantages of using different types of assessment tools in their classrooms, nor did they address the most optimal times for their use. This is not to say that none of participants did any of these things, but this information did not emerge from the data, nor was it evident in their course outlines. All of the participants recognized that assessment needed to be a component of their literacy courses, although some of them seemed struggled to determine the most appropriate assignments for deepening their student teachers’ understanding of the purposes of assessment. It was interesting that some of the participants seemed to use the words assessment and assignment interchangeably and did not necessarily make a distinction between the importance of teaching how and why student teachers should assess their future students and the importance of assessment of the actual student teachers in their literacy course. Two exceptions were Ryan and Clara.

Ryan had a unique perspective on assessment. Assessment to Ryan meant looking at student teachers’ own practices and policies about assessments in tandem with the field of assessment, such as current literature, and how this could be incorporated into their teaching practice. Ryan wanted his student teachers to ask essential questions that would encourage inquiry and make them consider whether they were drawing upon some of the ideas in the scholarly literature or from class discussions when thinking about assessment. This was important, because often times student teachers’ ideas about teaching were contrary to the scholarly literature. Ryan gave his student teachers six written assignments in his course, and each of those assignments was collaborative in some way.

For example, Ryan asked student teachers to analyze a piece of literature and submit a written response in small groups. The student teachers were expected to share their insights on the group process in addition to the analysis of the literature. This was to ensure that the student teachers would think about the process and not just focus on the final product. Ryan wanted his student teachers to have concrete examples of assessment so that they could develop an understanding of
where they started, what they had learned, and what the implications were going forward. This involved reflecting on previous assignments and artifacts throughout the course and allowing for setting new directions. Ryan was the only participant who made a concerted effort to provide a lot of written feedback. His student teachers were always receiving feedback, whether it was verbal, written, or peer-to-peer. Ryan’s description of assessment demonstrates his approach:

So my method of assessment is somewhat varied but it tends to be holistic, it tends to be formative rather than summative, in those traditional terms. So I write extensive comments on my student papers. My class and my assignments tend to be collaborative in nature. When I had them look at student writing, I had them do that in groups because I want them to be in conversation and I want the process to matter, so it’s not just about the products.

Ryan dealt with assessment very differently than the other teacher educators; he rarely gave his student teachers grades. He noted that the absence of grades created anxiety for many of his student teachers but he wanted his assessment to be more authentic. He also wanted to create an environment where his student teachers would ask deep questions about grades. For example, he would ask them to ponder:

What does it feel like to expect something and not receive it? What do grades mean? Why do people grade? How can grades be more authentic? How are they not authentic? What kinds of spaces do we make for students to view their evaluations as substantive, as formative, as concerned, as interested, as helpful? Because so often students receive “good job” and A+ or they see “Not so good job” or B+ or whatever on a piece of paper and then it goes into the drawer or a trash bin. So how can assessment be used in instruction, in supporting students over time, to think of themselves as readers and writers in the world?

One way that he focused on assessment was in relationship to teaching writing. Ryan wanted his student teachers to think about different ways that they could respond to pupils. Ryan felt it was important to offer praise and specific comments and ideas for improving pieces of writing. Ryan wanted the student teachers to think about how they would construct a conversation that provided meaningful comments for pupils to consider when creating their next piece of writing. He demonstrated the intended outcomes of such an approach by suggesting:
I want my student teachers, when they encounter a piece of writing, to assume that there’s intentionality and intelligence behind it, that there’s a person behind there with ideas and experiences in the world that they’re trying to express.

Ryan considered those kinds of conversations with students to be examples of authentic assessment. He thought seriously about assessment and considered the implications of assessment for his student teachers and for their pupils in very thoughtful ways. He saw assessment as being embedded in relationships and as an opportunity to help and encourage people. Throughout his literacy course he highlighted the complexity of assessment and the importance of using authentic, meaningful assessment to improve student learning.

Clara also had a complex way of thinking about assessment. She employed a range of strategies for her assessment of her student teachers, such as conferences, oral discussions, and examining pieces of writing, in addition to keeping a record of their attendance and participation. She thought it was particularly important to have weekly reading assignments in addition to some larger projects as part of her literacy course. Clara looked at assessment holistically. Her student teachers were responsible for conducting self-assessments and group assessments throughout her literacy course in addition to her assessments of the student teachers. Clara said,

I really stress a range of things…so in terms of my own assessment of students, I’m not particularly detailed about it, but I sit in on every group so I can hear exactly what they have to say and find out sometimes who isn’t verbal and who isn’t saying anything at all. I also hold teacher conferences with them. I don’t always get to everybody but when they have writing assignments, such as handing in their text maps that will count at the end.

In terms of getting student teachers to think about assessment of their future pupils, Clara put together a booklet for her student teachers on observing and interviewing children, and instructions for analyzing documents. Student teachers were also expected to read a chapter on assessment in their course text. Clara wanted her student teachers to become more independent in their thinking about the choices they would make when assessing pupils, and to consider the
reasons, the context, and the actual physical spaces where assessment took place. For example, she encouraged them to consider the differences engendered by observing children in the schoolyard versus in a literature circle group. The kinds of behaviours and responses teachers see from the same children could be very different. Clara shared:

I don’t feel that any particular assessment should be emphasized in the literacy course… I give them a range of ideas for how they can monitor their own students in the classroom. I just try to create a balance in my own classes, to give them a model of the kinds of things you could do. So, we use rubrics, for example, quite a few rubrics. I use post-it notes in discussions or just write comments on a sheet of paper about what I observe when people are having difficulty, and what they seem to be understanding. I also do one class where they’re exposed to a range of assessment strategies.

Clara emphasized that assessment of pupils did not have to be complicated. For example, she discussed how student teachers could simply jot down one or two thoughts based on classroom observations on a daily basis focusing on two or three children. She also created an observation checklist for student teachers to use in their future classrooms.

Many of the participants acknowledged the importance of taking into consideration the reason for assessment and the context when assessing not only student teachers, but also future pupils. However, there was a wide range of approaches both to teaching assessment and to how LTEs actually assessed the learning of their student teachers as demonstrated in Table 3. Further, while it was clear that all the participants saw value both in assessing student teachers and in teaching how to assess children, it was unclear how they determined what assessments would be most appropriate for deepening their student teachers’ understanding of literacy concepts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Assessment Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Clara**   | Assessment *for* and *of* learning  
Observation Checklists, rubrics, anecdotal and jot notes, group presentations |
| **Jane**    | Assessment *as* learning and *of* learning  
Analysis of student teachers’ writing; written reflection and emphasis on graphic organizers. |
| **Julia**   | Assessment *of* learning and *as* learning  
Theoretical, practical, and conceptual assignments that could be implemented using multi-modal texts. |
| **Lester**  | Assessment *as* and *of* learning  
Informal methods; observation of students, participation marks, group presentations with simple rubrics. |
| **Linda**   | Assessment *as* and *of* learning  
Observations, anecdotal notes, self and peer assessments, and final products with an element of choice |
| **Ryan**    | Assessment *as* learning  
Analysis of writing samples and providing descriptive feedback both orally and in written form. Verbal and written, peer to peer and student to teacher feedback |
It was also unclear how much time was spent on differentiating among assessments of learning, assessments for learning, and assessments as learning. Assessment of learning is the process of collecting and interpreting evidence for the purpose of summarizing learning at a given point in time. Assessment as learning involves the process of developing and supporting the individuals’ metacognition; individuals should be actively engaged in the assessment process and be monitoring their own learning. Finally, assessment for learning is the on-going process of gathering and interpreting evidence about student learning for the purpose of determining where students are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there (Growing Success Document, 2014, p. 144). This distinction is important, because many of the participants drew upon their previous experience as classroom teachers to inform the assessment methods they implemented in their courses. Research by MacLellan (2004) showed that teachers often employ the same assessment strategies they experienced as students. However, by drawing on these experiences, they may have been overlooking the fact that the context of the learning environment in teacher education was quite different.

For example, children are often assessed for the purposes of communicating and reporting to parents on their progress, in contrast, student teachers are being assessed as adults, in an environment where the focus tends to be more on assessment as learning, as opposed to assessment of learning. For the most part the LTEs implemented ‘assessment as learning’ through the assignments they gave. By choosing assessments as learning they were providing the student teachers an opportunity to further their own learning, which included self-assessments and peer-assessments. I also believe the range of approaches they used were a result of trying to balance the needs of their student teachers with their own goals as teacher educators. By choosing assessment strategies that allowed student teachers to ask questions about their own learning the LTEs could be more responsive to the learning needs of the student teachers, by allowing them to make choices that would best meet their needs, while at the same time encouraging student teachers to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
Finally, I believe that time constraints may have also influenced the type of assessments that the literacy teacher educators used in their literacy course. Many of the LTEs spoke about the challenges of teaching a wide range of topics in such a short time span. As a result, it was likely necessary to prioritize certain methods of assessment and also to provide assignments that were not as labour intensive to mark, given the large class sizes that many of these LTEs had in their literacy course. However, the methods of assessment that they selected may not have always been the most effective or taught with the depth that was required for significant learning and understanding to occur. James and Pedder (2006) discussed the importance of utilizing assessment for learning approaches with student teachers. This research asserted that teacher educators should be actively engaging student teachers in formative assessment processes with a view to providing them with authentic assessment experiences (James and Pedder, 2006).

I believe that as a group, the LTEs in this study provided their student teachers with limited opportunities to engage in authentic assessments, although some were better at this than others. In the literature, this is often referred to as authentic learning tasks, which are hands-on tasks that explicitly link theoretical concepts to practical concepts of teaching (Deluca, Chavez, Bellara, & Cao, 2013). Providing student teachers with the opportunity make meaningful links between the importance of assessment theory and practice should be an integral part of literacy teacher educators course work.

**Course Content**

The participants shared similar beliefs about literacy instruction and acknowledged that teaching literacy required constant reflection on their practice and an openness to the idea that learning is continuous. In this section I highlight two elements that were common to the course content of the participants. These two elements are components of balanced literacy, the use of children’s literature and other texts to support the teaching of literacy.
Components of Balanced Literacy

Balanced literacy is a term that many of the participants used in their literacy courses. However, this term can be misleading because of the multiple ways it can be defined. For some LTEs, the term balanced literacy referred to the teaching of reading and writing strategies that included: teaching student teachers how to read aloud and write aloud; teaching shared reading and shared writing; teaching guided reading and guided writing, and; teaching independent reading and independent writing methods. For others, balanced literacy meant incorporating a variety of reading and writing strategies into their literacy course with no specific framework for addressing certain components of reading or writing. For this study, I define the components of balanced literacy as including reading aloud, guided, shared, and independent reading, as well as writing aloud, guided, shared, and independent writing, which often take place in a Readers’ or Writers’ workshop. Reading aloud can help to deepen a child’s understanding of the text and help them to become more analytical (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Many of the participants indicated that introducing the concept of balanced literacy was a starting point for teaching literacy and all of them included opportunities for student teachers to actively engage in and learn about teaching reading and writing processes in their literacy courses.

Although how the LTEs interpreted the concept of balanced literacy differed, all of the participants included components of guided, shared, and independent reading and components of guided, shared, and independent writing in their literacy courses. Most of the participants viewed a balanced approach to literacy teaching as both foundational for student teachers and integral to their learning experiences in the teacher education program. However, because it meant different things to each of the LTEs it made it hard to view this as a consistent element across their teaching practice. This speaks to the importance of having a pedagogy of teacher education, whereby elements of their literacy course would have some coherence within and across programs, especially as it related to the concept of balanced literacy.
Linda, Lester, Clara, and Ryan provided some examples of the content of their literacy course, noting the overlapping issues of topics, experience, and texts as key. Some participants also shared the underlying reasons behind the choices they made when trying to address a wide range of literacy concepts.

Linda focused on developing concepts of reading and writing through facilitating Readers’ and Writers’ workshops, another aspect of a balanced literacy approach. Linda used children’s literature, journals, textbooks, video clips of leading researchers, and Ministry of Education websites. She also included social justice issues, media literacy, and critical literacy as elements of her course content. Linda also discussed topics such as poetry, social justice, critical literacy, media literacy, and word study because these were important to her. Linda shared, “You’re not going to cover all of the content you want to cover, you have to pick and choose and prioritize, but try to cover as wide a range as possible.” Kosnik and Beck (2011) referred to this as “covering the waterfront” (p. 2). This occurs when teacher educators try to include as many topics as possible in their courses but are unable to teach any in depth. Stagg Peterson (2013) identifies this as a challenge literacy teacher educators face when determining what is fundamental to student teachers’ learning, and how to cover this ground given the limited number of course hours devoted to literacy in their teacher education program. Stagg Peterson (2013) asks, “Should the course address a wide range of topics and issues or a smaller number of topics in order to achieve greater depth of understanding?” (p. 101). This is a question that almost all of the participants in my study grappled with when trying to determine the most appropriate content for their literacy courses. As noted earlier, many of the LTEs tended to focus on breadth not depth. By implementing a balanced literacy approach, participants were able to address a wide range of literacy topics and actively engage student teachers in the learning process.

Lester viewed balanced literacy as a core component of all literacy courses in teacher education programs, and felt that after seeing the practices involved modeled student teachers would be
able to build upon them in their future classrooms. When Lester shared his thoughts about the content of his course, he noted, “I examine balanced literacy by looking at guided and shared reading and the read-aloud experience; and I do the same with writing.” Lester, like many of the other participants, believed that immersing his student teachers in practical experiences that they could replicate with their future students was extremely useful.

Other ways elements of a balanced literacy approach were enacted in the LTEs courses involved the use of course readings and texts. Clara and Ryan used theoretical texts throughout their courses in addition to articles and other documents they provided. Clara explained, “I’ve been using the Bainbridge and Malicky Language Arts textbook for a while… I select chapters that contribute to their developing understanding of the theoretical framework and I ask everybody to read them.” Ryan chose a book called *Teaching for Joy and Justice* by Linda Christensen. He described the author as “eminently practical but deeply critical; she’s a social justice educator.” Christensen’s work draws on the importance of students’ lives and their interaction with the world and attempts to give a voice to their lives through writing; she is recognized for treating students as intellectuals. The selection of this text was an expression of Ryan’s philosophy of collaborative inquiry and his approach of treating his student teachers and their prospective students as intellectuals. He valued drawing on personal experiences and stories to develop the student teachers’ literacy skills. Ryan embedded aspects of critical literacy and narrative writing throughout his course, just as Christensen does in her own work (Christensen, 2009). Using this text enabled him to provide theoretical support for the concepts he was teaching in his course and is another example of how aspects of balanced literacy, in this case independent reading and writing, were embedded in his course. Ryan used the readings from these texts to stimulate class discussions and to encourage student teachers to respond in writing and orally to the material.

In contrast to Ryan, essentials for Julia’s literacy course included the concept of sequencing, critical literacy, literacy and technology, and aspects of grammar, such as word study. Julia began with the intention of specializing in certain topics as her literacy course progressed and her
student teachers gained more practical and theoretical knowledge. Julia wanted her student teachers to understand how to use multiple texts in meaningful ways, and to be able to use different genres of text from across curriculum areas. Julia shared:

Having student teachers enact with a text so for example, actually having student teachers create a picture book. Helping them to understand what it means to create text, personalize it, and then have them read to each other from the picture books they created.

The types of resources LTEs used varied and the choices appeared to be based on personal preferences and research interests; they were not the result of institutional expectations within their teacher education programs. For many of the LTEs, the use of literature and/or textbooks enabled them to introduce their student teachers to theoretical orientations in the field of literacy and provide them with points of reference. Several of the participants referenced the Ministry of Education’s curriculum documents in their interviews and attested to using these as resources throughout their literacy course. The use of curriculum documents and other types of readings by the participants further illustrates their emphasis on a balanced literacy approach because they made an effort to introduce student teachers to different genres of texts when teaching various concepts.

The use of curriculum documents also aligns with one of the three elements of a pedagogy of education proposed by Kosnik et al. (2014): reading, discussing, and analyzing a range of texts and resources. Within their literacy courses, the LTEs found ample opportunities for student teachers to read independently and share thoughts and write responses to texts or materials that they had read or heard, in addition to providing opportunities for authentic reflection. All of the teacher educators in the study were faced with the challenge of trying to include key areas of literacy and assist their student teachers in developing a solid understanding of literacy concepts within certain time constraints. These areas of focus are also in line with recommendations from the International Reading Association (2012), which suggest literacy instruction should include
skills like activating prior knowledge, predicting, questioning, summarizing, and synthesizing information from multiple sources.

The participants had a broad range of experiences and theoretical perspectives that they brought to the teaching of their literacy courses. Clara’s literacy course was centered on teaching student teachers how to facilitate Readers’ and Writers’ workshops in their future classrooms. In the Readers’ workshop, for example, she would teach about the language processes, child development, and how teachers can use strategies to promote children’s development of many of the skills required to learn to read. Clara described the key areas she sought to teach as follows:

I want student teachers to learn about language processes. I want them to learn about ways of teaching spelling and grammar that are contextualized. I want to learn the repertoire of strategies, such as Readers’ and Writers’ workshop, literature circles, using media, for example, to support student learning, and how to scaffold student learning.

Clara also felt that her literacy course should be a forum to discuss issues of social justice, inclusion, and include Indigenous peoples’ perspectives. For her, teaching literacy was not just about literacy; she viewed her course as a space where student teachers would learn how to be “decent human beings, as well as teachers.” Social justice and being socially aware was something Clara felt strongly about. Other topics Clara identified in her literacy course included the development of language and thought; lesson and unit planning, the selection, planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning opportunities, and; viewing, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. She viewed these as essential components of her course. Her intention was for these topics to be explored in a way that would provide a framework for student teachers to use as they learned how to address individual pupils’ needs in their future classrooms.

Julia emphasized reading development and the stages of reading development. She talked about differentiated instruction and varying methodologies with the intention that her student teachers
grasp these concepts with some depth. She also addressed the importance of having a digital or electronic presence in her literacy course. Julia shared:

I think that helping student teachers understand what having a digital presence means for literacy is essential. Digital technology is not just a tool you can use, but actually understanding on a cognitive level how we think in terms of technology.

An area that received more attention in his literacy course was the concept of balanced literacy. Lester focused much of his time on trying to convey what it means to have a balanced literacy program but acknowledged that it was impossible to cover all topics. He indicated that his course content was a combination of his own priorities, the Ministry of Education priorities, and student teachers’ needs. He admitted:

I know I don’t do enough justice to all of the strands (reading, writing, oral and visual communication), I know that. I mean, we teach people guided reading, or teach them about running records. I mean, there’s so many things that you have to introduce them to… I think that any teacher education program should give them a taste of balanced literacy…and because I’m not as great at guided reading, for example, I connect with my teaching colleagues about these components. But I realize there are some things missing from my course. In literacy there are just so many topics. I think it would be impossible to teach everything.

Lester made sure that he taught at least two classes that focused specifically on writing. These classes centred on two big questions from his student teachers. One question he received frequently was, “How do you get kids motivated to write?” The second was, “How do you assess their writing?” Lester made a concerted effort to try to meet the needs of his student teachers, and this was another reason for the variations in his course content from year to year. Lester shared:

What I teach depends on what student teachers are like and the questions they have. I used to start the year with, what are all the questions you have about reading? What are all the questions you have about teaching writing? And then I’d search for the answers, and by the end of the year, after 36 hours of class, and reading on their own, and some professional development they have some answers. Some of the answers came from their practicum experiences and how they reacted to those
experiences...but even with all of that, they always come away with more questions at the end of the year...It’s so hard for student teachers to grasp everything.

Lester was not unique in his struggle to compress as much literacy content as he could into his course. Linda talked about how her vision changed and how this led to changes in the content of her course. She indicated that teacher educators needed to be willing to change with the times and keep moving forward in order to continue learning and teaching in meaningful ways. In her course outline, Linda indicated that her student teachers would have the opportunity to explore language processes, grammar usage, current theories of reading instruction, poetry, literature, drama, and psychological and sociological factors that influence learning in children. At this point in her career Linda developed the entire course on her own, as she was new to the teacher education institution and had no colleagues with whom to network or share course outlines. Linda remarked:

I feel pretty good about my course, I mean, I don’t think any of us can sit here and say that all the courses we teach are wonderful or perfect, and that there’s nothing I would change, but I think it is pretty good. I do change it, I get feedback from the students and I’m changing it right now, I’m actually changing their last assignment because my intent for what they need to be demonstrating as part of their learning has changed.

Linda was aware that she did not know everything about literacy. She considered herself on a life-long journey of learning and wanted her student teachers to adopt the same kind of approach towards teaching literacy. Linda wanted student teachers to leave her literacy course with an understanding of how to develop and implement a Readers’ and Writers’ workshop and to be able to apply the concepts they had learned in meaningful ways.

All of the participants attempted to address components of balanced literacy that would could be used a springboard for their student teachers to begin their own literacy teaching.
Use of Children’s Literature

There is a great deal of research that supports the use of children’s literature to teach literacy skills in elementary classrooms (Callow 2011; Galda & Cullinan, 2006). Many of the participants used children’s and young adult literature as a springboard for teaching literacy; Clara, Lester, Jane, and Linda provided the best examples in my study. Ryan and Julia were secondary school literacy teacher educators, so they used Shakespeare and other, multi-modal resources in their literacy courses. The use of children’s literature allowed the elementary LTEs to incorporate their “love of literature” into their literacy courses, introduce a range of what they considered high quality texts to the student teachers, and explore different genres of literature in a practical way. Indeed, research has shown that children’s literature provides accessible texts that are useful for exploring themes and theories that student teachers may be teaching (Brenner, 2003).

For example, Clara discussed her use of children’s literature in the framework of a Readers’ Workshop as follows:

I try to connect everything I do in my literacy course with children’s literature. For example, I ask my student teachers to think about how, when teaching about the language processes, they can use children’s literature to develop proficiency of language communication, vocabulary, and grammar.

Clara continued by explaining how she infused children’s literature into many aspects of her course:

When it comes to teaching the tools of language communication, for example, grammar or vocabulary development, I try to connect it with children’s literature or my approach to teaching spelling is embedded in a meaning-based approach, where I can draw on literature. For example, I give them a mini-lecture on grammar and then I give them a book list.

Lester, like Clara, used a great deal of children’s literature in his class. Children’s literature was a tool for him to teach different elements of reading, writing, and talk curriculum to his student
teachers. Lester drew upon his extensive collection of children’s literature and emphasized using picture books to teach literacy concepts. He used children’s literature as a foundation to demonstrate reading, writing, and talking strategies. Lester noted, “I use a lot of children’s literature to teach the reading program…I use children’s literature to demonstrate different kinds of learning opportunities that student teachers can provide during their practicum.”

Jane also drew upon her interest in children’s and young adult literature. When she discussed her vision for teaching literacy, she noted, “I’m constantly looking for children’s literature that embeds in it fun and word play, literature that allows student teachers to be aware of word study.” Linda had a similar approach in that she valued children’s literature that allowed her to incorporate other aspects of literacy teaching such as reading comprehension strategies and the importance of word study and vocabulary development. The use of children’s literature allowed Clara, Lester, Jane, and Linda to develop lessons and concepts within their course to help student teachers acquire practical pedagogical approaches for teaching literacy in addition to their learning to develop a theoretical framework. Children’s literature also provided the teacher educators with an opportunity to introduce a variety of textbooks and online resources to student teachers that would support their literacy programs.

What was missing from this discussion were specific examples of children’s literature that the participants actually used and how they determined whether a particular text was suitable. Also, it was unclear whether or not they used children’s literature to explore more complex themes of sustainability, social justice, or diversity or other issues that often arise in elementary schools. For example, children’s literature can be used as a powerful tool for teaching young children about issues of sustainability (Bradbery, 2013) and it has also been used to address topics such as war, refugees, homelessness, and poverty (Lightsey, Olliff, & Cain, 2006). Nor was it clear if the literacy teacher educators selected children’s literature that reflected a range of cultural diversity or diversity in terms of the setting, characters, and authors. However, it was evident that the use of children’s literature allowed the participants to model pedagogical strategies for their student
teachers that could be transferred to classroom settings. Further, children’s literature was not taught in isolation, the goal was to embed literacy concepts with underlying theoretical perspectives through classroom discussions and to assist student teachers to make connections between their own teaching and learning.

The LTEs in this study all used a range of pedagogical approaches in their literacy courses to teach literacy concepts. The findings show that their theoretical frameworks and research backgrounds influenced the strategies they chose to implement in their literacy courses. These strategies included modeling how to read a book and teaching specific comprehension strategies, and giving the student teachers opportunities to do the same. Integrating interactive experiential learning opportunities using children’s literature was common among the LTEs teaching student teachers for elementary certification. Many of the participants tried to embed these learning opportunities in the framework of the Readers’ or Writers’ workshop using practical exercises and, to a lesser extent, traditional lectures.

The examples above illustrate the range of content covered in courses among the participants. However, the common goal was the intent to adequately prepare student teachers to teach literacy and the categories represent their efforts to prioritize topics that they felt would be most beneficial and most impactful given the short period of time that was spent in their literacy course. The selection of content for their courses appeared to be based partly on their previous doctoral research and partly on personal preference and experiences.

For example, the teacher educators’ previous research interests often influenced how they selected the content for their literacy courses; in Julia’s case, this was digital literacy and multiliteracies. She had completed her Ph.D. in multiliteracies and this concept was embedded throughout her course. Lester’s doctoral research was about the importance of written and oral response to literature. In Lester’s course, he emphasized the value of talk and oral language and used children’s literature as a foundation for developing literacy concepts. In Clara’s case, it was
her doctoral research in language and curriculum studies that influenced the choices she made about making multicultural children’s literature a prominent part of her course content. It was not unusual that the depth that each LTE went into each topic varied, nor was it atypical that the opportunities for their student teachers to engage in practical experiences and apply their learning through in class activities or assignments also varied. However, the variation in topics and tendency to focus more heavily on topics connected to their research interests meant that more challenging issues such as teaching literacy to English Language Learners or teaching literacy to students with exceptionalities received very little if any attention among the participants. Upon examination of the course outlines, some of the participants had one class dedicated to addressing special education and English Language learners and others did not specifically mention this topic at all.

One factor that influenced the depth and variation within the LTEs literacy courses was time. The amount of time they had to teach literacy was limited and the challenge was prioritizing topics and making deliberate decisions about when, how, and what to teach given the time constraints they were operating under. Linda acknowledged that there was not enough time to cover everything in depth when she said:

I guess my goal is to give student teachers a smattering of what’s out there. They are not going to leave as a well-rounded individual that knows everything about literacy, but they will know little bits of a fair amount of stuff…and at least they will know that there are textbooks and resources that can help them figure out how to deal with different topics.

While time constraints were a commonly mentioned constraint among participants, Clara was the one exception because she had much more time for her literacy course (54 hours) than the other participants. This meant that Clara had the time to address key topics in depth, such as differentiated instruction, assessment, spelling, digital literacy, multi-modalities, critical media, and to really think about what concepts she wanted her students to learn.
For Linda, equipping the student teachers with the tools to further develop their own knowledge base was an attempt to address the gaps in the content of her literacy course. She attributed these gaps to the lack of teaching time for her literacy course, and similar to the other LTEs, struggled to fit in all the topics she felt were important to teach.

This led me to believe that greater alignment among literacy courses within the province of Ontario would address the fragmentation that currently exists across teacher education programs and literacy courses. In Ontario, there are no regulations around specific topics of instruction for literacy teacher educators; however, there are recommendations that have been developed by the Ontario Association of Deans, which specifically address teacher preparation in literacy education. A report written by Wade-Woolley (2011) advocates three overarching themes that are related to the preparation of student teachers who will teach literacy. These themes are:

- Values, dispositions, and habits of mind
- Essential knowledge of literacy and contexts
- Principles and practices of effective language and literacy teaching (p. 11).

Essentially Wade-Woolley (2011) is proposing that first literacy teacher educators need to cultivate with their student teachers a disposition towards continuous learning. Second, that literacy teacher educators need to enable student teachers to develop a deep knowledge base that creates an understanding of not only curriculum documents, but also, that student teachers acquire an understanding of foundational literacy development and learning. Finally, that teacher educators prepare their student teachers to have an understanding of the principles of effective language and literacy teaching (p. 4). The goals outlined by Wade-Woolley (2011) are challenging given the complexity of work that literacy teacher educators do and the fact that they are faced with a number of issues in their role that can impact on their teaching over which they have little control. These issues include working with increasingly diverse student teacher populations, limitations on teaching time, pressure to publish, departmental obligations, and calls for reform. Navigating all of these issues while at the same time trying to teach about teaching
and teach about literacy is almost an impossible task. Yet the literacy teacher educators in this study strived to create learning environments that would equip their student teachers to be successful teachers in the 21st century classrooms.

The findings show that it was a challenge for the teacher educators to incorporate all aspects of literacy into their courses, and that in fact, many were aware that their literacy courses had significant gaps. The participants had a range of pedagogical approaches and how they incorporated their knowledge of theory and practice into their literacy course varied widely. One element that seemed to be common to all participants was the importance of trying to meet the needs of their student teachers by being open to their questions. Indeed, student teachers’ questions helped shape the direction of the literacy course for many of the participants. While the data suggest that participants’ research interests may have influenced their course priorities, other factors could have been influential in less obvious ways.

For example, the overall program priorities, individual departmental priorities, and the institutional culture of the teacher education programs in which they worked could have influenced their teaching and the content of their courses. Although the participants did not speak directly to these factors, research by Cochran-Smith (2003) argues that there needs to be more attention to the institutional supports that should be in place in order to meet the complex demands of preparing teachers (p. 6). It is not unusual for variation to occur from one literacy course to another. However, this can be problematic because it means that student teachers will have gaps in their literacy knowledge. These concerns are discussed in more detail in the concluding chapter.

**Cumulative Findings: Returning to the Conceptual Framework**

In this section of the chapter, I briefly analyze the main findings of the dissertation in relation to the conceptual framework as discussed in Chapter Two. The conceptual framework addressed
the role that social constructivism played in creating their vision as literacy teacher educators, the importance of vision for teaching literacy and teaching about teaching, and the importance of developing a pedagogy of literacy teacher education. These concepts intersect with each other in different ways. They interacted in more of a cyclical process than a hierarchical process as I first thought. Social constructivism influenced vision which in turn impacted a pedagogy of literacy teacher education and as the LTEs continued to work and experience the world, their pedagogy continued to be informed by a constructivist view. Figure 2 depicts the cyclical nature of this process.

Figure 4. Social Constructivism, Vision and Pedagogy of Literacy Teacher Education are interrelated concepts that influence each other
Social Constructivism

Through conducting this research, I developed a conceptual framework that proposed that social constructivism has an ongoing influence on vision and literacy teacher education pedagogy. As I have identified, constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed based on social and cultural experiences that an individual has in their life (Vygotsky, 1963). I saw the concept of social constructivism emerge for the LTEs in a variety of ways. This theoretical lens was appropriate given the fact that the role of a literacy teacher educator is complex and requires them to think and do a multitude of things at the same time (Kennedy, 2006). I also found that the LTEs in this study were trying to teach a wide range of content within a short period of time, they were trying to foster a learning community of student teachers that was reflective, and a community of student teachers that would also be responsive to the needs of the children that they would eventually be teaching. This meant that the LTEs were drawing on their experiences and knowledge of the environment in which they worked and looking ahead to the diversity of environments that their student teachers would be working in. This is where the social constructivist framework connects to the vision and the pedagogy of literacy teacher education. Indeed, social constructivism is both a social and cultural model of learning (Gordon, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). By drawing and reflecting on their experiences as former classroom teachers, experienced literacy teacher educators, and researchers, the six participants were in effect drawing on the principles of social constructivism to enact their vision and develop their pedagogy of literacy teacher education.

Vision for Teaching Literacy

Developing a Philosophy for Teaching Literacy

It was evident that all six literacy teacher educators in the study worked very hard to create a vision for teaching literacy in their literacy course that would provide a foundation for their
student teachers’ future literacy teaching. Hammerness (2006) defined vision as teachers’ own conceptions of ideal teaching practices. The concept of vision as discussed in Chapter Two comprises the beliefs, values, and intentions of the literacy teacher educators that guide the direction of their literacy courses and literacy teaching. In this study, the participants’ visions ranged from an emphasis on modeling instructional strategies, to integration of children’s literature, to exploration of multiliteracies, to developing a collaborative inquiry approach to teaching. One common aspect of the LTEs vision was that they believed it was important for student teachers to develop their own philosophy for teaching literacy. As a result, they worked to assist student teachers with the application of a framework such as collaborative inquiry or constructivism.

For example, Lester encouraged his student teachers to develop their own philosophy for teaching literacy by observing best practices in schools and then reflecting on how to incorporate and adapt these observations into their teaching. Lester reported that he often told his student teachers that they needed to adapt the strategies he used by reminding them, “This is my philosophy… I don’t want you to imitate it, I want you to think about it, how would it work for you, and what are you seeing out there in the schools.”

Ryan and Clara made references to spending time in their courses helping student teachers understand frameworks because they felt these would inform how they developed their philosophy for teaching in their own classrooms. Ryan saw great potential in the process of collaborative inquiry to support student teacher learning and inform their practice. This aligns with research that suggests that teachers, or in this case student teachers, construct knowledge about teaching and learning by reflecting on practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004).

Clara’s vision focused on helping student teachers develop a constructivist framework in order to recognize that literacy is contextual. Clara stated, “Constructivism is central to my work as a
teacher educator.” She viewed her role as helping student teachers to construct meaning and apply new ideas to pre-existing knowledge to further develop their learning and teaching practice. Constructivists believe “that what is deemed as knowledge is always informed by a particular perspective and shaped by a specific ideological stance” (Gordon, 2008, p. 324). Both Ryan’s and Clara’s use of frameworks was intended to deepen their student teachers’ learning and assist them with the development of a philosophy for teaching literacy. Linda, Lester, and Jane did not use specific frameworks, but like Ryan and Clara, they engaged student teachers in discussions that enabled them to construct their own knowledge, interpret ideas, and explore concepts with a view towards developing their own philosophy for teaching literacy. The diversity of approaches these teacher educators used illustrates the complexity of developing a common vision amongst literacy teacher educators. All six participants commented that they wanted student teachers to develop their own philosophy about teaching, but to also have an understanding of their instructor’s philosophy and how it differed from their own. Having student teachers develop their own teaching philosophy was another aspect of learning from others that, for Lester, Jane, and Clara, was an important part of the process of becoming literacy teachers. However, the challenge with asking student teachers to develop a philosophy for teaching is that even with their limited experiences in classrooms, they have a tendency to believe that they already know everything is to know about teaching (Lortie, 1975). However, development of a philosophy of teaching that is rooted in both theory and practice takes a very long time.

Adding to the complexity of teaching literacy was the way in which participants enacted their vision for teaching literacy. Enactment of the participants’ vision was not uniform, yet I am advocating that it should be uniform. The vision of the participants continued to evolve over time and with experience. It is logical that the experiences the teacher educators had influenced their beliefs about teaching literacy and although these beliefs varied widely, there were some common aspects. For example, topics selected for the course were often based on the participants’ personal interests. These topics tended to be focused on areas that the participants felt most
confident in teaching rather than on essential literacy concepts. For some participants, these topics had strong links to their doctoral research and/or current areas of research. For example, Julia’s doctoral research on multiliteracies was evident throughout her literacy course. Ryan also drew heavily on his research around critical literacy and collaborative inquiry in teaching his literacy course. According to Hammerness (2006), teachers use vision in two ways: on one hand, as a guide for the future and, on the other hand, as a means of looking back and reflecting upon previous work experiences. All of the participants drew on their personal interests to some extent to develop their vision, both looking forward and reflecting back on their teaching practice. Furthermore, as much as the process of reflection is important, it also highlights a hidden challenge faced by the participants. By reflecting and changing their practice it becomes difficult to articulate a clearly defined vision to student teachers and to facilitate their learning goals as initially stated at the beginning of their course.

Another common aspect of the participants’ vision for teaching literacy was the focus on exploring student teachers identified needs and personal interests and integrating these into the content of the literacy course whenever possible. Working to address the needs of the student teachers was a priority for all of the teacher educators, although at times it was a challenge because the range of needs among the student teachers was so broad. Four participants, Linda, Jane, Ryan, and Lester, discussed how feedback from the student teachers about their needs and interests played a role in changing aspects of their literacy courses. All four of them explicitly acknowledged that it was important to address the student teachers needs and areas of interests in order to keep them engaged in the literacy course. These literacy teacher educators were not afraid to ask student teachers to share their ideas and insights; they valued the opinions of their student teachers.

For example, Ryan made changes to his course over time based on the changing educational climate in which his student teachers were learning and input that he received from his student teachers. Ryan explained, “I make modifications to my course syllabus to adapt to the realities of
the classrooms that my student teachers are in.” Encouraging feedback from student teachers provided the literacy teacher educators with opportunities to be responsive to their student teachers’ needs, and also afforded them opportunities to model the importance of reflecting on their teaching, to be explicit about why certain topics were taught, and to ensure that the content was relevant to their student teachers experiences and to the school contexts in which they would eventually be teaching. This points towards the need for LTEs to not only reflect on, but to also write about what they do in order to improve their practice. As Jove (2011) indicated, reflecting on teaching practice as a teacher educator can contribute to the improvement of the teachers’ work as a teacher educator and a researcher, while also being responsive to the needs of his or her student teachers. This also connects with the next concept to be discussed, continuous learning. The participants viewed themselves as continuous learners, both as teacher educators and as researchers, and they acknowledged this fact to their student teachers.

Continuous Learning

Teaching involves complex skills, knowledge, abilities, and competencies (Koster & Dengerink, 2008), more than can be taught in a single course. All of the participants in this study shared the perspective that their literacy courses were only a starting point for their student teachers and many emphasized continuous learning as part of their vision. There were two components to this: first, continuous learning for themselves as teacher educators, and second, instilling in student teachers that they would need to continue to learn throughout their teaching careers. Further, the teaching approach from the LTEs was not top-down. LTEs learned from their student teachers and from their colleagues and valued the interconnectedness of the relationship between LTE and student teacher. These literacy teacher educators were exemplary because they placed emphasis on responding to feedback in meaningful ways, not just giving simple answers to student teachers. As Rudland et al. (2013) noted, “Effective feedback is instrumental to effective learning” (p. 99) and in this study, this applied to both the LTEs and the student teachers.
Clara, like all of the other participants, hoped that student teachers would recognize that seeking professional development learning opportunities was essential to their growth as teachers. Clara noted, “I’ve explained to my student teachers that the literacy course is a springboard to literacy learning and teaching.” All participants acknowledged that they were still invested in a tremendous amount of learning about literacy and teaching literacy, even though they were experienced literacy teacher educators. Many, indicated this openness to lifelong learning as was described in earlier chapters. Jane and Linda sought out professional development learning opportunities by taking Additional Qualification Courses in reading and literacy. Julia, Ryan, Clara, and Lester attended and presented at conferences in order to continue learning and used these as opportunities to collaborate with colleagues as form of professional development that would inform their teaching. Clara, Ryan, and Julia published articles and papers in peer-reviewed journals. Lester wanted his student teachers to know that he was always learning and striving to improve his teaching. These are just a few of the examples of their commitment to continuous learning.

The concept of continuous learning was also connected to conducting research. Many of the participants incorporated action research assignments into their literacy courses in addition to conducting and participating in large-scale funded research projects as part of their own work as teacher educators. This practice reflects one of the four spheres of knowledge, knowledge of research, as described in the Kosnik et al.’s (2015) international study of 28 literacy teacher educators. Kosnik et al.’s (2015) study found, “effective LTEs need to be actively involved in conducting and applying research to their practice and to expand and/or refine their knowledge of research practices, learn new methodologies, and acquire identities as full-fledged researchers” (p. 57). In my study, the teacher educators who worked in research-focused institutions, namely Ryan and Julia who were seeking tenure, indicated that they felt some pressure to conduct research and apply for grants as part of that quest. Clara was continuously applying for research grants and publishing her work in scholarly journals. Thus, for Clara, Julia, and Ryan conducting
research was an integral part of their work as teacher educators. For the other participants, research was important, but not an integral part of their practice. Cochran-Smith (2005) suggests “teacher educators should function simultaneously as both researcher and practitioner” (p. 219).

In the U.S. research on teacher educators through the process of self-study has been a major area of growth (Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenburg, 2005). More and more teacher educators see the value in researching themselves and their student teachers in order to improve their practice. The growing number of participants in the American Educational Research Association (AERA) special interest group, “Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices” (S-STEP), supports this.

For my participants’ self-study was not an area of focus at the time this research was conducted, but they all valued research and the learning that came from reading, reviewing, conducting, or participating in research. This was part of the participants’ intent to instil the importance of continuous learning in their student teachers for the many reasons noted. However, it was not evident if all of the participants had a critical lens to “consume” research in a way that allowed them to interpret research studies that were relevant to the context of teacher education or if they applied the knowledge from their own research or other research studies to their teaching practice. This was not true for Ryan, Clara, and Julia. These three participants were actively engaged in research studies and projects that were connected to their work as literacy teacher educators.

For example, Ryan’s research interests centred around adolescent experiences with literacy, and creating collaborative inquiry communities with literacy teachers. Clara’s research focused on multicultural children’s literature and teacher development. Julia’s research on multiliteracies impacted her work in her literacy course, her current area of research focused on children’s use of multimodalities such as IPads in the classroom, and how the use of multimodalities could be used to teach reading. While the actual application of research to practice may have occurred, there was little evidence that this was consistent across all of the participants. This may be attributed in part due to my own inexperience as a novice researcher, I missed the opportunity to
Identity was another important aspect of the participants’ vision in this study and many encouraged their student teachers to investigate their own identities as literacy learners before they engaged with pupils. This way they could understand that the context of their learning and their literacy experiences might differ vastly from that of their future students, and the ways that their own learning experiences influenced them as teachers. The LTEs hope was that, by reflecting on their identity as literacy learners, student teachers would develop a greater awareness of how using reflection with their future students would be beneficial for their teaching. Wenger (1998) proposed that we become who we are by learning through social interactions in practice. Of these experienced teacher educators, five of the six had actually been classroom teachers and still drew on their knowledge and experience as former classroom teachers to inform their teaching, in essence learning through interactions in practice. However, the literature indicates that one’s professional identity as a teacher educator is not the same as an identity as a classroom teacher, yet they are not mutually exclusive (Williams et al., 2008, p. 250).

It appears that a similar view of identity not being mutually exclusive existed among the teacher educators in my study. Lester, Linda, and Jane felt that their prior experience as teachers gave them more credibility in the classroom. Jane said, “I consider my work an extension of myself as a teacher.” Teacher educators often hold multiple identities and must understand the implications of these identities on their work and their student teachers. The LTEs in this study had multiple identities: classroom teachers, researchers, consultants, mentors, practicum supervisors, and of course teacher educators. They often drew on these identities to inform their teaching and used their experience from those roles to find ways to make meaningful connections with their student
teachers. Their identities as teachers and researchers also led them to stay abreast of current government curricular initiatives and research.

The findings in this section reveal that the teacher educators were a rather heterogeneous group. This aligns with Lunenberg’s (2010) findings that teacher educators “form a rather heterogeneous group, not only do they come from different backgrounds, they also work in different settings” (p. 5). The participants in this study had a wide range of background experiences as consultants, classroom teachers, researchers, and instructional leaders that led them to the role of teacher educator. In addition, the participants thought carefully about their vision for teaching literacy by drawing on their research interests and prior experiences, and reflecting on their practice. Many aspects of their vision for teaching literacy were intertwined with their disposition for continuous learning and wish for student teachers to reflect on their own identity as literacy learners as a way to inform their teaching practice. The participants made decisions about their literacy teaching that addressed important questions such as: What would be most meaningful for my student teachers to understand in regards to teaching literacy? In what ways can student teachers apply the knowledge, skills, and strategies that they learn in the literacy course to their future classrooms? While their visions for teaching literacy varied, their primary goals were similar. Indeed, participants sought to assist student teachers in developing a foundation for teaching literacy, to have student teachers approach their teaching with an understanding that the learning process should be on-going throughout their career, and to have student teachers understand that they needed to develop their own philosophy for teaching based on personal beliefs, research, and experiences. It was evident that all the participants reflected on the information they gathered from their experiences teaching literacy and adjusted their course content to meet the needs of their student teachers. Sometimes this involved adjusting not only the content, but also the pedagogical approach that they were using in order to meet the needs of their student teachers. Participants were able to do this while still staying true to their vision for
teaching literacy, because part of their vision required them to be responsive to the needs of their learners.

Pedagogy of Literacy Teacher Education

According to Swennen and van der Klink (2008), teacher education pedagogy addresses how to stimulate and assess the learning of student teachers (p. 22). Loughran (2006) argued for the necessity of teacher educators to develop a “pedagogy of teacher education.” Loughran (2006) argued that developing a pedagogy of teacher education involved thinking about the practice of teaching about teaching as a complex process that requires both practical experience and research experience. Clara, Jane, Linda, and Lester all embraced pedagogical approaches that included experiential learning. While their depth of knowledge on specific topics actual teaching styles varied, their emphasis on practical skill development was an integral piece of their pedagogy. Being aware of the challenge of matching teaching reading, writing, or curricular concepts with a particular pedagogical strategy was common across all the participants. Further all of the participants in my study had research experience. For some, research was mainly from their doctoral research, but for others like Ryan, Julia, and Clara, engagement with research was continuous as they were conducting both small and large-scale research studies in addition to their teaching responsibilities.

The LTEs noted that at times there was a disconnect between the student teachers’ learning and the LTEs goals, which at times seemed like a failure of the LTEs pedagogy. Clara indicated that at the end of her literacy course some of the student teachers shared feedback that was “far from reality.” For example, some had claimed that they had not received any resources about children’s literature when in fact she had provided a bibliography in her course outline. Lester had a similar experience. At the end of his literacy course, some of Lester’s student teachers indicated that they did not understand the concept of balanced literacy. This was surprising and disappointing to Lester because he had spent a whole term teaching about balanced literacy and
the individual components of a balanced literacy program. The disconnect between the LTEs goals for the student teachers’ learning and the lack of understanding by the student teachers was a frustration shared by other participants. However, these examples provide important insights for us into the complexity of the work of literacy teacher educators who appeared to be explicitly teaching about literacy, but often found that at the end of their literacy courses student teachers were unable to grasp the fact that they had actually been introduced to certain concepts.

Earlier in Chapter Two I discussed Kosnik et al.’s proposal of literacy teacher educators developing a pedagogy of literacy teacher education. The three elements they highlighted as particularly important included valuing and responding to diversity, using a range of texts, and authentic reflection. These elements are presented in Figure 4.

![Pie chart showing three elements of pedagogy: Value and respond to diversity, Use of a range of texts, and Authentic Reflection.](image)

Figure 5. Pedagogy of Literacy Teacher Education.
As Kosnik et al. (2014) pointed out, these three elements are complementary to each other. In the next section I will discuss and analyze the ways in which my participants enacted the concept of a pedagogy of literacy teacher education in their literacy courses.

Valuing and Responding to Diversity

Ryan, whose teaching framework was based on a collaborative inquiry approach, explained the following when he was asked about his pedagogy as a teacher educator.

In my course, we look at process-based pedagogies. We don’t look at them in terms of best practices which is a term that I have a problem with; we look at them as promising practices, promising practices are approaches that have proven useful to teachers in various kinds of settings and circumstances. We try them on, we look at them from all sides, and we talk about them and pick them apart together to see how they feel to us.

Ryan was constantly pushing his student teachers to consider multiple perspectives and the diversity of their future students’ experiences, and to reflect on the implications of each other’s perspectives for their own future classrooms regardless of the topic under study.

Lester thought about his pedagogical approach in a similar way. Lester shared, “I’m modeling and demonstrating… I always try to demonstrate and let them practice a strategy and then I ask them what worked, what didn’t work, what would be the challenges with a particular grade.” Lester had expectations of his student teachers that went beyond just knowing how to teach, he wanted them to consider the implications of their choices for the diversity of pupils in their classrooms, the different ages of pupils, and reflect on why using a particular strategy might work with one group of children and not another. This example demonstrates that the role of a teacher educator goes beyond simply the transmission of information. Lester, Ryan, and the other participants knew that there were many ways that a teacher educator could teach a literacy course. The ways they chose to teach were often influenced by the LTEs experiences with teaching from the classroom and also their experiences teaching in teacher education and they seemed to be
aware of these influences. This aligns with Loughran’s (2006) notion that, “there is a continual need for teacher educators to be conscious of not only what they are teaching, but also the manner in which that teaching is conducted (p. 13). All the LTEs in this study demonstrated an awareness of what their pedagogical approaches to teaching were and how their approaches to teaching of literacy might influence the learning of student teachers. What was not clear was whether they were aware of how their pedagogical approaches were meeting the needs of increasingly diverse groups of student teachers in their literacy courses. The emphasis on issues of diversity and responding to the diversity of student teachers certainly varied across participants.

The concept of diversity was enacted in different ways for the participants, but one aspect that was consistent across all participants was the increasing focus on incorporating multiple perspectives and viewpoints into their discussions about literacy. This included discussions about valuing the diversity of experiences that children would bring to the classrooms, and discussing issues centred around social justice. For example, Clara was particularly focused on addressing issues of diversity in relation to the Indigenous communities and spent a great deal of time discussing Indigenous perspectives and values in her literacy course. Clara shared, “I want the student teachers to learn about inclusion and social justice…there are things that would make them decent human beings as well as good teachers that I want them to learn in my literacy course.”

Moving beyond discussions around the importance of hearing multiple perspectives three of the participants looked at multiliteracies as a way to address and value the diversity of literacy. The multiliteracies argument has spurred some literacy teacher educators to recognize that the skills required to communicate effectively in society are constantly changing (Mills, 2009, p. 108). One of the key aspects of multiliteracies pedagogy is the notion that there are many types of literacy. At the onset of this study, it became apparent that there was a strong focus on multiliteracies by two of the LTEs, Ryan and Julia, and an emerging focus on multiliteracies by
Clara. For the other three participants, whose courses did not have a strong focus on multiliteracies, there was at least an awareness of its growing importance as well as an understanding of the evolving concept of literacy.

For Ryan and Julia, multiliteracies were an integral part of their pedagogy. They both wanted student teachers to broaden their conceptions of what counted as literacy for children in Ontario schools and examine how they could incorporate aspects of multiliteracies and multi-modality into their future teaching. Julia had consistently embedded multiliteracies and multi-modality concepts into her literacy teaching. In one of her interviews Julia shared, “I want student teachers to expand their thinking about what literacy is, to go beyond the written word.”

Ryan also indicated that he wanted his student teachers to broaden their notion of what counted as literacy. He wanted his student teachers to be in conversation with children about their literacy interests and to problematize what counts as literacy. Ryan asked, “What does it mean to think about whatever that kid is doing in the corner on his cell phone as a literacy practice, not as an annoyance?” Ryan began his literacy course by asking these kinds of questions so that student teachers would also begin to question their own assumptions about literacy. Asking these questions gave Ryan a platform from which to engage his student teachers in the concept of multiliteracies. In my view, both Ryan and Julia wanted their student teachers to develop the perspective that all areas of their lives and their students’ lives are related to literacy in some way and that this was an integral part of multiliteracies teaching.

Rowsell, Kosnik, and Beck (2008) believed that promoting multiliteracies pedagogy should be an integral part of teacher education in the 21st century. Julia, Ryan, and Clara embraced the concept of different types of literacy in their own teaching and incorporated multiliteracies into many aspects of their course. For example, Julia talked about how essential it was for student teachers to think about working in digital environments and perhaps have a class blog or website and use social media to connect with parents as well as their children. This aligns with the New
London Group’s (1996) emphasis on the importance of teaching multi-modal language forms in schools, not as a replacement for traditional teaching but as a supplement to traditional literacy pedagogy (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). Ryan and Julia’s responses indicate that they valued multi-modal approaches to literacy teaching and multiliteracies and made these concepts essential parts of their literacy teaching.

Clara was the participant who had an increasing focus on multiliteracies. Clara’s choice to discuss the importance of thinking about multi-modalities was indicative of her increasing emphasis in this area. Clara made attempts to include multi-modal assignments and lessons throughout her course. For example, in her literacy course she had a lesson in which student teachers had to develop a multi-modal activity to respond to the novel they had selected as part of the Reader’s Workshop. In another assignment, Clara asked student teachers to work in pairs and come up with a multi-modal response to a picture book and to think about why we need to have children respond in multi-modalities. Clara’s emphasis on multi-modalities was growing, she was open to learning more about this area, and to including these concepts as another way to value and respond to diversity in her literacy course.

In contrast, the other three participants in this study were only beginning to address multiliteracies in their teaching at the time of this study. For example, Linda, Lester, and Jane acknowledged that they did not address evolving concepts of literacy and the integration of technology as well as they felt they should have, but they were aware of this fact. They felt that their student teachers often knew more than they did in this area. It was a challenge to address multi-modal ways of learning about literacy in their courses. Lester stated more than once, “I’m a technophobe…I’m not current with multiliteracies, but I’m aware of it.” Linda, Lester, and Jane were very honest about their lack of expertise with technology and multiliteracies and how this limited their ability to teach these concepts with any depth. Linda reached out to colleagues with more expertise to assist her in this area. She shared, “I consult with the technology expert in our faculty.” Jane acknowledged that she was “still learning about multi-modalities.”
integration of technology and literacy was clearly a gap in the pedagogy of at least three of the LTEs in the study. However, their demonstrated awareness of this gap could be the first step towards closing it.

McLean and Rowsell (2013) argued “literacy teacher educators need to shift their emphasis from teaching traditional reading, writing, and grammar strategies to ones that offer flexibility in the kind of meaning-making student teachers do” (p. 1). I believe that a shift in thinking takes time and requires practice and meaningful opportunities for learning from those with expertise in this area. Without these kinds of supports in place, shifting their pedagogical approaches to embrace multiliteracies and multi-modal ways of learning would be challenging for the literacy teacher educators with less experience in this area.

Range of Texts and Resources

The LTEs incorporated a range of texts in their literacy course and for many a focus on children’s literature was central to their work. As highlighted in Chapter Six, Jane, Lester, and Clara found a myriad of ways to infuse the reading of picture books into their literacy course. Picture books played a prominent role in the elementary literacy teacher educators courses, not only for modelling and sharing strategies when reading aloud to children, but also as a vehicle to share other elements of a balanced literacy program such as shared and guided reading. However, it was not clear if the elementary LTEs talked about how to assist children in selecting appropriate texts or if they discussed grouping students for guided reading groups based on their instructional needs. The selection of appropriate texts is an important consideration for LTEs to address in their literacy course. This aligns with the position of the (IRA 2012), which advocates for authentic literacy experiences using a wide variety of texts. Further support can be found from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCATE) (2006). NCATE calls for a reading curriculum that spans a wide range of literature, that is accessible to all students, and that spans a wide range of topics. Moving beyond the use of a range of texts and resources, LTEs must also
address how to motivate children with the selection of texts that are of interest to them, that are accessible to them in terms of their reading level, and finally that will engage students in meaningful discussions about issues that are relevant to their lives and connect with their home and school experiences.

For the secondary LTEs, Ryan and Julia, their use of texts and resources involved engaging their student teachers with poetry, Shakespeare’s plays, autobiographical writing from the student teachers, and research literature. Ryan shared, “If I want to help student teachers view themselves as critical interrogators and researchers in their work, I need to invite them to engage with the research literature.”

Another area for concern in relation to the use of texts and resources by the LTEs in my study was that only one of the LTEs used children’s literature to discuss issues of social justice and model critical literacy skills with some depth. This limited use of children’s literature to discuss issues of diversity was a missed opportunity by the elementary LTEs to engage their student teachers in critical literacy. Critical literacy builds on the assumption that literacy is political and that the texts that are selected are not neutral and often reflect the experiences of those the interests of those who are privileged and have power in our society (Freire, 1970). However critical literacy can also be a tool for LTEs to rethink traditional notions of what counts as literacy because it encourages learners to talk about issues of power and “critique problematic and textual social practices” (Rogers, 2014, p. 243). Ryan was the one LTE as highlighted in both Chapter Four and Six to whom critical literacy was an integral part of his pedagogy. He was aware of the importance of helping student teachers to unpack their underlying beliefs about literacy, including discussions around how literacy could be defined and whose literacy counted. Ryan addressed these issues because he knew that the beliefs of his student teachers would inform their teaching in their future classrooms.
While research supports the use of both fiction and non-fiction texts to improve reading comprehension and other literacy skills (Language Curriculum, MOE, 2006), many of the LTEs struggled to integrate non-fiction texts into their courses. For example, both Jane and Lester reflected on their desire to incorporate more non-fiction resources. Jane said, “I am struggling, I confess, to make sure that I bring in more non-fiction into my course, but I am aware that I need to.” The limited use of non-fiction resources by the elementary LTEs as well as the specific skills that are associated with navigating and accessing information in non-fiction texts is concerning. Informational texts often present more challenges for literacy learners and explicit teaching of how to use these resources should be an essential part of any LTEs course. The Ontario Language curriculum expects that teachers use a variety of genres of literature to teach the curriculum including non-fiction texts. Although the elementary LTEs were aware that they should be incorporating more non-fiction texts, unfortunately awareness of gaps did not always translate into action or change in the LTEs pedagogy.

Authentic Reflection

Cultivating the art of reflection on one’s experiences and practice has been a common thread throughout teacher education programs (Beauchamp, 2014). The literacy teacher educators in this study indicated that they felt strongly about imparting to their student teachers the importance of reflecting on their prior literacy experiences, but also reflecting on their learning within and outside of the literacy course. Edward and Thomas (2010) described reflective practice as the process of continually improving one’s teaching through engagement in critical thinking. The teacher educators in this study were always reflecting on their practice trying to improve their own teaching in addition to modeling this strategy for their student teachers. Ng, Murphy, McCullagh, Doherty, and McLeod (2014) discussed the idea of the teacher educator’s reflective practice in supporting student teachers’ engagement in reflective practice. They stated “Teacher educators demonstrating reflective practice are able to evaluate and identify their own capabilities and competence level, and act on weaknesses while building on strengths in order to
grow as professionals” (p. 35). I agree with Ng et al. (2014) that modelling reflection can be used by teacher educators to support student teachers in the development of reflective practice.

All of the literacy teacher educators in this study were well aware of their strengths and weaknesses, often as a result of reflection on their practice. They were open to finding ways to address their areas of weakness. Lester shared, “I improve my program but I’m very aware that it’s my own priorities and interests…as it should be, but I realize I’m not doing some things.” Both Jane and Lester indicated that were not as well-versed in multiliteracies and digital technologies as some of their teacher educator colleagues, and saw this as an area for growth. When Linda reflected on her course, she noted, “I try to cover as much as I can, based on the things I am aware of, but that doesn’t mean everything gets covered to the same extent.” Most participants recognized the importance of reflection and although they used this strategy in different ways, the overarching focus was on learning and growing from their practice.

While they were all thoughtful reflective practitioners it was not obvious from the interviews that the importance of this concept of reflection on practice was readily understood by their student teachers. Some critics of reflection point out that because they are so many different definitions of what reflection is as a concept, it is hard for student teachers to clearly understand the concept of reflection and thus determine whether or not the concept is valuable for teaching and learning (Galea, 2012; Thompson and Pascal, 2012; Russell, 2013). The lack of clarity about the concept of reflection and the lack of evidence that reflection truly improves teaching adds to the criticism (Beauchamp, 2014). In his review of reflection and teacher education Russell (2013) suggests that teacher educators have failed to provide clarity on reflection, have failed to model the practice of reflection, and have focussed on the concept reflection in a superficial way. These views stand in stark contrast to the LTEs in my study. I found that they attempted to engage their student teachers in reflection in a variety of meaningful ways and spoke explicitly about how reflection could be beneficial to improving their teaching practice and student teachers learning experiences.
Although the findings indicated that the participants incorporated a range of pedagogical approaches in their literacy courses, there are a few areas that require greater attention and focus for many of the participants. These areas include the knowledge of research and the evolving concept of literacy. Many of the participants expressed a desire to continue their learning in teaching literacy and many attended conferences or sought out professional development courses to enhance their learning. However, there was no clear indication that any of the participants who admitted that there were gaps in their understanding of multiliteracies, multi-modalities and other concepts of literacy were pursuing learning opportunities to broaden their understanding in these areas. The lack of knowledge about expanding conceptions of literacy and literacy teaching should be considered a barrier and may have had an impact on the knowledge and experiences of student teachers. Research by Kosnik et al. (2015) supports the notion that knowledge of research, in addition to knowledge of literacy and literacy teaching is so important. These two areas are part of the four spheres of knowledge which Kosnik et al. propose are important components of knowledge that LTEs should acquire in order to do their work effectively. The other two spheres of knowledge are knowledge of pedagogy in Higher Education and knowledge of current school and government initiatives. Collectively these four spheres should be continuous areas of professional growth for all LTEs.

It was not evident whether professional development opportunities were available to the LTEs within or outside of their teacher education programs in the areas. All of the literacy teacher educators in my study wanted to engage their student teachers in different ways of learning and teaching literacy, but many of the participants struggled to embrace some of the more current literacy initiatives of the 21st century. The struggle was not due to resistance to change, but is more likely attributed a combination of factors. These factors included the limited time most participants had to teach their literacy course, the complexity of teaching the vast components of literacy while teaching about teaching, and the pressure to conduct research and publish work in
the field of teacher education. Often the complexity and research demands contributed to a lack of coherence among the literacy courses.

Coherence has been an issue not only within literacy courses, but also within literacy teacher education programs. Hoban (2005) discussed the importance of a “multi-linked conceptual framework to promote coherence in the design of a teacher education program design” (p. 2). Kosnik et al. (2014) discussed how a holistic approach to teaching literacy would contribute to greater coherence in literacy courses for student teachers. A holistic approach would be one that embraces the three elements discussed as part of the pedagogy of teacher education. If all of the participants in my study were able to pursue a holistic approach towards enacting a pedagogy of literacy teacher education that focused on valuing and responding to diversity, using a range of texts and resources, and authentic reflection on their practice, their student teachers and the children whom they will eventually teach would all benefit.

Research by Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald, and Ronfeldt, (2008) supports the notion that effective teacher education programs have a coherent conceptual framework with interrelated elements that support the overall program. Lack of coherence has often been cited as a criticism by student teachers and those proposing reforms to the current state of teacher education (Levine, 2006; The Teaching Commission, 2006). It was clear that the LTEs felt that their courses were coherent and had a clear vision for the connections between content and pedagogy. However, it was not clear if the student teachers felt that there was coherence in the literacy course. From my perspective, it appeared that the links between topics and the reasons for making choices could have been made more explicit by all of the LTEs.

As discussed in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, many factors played a role in shaping the participants’ practices. The findings in this study indicate that literacy teacher educators’ pedagogical approaches to teaching literacy vary widely. Variables such as topic of doctoral research, personal interests, time, and student teachers’ needs influenced the development of the
LTEs literacy courses. The analysis also indicated that there was space for LTEs to include more current research in their course content. Only a few of the LTE’s repeatedly referenced scholarly literature when they were sharing details about the content of their literacy courses. I think that infusing current research on literacy teaching, current issues in teacher education i.e., (reform, regulation) and current research about teaching teachers would have added depth to the course content and enabled the student teachers to develop more concrete understandings of the complexity of teaching and to see the value in understanding the theory behind practice. All of the literacy teacher educators intended to prepare student teachers with a core knowledge base for teaching literacy upon completion of their literacy course with the expectation that their journey of literacy learning to teach, and learning to teach about how literacy would be on-going.

Chapter Summary

This chapter was a cross-case analysis and discussion of the cumulative findings in the study. In this chapter I explored the pedagogical approaches by describing three recurring pedagogical strategies: experiential learning; building community while learning from each other; and linking the teaching of assessment to assignments. This chapter also presented the main elements of the LTEs course content and discussed how teaching the components of balanced literacy and using children’s literature were prominent in the participants’ courses. The section that followed discussed the conceptual framework that I used to analyze the data. I discussed ways that I saw social constructivism influencing the pedagogy of the literacy teacher educators. In what followed I discussed the vision that the LTEs had for teaching literacy and how they encouraged student teachers to develop their own philosophy of education. Throughout the chapter I attempted to situate the findings within the literature. In the final section I looked at a pedagogy of literacy teacher education and three elements that are essential to enacting this pedagogy, valuing and responding to diversity, the use of a range of texts, and authentic reflection on practice.
Chapter 7
Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

In this final chapter, I discuss the salient points that arose from this study and outline the implications for literacy teacher educators and teacher education programs. I offer recommendations for literacy teacher educators to improve the teaching of literacy, recommendations for teacher education programs, and recommendations for the Ministry of Education an important stakeholder that should be more involved in the process of educating student teachers. I also reflect on how conducting this research study has influenced my own views and increased my understanding of the challenges of being a literacy teacher educator in the 21st century.

Observations

Through conducting this research, I gained many insights that led me to make some general observations. These observations are based on my interpretation of the data gathered from the six participants in the study. As indicated in Chapter Two, I used the conceptual framework that included social constructivism, vision for teaching, and a pedagogy of teacher education as the lens to analyze the data. These concepts were interrelated and had a reciprocal influence on each other. It was evident that all participants had a vision for teaching literacy and that their vision was influenced by their pedagogy of teacher education. This pedagogy in turn would influence their vision and as a result the participants vision was constantly evolving and enabled them to construct new knowledge, which aligns with the principles of social constructivism. For example, Ryan who had one of the more clearly articulated visions for teaching his literacy course, indicated throughout his interviews that he was continually learning, reflecting, asking questions and changing his literacy course to meet the needs of his student teachers, selecting
new articles and texts to read and discuss with his student teachers, and to address the ideas and concepts that he valued as authentic to teaching literacy. All of these practices that Ryan implemented drew upon some of the principles of constructivism and created an opportunity for Ryan to modify his course content, provide opportunities for experiential learning, and continue to be responsive to the student teachers and to the demands of preparing future literacy teachers. Using the concepts of vision, pedagogy, and constructivism assisted with my examination of the data for all participants and allowed me to explore the different ways that each participant addressed these concepts with a specific lens. It led me to draw some of the following conclusions about the literacy teacher educators in this study.

First, I think that there is too much diversity among the literacy courses taught by literacy teacher educators. Although there were some areas of commonality across the participants’ courses, such as balanced literacy and reflection on practice, many aspects of their literacy courses differed across each participant. As outlined in the previous chapter, for example, some participants had very little emphasis on literacy and technology, while other participants made this a core component of their literacy courses. Some participants emphasized reading workshops and focused a great deal on reading comprehension but neglected aspects of the theory in their literacy courses.

There are advantages for student teachers in having different learning experiences, studying different theories about literacy teaching, learning about different theoretical frameworks in which to ground their pedagogies, and acquiring a range of pedagogical approaches. There are also disadvantages with a great deal of variation in literacy teacher educators’ courses. For example, some courses were more thorough than others, some courses went into more depth with a few topics, while other courses gave a superficial overview of a wide range of topics. Literacy courses are meant to be foundational elements of student teachers educational journey and are supposed to prepare student teachers for teaching literacy to children who will likely come from a range of backgrounds and have different literacy experiences. Perhaps there should be some
components that are standard across each course, regardless of the teacher education program or
the teacher educator. Without some standardized elements, the variations across courses can lead
to significant gaps in a student teacher’s knowledge about teaching, and gaps in knowledge about
teaching literacy.

These literacy teacher educators taught what they knew and focussed on topics that they liked.
This sounds simple enough, but it is actually quite significant because of the major influence that
personal interests of an LTE can have on the development of beginning teachers. The literacy
teacher educators intended goals, which were often based on their visions for their literacy
courses, were not always in alignment with the work that they engaged the student teachers in
throughout their literacy course. All were well intentioned and committed to creating a strong
foundation for teaching literacy, but whether or not the participants were actually successful in
achieving that goal remains unclear.

I am not advocating for a prescribed course syllabus for all literacy teacher educators as this can
stifle the creativity and individuality that every teacher educator brings to their teaching. Indeed,
I strongly believe that literacy teachers need to have the freedom to choose some of the content
for their literacy courses and that they should have the opportunity to infuse their passions and
interests into their teaching. However, I have also come to believe that including some core
elements in all literacy courses would be beneficial not only for student teachers, but also for
their future students. While I have no way of knowing whether student teachers who were
enrolled in these LTEs courses performed better or worse as teachers of literacy, the findings
point to differences that would likely produce unique outcomes. Thus, if there was a push
towards including some core elements within a literacy course for student teachers I believe they
should include:

- A focus on why literacy is essential for all learners;
- A look at how definitions of literacy have evolved over time;
Discussion of the key components of a balanced approach to teaching literacy; and;

Discussion about the diversity of learners and learning styles.

First, I will explain the importance of focusing on why literacy is essential for all learners. By including this element, it would highlight for student teachers that the acquisition of literacy enables all individuals to participate in society. Indeed, without basic literacy skills many individuals are likely to be limited in their opportunities for work, education, and their ability to communicate effectively with others. In regards to the second point, I feel it is important for literacy teacher educators to address the evolving nature of literacy and to incorporate broader and more complex notions of literacy into their courses. Support for this broader approach to teaching literacy can be found with Bainbridge and Macy (2008) when they acknowledged that:

In the past two decades, broader and more complex approaches to literacy teaching have been developed which have the potential to result in increased student engagement, greater depth of literacy learning, improved literacy abilities in real-life settings, and continued literacy participation and learning in later life (p. 65).

The third element speaks to the importance of literacy teacher educators including foundational components of reading and writing as an integral part of their literacy course. Heydon, Hibbert, and Iannacci (2005) discuss balanced literacy in the following way:

Balanced literacy is a commitment to ensuring that all aspects of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing receive context appropriate emphasis within a language and literacy program and one that involves knowing and beginning with individual students and understanding that to do this well requires ongoing professional development that is informed by a range of current literacy research (p. 313).

Literacy teacher educators need to have a clear understanding not only of the essential components of balanced literacy, but also how to teach these components in a world where literacy concepts are constantly evolving. As the findings indicated, all of the participants in this
study addressed the important components of balanced literacy, but they approached it in range of ways. The lack of coherence in some of their approaches may have led some student teachers to believe that they had not covered aspects of balanced literacy, which is an ongoing issue that LTEs need to take into consideration as they plan their courses.

Finally, addressing the diversity of learners is of particular importance for LTEs because currently there is little evidence to show that student teachers are equipped to meet the diversity of learning needs in classrooms (Jelas, 2010). The participants in this study did not seem to address this particular area with any depth. The discussion around teaching student teachers about special education and diverse learners was often limited to diversifying choice in response to assignments and expression of knowledge. As Jordan, Scwhartz, & McGhie-Richmond (2009) noted:

The challenge for teacher educators is to ensure that student teachers have practicum experiences in which there are opportunities to examine and foster their beliefs and learn desirable lessons about how to address the diversity of needs in the classroom (p. 541).

There was discussion about learning styles and supporting student teachers, but a weakness in the LTEs literacy courses were the limited discussion around the ways that curriculum planning with the diversity of learners in mind could be more central to student teachers practice. There was very little attention to culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) or the ways in which CRP works to address teaching students who are culturally, linguistically, or racially diverse. Although the LTEs did discuss the importance of building relationships and getting to know their student teachers, there was no reference to imbedding CRP into their practice or literacy course. This lack of attention could be misinterpreted by student teachers as a lack of importance of discussing and highlighting the knowledge and experiences of students who do not identify as part of the dominant culture, as a result of their linguistic or racial background. While it is unlikely that this was intentional, it speaks to the gaps that continue to exist when addressing the needs of the diverse groups of learners in our multicultural society.
Another recommendation for inclusion as a core element of a literacy teacher educator’s course could be to include a discussion on the use of theoretical frameworks. By introducing a range of theoretical frameworks in their literacy course, it creates an opportunity for student teachers to see the import of theory. I believe the use of frameworks are important because they provide student teachers with a particular perspective to frame their thinking and analyze the concepts they are learning. All literacy teacher educators have the freedom to discuss theoretical frameworks that they identify with or that they see as valuable for student teachers learning. However, I do recommend that LTEs include a discussion about the concept of social constructivism and the importance of the learner constructing knowledge based on their own experiences. Indeed, social constructivism is an important concept in its contention that the learner constructs knowledge. As Dewey (1916) noted, “education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told, but an active constructive process” (p.46). Literacy teacher educators could be encouraged to model constructivist teaching in their own practice in order to assist student teachers in applying constructivist frameworks to their own practice teaching, which would also encourage the consideration of context, which is often overlooked by student teachers. In this study, the use of frameworks varied amongst the participants, some adopted frameworks that were deeply embedded into their courses, and other participants gave the discussion of frameworks very little attention.

Implications for Literacy Teacher Educators

Conducting this study created an opportunity for me to explore the range of ways that literacy teacher educators are teaching literacy and to probe more deeply into their vision for teaching literacy and the thinking that underlies and influences their practices. The findings from this study show that literacy teacher educators face a unique set of challenges. They are expected to teach student teachers what is deemed critically important for the acquisition of literacy skills, and why and how to teach it, in a short span of time. In order to do this, a literacy teacher
An educator needs core foundational knowledge in literacy, both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (International Reading Association, 2007; Moats, 1999; Shulman, 2004).

Acquiring foundational knowledge requires LTEs to continually update their knowledge because our understanding of literacy is constantly evolving and changing. As Luna, Solsken and Kunz (2000) stated, “instead of literacy in the singular, scholars have begun to speak of literacy practices, multiple literacies, or situated literacies and to see individuals as having varied repertoires of literacies” (p. 278). As noted in the literature review, it is important for literacy teacher educators to help student teachers broaden their notion of what counts as literacy (ILA, 2016; Mills, 2010; Street, 2006), and in order to do that seeking out opportunities for continuous learning must be embedded in their approach to teaching about literacy. This aligns with the philosophy of the LTEs in this study, as many continued to acknowledge that they were always learning and developing new ideas about how they understood the concept of literacy.

Further, with the call for reforms and increase in high stakes testing on beginning teachers, the pressure on teacher educators to prepare student teachers adequately to teach literacy is even greater. As Kumashiro (2015) noted, “improving teacher quality and teacher preparation should be a process that engages key constituents and communities and draws on both scholarly and practical expertise” (p. 4). LTE’s may be called upon to change core elements of their literacy teaching practices as a response to reform agendas and new regulations, but these reform agendas will have little success without taking into consideration the fact that teacher preparation is part of a larger educational system that is impacted by classroom, community, and district contexts (Hammerness & Craig, 2010) in addition to other societal issues.

This supports the notion that literacy teacher educators need to be responsive, adaptive, and dynamic in their teaching, and participate in and conduct research in their field to continually inform and improve their practice. What makes this a challenge is that some literacy teacher educators consider themselves to be teacher educators first, and research is secondary to their
practice. This may be particularly true for those LTEs who work in non-research intensive programs. Although all LTEs have knowledge of research there are many, especially early career and beginning LTEs who have transitioned from the classroom to higher education, who do not have a strong background in conducting research, especially on their own practice. As Cheruvu (2016) noted, “For many teacher educators, their practice is quite often a separate endeavour from their research (p. 225). However, the emphasis on self-study research and research of teacher educators own practice has increased over the past decade.

Highlighted in the report Towards a Foundation for Teacher Preparation in Literacy Teacher Education (2011) is the conclusion that research is central to teaching and learning about teaching. According to Murray (2010), the benefits of research into one’s own practices should hold a central place in any orientation program for teacher educators (p. 205). Just as in research on teaching, researchers in the area of teacher education need a common research agenda, a shared language, and more precise methodological and theoretical tools for addressing critical questions about how best to prepare teachers. Such research could focus both on emerging and evolving policy issues regarding preparing teachers and on research that improves the teaching practice of teacher educators.

**Recommendations for Literacy Teacher Educators**

The complexity of the role of literacy teacher educator demands staying abreast of developments in the field of literacy, such as multiliteracies, new literacies, and multi-modalities (Knobel & Lankshear, 2006; Kress, 2009). In order to accomplish this, LTEs must stay current with the research literature and glean the perspectives and dispositions about literacy that are most relevant to teaching student teachers in the current educational context, and apply what they learn to inform their work. As a result of these efforts, LTEs will acquire new insights into literacy teaching, add to their pedagogical approaches, and refine their vision for teaching. As Grossman and MacDonald (2008) argue:

> In order for teacher education to move forward, a stronger connection to research on
teaching could inform the content of teacher education—what gets taught and how—while a stronger relationship to research on organizations and policy implementation could focus attention on the organizational contexts in which the work takes shape (p. 185).

If literacy teacher educators are supported in pursuing research interests that add to the depth of research in teacher education, then all stakeholders in teacher education will benefit and contribute to a clearer conception of what teacher educators need to know and do to successfully teach student teachers. As Williams et al. (2012) noted, a personal pedagogy is seen by many teacher educators as a way to define who they are as teacher educators (p. 254). Developing a personal pedagogy through reflection on practice and professional relationships enables teacher educators to strengthen their own identity as educators within a community of educators. Literacy teacher educators must also consider drawing on the expertise of their colleagues in order to build a learning community for themselves in the same way that they attempt to build a learning community in their classrooms. Grossman and MacDonald (2006) advocate for teacher educators and researchers to work together to build a community of learning that engages all parties to work towards a common goal of improving teaching and teacher education. Based on the findings from this research study, it is my recommendation that all literacy teacher educators, both beginners and experienced, adopt the following practices to further enhance their literacy teaching:

- LTEs should regularly review and submit scholarly articles about teaching literacy in teacher education, and the practice of literacy teacher educators.

- LTEs need to understand that just as the concept of literacy evolves, their teaching must also evolve and they must be willing to incorporate new and innovative teaching practices.

- LTEs need to become active participants in learning communities that include other LTEs, classroom teachers, student teachers, and Ministry of Education officers.
These are ideals rather than prescriptive mandates, however, as including these suggestions in their practice would add to an already complex role and increase the workload of literacy teacher educators.

Additionally, as Souto-Manning (2012) argues, teacher educators must engage in teacher research with three goals in mind: to transform the self, to transform curriculum, and to transform teaching in teacher education. In my view, literacy teacher educators need institutional support to work towards these goals. Without an institutional context that encourages and creates space for collaboration, these ideals would be hard to achieve. For example, departments could highlight and circulate peer-reviewed scholarly work and recommend monthly readings to LTEs, as well as provide opportunities for LTEs to collaborate on writing and publishing articles. However, doing this would require leadership from within the department by literacy teacher educators who were committed to staying abreast of current research. This is not such a tall order, as many are already continuously involved in conducting research, but this seemingly simple task requires additional time and effort and adds to the workload of LTEs. Furthermore, by sharing course outlines and other resources, LTEs will have a greater understanding of what their colleagues are doing in their literacy courses, which may also create opportunities for collaboration. Literacy teacher educators must be able to maintain autonomy, flexibility, and uniqueness in how they develop and teach of their literacy courses, but they also need to ensure that what they are teaching is relevant and stays abreast with current research about literacy and new literacies.

Finally, it would be ideal if LTEs facilitated professional learning communities with colleagues within and outside their teacher education programs and if they received support from the MOE to connect with classroom teachers to share best practices. Livingston (2014) discussed the importance of teacher educators working collaboratively. Livingston stated, “The diversity of teachers’ professional learning needs across their career calls for a collaborative approach to teacher education with different teacher educators working in partnership — integrating research
Implementing and sustaining more collaborative approaches among teacher educators and classroom teachers can only serve to improve the experiences for student teachers and children in Ontario’s classrooms.

Teacher Education Programs

As Darling-Hammond (2000) pointed out, teacher education programs play a crucial role in the preparation of teachers. Teacher education programs can play a role in transforming the quality and level of preparedness of student teachers by creating an environment that encourages teacher educators and classroom teachers to collaborate and communicate regularly as part of a professional learning community. This improved communication and emphasis on collaboration could help to bridge the gap between academic theory and classroom practice. As Wade-Woolley (2011) indicated, collaboration must extend to reading specialists, special educators, librarians, and any other educators who play a role in literacy teaching and learning. Kosnik and Beck (2009) identified seven priorities for teacher education. These seven priorities, identified in Chapter Two and Chapter Five are: program planning; pupil assessment; classroom organization and community; inclusive education; subject content and pedagogy; professional identity, and; a vision for teaching. Based on the findings from this study, I recommend that teacher education programs:

- Create opportunities for LTEs within and across teacher education programs to collaborate to produce new ideas for teaching literacy.

The literature that speaks to the benefits of collaboration for teacher educators and suggests that it plays a crucial role in the professional learning of teacher educators (Hamilton, 2009; Ritter, 2009). Although the LTEs in this study found very little if any time for collaboration amongst their colleagues, it is vital for learning to occur. Loughran (2004) asserts that small group collaboration is most beneficial when participants have the opportunity to dialogue and examine
their assumptions and beliefs. By providing a forum for teacher educators and classroom teachers to exchange ideas and knowledge and learn from each other this will benefit not only teacher educators, but also student teachers, experienced teachers and the children that they teach. To this end, teacher education programs should:

- Support and fund research about literacy teacher educators within teacher education programs and create opportunities for classroom teachers and teacher educators to work together on research projects and apply research to classroom practice.

In regards to teacher education programs supporting and funding research within their own programs this would require an institutional commitment by programs and would need support from Dean’s offices and departmental Chairs in order to make this a budget priority. Collaboration amongst all stakeholders in teacher education is essential, not only for conducting research, but for sharing and growing in knowledge of practice. The sharing of knowledge, research, and practice will benefit all stakeholders through the acquisition of current knowledge to improve teaching and learning. Cochran-Smith (2005) proposed that the way to move teacher education forward is to have teacher educators work on several projects simultaneously, and that there are three ways teacher educators can do this:

The first is helping prospective teachers begin the life-long process of learning to teach. The second is taking our own professional work as educators as a research site and learning by systematically investigating our own practice and interpretive frameworks in ways that are critical, rigorous, and intended to generate both local knowledge and knowledge that is useful in more public spheres. And the third is analyzing and interrogating all policies that have an impact on teacher education from many different lenses, including political lenses and those related to social justice (p. 220).

Much of this work has to be done collaboratively through learning communities with classroom teachers, both experienced and novice, and teacher educators, within and across programs. The extension of this work into self-studies or longitudinal studies by teacher educators is vital to the acquisition of a body of knowledge for the field of teacher education. Even when self-studies and
the lack of quantitative research is criticized by the larger research community and policy makers, teacher educators must persevere and continue to study their own practice in order to improve their practice. Teacher educators must present rigorous research that addresses the criticisms and challenges the reform agenda that often acts to discount the quality of research within teacher education.

Ministry of Education in Ontario

The Ministry of Education also has an important role to play in supporting the work of literacy teacher educators and development of beginning literacy teacher educators. Currently, their role is minimal in that they have given the power to the Ontario College of Teachers to license faculties of education across the province. I learned through this study that the Ministry of Education does very little if anything to support teacher educators, whether they are beginning or experienced. None of the participants indicated that they had attended professional development sessions, conferences, or training that was developed or sponsored by the Ministry of Education. Nor, was I able to find any evidence of past conference through some online searches of professional development opportunities for teacher educators. However, I envision the Ministry of Education in Ontario as an organization that has a vested interest in the development of quality teacher educators and teachers. Strategically funding research about literacy teacher educators and exploring the many ways that they influence the education of our future teachers is essential to their mandate. The Ministry of Education in Ontario can also support LTEs by providing research grants and facilitating professional conferences that bring teacher educators together from across the province. The Ministry of Education can also monitor teacher education programs, and the organization that accredits them. Monitoring the Ontario College of Teachers to ensure they are providing high quality programs taught by experienced teacher educators who possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for teaching literacy education should be a mandate of the ministry. Where programs are falling short of these goals, the ministry should provide professional development.
For example, the Ministry of Education could offer workshops for literacy teacher educators in collaboration with leading researchers from teacher education institutions. The Ministry of Education could also extend their online resources and webinars to include briefs about best practices for balanced literacy instruction for teacher educators, not just classroom teachers. Finally, the Ministry of Education could review and/or implement new policies that support the teaching of literacy in teacher education programs through training and development institutes for teacher educators, and by providing financial resources for research specifically in the area of teaching literacy.

Additionally, a concerted effort by the Ministry of Education to shift public perceptions about teaching and the low status of the profession (Walker and Von Bergmann, 2013) would be beneficial. In order to work towards a more coherent environment, teacher education programs must also establish priorities. Most, if not all teacher educators understand the importance of being aware of Ministry of Education priorities and taking into careful consideration the specific educational contexts in which they are teaching and student teachers are learning. Context plays a significant role in approaches to teaching and learning both for teacher educators and beginning classroom teachers. This is particularly relevant for teachers working in schools and districts that are impacted by high stakes testing, which can interfere with teachers’ ability to teach what they believe is pedagogically appropriate for the children in their classrooms. As Grossman & MacDonald (2008) noted, “teacher education exists at the nexus of multiple institutional and policy contexts; the top-down policies of the national accrediting agencies and the state, along with the local contexts of surrounding districts and labour markets shape the organization and practice of teacher education” (p. 185). Literacy teacher educators must prepare student teachers to work in a range of contexts that are situated in an educational climate that is governed by the policies of the MOE. In my opinion, having knowledge of the social, cultural, and political context where one is teaching is essential. Teacher educators must understand the role that
district school board policies and government policies play in teaching, even if these policies do not align with their own identity, philosophy, and vision as teacher educators.

My Reflections About Being a Literacy Teacher Educator

I have learned a great deal through my observations of the teacher educators, through the interview process, through reflecting on my own thinking, and through reading the literature on teacher education, teacher educators, and the field of literacy. When I began this research study, I wanted to understand the influences that the educational and professional background and experiences of the participants had on their vision for teaching literacy and their pedagogical approaches to teaching literacy.

Prior to this study, I had made some assumptions about the best way to teach literacy. What I realized is that there is not only one way, or a “best way” to teach literacy, and that the different literacy teaching approaches allow teacher educators to engage different types of learners in the learning process. My exploration of the research questions led me to reflect on my own experiences of learning how to teach literacy, my educational background, and my experiences as a classroom teacher. My own learning about teaching literacy and the place of research in informing my practice multiplied throughout this study. I reflected on the fact that during my brief tenure as a literacy teacher educator, research played a very small role in my practice, and I came to feel that I had short-changed many of the student teachers who had been in my courses. I knew before I began this study that I did not know enough about teaching literacy, but what I did not realize was how much I did not know or that it would be impossible to “know” everything.

My vision for teaching literacy to student teachers has changed and evolved. If given the opportunity to be a literacy teacher educator again, I would do the following:

- Emphasize the importance of collaborative inquiry with student teachers and their future students.
Make multiliteracies and new literacies an integral part of my teaching.

Embed opportunities for action research into the literacy course and participate in self-study research during my teaching.

Seek out opportunities for collaboration with teacher educator colleagues both inside and outside of my teacher education program.

Continually read and review the scholarly literature in the field of literacy, teacher education, and teacher educators

Make explicit the connections between theory and practice.

The findings presented in this research study make some important contributions to the field of literacy teacher educators working in teacher education programs, yet led me to ponder other areas in which research might be conducted. For example, I often wondered throughout this study whether the cultural background of the student teachers had any impact on the teacher educators’ decision-making. I am curious about issues of diversity and how culturally relevant pedagogy could be integrated into literacy teaching for elementary and secondary student teachers. It would be instructive to conduct a research study that explores the relationship between the cultural backgrounds of teacher educators and their pedagogies. Questions for the study could include: How has your personal identity and cultural background influenced your work as a literacy teacher educator? How is culturally relevant pedagogy manifested in your teaching practice? In what ways does the cultural diversity of your student teachers influence the topics or strategies that you use in your literacy course? Also, I think it would be valuable to conduct a longitudinal study of how the priorities of literacy teacher educators with respect to their literacy courses change over time, and what key aspects of their experience influence the changes.
Limitations of the Research Study

This study offers some insights into the teaching practices of literacy teacher educators; however, there are limitations in generalizability due to the small sample size. The study included six participants from four different teacher education programs in one province. As a result, it is difficult to make generalizations that go beyond the scope of this study, or to make statements about trends for all literacy teacher educators. The findings are specific to the participants in this study.

Second, if the interview data had been triangulated, the trustworthiness of the data would be improved. However, this was not possible because I was not able to observe four of the six participants teaching their literacy course due to geographical limitations and some participants’ unavailability for classroom observation.

Third, the study only examined three aspects of the literacy teacher educators’ teaching: their vision, course content, and pedagogical approaches. The work of literacy teacher educators is very complex and includes many aspects that were not addressed in this study. For example, the study did not examine the type of professional development that would enhance the teaching of literacy, nor did it look at the participants’ knowledge of pedagogies for higher education.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is clear, based on my findings, that further research about literacy teacher educators, their qualifications, and professional knowledge base is required, and this research would benefit both literacy teacher educators and teacher education. Research areas could include into how literacy teacher educators can make stronger links between theory and practice.
Linking Theory and Practice

Teacher education programs have been criticized for being disconnected from what is happening in classrooms (Kosnik & Beck, 2002; Levine, 2011). In this study, many of the LTEs indicated that balancing theory and practice was an on-going challenge, not because they were too theoretical, but because they placed a greater emphasis on practical applications of theory. Many of the LTEs in this study focused on practical applications of literacy concepts in their courses and tried to embed theory into their lessons and pedagogical approaches. All made connections between theory and practice, but this was accomplished in a range of ways and their reflections on student teachers’ evaluations revealed that was not always coherent.

This need for balance between theory and practice is echoed by the IRA (2005) study of literacy teacher education programs. The IRA (2005) study indicated that teacher education programs should implement a clear theoretical orientation to literacy instruction, a vision-driven plan for preparing future teachers of quality, and a comprehensive curriculum. Levine (2011) also affirmed the importance of blending theory and practice in teacher education when he stated:

We need to create teacher education programs that blend theory and practice, integrate academic and clinical instruction from the earliest days of the program, combine pedagogical and content education, and employ a faculty that consists of both practitioners and professors, each accorded equal status (http://chronicle.com/article/The-New-Normal-of-Teacher/127430/).

One of the recommendations of the Wade-Woolley (2011) report, Towards a Foundation for Teacher Preparation in Literacy Education Ontario, were that teacher educators must prepare student teachers to acquire adequate conceptual and theoretical knowledge about literacy, because this provides a framework for instructional decision-making (p. 11).

The LTEs in this study would all benefit from further reflection on the relationship between theory and practice. This could assist them in making the implicit, explicit, and help close the gap that student teachers indicated existed between theory and practice in their literacy courses.
Inquiry and Collaboration

Another area that would benefit from further research includes research into how literacy teacher educators can use collaborative inquiry to support student teachers’ development as literacy teachers. A study by Ferm Thorgenson, Johansen, and Juntunen (2015), found that the teacher educators in their study all mentioned “they would benefit from discussions and sharing of visions among their colleagues as well as with the heads of programme or department” (p. 57). This speaks to the need for teacher educators to seek out opportunities to build communities that can provide a space for inquiry-based learning and that allows for open collaboration amongst colleagues within and across teacher education programs.

Focussed Professional Development

The third area that I recommend is research on what specific kinds of professional development would be most beneficial for literacy teacher educators. Loughran (2014) argues, “Professional development of teacher educators must be purposefully conceptualized, thoughtfully implemented, and meaningfully employed (p. 280). For this to happen literacy teacher educators would need to actively seek out learning opportunities by attending relevant conferences, joining professional associations, conducting research studies, and reading scholarly peer-reviewed journals. Collectively these learning opportunities would serve to enhance and improve their ability to teach about teaching, and teach literacy.

Finally, in my current role as an elementary school principal, I have been reminded of the value of reflecting on my practice, and that continuing to learn and read the scholarly literature can benefit not only me, but also the teachers and children in my schools. It is my hope that this study will encourage both literacy teachers and LTEs to reflect on their vision for teaching literacy, and, if necessary, make changes in their pedagogical approaches and practices in teaching literacy.
References


Britzman, D. P., (2003), Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach. SUNY Press


Campbell, B. (1990). What is literacy? Acquiring and using literacy skills. Australasian Public libraries and Information Services, 3 (3), 149


231


   Newark, DE: Author.

   In J. Gardner (Ed.), Assessment and learning (pp. 27–44). London, UK: Sage.


Kincheloe, J. L., (2004). The bizarre, complex, and misunderstood world of teacher education. In J.L. Kincheloe, A. Bursztyn, & S. Steinberg (Eds.), Teaching teachers: Building a quality school of urban education (pp. 1-49). New York: Peter Lang


Knowles, J. G., Coles, A., & Sumson, J. (2000). Guest Editors’ Introduction: “Publish or perish”: The role and meaning of research in teacher education institutions. 27(2) pp. 5-6


Koster, B. (2002). Teacher educators under the microscope: The development of a professional profile for teacher educators and the effects of examining this profile on their self-image.


OECD and Statistics Canada (2000) Literacy in the information age: Final report of the adult international literacy survey. (pp. 1-204)


Preparing the Highly Qualified Teachers Our Children Deserve. Published by Jossey-Bass. Copyright © 2005 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.


Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC) PIAAC Literacy: A Conceptual Framework, OECD Education Working Paper No. 34 By PIAAC Literacy Expert Group


Street, B.V. (2006). New literacies, new times: How do we describe and teach the forms of literacy knowledge, skills, and values people need for new times? In J. Hoffman, D.L. Schallert, C.M. Fairbanks, J. Worthy, & B. Maloch (Eds.), 55th yearbook of the National Reading Conference (pp. 21-42 Oak Creek, WI: National Reading Conference.


TELT Study – Teacher Education and Learning to Teach conducted by Researchers at the National Centre for Research on Teacher Education between 1986 and 1990. Handbook of Research on Teacher Education.


Appendices

Appendix A
Letter of Introduction

Dear Literacy Teacher Educators,

I am a PhD Student at OISE/University of Toronto who is conducting a research project entitled, *Investigating the practices of literacy teacher educators*. The study is part of my dissertation research focused on teacher education, specifically in the area of literacy teacher educators. One of my research activities is to gain more information from literacy teacher educators about how they go about preparing student teachers to teach literacy, and I wish to invite you to be part of the research study.

The goals for my study include:

☐ Investigating the factors that influence literacy teacher educators course development, course content and program priorities;

☐ Investigating the kinds of background experiences that literacy teacher educators found helpful in their practice;

☐ Investigating how literacy teacher educators design their courses for student teachers;

☐ Investigating how universities can better support literacy teacher educators, especially newly appointed instructors;

☐ Investigating to what extent the development of the courses influenced by the background or demographics of the student teachers in their classes.
I am inviting you to participate in a study that involves teacher educators at various faculties of education across North America. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that influence the course development, course content, and program priorities of literacy teacher educators. It is my hope that at the end of this study, recommendations can be made for literacy teacher educators about best practices in terms of the efficacy of certain programs based upon the case studies from this research.

I am seeking literacy teacher educators who are willing to participate to be interviewed and if possible observed as they teach. Your participation in the study would involve me interviewing you twice for approximately one hour and conduct an observation of you in your classroom when you are teaching literacy. The purpose of the classroom visit is to gain a deeper understanding of your teaching approach and acquire further information about the context of your literacy teaching practices. At no point will I study particular students in the class or record their names. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in written reports, and the faculty of education, staff, students and/or school district will not be identified in any way. The purpose of the interview is to give the researcher a deeper understanding of how course instructors prepare student teachers to teach literacy; to gather examples of best practices; to acquire further information about literacy course content and instructional strategies; and to understand how literacy is taught in teacher education programs. The researcher will tape-record the interviews and make notes. The interview will last approximately 1 hour and will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient for you.

Involvement in this research project is voluntary and will not pose any risks for you. You can choose to ignore any question. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Pseudonyms will be used. No one other than the researcher will have access to the raw data. You have the right to refuse to participate without having to give a reason. There will be no compensation for agreeing to participate. You may keep a copy of this consent letter. If you have further questions about
your rights as a research participant, you can contact the University of Toronto’s Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

The interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed. I will keep the tapes in a locked storage cabinet in my office at the university. The transcripts and tapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study. If you participate in the interviews you will have the opportunity to read the transcripts of your interview to check for inaccuracies (Note in the hard copy a pseudonym will be used instead of your name). I will use the data for my doctoral dissertation. I will also use the data from this study to write scholarly papers on teacher education. These papers will be submitted to academic journals for publication and to academic conferences for presentation. I would like to use the data from this study for future writings on teacher education and literacy teacher educators. Once again, in the thesis and papers pseudonyms will be used and participants and their institutions will not be identified in any way.

In order to go forward with your participation, you must sign and return the attached consent form. Thank you for your willingness to be involved and I look forward to working with you. If you have any questions, please contact Belinda Longe or Dr. Clare Kosnik.

Sincerely,

Belinda Longe – PhD student at OISE/UT
Phone: 
Email: 

Dr. Clare Kosnik – Professor at OISE/UT and Doctoral Dissertation Supervisor
Phone: 
Email: 

259
Appendix B
Informed Consent Form for Literacy Teacher Educators

Name: _________________________

I have read the attached letter and agree to be part of the research study, Investigating the practices of literacy teacher educators. If I choose to participate in the interviews and classroom observation, I agree to have the interviews tape-recorded.

I agree to let Belinda Longe use the data for purposes of research and to quote from the interviews. I also agree to let her refer to the research data gathered in this project for future work on teacher education programs, and health and physical education.

Name: _________________________

Signature: __________________________

Date: __________________________

I have also been given a copy of this consent form and letter.

Signature: _________________________________________

Date: _______________________________

Please indicate the email address (if any) you would like us to use.

Email address: _________________________________________

If you would like to receive copies of your interview transcript and final report, please include an email address or postal address where they can be sent.
Email address: _______________________________________

Mailing address: _______________________________________

________________________________________________________________

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Belinda Longe at belinda.longe@utoronto.ca or Dr. Clare Kosnik, (Doctoral Dissertation Supervisor) at clare.kosnik@utoronto.ca

Thank you again for your participation.
Appendix C
Interview Questions: First Interview

A. Background Information

1. What is your current teaching assignment?

2. How long have you been teaching in this program?

3. Where did you complete your undergraduate and graduate studies?

4. What was your major in your graduate studies?

5. Did you receive any specific training in teacher education?
   a) If yes, what kinds of training or courses did you receive? What was the focus of these programs?
   b) If no, what kinds of training should literacy teacher educators have?

6. Tell me about your work as a literacy educator to date. What courses have you taught?

B. Course Development and Instructional Strategies

7. Were you responsible for developing the course content? How do you feel about your course?

8. If yes, what was your philosophy for developing the course content?

9. What curriculum resource materials do you use to help you plan your lessons?
10. Can you tell me about your overall goals for your literacy program? How did you establish these goals?

11. When planning your program, do you plan on a daily basis or do you plan for a longer period of time?

12. What topics should be emphasized in literacy teacher education courses? What do you think literacy educators should prioritize in their programs?

13. What are some essentials that you think student teachers need to begin their literacy programs?

C. Course Delivery

14. In terms of delivering your program, can you tell me about some of your instructional strategies?

15. What assessment methods do you use?

16. What methods of assessments do you emphasize for student teachers?

17. What areas of literacy do you find most challenging to teach? Why?

18. What areas of literacy do you feel most confident about teaching?

D. Assignments/Readings

19. What kinds of assignments do you give student teachers to help them conceptualize their literacy teaching?

20. Do you have one assignment that you feel is particularly effective? Tell me about it.
21. What are some of the texts or readings that you have student teachers read? Have you found a text that strongly supports your teaching goals?

E. Institutional Level

22. To what extent is there consistency in the literacy courses across the teacher education program?

23. What different courses are offered at your institution that are specific to literacy?

24. Do you have the opportunity to work collaboratively with other instructors in the program?

25. What advice would you give to other literacy teacher educators who are new to the role?

26. Do you have any additional comments or thoughts you wish to share about literacy teacher educators or teacher education?
Appendix D
Observation Form

Date: Class observed:

Teacher Educator Observed: Time of Observation:

1. What did you note/observe about the teacher’s work? (What struck you about the teacher educator’s work? What do you want to convey to us?)

2. What did you note/observe about the student teachers’ interaction with the teacher educator?

3. What types of instructional strategies did the teacher educator use?

4. What opportunities for collaboration and questioning did you notice?

5. What were the highlights of the observation?
Appendix E
Invitation of Participants Via Email

Subject line: TEACHER EDUCATOR Participants Needed for Dissertation Research

ARE YOU A LITERACY TEACHER EDUCATOR?

Dear Literacy Teacher Educator,

I am a PhD student at OISE/University of Toronto and I would like to invite you to participate in a study called, Investigating the practices of literacy teacher educators.

The study is part of my dissertation research focused on teacher education in the area of literacy. The research is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of a Doctoral degree at the University of Toronto.

If you are interested, please email me at belinda.longe@utoronto.ca or call me at 416-909-7460.

I have attached a letter of introduction, further outlining the goals for my study in this email.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Belinda Longe

Belinda M. Longe
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
belinda.longe@utoronto.ca
Appendix F
Second Set of Interview Questions

Content

1. What areas of your literacy course get the most attention? Why?

2. Are there any content areas that are not covered in your courses?

3. What are some of the teaching or instructional strategies that you use?

Vision

4. What are your priorities for the literacy course?

5. How did you arrive at these priorities? Why are they important in your course?

6. If I came into your class, how would I see these priorities?

7. Can you share your goals for future literacy teachers (student teachers?)

Community

8. Are there opportunities to build community among your colleagues?

9. How important is building a learning community in your classes? How do you do it?

Assessment

10. How do you assess student teachers?

11. Why do you choose these methods of assessment?
12. Do you feel that any particular assessments should be emphasized in the literacy coursework?

Open Questions

13. Have there been any turning points in your teaching?

14. Is there any additional information that you would like to add in reference to the features of content, vision, community or assessment?