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**PERCEPTIONS OF CONFORMITY DURING
THE STUDENT TEACHING PLACEMENT**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the issue of conformity and the relationship between student teachers and associate teachers during the preservice practicum. The three questions that guided this research included: (a) Did associate teachers expect pre-service teachers to mirror their practices during the practicum? (b) Did student teachers describe and expectation of conformity within their field experience?; and (c) What circumstances during the practicum increased the likelihood of conformity?

This study was conducted with a sample of student teachers and associate teachers during the 1999 - 2000 school term at one Ontario university, and it consisted of two phases of data collection. The first stage involved preliminary interviews with one student teacher on two separate occasions. The data from these interviews guided the surveys that were distributed to student teachers and associate teachers in the second phase of data collection.

This study found that associate teachers indicated that conformity occurred, and a fraction of these participants clearly expressed a desire for this behaviour. Other associate teachers may have implied this expectation through communication, feedback, and their actions. The student teachers suggested that conformity occurred in smaller numbers. Some participants expressed that it was a requirement of the practicum, while others felt that conformity occurred out of respect for the associate teacher.

With reference to the factors that contributed to conformity, a perceived expectation of conformity and an associate teacher with more than 20 years of experience all increased the rate of conformity with this group of participants. If student teachers observed for one week at the start of their practicum and then proceeded to teach 3 - 4 lessons per day, they reduced their risk of conformity. Additional variables aside from the ones presently stated were also examined within this research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

While the university-based study of pedagogy is frequently assigned limited value, especially by practitioners, practice teaching is considered to be essential.

(MacKinnon, 1989, p. 2)

Purpose of the Study

Each individual enrolled in a teacher preparation program has an assortment of individuals, both personal and professional, who provide support, guidance and authority. Family, friends, teachers from the past, professors, faculty liaisons, associate teachers, and students within the classroom all affect the decisions of a student teacher. Despite all of these individuals, the associate teacher has been identified as the one who exerts the greatest influence upon the student teacher during the practicum (Bean, 1997, Cruickshank & Kennedy, 1977; Manning, 1977; McNamara, 1995; Seperson & Joyce, 1973; Sudzina, Giebelhaus, Coolican, 1997; Tighe, 1991; Yee, 1969). Most student teachers, practicing teachers, and education professors consider this field experience one of the most valuable learning experiences that a new teacher will have (Becher & Ade, 1982; Evertson, 1990; MacKinnon, 1989). The relationship that exists between the student teacher and associate teacher has the potential for extraordinary influence on the overall effect of the pre-service program. The philosophical dilemma foundational to this practicum experience is that of change in the school system versus maintenance of the status quo. Is it the intention of the placement to prepare students to change the way we do education, or is it our intent to inculcate them in the processes currently in use in the classrooms?

The purpose of this research was to study the relationship between student teachers and associate teachers: that is, how did student teachers and associate teachers describe conformity

during the pre-service placement and what factors may have contributed to student teacher conformity. The questions that guided this research were three fold: (a) Did associate teachers expect pre-service teachers to mirror their practices during the practicum? (b) Did student teachers describe an expectation of conformity within their field experience?; and (c) What circumstances during the practicum may have increased the likelihood of conformity?

Background

The Practicum Partners Handbook (1999), made available to both associate teachers and student teachers, describes the expected learning outcomes for student teachers. Aside from the issues of confidentiality, respect for the rules and routines of schools, and professional conduct, this document suggests that student teachers are capable of completing lesson and unit plans, and understand the use of the curriculum documents in the classroom. One of the four goals of the practicum within one Faculty of Education Handbook is:

To assist student teachers in becoming 'students of teaching' by reinforcing key concepts about teaching and by learning to think about teaching in new and innovative ways. (p. 2)

As positive role models, the associate teachers are expected to: provide an overview of content that will be taught during the placement, “[f]amiliarize student teachers with classroom and school routines...”, assign specific tasks and duties for the student teachers, and “[o]bserve, assess, and provide written and oral feedback” (p. 9).

At this institution, associate teachers are also responsible for the formal evaluations of their student teachers. These evaluations play a significant role with school boards during hiring procedures, and the Faculty of Education itself holds these evaluations in high regard - if a practicum is deemed unsuccessful by the associate teacher, the student teacher must sacrifice the entire year or make special arrangements for an additional practicum. Therefore, associate teachers are in a position to exert a tremendous amount of short and long term influence over their student teachers. This study focused on the dynamics of this relationship, more

specifically, the expectations of conformity during the practicum. Data collection for this research was done through a combination of surveys distributed to student teachers and their associate teachers.

Significance of the Study

The teaching profession evolves and changes with the addition of each new teacher. The field experience plays an important role in the socialization of new teachers, so it is important to understand the experience and background that teachers attain before they start their careers. Student teachers receive the opportunity to reinforce personal beliefs, attain new teaching strategies, and receive the opportunity to relate their course work to the classroom during this time (Practicum Partners Handbook, 1998, p.1). The relationship between the associate teacher and student teacher is of utmost importance. Associate teachers are in a position to influence the overall experience throughout the practicum (Cruickshank & Kennedy, 1977; Manning, 1977; McNamara, 1995; Seperson & Joyce, 1973; Sudzina et al., 1997; Tighe, 1991; Yee, 1969). The extent of this influence is of significant value for school boards and universities. The Faculty of Education must be concerned with the positive, or negative impact that these associate teachers have upon student teachers. If these student teachers attempt to replicate the practices of their associate teachers, Faculties of Education owe it to student teachers and teaching community to ensure that they receive the best available associate teachers.

Limitations

This study was limited to students enrolled in the one year program or the concurrent education program in the Faculty of Education at one Ontario university during the 1999 - 2000 school year. The associate teachers included in this study were those who received a student teacher from that same faculty within the 1999 - 2000 time frame. Due to the number of students enrolled in the program (over 500) and the large number of associate teachers involved in this process, 125 student teachers and 125 associate teachers were randomly selected to

participate in this study. From the 250 people selected, 69 participants agreed to partake and share their experiences. This small sampling sheds light on the experiences of these individuals and can not be generalized to all students everywhere.

The current literature has identified a number of factors that affect experiences of student teachers. For the purpose of this report, the effect of prior beliefs and previous teaching experiences were not studied. Although the area of reflective practices of the student teacher is related to this study, it was only referred to tangentially.

In an attempt to acknowledge the need for improvement, it is necessary to examine areas of concern that arose as this study progressed. The fact that this survey only represents a small portion of student teachers and associate teachers at one Ontario university indicates that the information gathered is only representative of this sample. This experience sheds light on a small portion of the student teacher population, but through various small research projects information within this realm is extended.

A second suggestion, if this study was repeated, would be to include definitions. Two questions on each survey requested information on various teaching styles. In order to reduce individual interpretations it is necessary to clarify what is meant by traditional, innovative, and radical teaching styles on the survey when related questions are posed. The inclusion of these definitions on the survey would reduce any discrepancies that arose among the participants.

In addition, a differentiation between concurrent education students and the one year education students would have increased validity in this study. Although these students complete similar courses during the one year or final year of study, the concurrent education students received an additional teaching placement during their third year. This may have affected their experiences during their final year, although the specific effects are unknown.

Definition of Terms

A dictionary definition of conformity is; “correspondence in form or manner; agreement in character; likeness, resemblance; exact correspondence to or with a pattern in some respect or

manner” (Oxford, 1970, p. 813). For the purpose of this paper, conformity dealt specifically with the actions of student teachers in relation to their associate teachers during the practicum. Conformity occurred when student teachers attempted to replicate the routines, actions, and approaches towards teaching exhibited by their associate teachers.

The term “practicum” has been used to refer to a time during the Bachelor of Education program when the university collaborates with practicing teachers. These teachers allow the students enrolled in the program to experience classrooms first hand. This experience sets out to bridge the gap between the Faculty of Education and the ‘real world’ of teaching. Cruickshank and Kennedy (1977) indicate that this “is a time for the student teacher to explore, experiment, and ‘put it all together’ before becoming a professional” (p. 51). Within the literature, the terms “practicum”, “field experience”, “teaching placement”, and “pre-service placement”, are used interchangeably. The term practicum will be used here to describe this process.

Saunders, Pettinger, and Tomlinson (1995) stated that classroom teachers “find themselves with some degree of formal involvement in the training, supervision, and assessment of students working toward qualified teacher status.” Hattie, Olphert, and Cole (1982) indicated that “supervising teachers ... are expected to help, guide, and eventually evaluate the student teacher.” The terms “associate teacher”, “mentor”, and “master teacher” are all used to refer to this practicing teacher who invites a student from the Faculty of Education into his or her classroom for a specified length of time. The term associate teacher will be used in this study.

“Preservice teacher”, “student teacher”, and “teacher candidate” refer to the individual enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program who enters the school community for a specified length of time to learn more about the classroom environment under the direct supervision of an associate teacher. Throughout this report, the term student teacher will be utilized.

Assumptions

When the student teachers entered the classrooms that were assigned for their practica, it was assumed that these students were fully immersed within this environment, received the

chance to take an active role, and seized the opportunity to apply their pedagogical knowledge. It is also assumed that student teachers received adequate instruction at the Faculty of Education to make knowledgeable decisions once in the classroom. Finally, it is assumed that the participants in this study answered truthfully and accurately and that the sample was representative of the usual experiences of the student teachers.

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter outlines the purpose of the study and a brief overview of how this research was approached. The second chapter reviews academic literature that exists in relation to the role of associate teachers and the issue of conformity and non-conformity during the practica. Chapter three presents the preliminary research that was completed before the current study commenced. This phase of research assisted in the development of the survey that was used as the main tool in gathering the data for this study. The fourth chapter presents what research processes were followed, and all other details related to the methodology. Chapter five presents all of the data that was gathered from the student teacher and associate teacher surveys, while chapter six interprets this data and provides a discussion of the findings. The final chapter draws conclusions based upon the findings of the research, provides implications for these conclusions, and offers recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Practicing teachers have often indicate that the practicum was the most applicable and significant portion of the pre-service program (Miklos & Greene, 1987). However, there is long standing concern about exactly what is being learned in a practice teaching placement that goes back to 1904 when Dewey expressed concern for student teachers during this time in their teacher preparation programs:

Dewey (1904) warned against placing students in public schools before they developed habits of reflection. He suggested that if students were placed in 'apprenticeship' experiences too soon, they would be overly influenced by the ongoing practices found in their placements.
(Goodman, 1985, p. 46)

In more recent literature, Dewey's predictions held true. Associate teachers were identified as the most influential individuals during the practicum (Cruickshank & Kennedy, 1977; Manning, 1977; Tighe, 1991).

There are two opposing views of the practicum. Most literature indicated that associate teachers were influential during the practicum and that this situation lead to student teacher conformity. The opposing literature identified situations in which the influence of the associate teacher was not sufficient to create fundamental change in student teachers' attitudes. The extreme of this position identified a student teacher who influenced an associate teacher to change his or her practices in order to conform with the student teacher's perspective.

Some of these ideas were reflected in the pilot stage of this research. The participant who was interviewed during the early stages of this research expressed concern for the expectation of conformity that arose during his second practicum. It was acknowledged at this time that the layout of some of his lessons would not be replicated once in his own classroom.

The results from the preliminary interviews appear within the next chapter. It was necessary to examine conformity within the context of society before isolating this behaviour within the field of education. Upon completion of this brief examination, the influence of associate teachers is presented, followed by the research found on student teacher conformity and student teacher non-conformity.

Conformity in Society

For years, psychologists and sociologists studied group dynamics and human behaviour in situations where conformity may result. People conform for various reasons in different situations. Within the field of psychology, in simplified form, it was believed that conformity occurs for two reasons. Public conformity occurs when people do not really change their minds rather they may behave in a way that is socially desirable. Private acceptance is the second reason, this occurs when people are convinced that their previous thoughts or behaviours are wrong and as a result change their minds (Bernstein, Clarke-Stewart, Roy, Srull & Wickens, 1994, p. 643). Asch (1955) conducted an experiment that many researchers replicated for years to follow while other academics used similar approaches that differed slightly.

Asch (1955) selected 123 male college students that were placed in groups of seven to nine. The participants were informed that they were going to compare the length of lines. Two cards were displayed, only one line appeared on the first card while three lines appeared on the second card. One of the three lines on the second card matched the length of the line drawn on the first card. The participants were requested to select the line on the second card that matched the single line on the first card. "What the dissenter does not know is that all the other members of the group were instructed by the experimenter beforehand to give incorrect answers in unanimity at certain points. The single individual who is not a part to this prearrangement is the local subject of our experiment" (p. 32). All participants provided their responses orally and on the third trial of the experiment one person disagreed with all other participants, on the fourth trial he disagreed again. Eventually the participant found himself in the minority until finally he was

the only one providing a correct response. The subject “could act independently, repudiating the majority, or he could go along with the majority, repudiating the evidence of his senses” (p. 32). It was found that “under group pressure the minority subjects swung to acceptance of the misleading majority’s wrong judgments in 36.8 per cent of the selections” (p. 33).

Insko, Drenan, Solomon, Smith, and Wade (1983) performed a similar experiment with 110 female undergraduate students that included a public and private factor in an attempt to uncover additional behavioural patterns in relation to being liked and being right. The participants were placed in a group of six where all people involved were aware of the proceedings except the subject. The participants were requested to identify colour relationships. Three colours were shown in a row, the colour in the middle was to be identified as closer to the colour on the right or the colour on the left. Various approaches were taken that provided a private and public factor. Some participants were requested to write their responses on paper and deposit the unsigned sheet in a box on the way out, others were expected to follow the same procedure in addition to sharing their responses aloud, while some were requested to give their responses orally. This study concluded that conformity occurred more frequently in public settings when compared to the private settings.

In a similar study, Insko, Smith, Alicke, Wade, and Taylor (1985) studied the effects of group size on conformity. Two hundred and three female undergraduate students were selected to participate in a study about colour relationships. This experiment followed the same format as Insko, et al. (1983). “[T]he interaction of group size with both the manner of responding [publicly or privately] and color relationship variables indicates that the group-size effect is mediated by the dual concerns with being liked and being right” (p. 47). This study showed that conformity increased as the number of participants that provided incorrect answers increased especially when coupled with public responses.

Within the literature, it was demonstrated that people are more likely to conform under certain circumstances. These situations are grouped within three categories: ambiguity of the situation, unanimity and size of the majority, and personal characteristics (Bernstein et al.,

1994). When ambiguity of a certain situation existed, people were more likely to conform. For example, if a group of strangers were gathered on a street corner and several people looked up, other people within this group are more likely to conform by also looking up. The size of a majority also influenced the rate at which people conformed as demonstrated by Insko, et al. (1985). When placed in a situation where the majority of people agree, those in the minority are more likely to conform to fit with the majority. The third category relates to personal characteristics and familiarity with a certain task. "People who are unfamiliar with a situation or have relatively low status in a group are the ones most likely to conform" (Bernstein, et al., 1994, p. 645). Chartrand and Bargh (1999) studied the chameleon effect .

"Like a chameleon changing its color to match its current surroundings, ... [people's] behavior changes to match the norms and values of the group with which he is currently involved" (p. 893). The first experiment that was completed in this study tested the "unintentional mimicry between strangers" using 39 male and female students (p. 897). Two strangers, one observer, and a video camera (that was later used to code the data), were placed in a room while the participants were requested to discuss a series of pictures. One of the two strangers was requested to perform various behaviours (face rubbing, foot shaking, or smiling) continually throughout the activity. The second participant had no knowledge of this request while he or she participated in the discussions. Following this initial activity, the second participant was placed in another room with a different stranger and asked to repeat the same activity. The experimenters watched to see if similar behaviours that were exhibited by the first partner in the first meeting would be unintentionally repeated when placed in a similar situation with a new stranger. The experiment demonstrated that "[t]he perception-behavior link posits the existence of a natural and nonconscious connection between the act of perceiving and the act of behaving, such that perceiving an action being done by another makes one more likely to engage in that same behavior" (p. 900).

The second experiment completed by Chartrand and Bargh (1999) "was to test whether behavior matching does in fact increase liking and create a sense of smoother interaction" (p.

900). Seventy-eight male and female students were selected to follow the same procedure as experiment one

except that the confederates no longer smiled (or not), shook their foot, or rubbed their face. Instead, during the interaction, the confederate avoided eye contact with the participant and maintained a neutral facial expression. Furthermore, in the mimicry condition, the confederate mirrored the posture, movements, and mannerisms displayed by the participant. In the control, the confederate sat in a neutral relaxed position, with both feet on the floor and both hands holding the photos (or resting in the lap) (p. 902).

A brief survey that requested information about the task was completed following the activity. It was found that “those participants whose movements were mirrored by the confederate both experienced the interaction as having gone more smoothly and liked the confederate significantly more” (p. 903). It is important to relate some of this information on conformity to the field of education. The remaining portion of this literature review discusses the influence of the associate teacher followed by student teacher conformity and non-conformity during the practica.

Associate Teachers' Influence

The studies described here all indicated that associate teachers were perceived as one of the most influential individuals during the practicum. For example, Cruickshank and Kennedy (1977) surveyed 60 student teachers in order to identify important influences. Seventy percent of these student teachers were female and the average age was 22.8 years old. Some of these student teachers (25%) had elementary school experience, 66.7% had high school experience, while the remaining 8.3% completed student teaching practica in both settings. The significant individuals identified by the student teachers fell into 12 categories including; cooperating teachers, center coordinators, college instructors, other teachers and administrators, content area supervisors, other student teachers, friends, parents, other relatives, spouse, and students, but

more than half of the 60 students indicated that their associate teacher was the most influential individual during the practicum.

In earlier literature, Yee (1969) studied cooperating teachers' influence and the possibility that the attitudes of the student teachers may alter during the practica. It was stated that "the attitudes of student teachers towards young people generally reflect the predominant influence of their cooperating teachers" (Yee, 1969, p. 331). This influence appeared in two forms 'congruent' and 'incongruent' influence. Congruent influence occurred when the student teacher identified and appreciated the associate teacher as a positive role model. In contrast, incongruent influence included situations in which the associate teacher demonstrated practices that the student teachers believed were inappropriate or uncharacteristic of their own actions. Associate teachers influenced student teachers' attitudes in positive and negative ways.

The Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI) was used to survey 124 associate teacher and student teacher pairs, along with the 12 college supervisors that were directly involved with these dyads. A new score key was implemented to increase the validity of the MTAI for this purpose. The frequency-of-change-in-product-moment (FCP) was used to attempt to identify the source of the influence. A pretest was completed before the student teachers started their practica, and a post test was administered 16 weeks later at the conclusion of the semester. Yee's findings suggested "that cooperating teachers wield great congruent influence upon student teachers' attitudes. ... student teachers shifted their attitudes to approximate more closely the attitudes of the cooperating teachers" (1969, p. 331). Although this shift occurred most often, Yee (1969) noted that it was "...important for directors and supervisors of student teaching to realize that incongruent as well as congruent influence may occur in such dyadic relationships" (p. 331).

In another study, Manning (1977) compared key individuals during the practicum in urban and suburban settings. The sample included 60 student teachers: 20 who taught in suburban settings, 20 who were in traditional urban settings, and 20 who were placed in an experimental urban setting. All 60 students were surveyed after they completed the practica.

The associate teachers were chosen as the most influential in the urban school settings, and the second most influential in the other two settings (behind professors or college supervisors). In all of these instances, associate teachers were perceived among the most influential individuals during the practicum.

More recently, McNamara (1995) studied the influence of associate teachers during the practicum. He selected 28 triads of student teachers, associate teachers, and university supervisors to interview and observe. Interviews with the student teachers provided information that could be grouped into four categories:

1. 17 out of 28 students reported that, in broad terms, what they taught was determined by the mentor [or associate teacher] and general school policy
2. In five cases the students reported that they had some flexibility within the requirements set by the mentor [or associate teacher]
3. In three cases students reported that what they taught and the organization of the timetable was prescribed by their mentor [or associate teacher]
4. Finally, in three cases, students reported that they were given considerable free choice by the mentor [or associate teacher] in determining what they taught. (McNamara, 1995, p. 53)

The associate teachers, when questioned, suggested that other than the National Curriculum “they should have the deciding voice in students’ teaching” (p. 55). Additional evidence supported the associate teachers’ claims, “in general terms, what they [the student teachers] taught and when they taught was very much determined by their mentor [or associate teacher]” (p. 53). Twenty-five of the 28 student teachers explained that they were given more opportunity and choice when developing how they taught their lessons rather than the topic and schedule.

Observers attempted to identify occasions when the student teachers displayed pedagogical knowledge. These incidents were questioned immediately following the lesson in a short conversation with the student teachers. The influences on these decisions were grouped into 6 categories that included: student autonomy, common sense, class context and constraints, associate teachers’ influences, university supervisors’ influences, and other people’s influences.

From these observations, discussions, and previous interviews, McNamara (1995) concluded that associate teachers are in an influential role during the practicum.

According to Sudzina, Giebelhaus, and Coolican (1997), the relationship between associate teachers and student teachers effected the practicum immensely. These researchers surveyed and interviewed some of the less successful student teachers and their corresponding associate teachers. The outcome of this study identified the need for an increase in training and support for associate teachers. Their findings stated that in some cases

sources of difficulties [for the student teachers] were more subtle and difficult to document. In these cases, it appears as if personality and pedagogical conflicts between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher precipitated negative classroom interactions and weak summative evaluations. (Sudzina, Giebelhaus, & Coolican, 1997, p. 29)

Although Sudzina et al. did not focus on the specific aspect of associate teacher influence, it was clear that the dynamics of the relationship between the associate teacher and the student teacher had an overall effect on the success or failure of prospective teachers.

In another study, 23 student teachers were surveyed to discover what these student teachers perceived as their sources of learning, and what they believed they learned during a practicum experience in a professional development school (Duquette & Cook, 1999). Nine student teachers completed two practica in a professional development school (PDS), 9 other student teachers completed only one practicum in a PDS, while 5 participants did not complete any practica in a PDS. The students that experienced a practicum in a professional development school indicated that their main source of learning was received through reflective practices while the mentor teacher, or associate teacher, was identified as the second source of learning:

The mentor teachers were depended on to be models of good practice, to provide learning resources, to give feedback to the student teachers, to back up candidates' efforts in classroom management and discipline, and to provide sufficient emotional support to develop and maintain reasonable confidence. (Duquette & Cook, 1999, p. 202)

These demanding expectations placed on associate teachers indicated that they are in an influential position during the practicum.

In a similar study, Seperson and Joyce (1973) observed 19 student teachers throughout their practicum experiences. Samples of their teaching behaviour were obtained before they entered their practica, early in the practica and again later during this same practica. The teaching behaviours of their corresponding associate teachers were also obtained. Correlations were made to determine if the associate teachers influenced their student teachers. Positive correlations first appeared between the associate teacher and student teacher early in the practicum. "It is worthwhile noting that the influence of the cooperating teacher was felt during the very early week of student teaching rather than being the result of the slow and cumulative impact" (Seperson & Joyce, 1973, p. 150). For this reason, the survey used in the current study focused on different stages in the practicum by asking questions about the "initial observation days" as well as the "full time teaching days". This body of research presents numerous concerns. How the associate teacher's influence affects the actions of the student teacher during the practicum is only one of many that could be investigated.

Student Teacher Conformity

It may be that student teachers neglect what they learned in their classes at the Faculty of Education and conform to their associate teachers' expectations during the practicum experience. In a survey of 127 student teachers, Puk and Haines (1999) found that the student teachers who did not see their associate teachers teaching inquiry said that they would be less likely to use inquiry in the future (p. 546). Puk and Haines suggested that "if student teachers observe their associate teacher teaching in a certain manner they feel it is safe to emulate that style" (p. 545).

Puk and Haines (1999) suggested that one of the issues of conformity is that of evaluation. Associate teachers are required to evaluate the performance of the student teachers. As a result, the student teacher may feel compelled to conform to the associate teacher's

expectations. Goodman (1985) found similar results in his study of an Early Field Experience program which used both observations and interviews to obtain data. Goodman (1985) suggested that “students [student teachers] had little control over either what or how content would be taught” (p. 45). These student teachers passively accepted the environment in which they were placed and conformed to the expectations of associate teachers while they were there. Student teachers who wanted the opportunity to experiment during their practicum looked for associate teachers who had a reputation that allowed for freedom during instruction.

Specific accounts of the effect of this relationship appeared within other literature. Rand and Shelton-Colangelo (1999) compiled a number of student teacher narratives. One student reflected on a creative writing lesson that she had just taught. “Mrs. Johnson had given me control over the lesson, yet now I was not able to lead it in the manner that I felt was best. ... Should I try to continue the lesson in the mold of Mrs. Johnson even though I had a different philosophy?” (p. 40) A similar conflict between student teachers and their associate teachers appeared within a number of narratives. Rand and Shelton-Colangelo found that innovative student teachers were not given the opportunity to explore different approaches to teaching, rather, associate teachers stated what was expected of them. For example, Ralph, another student teacher, had attempted to implement cooperative learning during his practicum. “After class, Mr. Grant [his associate teacher] had another discussion with me. He told me that these students would never behave in groups. He suggested I go back to ‘good old basic’ teaching because I could cover more information that way” (p. 38). Some students were torn between what they had learned at the Faculty of Education, and the traditional teaching methods that some associate teachers demanded. The issue of conformity had wide spread effect on the student teachers, associate teachers, and the students within these classrooms.

Similar concerns arose as early as 1961 in a study by Price. Price (1961) administered the *Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory* (MTAI) to 116 associate teachers before the practica, and 60 were selected for the purpose of the study. Similarly, 100 student teachers completed the MTAI before the practica and 45 individuals were selected. These student teachers were

retested after their practica to see if a shift in their attitudes was evident. An observation period was also completed in this study that utilized the *Sanders' Observation Schedule*. The results indicated that "student teachers' attitudes were altered in the direction of those held by their supervising teachers" (Price, 1961, p. 474). Price (1961) concluded that "student teachers seem to acquire many of the teaching practices of their supervising teachers during the internship semester" (p. 475).

More recently, Mary Ann Tighe (1991) studied student teacher attitudes toward English education, and factors that influenced these attitudes. She found that student teachers exhibited conflicting practices in the classroom when compared to their written answers on an attitude survey. When asked what factors influenced their seemingly incongruent practices in the classroom, the students confirmed that they were influenced by the practices of the cooperating teacher. Their answers indicated that they thought that it was more appropriate to follow the practices of their associate teacher than to try something new. Tighe (1991) indicated that the

first real teaching assignment [for these student teachers] forces them to conform - when it squeezes them into a mold. Few interns are strong enough to stand up under this pressure. (p. 234)

Thomas Bean (1997) was also interested in English education, more specifically the literacy strategies that student teachers utilize. Twenty-seven student teachers were enrolled in a pre-service reading course that required an observation practicum one day per week, and numerous microteaching sessions. Ten of these student teachers also enrolled in a five day teaching practicum. These 10 individuals were interviewed after the completion of the five day practicum. The content area reading strategies used for microteaching was compared with those used during the teaching practicum. Only 2 of the 10 student teachers chose to use the same literacy strategies for both sessions. Upon completion of the data analysis a number of themes arose from the interviews. "A synthesis of themes revealed in the 10 interviews shows that the most dominant influence in strategy selection and use was the cooperating teacher". Eight

student teachers decided to alter their strategy to fit with “the climate they felt the cooperating teacher wanted to maintain” (Bean, 1997, p. 161).

Martin (1997) examined two student teachers extensively in attempt to increase awareness about the role of a mentor. Three main contexts of mentoring were extracted from the data, the pertinent one for this research referred to the use of teaching exemplars during the practicum. The data suggested that exemplars assisted in structuring the student teachers’ teaching practices. In addition, Martin (1997) explained that

borrowing a routine did not seem to be mere mimicking but rather seemed to be an attempt to research into one’s own pedagogy by verifying the fit between on the one hand, the routine itself and, on the other hand, how one wishes to teach. (p. 193)

This article embarked upon a vast number of issues aside from the influence of the associate teachers. Although Martin acknowledged the fact that these two student teachers replicated characteristics of their associate teachers’ personae, it was a natural progression of growth from a student teacher to a beginning teacher. Teaching exemplars of the associate teachers influenced how these student teachers executed their lessons during the practicum experiences.

MacKinnon (1989), who observed four student teachers in their classrooms and interviewed an additional eight student teachers, summarized the issue in the results:

Conformity was, simply put, a fact of life for the student teachers throughout the eight-week practicum. Whether for reasons of status, or out of concern for the children, or as a result of a pragmatic self-interest in a good evaluation, all of the student teachers defined the practicum as a situation where significant change was not an advisable course of action. (p. 14)

Student Teacher Non Conformity

Student teachers do not adopt the teaching strategies of their associate teachers in all circumstances. Bunting (1988) was interested in the socialization of student teachers during the practicum. The Educational Attitudes Inventory (EAI) was given to 17 student teachers and their

corresponding associate teachers before the teaching practicum and it was administered to the student teachers a second time upon completion of this practicum. The EAI consists of two scales. A high score on the student-centered scale indicated a belief “in the importance of empathic, supportive relationships which free students to discuss their feelings and experiences” (Bunting, 1988, p. 44). Participants who scored high on the directive scales believed in “[f]irm discipline, attention to order and procedure, and teacher-controlled curricula” (p. 44). When these student teachers completed the EAI for a second time “ten of the seventeen candidates registered [a] substantial change” (p. 44). Bunting (1988) acknowledged the attitude changes, but cautions that:

[n]o candidate underwent fundamental change in his or her belief orientation. The pattern of moderation suggests that student teaching worked not to redirect the thinking of candidates, but to expand their perspectives to include a wider diversity of methods and practices. (Bunting, 1988, p. 45)

Bunting believed that these attitude changes were not significant and she indicated that it is part of the socialization of teachers in the profession and that these attitudes will continue to change throughout their careers. “Findings reported from the present study suggest the possibility of the cooperating teachers serving as a socializing influence” (Bunting, 1988, p. 46).

Copeland (1979) attempted to explain the influence of the associate teacher from another perspective as well. Rather than isolating the associate teacher / student teacher relationship he examined the entire ecological system within the classroom during the practicum. Thirty-two student teachers completed a microteaching program that focused on the development of three target skills: completeness of communication, utilizing probing questions, and developing generalizations. Half of these student teachers (16) were paired with associate teachers who modeled these skills in their classroom and were “rated ‘high’ on target skill usage”. The other sixteen student teachers were paired with associate teachers who were “rated ‘low’ on target skill usage”. The results from this portion of this study “showed that no significant difference

[was found] between scores of student teachers who had taught with ‘high’ or ‘low’ cooperating teachers” (Copeland, 1979, p. 196).

A second phase of research was completed that expanded the focus of the research to include the entire ecological system within the classroom. Three weeks into this teaching practicum the student teachers were assigned to teach a reading lesson to a class other than the one that they had been working in. The student teachers did not have the opportunity to observe this new classroom before teaching their lesson. Half of the original 16 student teachers who taught with teachers who were rank ‘high’ were moved to a classroom where the associate teacher was ranked ‘low’, while the remaining 8 moved to another associate teacher who was also ranked ‘high’. The same division also occurred with the 16 student teachers who were placed with a ‘low’ ranking associate teacher at the beginning of the practicum. At the conclusion of this exercise Copeland (1979) found “very significant differences in scores which attributed to the nature of the classroom ecological system in which the subjects taught” (p. 196). Copeland (1979) summarized by stating

when a student teacher who had been trained in that skill enters that classroom and attempts its use, the attempt fits the system. ... On the other hand, if the student teacher attempts to utilize the skill in a classroom in which the skill is not a part of the ecological system, that attempt is not reinforced. (p. 196)

This study attempted to describe how the influence of the associate teacher is misinterpreted. The associate teacher influences the entire ecological system within the classroom and in turn it is this system that influences the student teacher during a practicum.

There are a few examples within the literature that suggest that sometimes student teachers serve as leaders rather than as followers. Abell and Roth (1994) described how one student teacher resisted conformity. This student teacher had a passion for science and entered an elementary school that lacked scientific initiatives:

Instead of complying, Marie [the student teacher] constructed her own world of science teaching....instead of adapting to the expectations she perceived from the other fourth-grade teachers, she catalyzed

these teachers to change some of their own science teaching beliefs and practices. (Abell & Roth, 1994, p. 82)

Marie was not a typical case, she had numerous experiences teaching science and felt very comfortable in an instructor's role. There were a number of external factors that assisted Marie in her practicum experience. The science program implemented by this associate teacher consisted of traditional text book lessons and worksheets. This teacher invited additional efforts to improve the program, but insisted that the current curriculum be maintained. In order to work within these constraints, Marie adapted the textbook to fit her approach to teaching. She also maintained a close link with the university. This allowed Marie to overcome the equipment and material constraints. Marie's associate teacher, actually learned from Marie. Other science teachers within the school also attempted to implement similar programs to Marie's within their own classrooms. Without a conflict between Marie and her associate teacher, Marie's chances for innovative reform were improved: "Marie's case illustrates that beginning teachers do not necessarily comply with the cultural norms of the school in which they teach" (Abell & Roth, 1994, p. 88). This example stands alone on the other side of the conformity ledger.

Summary

The current literature provided extensive evidence of the important role an associate teacher has during the practicum. This research spanned decades and continues to evolve today. A variety of approaches, numerous studies, and various participants and researchers demonstrated the profound effect a student teacher / associate teacher relationship had on the overall effectiveness of the practicum. Unfortunately, a gap arises within the research that is specific to student teacher conformity versus student teacher non conformity. It is evident that the issue of conformity arose in the daily activities and actions of people in society, but few researchers attempted to apply this dynamic to the student teacher / associate teacher relationship. Those who have traveled this unbeaten path provided data to indicate that conformity does occur, while other academics offered alternative explanations for this situation.

One researcher found an example of a situation where the roles were reversed, the student teacher had a profound effect on the associate teacher. In no way does the research here attempt to solve this debate, rather it is the hope of the researcher to shed light on a small sample of participants from one Ontario university. By doing this, some questions or concerns may be answered, but more importantly more questions might be raised.

CHAPTER III

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

Introduction

Associate teachers play a significant, influential role during this crucial learning experience, and some student teachers described a need to conform as a result of the influence of their associate teachers. This is particularly true if associate teachers are responsible for the student teacher evaluation. In this current study, the students are evaluated by their associate teachers and the expectation for conformity is explored within this context. Do associate teachers expect some level of conformity, or is it a false assumption made by the student teachers?

An initial phase for this research was utilized to focus the development of the survey instrument. The preliminary interviews occurred throughout the 1999 - 2000 school year, one education student was interviewed after successfully completing the first practicum and again following the second practicum. The experiences that "William" had can be referenced to existing literature. This initial information was considered and applied when the surveys were created.

Methodology for Preliminary Research

Semi-structured interviews provided data that were used to create two surveys. Two interviews took place with the same participant. The first occurred after the initial teaching placement, the second was completed at the end of the second teaching placement. The participant was asked to describe the experiences that occurred during each practicum. The second interview focused more upon his associate teachers. Having experienced two contrasting teaching philosophies, that the participant was asked to compare the two practica, explain the positive and negative experiences from both situations, and state which circumstance was

preferred and how it fostered a learning experience. These interviews provided the opportunity to pose descriptive questions and gather relevant data about the practice teaching experience in survey form. The interviews totaled 1 hour and 45 minutes and were recorded and transcribed.

Analysis Description

Data analysis was completed using inductive analysis. Patterns in the transcripts emerged as the separate parts of the data were analyzed and coded based on various key words that emerged throughout (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Once the first interview was transcribed, a primary coding system was developed. This primary system involved a process by which key words that appeared repetitiously were highlighted and considered within the context of the conversation. During this initial stage, areas requiring more detail or clarification, and any contradictory statements, were noted and addressed in the second interview, as well as any new experiences that had occurred since the original meeting. Again this second interview was transcribed and key words were identified. At this stage, in order to increase trustworthiness within this research, the two interviews were compared to ensure that no additional contradictions emerged that would need further clarification. The researcher sought evidence that indicated a change in teaching style between the first and second practica. The key words that appeared in both of these interviews were organized into coding categories, and were then used to guide the organization or sorting of the data that was collected. Bogdan (1982) explained in a general way that coding categories can fall within different kinds of 'families' or 'codes'. Using his description, coding categories emerged from these two interviews. Three out of the four categories fall under his 'family' titled "Perspectives Held by Students" (p. 158). "This family includes codes oriented toward ways of thinking that all or some subjects share which are not as general as their overall definition of the situation but indicate orientations towards particular aspects of a setting" (Bogdan, 1982, p. 158). The three coding categories that were used to organize most of the data were: beliefs about associate teacher responsibilities, beliefs about effective teaching, and beliefs about students. Using Bogdan's model, the final

coding category fit in his family titled “Relationship and Social Structure Codes”. “Units of data that direct you to cliques, friendships, romances, coalitions, enemies, and mentors / students are what we mean by relationship codes” (Bogdan, 1982, p. 161). This final coding category is titled ‘relationships with associate teachers’. These categories were not finalized until a loop of analysis, reflection, development, and change took place until conclusions were made based upon the participants experiences.

These four categories all attained various sub-categories, eighteen in total. Table 1 displays all of the information relating to categories and sub-categories. The associate teacher’s responsibilities consisted of six sub-categories: be a positive role model, provide resources, provide feedback, remain helpful, provide expectations for the student teacher, and provide guidance during the field experience. Grimett and Ratzlaff (1986) received similar responses when they studied student teacher expectations of their associate teacher. They found that the associate teachers were expected to: “[s]upply student teacher[s] with copies of the teacher’s guide, teacher’s manual, textbooks, and other types of teaching aids”, “[i]nvolve student teacher[s] in planning and directing learning activities or children”, “[h]old scheduled conference periods with student teacher[s]”, and “[d]emonstrate for the student teacher different methods or procedures of teaching” (pp. 46 & 47).

The beliefs that William had about effective teaching were separated into six subcategories: a) positive attitude, b) care for students, c) proficient planning, d) mutual respect, e) classroom management, and f) reflection. Three sub-categories were developed for his beliefs about students. These were student behaviour, student level and student learning. The relationship with the associate teacher was simply divided into positive and negative sub-categories. A number of revisions to early sub-categories and main categories were completed before the current distinctions summarized and contained the relevant data effectively. Two categories are the focus of this paper - the perceptions of associate teacher responsibilities and the relationship between William and his associate teachers.

Table 1. - Preliminary Interview Data

Beliefs about Associate Teacher Responsibilities	Beliefs About Effective Teaching	Beliefs about Students	Relationships with Associate Teachers
Role Model	Positive Attitude	Behaviour	Positive
Provide Resources	Care for Students	Level	Negative
Provide Feedback	Proficient Planning	Learning	
Helpful	Mutual Respect		
Provide Expectations for the Student Teacher	Classroom Management		
Provide Guidance	Reflection		

Interpretations

Beliefs about the Associate Teachers' Responsibilities

Upon completion of the first practicum, William had developed certain expectations of his associate teachers. To William, a good associate teacher was described as a positive role model that provided resources, feedback, clear expectations for the student teacher, guidance, and remained helpful throughout the placement. His first associate teacher met and exceeded these expectations, while his second associate teacher was lacking in a number of areas.

Associate Teachers as Positive Role Models

As role models, William expected his associate teachers to demonstrate effective teaching and management strategies so that he could use similar approaches in his own teaching.

He valued demonstration, it was perceived as a useful learning tool. In the second interview William indicated,

I would try and follow the way that my associate [teacher] would teach ... I could see some of the things that he did, that ... the class is used to, so I would use that when I was teaching. (line 327 - 331)

Observations could lead to mimicking the specific styles of the associate teacher.

William made it quite clear that he felt that “we’re not there as students to do their [the associate teacher’s] work for them, but we’re there to learn from them” (Interview 2, line 344 - 345). William felt that he would learn best by following the lead of his associate teacher. During his second placement, his associate teacher only demonstrated for a total of two days (1 full day and 2 half days). William felt lost and uncertain about the regular day to day activities to which the students were accustomed. He would have preferred more time learning from the role model before doing it himself. From his point of view, an associate teacher should demonstrate the teaching style and classroom routines with which the students were familiar. William respected the predetermined environment in the classroom. William appreciated clear instructions and expectations before teaching on our own in order to maintain the classroom atmosphere.

Clear Expectations from Associate Teachers

There were numerous differences between William’s two associate teachers’ expectations. In both cases, he hoped for a suitable transitional phase that allowed the students to adjust to him which in turn allowed him to adjust to the new setting and new associate teacher. In the first interview William described how he was introduced into the classroom:

The first couple of days I just sat and observed ... And then slowly she [the associate teacher] just started getting me involved with different activities and I would help ... and then by the end of the first week I maybe taught two lessons. (line 15 - 22)

His second placement was contradictory to this. William described how he was introduced to the classroom environment during his second practicum.

I spent the first day observing ... the second and third day I taught for half a day and then observed for the rest of the day and kinda helped out with little things, and then after that I was teaching full days. (line 25 - 29)

William's second associate teacher's expectations exceeded those of his first. He offered less support and guidance. Although he described it as a positive learning experience, he knew he wouldn't have any assistance from the associate teacher when on his own, it was evident that he appreciated what his first associate teacher offered him.

William described this support, "she would tell me what she expected the lesson to accomplish" (Interview 2, lines 95,96). There were frequent student teacher / associate teacher conferences to ensure that William attempted to attain similar goals within the classroom that the associate teacher had previously desired. This description was similar to the conclusions that McNamara (1994) made. He described how what the student teachers "taught and when they taught was very much determined by their mentor [or associate teacher] ... but that they were involved in discussions and given some flexibility (p. 53). These instructions may have restricted his teaching creativity at this point in time, but that's where he felt comfortable during his first practicum experience.

At the start of his second placement, feeling confident, William had to adapt quickly to an environment that differed drastically from his first. He initially felt confused but soon uncovered his roles and responsibilities in the classroom. Specific expectations weren't given, but he quickly found his limitations when a disagreement arose over how physical education was taught. After reflecting on his first two practica, William explained how helpful clear expectations were and that it was his first associate teacher who provided these guidelines.

Guidance from Associate Teachers

From William's point of view, associate teachers were also required to provide guidance throughout the practicum. "The associate teachers are there to ... guide you, teach you what it is to be a good teacher" (Interview 2, line 341 - 342). In the second interview he indicated how his first associate teacher indicated what he was expected to teach and the expectations that he should include in his lessons. During his second placement William described how he "didn't have very much guidance" (Interview 2, line 176 - 177). Although he appreciated the opportunity to develop as an independent teacher during this time, his second associate teacher still expected him to follow his model of teaching. This experience affected the relationship that William developed with his associate teachers.

Associate Teachers Who Provided Resources

On numerous occasions throughout both interviews, William indicated that associate teachers should provide specific resources for their student teachers. He described how his first associate teacher would show him where to "get the information or resources" that he needed for his lessons (Interview 1, line 46). William valued these resources and made note of what they were in his reflection journal for future reference. He didn't receive this type of assistance during his second placement. He described how helpful it would have been if his second associate teacher would have assisted him in the same manner, he was required to look for his own resources during his second practicum.

Associate Teacher Feedback

Along with the specific instructions that William found helpful, he also appreciated specific feedback. In the first interview he stated that

[w]hen I teach, I found with my first placement, that it was so helpful getting feedback at the end of the day as to what I need to improve on in my lessons, or what I did well. That was really beneficial for me in planning for future lessons. (line 132 - 135)

He would include some of this feedback in his journal so that he could refer to it again when he planned his future lessons. During the second interview William indicated how he was 'getting tired of being evaluated all of the time'. This could indicate that the feedback that he received at this time wasn't as positive as the feedback from his first associate teacher. It is also possible that the feedback he received from his second associate teacher referred to his personal character and opinion rather than his teaching skill. William could have been just as successful during his second placement, but his associate teacher chose to use different teaching techniques and strategies. A conflict could have caused this shift in William's beliefs about associate teacher feedback, although he still believed that it was one of their responsibilities.

Helpful Associate Teachers

It is important to understand what William described as helpful. From direct description during the interviews, it was apparent that he appreciated clear, specific instructions and that this was equated with helpfulness. In the first interview he described his associate teacher as follows:

she was really helpful. We would sit down at the end of the day and we would go over what we had taught during the day and then we would decide together what I should teach the next day. ... She would tell me exactly what she wanted taught so it wasn't like I'm gonna leave you here to teach for the next couple of weeks or whatever. She was really helpful. (line 43 - 49)

Compared to his second associate teacher, William stated that "he wasn't so helpful with giving me ideas on what to teach on, he just said, ... use your own judgment, ... so that was a little bit sketchy" (Interview 2, line 7 - 9). William's relationship with his associate teachers was based on how they met his perceived expectations.

Relationships with Associate Teachers

Positive Relationship

During the first interview, William described how he developed a good rapport with his associate teacher, she attempted to accommodate her student teacher in every way possible.

We had a spirit day right at the beginning and you had to dress for your favourite sport, or whatever. So, I love volleyball, so I dressed like that. She asked if I wanted to teach a unit on volleyball. (line 25 - 28)

William was new to the classroom, his previous experience with children was limited to Sunday school and summer jobs. His first associate teacher saw an opportunity to give him the chance to teach something that he enjoyed and with which he felt very comfortable. This assisted in developing a warm and caring atmosphere for learning.

She [the associate teacher] just went above and beyond what she was expected to do as an associate teacher, which was great. And ... I developed like a friendship with her. (Interview 2, line 79 - 81)

This environment created a comfortable situation for William to experiment and grow as a new teacher.

Negative Relationship

In contrast to the previous situation he explains,

My second teacher ... had a caring atmosphere in the classroom, but he was a lot more rigid it seemed, and strict. ... As far as I was concerned, ... I was just another teacher in the class, as opposed to someone who was to be learning from him. (Interview 2, line 81 - 85)

These opposing descriptions affected how William perceived the overall learning experience during the placements. Rather than experimenting with new teaching strategies, during his second practicum William preferred to try and replicate what his associate teacher did. Although The Practicum Partners Handbook (1999) stipulates that one of the main goals for

student teachers is to “[learn] to think about teaching in new and innovative ways” (p. 2). His second associate teacher didn’t provide an environment where William felt uninhibited enough to experiment with innovative teaching strategies.

William also had negative emotions about his second associate teacher’s expectations and methods of evaluation:

By the end of the three weeks [during my second placement], I was getting tired of being evaluated, and constantly watched. ... everything that I did, ... he was ... watching over my shoulder, and ... just the feeling that you’re being evaluated all the time, and you’re constantly being scrutinized kinda, I get tired of that.
(Interview 2, line 366 - 372)

William’s choice of words is interesting in this excerpt. During the first placement William described his appreciation for evaluation and feedback. Contrary to this initial opinion, William described how he felt like he was being watched all of the time, and scrutinized rather than assessed. This reaction could have been a result of the contrasting personal relationships with his associate teachers. The friendship that he had with his first associate teacher led William to believe and appreciate the feedback, rather than stimulating a defensive response.

A conflict of personal philosophy with his second associate teacher added to the negative atmosphere during his second placement.

when I had to teach my first phys. ed. lesson, I wanted to teach it the way I had been taught at the university, you know, starting with your warm-up and your cool-down and all that extra stuff, which I think is important for kids in phys. ed. so that they don’t injure themselves and that sort of thing ... He [the associate teacher] said to me, basically, there’s too much dead time when you do that, they’re not being active when they’re stretching, ... you go, you do your activity and when the bell rings, boom the kids are out. So I didn’t agree with that, and I wouldn’t run my class like that, but that’s the way he wanted it so that’s the way that I did it for the rest of my placement. (Interview 2, line 399 - 420)

Again this second practicum did not fulfill the goals stated by the university. The Practicum Partners Handbook (1999) states that the practicum will “provide student teachers with

opportunities to transform theory into practice” (p. 2). William clearly supported the teaching strategies that he learned in his Physical Education class, but he was unable to implement these approaches during this practicum. William felt the need to suppress his beliefs and transform his teaching strategies to fit the expectations of his associate teacher. Presented with this conflict between the university and the associate teacher, William choose to abandon the Faculty of Education teachings and conform to the situation.

Additional evidence of conformity existed throughout the interviews. When asked what he had learned during this process, William replied,

I guess it taught me to be flexible and just, I feel like I’m just going through the motions to do what he wants me to do to get through, like if it was my own classroom I would be doing it a lot differently.
(Interview 2, line 151 - 156)

William suggested that he followed the expectations of his associate teacher, aware that he would not replicate this style in his own classroom. This is an example of what Yee (1969) would call incongruent influence “[i]ncongruent influence is shown in the statement, ‘My cooperating teacher’s attitude toward and rapport with pupils was so bad, I learned what not to do in classrooms’” (p. 328). William may have learned more from his second practicum than his first. William’s statement illuminates concern for the student teaching process as a whole. In William’s case, the negative relationship between a student teacher and an associate teacher does not foster the learning environment that the university strives to achieve. He also indicated how he “would try and follow the way that my associate would teach” and that he “basically did things the way he [the associate teacher] wanted it to be done” (Interview 2, line 327,328 & 389). It was this situation that prompted the questions for my surveys.

Summary

A number of researchers have provided evidence that the associate teacher is the individual who exerts the greatest amount of influence on the student teacher during the practicum (Cruickshank & Kennedy, 1977; Manning, 1977; McNamara, 1995; Seperson &

Joyce, 1973; Sudzina et al., 1997; Tighe, 1991; Yee, 1969). The interviews with William framed the questions on the survey. William had developed perceptions of the associate teachers' responsibilities, and the impression that the relationships with his associate teachers effected his overall experience. Although William expressed his desire for specific expectations, guidance, and feedback from his associate teachers, it was apparent that the relationship he had with his associate teachers affected his appreciation of these provisions. William expressed how he adapted to the two different classrooms and how it was necessary to follow the directions and expectations that were placed upon him. The issue of conformity arose and he expressed how he did what he had to do to successfully complete his second practicum. William indicated how he conformed to the situation but was aware of his own intentions, he knew that he would not repeat certain practices once in his own classroom. Although student teacher conformity was present, and his associate teacher expected this practice, the participant still described a positive learning outcome. William was unable to experiment and implement the teaching strategies that he acquired from the university. With initial evidence that supported the existence of conformity, I was fascinated and determined to expand my base of information. The goal for this research was based upon the information found within preexisting literature and the data collected in the preliminary interviews.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Preamble

The methodology for the main study was based on the findings of the preliminary research, specifically the issue of conformity which emerged from William's description of his experiences. Surveys provided the main source of data for this study. One survey was mailed to the associate teachers, while the second survey was distributed to the student teachers. Both of these surveys attempted to discover the expectations of conformity that emerged during the practicum.

Participant Selection

This study was conducted with a sample of student teachers at two levels - third and fourth year concurrent students, one year Bachelor of Education students, and associate teachers during the 1999 - 2000 school term . The one year education students and the fourth year concurrent education students received three different opportunities to teach in various school communities. The participants in this study were students enrolled in the Faculty of Education at one Ontario university and a sample of associate teachers who mentored the same cohort of student teachers. The first placement occurred during the months of November and December and lasted for a five week period. The second took place during three weeks in February, and the third session was a four week placement in April. For most of the student teachers, these three teaching placements varied with respect to school, grade, and associate teacher. Each new placement required a transitional observational period. The students were expected to observe for two days at the start of each new practicum. The third year concurrent education students were expected to observe and provide assistance within the classroom for the first semester before starting to teach on their own during the second. Between practica, third year student

teachers attended classes at the university. These students completed courses for their undergraduate degrees, three education courses, and spent one half day per week in a local school for the entire year. The desired level of qualification (primary/junior, junior/intermediate, and intermediate/senior) determined the specific course requirements for the Bachelor of Education for all of the students enrolled.

The student teachers and associate teachers selected to receive the surveys were not necessarily the ones that were appointed to work with each other, no attempt was made to “pair” responses. The surveys were mailed to 125 randomly selected student teachers and 125 randomly selected associate teachers in the middle of May, 2000. Random sampling was utilized to select the recipients of the surveys. By the end of June 2000, 34 surveys were returned from the student teachers (1 survey was blank while the remaining 33 were fully or partially completed), and 38 surveys were returned from the associate teachers (2 were blank while 36 were fully or partially complete).

Survey Description

Through surveys, the research had intended to gain a broad source of data from education students and associate teachers concerning issues surrounding conformity. Two slightly different surveys were distributed to the two groups. Various factors that effect the student teaching experience were considered during the creation of this survey. These factors include: student teacher observation days, teaching days, teaching styles, associate teacher support and experience, and the expectation of conformity. The student teacher survey (Appendix D) contained 12 questions that were organized into 4 sections: section A - initial observation days, section B - full time teaching days, sections C - expectations of conformity, section D - conformity, and a short answer portion. Most questions provided 2 - 4 choices that could be selected from, but all provided an opportunity for personal additions.

The associate teacher survey (Appendix B) contained 13 questions that required the associate teachers to reflect on their most recent experience with a student teacher. Questions 1

through 7 asked how the student teachers were integrated into the classroom and the type of support that was offered during this initial phase. Questions 8 through 11 required information about the associate teachers and their personal expectations for their student teachers, while question 12 asked how the associate teachers thought that the practicum experience affected their student teachers. Question 13 simply asked if the participants had learned anything from their student teachers. Most questions provided 2 - 4 choices that could be selected from, but all offered space for personal additions. Three areas in the associate teacher survey required written responses.

The student teacher and associate teacher surveys were slightly different, but numerous questions appeared on both surveys. Both surveys requested the student teachers and associate teachers to indicate the number of observation days at the beginning of the practica, how many lessons were taught per day by the student teacher initially, and how many full time teaching days there were. These questions were included in the surveys so that the researcher could gain insight on the overall practica experience. The interviews with William also raised some concern with reference to the observation days during the practicum. William expressed how he received an opportunity to observe his first associate teacher which allowed him to understand more fully how this classroom was run and some of the expectations that this associate teacher had for her students. In contrast, during his second placement, William received little observation time which left him with a 'sink or swim' philosophy. It was initially thought that the amount of observation time, and the process of student teacher integration into the classroom may effect the rate of conformity, therefore these questions were posed.

Both surveys included questions that asked about the teaching style of the student teacher and the associate teacher. These questions were included to study whether or not a specific approach to teaching increased the rate of conformity in addition to increasing the validity of the results. The participants were asked directly about conformity; whether or not it was expected and if the student teacher did conform. In order to ensure that these responses accurately represented the experience, the student teachers' teaching styles were compared to the associate

teachers' teaching styles that were described on the same survey. If the participant indicated that conformity was not present during the practicum, yet clearly stated that teaching styles were the same, it was necessary to examine the entire survey to understand and interpret the situation.

Questions about the type of support that the associate teacher provided throughout the practicum appeared in both surveys. It was necessary to pose questions that related to associate teacher support because it was possible that through this support associate teachers could influence their student teachers. Most importantly, both surveys posed questions specific to the expectations of conformity. Student teachers and associate teachers could express if there was an expectation to conform and whether or not this expectation was met.

In addition to the questions that appeared on both surveys, there were circumstances that needed to be addressed separately. For example, the associate teachers were asked how many years they had been teaching in hopes to understand if a relationship existed between teaching years and conformity. Associate teachers were also asked whether or not this practicum was a learning experience, and the student teacher was asked to comment on the similarities and differences between the two teaching styles. The responses received from these questions created a better understanding of the relationship between student teachers and the associate teachers. The student teachers were questioned about the type of feedback that the associate teacher provided when the student teacher used his or her own materials. It was thought that if student teachers used their own material and received negative feedback as a result, they would be more likely to conform and use the resources supplied or suggested by the associate teacher.

All questions in both surveys provided opportunity for additional comments, the student teacher survey included one question that required a short written response, while the associate teacher survey included three short answer questions. Tolman and Brydon-Miller (2001) edited the work of Marecek, Fine, and Kidder who simply stated that research "involves listening to and theorizing about what emerges when people use their own words to make sense of their lived experience" (p. 33). From this perspective, it was necessary to allow opportunity for participants

to express their ideas and feelings in their own words. Therefore, the two surveys used in this research created this opportunity.

Ethics

Cover letters (Appendices A and C) were distributed to the participants when the surveys were administered. These letters outlined the (a) purpose of the project, (b) issues of confidentiality, and (c) the voluntary nature of this study. Consent was given when the participants completed and returned the survey (Appendix B and D). Participant names were not requested on the survey, and no one other than myself had access to the information provided. Upon completion of this study, the information will be securely stored at Lakehead University and will remain protected for seven years at which time it will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

From the written responses on the surveys, the data were first compiled into tables. Data interpretation was completed through an inductive analysis process. “Once the tasks of organization and description are complete it may then be appropriate to move on to consideration of causes, consequences, and relationships” (Patton, 1980, p. 324). Initial interpretations and analysis were made from the numbers and patterns presented in the tables. In addition, each survey was considered individually so that contradictions could be detected and interpretations could be made from these discrepancies as well.

With reference to the student teacher surveys, the data was analyzed and reported according to: initial observation days, full time teaching days, teaching styles of the participants, support provided by the associate teachers, expectations of conformity, and associate teacher feedback. For the associate teacher surveys, the data was analyzed and reported according to: initial observation and teaching days, full time teaching days, support provided by the associate teachers, teaching styles of the participants, experimentation with

different strategies, years of teaching experience, expectations of conformity, descriptions of conformity, and the associate teachers' learning experiences.

CHAPTER V

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Student Teacher Surveys

Summary of Data

Section A - Initial Observation Days

The first section of the student teacher surveys required the participants to reflect upon their initial observation days within their classroom. There were 32 responses for each of the four questions. When asked how long the observation period was before being requested to teach the first lesson, three student teachers indicated that they entered a new classroom and taught their first lesson without an opportunity to observe, 22 student teachers observed for 1 - 3 days, 3 student teachers indicated their observation period extended for 1 week, 2 student teachers observed for a month, and 2 student teachers didn't specify a time frame. Most student teachers and associate teachers fulfilled the recommended 1 - 3 day observation period set by the university .

The student teachers were also asked to indicate how many lessons a day they taught once they started to teach. Nineteen student teachers stated 2 - 3 lessons per day, 11 indicated 1 lesson per day, while the remaining 2 student teachers taught 4 - 5 lessons per day. The participants were then requested to describe their associate teacher's teaching style. Nineteen student teachers described their associate teachers style as "traditional", 11 associate teachers were "innovative" while 2 were described as a "combination between traditional and innovative". The last question in section A asked for the type of support that the associate teachers provided for the initial lessons that the student teachers taught. Most participants described a variety of answers, the results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. - Support Provided by the Associate Teacher for the Student Teacher's Initial Lessons

Type of Support Provided by the Associate Teacher	Number of Student Teachers
information on the subject matter	22
specific instructions to follow	12
sample lesson plans	7
textbook	2
feedback from prior lessons	2
resources	1
dictated actual lesson plan	1
student background	1
nothing	1
suggestions	1

Section B - Full Time Teaching Days

In the initial portion of section B the participants were required to reflect upon the number of full days taught during their practica. Out of 33 responses, 18 student teachers taught more than 10 full days throughout their practicum, 4 student teachers taught 7 - 10 full days, while 3 student teachers taught 1 - 3 full days and 4 - 7 full days respectively. Three student teachers didn't receive the opportunity to teach a full day, and 2 student teachers taught half days only.

The participants were then requested to describe the type of support their associate teachers provided when they were teaching full days. This questions was repeated to see if a shift occurred from the initial teaching phase towards the latter portion of their practicum. Thirty-two student teachers responded to this question although most indicated more than one response, the data are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. - Support Provided by the Associate Teacher for the Student Teacher Once Expected to Teach Full Days

Type of Support Provided by the Associate Teacher	Number of Student Teachers
information on the subject matter	22
sample lesson plans	10
specific instructions to follow	9
feedback	3
resources	2
general advice	1
topic only	1
not very helpful	1
suggestions	1

Similar to the previous data, information on the subject matter was selected as the type of support that most associate teacher's provided. Sample lesson plans and specific instruction were also selected frequently. The alternative responses (feedback from prior lessons, additional resources, general advice, suggestions, the topic of the lesson only) were only suggested by one, two, or three participants in each case. One participant stated that their associate teacher was not very helpful during the practicum.

Section C - Expectations of Conformity

Section C of the student teacher survey focused on the perceived expectations of conformity. There were thirty three responses to both questions within this section. When asked if the student teacher was expected to use the information that was provided by their associate teacher, 20 replied no, 12 student teachers indicated yes, while one student teacher stated they were required to use the information sometimes. When asked if the student teacher was

expected to repeat their associate teacher's teaching style during their lessons, 26 replied no while 7 student teachers perceived this expectation.

Section D - Conformity

The final portion of the student teacher survey focused specifically on the issue of conformity. Thirty three student teachers responded to each question within this section of the survey. The participants were requested to indicate whether they chose to replicate their associate teacher's teaching style or experiment with different teaching strategies. Nineteen student teachers indicated that they used various teaching strategies, 7 student teachers repeated their associate teacher's teaching style, and 7 student teachers did both throughout their practicum.

When asked how their associate teachers responded if the student teacher chose to use their own materials and ideas, 26 indicated that they received positive feedback, 1 student teacher received negative feedback, 1 student teacher received both positive and negative feedback, and 5 associate teachers didn't provide a response at all. The participants were also requested to describe their own teaching style, the results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. - Student Teachers' Teaching Styles

Teaching Style	Number of Student Teachers	Percentage of Student Teachers
innovative	14	42.4
traditional	10	30.3
combination between traditional and innovative	8	24.2
radical	1	3

Short Answer Segment

In addition to the results previously presented, the student teachers were requested to provide short written responses that commented on the similarities and differences between

teaching styles. These responses varied from “very little similarity at all” to “very similar”. Among those student teachers who indicated that their teaching style was similar, two opinions about this situation arose. Some student teachers indicated a certain level of frustration when writing about the similarities between the two teaching styles. They felt that conformity was the only option that would lead to success, while other student teachers appreciated the skillful and proficient example that they could follow once in their associate teacher’s classroom. One student teacher wrote, “I felt she ... [the associate teacher] was critical of me for not being more like her” (student teacher #1). It appears that this student teacher felt that conformity was the only way to successfully complete his or her practicum. Another student teacher expressed, “I felt that my associate [teacher] did not provide me with enough support or help. She had a ‘sink’ or ‘swim’ philosophy” (student teacher #3). This indicates that associate teachers don’t always provide the assistance or the learning environment that some student teachers require. One student teacher wrote “I felt I had to mirror the teacher’s style initially to get a positive response from the students” (student teacher #24). Another student teacher expressed a similar experience when he/she stated,

it was hard to establish a teaching style during your placement because you are only there for a short period of time. On the other hand, the associate teacher has been there since day one and he/she has established their teaching style and also the way the students react to it. (student teacher #23)

Another student teacher expressed his/her frustration about entering an associate teacher’s classroom, “My second placement ... was a disaster. That teacher expected me to be exactly like her and I was not interested in being like her” (student teacher #15).

Collectively, 23 student teachers provided various examples of how their approach to classroom teaching differed from their associate teacher’s. One student teacher’s comments explained,

my associate teacher is very much an authoritarian style teacher. She never employed any cooperative learning methods or different teaching styles. She merely lectured

while the class listened. I based my lesson plans around group work and cooperative tasks while also incorporating some lecturing time as well. (student teacher #17)

One other student teacher shared a similar experience, the associate teacher's

teaching style was very traditional and by the book. Group work was not very well explored. When I tried to use the cooperative setting, I could tell that the students were not well versed and they needed quite a bit of direction. I liked to bring in practical matters whenever possible. If we were studying weather, then we would go outside and explore the weather happening in our area. I liked switching activities quite often to keep the interest of my students. (student teacher #18)

Other differences in teaching styles included classroom management. "The main difference I found was my associate's ability to keep the student's attention throughout the lesson - basically maintaining control of the classroom" (student teacher #14). A second student teacher provided a description of differences in discipline philosophies.

For discipline he [the associate teacher] believed in time-outs and if work was not finished he would have students miss out on recesses and gym and art subjects. ... I preferred to use TRIBES techniques and I messages in trying to teach students how to verbalize their feelings when it came to discipline. (student teacher #4)

Because the purpose of this study was to examine the description of conformity and to further understand the expectations of conformity during the pre-service placement, for the purpose of interpretation, the information that was gathered from this survey was divided into two groups: student teachers who mimicked their associate teachers' teaching styles occasionally or consistently, and those student teachers who experimented with different teaching strategies throughout the practicum.

Other student teachers described how they exhibited similar teaching styles compared to their associate teacher because of similar teaching beliefs, philosophies, and/or personalities. One student teacher stated that his or her associate teacher "used lots of hands on labs, something I think is important and would like to do as well" (student teacher #8). Another

participant indicated that he or she was similar to the associate teacher because a “sense of humour [was] embedded in each lesson” (student teacher #9) A third student teacher wrote

My associate teacher and I shared many similarities in our teaching styles. We both shared a great enthusiasm for teaching and we liked to test the student’s ability to grasp certain topics. Many times we created lessons with specific themes such as Valentine’s Day, to capture the students’ attention and interest in learning. (student teacher #14)

A variety of other examples were provided that demonstrated how some participants were similar to their associate teacher. In most instances these responses related to the tone of the lesson, making learning fun and enjoyable, compared to the issue of teaching styles.

Associate Teacher Surveys

Summary of Data

The data from the initial portion of the survey indicated that out of 34 responses, a total of 31 associate teachers demonstrated for the first 1 to 3 days of the practicum, while the remaining 3 demonstrated for a full week. This result corresponded with the guidelines from the Faculty of Education - the university expected that associate teachers would demonstrate for two days while the student teacher observed, assisted, and adapted to the routines in the classroom.

Once these student teachers started to teach lessons on their own, 29 of 36 associate teachers indicated that their student teachers taught 1 to 2 lessons per day, 4 student teachers taught 3 to 4 lessons per day, while 2 started teaching all day. One associate teacher indicated that his or her student teacher taught half days, they choose not to break it down into the number of lessons per day. With reference to the number of full time teaching days, 34 associate teachers responded. One student teacher didn’t teach a full day, 2 student teachers taught 1 to 3 full days, 7 taught 4 to 7 full days, 13 taught 7 to 10 full days, 9 student teachers taught over 10 full days, and 2 associate teachers indicated that the practicum was divided between the 2 student teachers that taught in the same classroom.

The associate teacher survey asked what type of support the student teachers received when they taught alone. Thirty-six associate teachers responded to this question, three choices were given on the survey and a variety of additional responses were added. The results are summarized in Table 5. Information on the subject matter was selected as the type of support that all of the associate teachers provided. Specific instructions and sample lesson plans were both selected by most associate teachers as well. Additional resources were indicated by a smaller number of participants and the alternative responses (brainstorming sessions, background on the students within the class, rubrics, lesson demonstrations, feedback from prior lessons, curriculum expectations, lesson and unit timelines, and crowd control / classroom management) were only suggested by one, two, or three participants in each case.

Table 5. - Support that Associate Teachers Provided when Student Teachers Taught Alone

Type of Support Provided by the Associate Teacher	Number of Associate Teachers
information on the subject matter	36
sample lesson plans	22
specific instructions to follow	22
resources	6
feedback	3
brainstorm together	2
background on students	1
rubrics	1
demonstrations	1
curriculum expectations	1
timelines	1
crowd control	1

When asked about their student teachers' teaching styles, 24 out of 36 associate teachers indicated that their student teachers utilized "traditional" approaches. Five associate teachers characterized their student teachers' style as "innovative", while 7 indicated a "combination between traditional and innovative".

The associate teachers were then requested to consider whether or not their student teachers experimented with new teaching strategies (this differs from non conformity which is gathered when the associate teacher is asked if the student teachers choose to use similar teaching styles), 26 out of 35 associate teachers thought that they did, while 9 associate teachers indicated that their student teachers didn't experiment.

The participants were asked to provide short written responses that described the teaching styles of their student teachers. A collection of the positive descriptions include: "efficient; well-prepared; open-minded; in control" (associate teacher #13), "flexible, patient, positive" (associate teacher #9), "very relaxed with the children; very competent" (associate teacher #11), "attempted a variety of teaching styles" (associate teacher #8), "experimented with styles they had observed at the College" (associate teacher #12), "shift[ed] away from teacher centered to student centered lessons" (associate teacher #34), "engaging, [and] creative" (associate teacher #24). From the opposing view some associate teachers responded with: "very traditional, follow[ed] the teacher's manual" (associate teacher #21), "didn't seem to have a grasp of different techniques or was not comfortable straying from 'teacher directed method'" (associate teacher #35), "the student [teacher] seemed set in ways that required little personal involvement" (associate teacher #1), and the student teacher's "lack of content knowledge made it difficult for him to experiment as much as he should have" (associate teacher #3). The next group of questions required the participants to describe the expectations that they had for their student teachers.

The data obtained from this portion of the associate teacher survey assisted in describing the cohort that participated in the study. Nine of these associate teachers have been teaching for

less than 10 years, 14 have been in the profession for 10 to 20 years, while 13 have been teaching for more than 20 years.

The next question in the survey asked the associate teachers to describe their teaching styles, 35 responded with a variety of answers, but some associate teachers selected more than one option. The data from question 9 are summarized in Table 6. Most associate teachers indicated that they utilized “traditional” styles, “innovative” styles or a “combined style between traditional and innovative”. Some associate teachers also suggested that their styles were “self-discovery” or “experienced”, and also that many of these styles were combined.

Table 6. - Associate Teachers Teaching Styles

Teaching Style	Number of Associate Teachers	Percentage of Associate Teachers
combination between traditional and innovative	15	44.1
traditional	7	20.6
innovative	7	20.6
many styles combined	3	8.8
self-discovery	1	2.9
structured	1	2.9

When asked if the associate teachers expected the student teachers to use a similar teaching styles, 35 responses were obtained, 27 replied no, 6 stated yes, while the remaining 2 expected conformity some of the time. This question was followed by 36 replies as to whether or not the student teacher choose to use a similar teaching style. Twenty associate teachers responded yes, 8 said no, 6 indicated sometimes, while 2 were unsure. Question 12 of the survey asked the associate teachers how they thought this teaching experience affected their student teachers. Thirty-five associate teachers responded, but some choose more than one answer, this

data is summarized in Table 7. Their choices included: “confirmed a traditional approach to teaching”, “guided the student teacher towards a less traditional teaching style”, “you taught your student teacher the necessary information for teaching traditionally”, “confirmed an already radical teaching style”, and none of the above.

Table 7. - How the Practicum Affected the Student Teacher

How the Practicum Affected the Student Teacher	Number of Associate Teachers that Selected the Response
guided him or her towards a less traditional teaching style	18
confirmed traditional approach to teaching	11
you taught your student teacher the necessary information for teaching traditionally	7
none of the above	4
confirmed an already radical teaching style	0

In addition to these results, the associate teachers were also requested to describe pertinent situations that illustrated their responses. One associate teacher who was paired with a student teacher who conformed stated,

I have a kindergarten class. Consistent routines are very important. The student [teacher] was asked to keep the routines. The content/information/unit study was preset. The student [teacher] had to gather information on the topic and present it within the routine structure which was done. (associate teacher #5)

Numerous examples were given that represented how the practicum guided the student teacher towards a less traditional teaching style. An associate teacher described a specific lesson about money. The student teacher had

tried [a] traditional approach ... Students had [a] hard time working and valuing coins. [The student teacher] changed [the] approach and went to a more tactile lesson, [the] student [teacher] played a game with actual coins and a die. They had to add coins depending on their roll. [The] students seemed to understand

adding coins and the value of them. (associate teacher #19)

Another associate teacher shared a second example where the student teacher was guided towards a less traditional teaching style.

[My student teacher] started with the basic: read, assign questions, and take it up approach. I informed him that the kids were bored and suggested a debate to tie things up. He did a great job of organizing and evaluating this debate. The kids responded by getting fully involved in the discussion. Hopefully, this taught ... [my student teacher] the difference between 'student - busy' and 'student - centered' learning. (associate teacher #3)

Other instances arose that explained how this practicum taught the student teacher the necessary information for teaching traditionally. One associate teacher explained how the student teacher “taught a lesson/unit on food and nutrition and she did it in a structured way” (associate teacher #15).

The final question in the associate teacher survey asked if the practicum was a learning experience for them. Thirty-one out of the 36 responses indicated that they had something to learn from their student teacher, while 5 replied no. An opportunity to explain their answer was given, a number of associate teachers perceived this opportunity as an experience that assisted them with personal reflections. One associate teacher stated,

I saw many aspects of my own approach that I did not think were effective when attempted by the student teacher. I can only assume that these methods are no more effective when I implement them. I also learned that there is a lot of material readily available via the Internet, and that a lot of it is useless. (associate teacher #1)

Another associate teacher reflected on his days as a new teacher,

I realized that I have come a long way since my own days as a student - certain mistakes or ways of doing things reminded me of things I used to do. I was able to re - evaluate my own teaching skills by seeing my classroom from a different point of view. (associate teacher #31)

Other associate teachers were able to gain new materials and approaches to lessons they had been teaching for years. An associate teacher mentioned that the student teacher “extended the unit on air that I had introduced her to, adding many more experiments and assessment techniques that I had not thought of using ... [she also] presented a few lessons in art that I had not used or heard of before” (associate teacher #13). Another associate teacher indicated that “the student teacher completed research on the new topics [in the new curriculum] which I also benefited from” (associate teacher #10). Other associate teachers offered some criticism of the Faculty of Education. One associate teacher wrote that “they [the student teachers] are not getting out into the field as often as they should” (associate teacher #5), while another suggested that “I learned [that] experienced teachers know a lot about their students and how to teach. I learned that you become a better teacher through experience and watching others teach. I learned [that] we don’t get to discuss pedagogical issues enough with our peers” (associate teacher #4).

CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Student Teacher Surveys

Interpretations

For interpretation purposes, the information gathered from the surveys was divided into two sections - student teachers' who chose to replicate their associate teacher's teaching styles occasionally or consistently, and those student teachers who experimented with different teaching strategies (self identified by answers to the question). The data indicated that 14 student teachers mimicked their associate teachers while 19 student teachers experimented with different strategies. The remaining questions in the student teacher survey were compared within these two groups to expose various patterns or reasons for these responses. To assist with interpretations it was necessary to describe why each questions was included in the study, what response was expected, what information was gathered, possible reasons for these results, and how this information assisted in answering the questions stated at the beginning of this research: (a) Did associate teachers expect pre-service teachers to mirror their practices during the practicum? (b) Did student teachers describe an expectation of conformity within their field experience?; and (c) What circumstances during the practicum may have increased the likelihood of conformity? The interpretations will follow the layout of the survey. The initial observation days are following by full time teaching days and the teaching style of the participants. Support provided by the associate teacher is then examined. Expectations of conformity and the associate teacher feedback appear towards the end of this section.

Initial Observation Days

The questions within the first section of the survey consisted of initial observation days and the process of student teacher integration into the classroom. If conformity was perceived as

an issue during the practicum, it was necessary to determine if a relationship existed between the observation days at the beginning of the placement and the rate of conformity. An increased number of observation days created greater opportunity for the student teachers to acquire an understanding of the associate teachers' teaching style and the specific routines within the classroom.

The number of observation days identified by the student teachers were evenly distributed throughout the two groups in most instances. Three student teachers indicated that they did not receive an opportunity to observe their associate teacher at the beginning of their practicum. Two of these three participants stated that they experimented with different strategies, while one validated the he/she conformed. It is possible that this participant conformed to the expectations expressed verbally by the associate teacher rather than through observation, or he/she taught 2 - 3 lessons per day which still allowed an opportunity to observe his/her associate teacher's practices. All 3 student teachers who observed their associate teachers for a week acknowledged that they experimented with different strategies when teaching independently. This could indicate that a one week observation period is the optimum length of time to witness various approaches to education, to reinforce previous experiences and, consequently feel self-assured and comfortable to experiment with diverse strategies throughout the practicum. At this stage of the research it is unclear how these participants perceive the expectations of conformity although it is certain that conformity occurs during the practicum.

The next question in the student teacher survey asked the participants to describe their associate teachers' teaching style. This question was asked for two reasons: primarily to see if a relationship between teaching style and the rate of conformity existed, and secondly, to compare the teaching styles of the associate teacher with the student teacher. The number of innovative, and the combination of innovative and traditional styles were equally divided among those student teachers who conformed and those who didn't. This information doesn't allow for any conclusions to be drawn as to whether or not a specific teaching style is more prevalent within groups of student teachers who conformed or those who experimented with different strategies.

Full Time Teaching Days

The student teacher survey asked the student teachers to reflect on the process of integration that they experienced at the commencement of their practica. It was necessary to understand how many lessons these student teachers taught when first introduced to the classroom and how many full days they taught in total. The expectations placed upon the student teacher may have affected the presence of conformity. If a student teacher was expected to teach 1 or 2 lessons per day, greater opportunity remained to observe their associate teacher. The number of student teachers who conformed versus the number of those who experimented with different strategies were divided evenly between the number of student teachers who taught 1 lesson per day. A similar pattern arose among those student teachers who taught 2 - 3 lessons per day. The two student teachers who indicated that they were expected to teach 4 to 5 lessons per day at the beginning of the practicum indicated that they experimented with different teaching strategies. This could indicate that these student teachers were more prepared and confident about their personal teaching ability and thus permitted to teach 4 -5 lessons per day and therefore less likely to change their style to fit that of their associate teacher. It is also possible that they were not given sufficient time to observe their associate teacher's teaching style. Some of this information will be addressed later so that conclusions can be drawn. The student teachers were also requested to indicate how many full days they taught over the span of the school practicum.

All student teachers who taught for 1 - 3 full days and 4 - 7 full days appeared within the group of participants who experimented with different teaching strategies, a total of 6 student teachers. Those student teachers who conformed, taught more full days than those who experimented (the lowest being 7 - 10 full days). This information reveals how some associate teachers perceive conformity during the placement. For this group of associate teachers there was a strong indication that the student teachers who conformed received a greater opportunity to teach and therefore they reinforced the teaching strategies that these associate teacher valued and held in high regard. Associate teachers who were paired with student teachers who

conformed may appreciate their strategies and style within the classroom, therefore they provided these student teachers with more time to instruct. These student teachers may have reduced any classroom disruption that may have occurred from their presence compared to those student teachers who experimented with different teaching strategies. In addition, participants who experimented with different teaching strategies could have had an increased rate of nonsuccess, these associate teachers may not have provided an opportunity for these student teachers to redeem themselves. It may also be possible that the student teachers who experimented with different teaching strategies were given more time to prepare and greater feedback on their lessons before being required to present them, thus reducing the number of lessons they were required to teach. As a result, this may have allowed these individuals to be more creative in their planning. A number of variables exist when determining a cause of such action.

Teaching Styles of the Participants

In order to affirm or renounce the student teachers' previous assertions of mimicking their associate teacher's style or experimenting with different strategies, the survey requested the student teachers to describe their own teaching style so that it could be compared with the teaching style of their associate teacher. This information was again compared within the two groups of participants, those who conformed and those who experimented with different teaching strategies. The results for the group of student teachers who indicated that they mimicked their associate teachers' teaching styles are summarized in Table 8, one student teacher in this group was not included because he/she didn't indicate the teaching style of the associate teacher. Most student teachers who stated that they conformed also selected similar teaching styles. For example, student teachers who thought they implemented innovative teaching styles, also suggested that their associate teachers were innovative or that they implemented a style that combined traditional and innovative strategies.

Table 8. - Comparison of Teaching Styles for Student Teacher who Indicated Conformity

Associate Teacher Teaching Style	Student Teacher Teaching Style	Number of Identified Combination	Percentage of Identified Combination
innovative	innovative	4	30.7
traditional	traditional	3	23.1
traditional	combination of traditional / innovative	3	23.1
combination of traditional / innovative	traditional	1	7.7
traditional	innovative	1	7.7
innovative	traditional	1	7.7

When the responses between associate teacher and student teacher teaching styles were compared, it was expected that those who indicated conformity during their placement would have indicated a similar style compared to their associate teacher. This proposal held true, most student teachers who conformed indicated that their teaching style was similar to that of their associate teacher's with some variations.

Two student teachers indicated that they mimicked their associate teacher's teaching style yet utilized different teaching styles. It was possible that these two participants selected the style that they would like to teach in their own classroom rather than the style they utilized during the practicum or they didn't really conform during their practicum. From this data, it appears that these participants may have perceived an expectation to implement a similar teaching style when compared to their associate teacher due to the importance of the student teacher evaluations or it may be that these student teachers taught in a fashion that provoked the best response from the students within the class.

A similar table was constructed that displayed the information about teaching styles and those student teachers who indicated that they didn't conform during the practica. The results

for the group of student teachers who indicated that they experimented with different teaching strategies are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. - Comparison of Teaching Styles for Student Teachers who did not Conform

Associate Teacher Teaching Style	Student Teacher Teaching Style	Number of Identified Combination	Percentage of Identified Combination
traditional	traditional	5	26.3
innovative	innovative	4	21
traditional	combination of traditional / innovative	2	10.5
combination of traditional / innovative	combination of traditional / innovative	1	5.3
innovative	combination of traditional / innovative	1	5.3
traditional	innovative	5	26.3
innovative	radical	1	5.3

Thirteen out of 19 student teachers who indicated that they did not conform during the practicum suggested that they used a similar teaching style when compared to their associate teacher. This may indicate that more student teachers conformed during the practica than previously stated. These student teachers may not have wanted to state specifically that they conformed, but without knowing they indicated that they used a similar teacher style as their associate teacher. These participants did not describe an issue of conformity during the placement yet they persisted to replicate their associate teacher's teaching style. This may indicate that these student teachers were unaware that they conformed during this teaching placement.

Among these student teachers who stated that they experimented with different strategies and therefore implemented a different teaching style when compared to their associate teacher, the innovative student teachers indicated that they were often paired with traditional associate

teachers. This could have been a result of the classroom environment. Those student teachers paired with traditional associate teachers may be more likely to indicate that they were innovative compared to those student teachers paired with innovative associate teachers. In addition, an explanation for this duo may include the possibility that an innovative approach may be the result of innovative instruction at the faculty.

Thirteen student teachers indicated that they experimented with different teaching strategies but used teaching styles similar to their associate teachers. A related breakdown of data appeared within the group of student teachers who conformed during their practicum. This may be interpreted in a variety of ways. If student teachers used similar styles, the associate teachers may have been more open to experimentation during the practicum. The student teachers who indicated that they experimented with different strategies yet utilized similar teaching styles (13 participants in total) may have actually conformed during the practicum to a certain degree and not realized it, or they may have not felt comfortable stating that they mimicked their associate teacher's teaching styles in question 9. If this was the situation then a total of 27 student teachers out of 33 conformed to some extent during their practicum experiences, rather than the initial 14 who indicated that they simulated their associate teacher's teaching styles. In Puk and Haines' (1999) study of student teachers during the practicum, they indicated that "[t]he school culture confirmed (during this practicum) that it is acceptable to maintain the status quo without any discussion about whether or not that is good practice in the long term" (p. 546). For this group of student teachers there was strong evidence to support this theory. Conformity may be perceived as an acceptable practice during the practicum without regard for the expectations placed by the faculty during this crucial time.

When the student teachers were asked to describe their personal teaching styles, it was initially compared with those of their associate teachers. It was also necessary to determine if a relationship existed between specific teaching styles and the rate of conformity. Without considering those student teachers who combined their teaching styles, student teachers who described themselves as innovative also stated that they experimented with different teaching

strategies. For these participants, experimentation with different strategies could have been a distinct characteristic of an innovative teacher. Traditional student teachers and those who combined traditional and innovative teaching styles were divided equally among the two groups of participants - those who conformed and those who experimented with different strategies.

Support Provided by the Associate Teachers

The type of support that the associate teachers provided may have affected the number of student teachers who conformed. Two questions in the student teacher survey requested information about this support with reference to the initial teaching days and full time teaching days respectfully. It is hypothesized that the type and amount of support provided by the associate teachers should progressively diminish throughout the practicum so that the student teachers become increasingly independent. These questions were asked to see if this progression existed, and what type of factors may contribute to the presence of conformity. Initially the researcher speculated that those associate teachers who provided sample lesson plans and specific instructions to follow may increase the number of student teachers who conformed during the practicum. Rather, these student teachers were divided equally among these two groups of participants. The interesting data gathered from this question pertains to the progression of support that the associate teachers provided. This data is summarized in Table 7, two participants were not included in this table because both questions were not completed which disallowed any comparison. Table 10 maintains the distinction between the student teachers who conformed and the student teachers who experimented with different teaching strategies. Three categories were developed to explain the amount of associate teacher support as the practica progressed: the support remained the same, the support decreased, and the support increased throughout the practica.

Table 10. - Amount of Associate Teacher Support Given at the Beginning of the Practicum Compared to the Amount Given Toward the End

	Associate Teacher Support Remained the Same throughout the Practicum	Associate Teacher Support Decreased throughout the Practicum	Associate Teacher Support Increased throughout the Practicum
Student Teachers who Conformed	6	6	1
Student Teachers who Experimented with Different Teaching Strategies	7	4	7

The major distinction between the two groups of participants was evident with reference to an increase in associate teacher support throughout the practicum. There were more associate teachers who increased their support throughout the placement paired with student teachers who experimented with different strategies. In one example, student teacher #15 did not conform and he/she only received information on the subject matter when he/she first started to teach alone. As the practicum progressed this student teacher received this same type of support in addition to specific lesson plans when teaching full time. There was an increase in associate teacher support throughout the practicum for this participant.

A second participant who did not conform received the textbooks to work from at the beginning for his/her placement and later received information on the subject matter and specific instructions to follow. Seven out of the 18 student teachers who experimented with different teaching strategies received increased support and guidance as the practicum progressed. This information sheds light upon how these associate teachers perceived non conformity.

These associate teachers may have deemed their attempts unsuccessful and therefore provided more support in an effort to influence how these participants planned their next lesson. It is also possible that the associate teachers preferred a similar style to their own and as a result attempted to persuade the student teachers who experimented to change and conform to their

style of teaching. From this sample it is evident that those student teachers who experimented were not rewarded for their efforts.

Within the group of student teachers who conformed, almost half received an reduction in support from their associate teachers during the practicum. It appears that these associate teacher felt confident in their student teachers' abilities and reduced their support as a way to demonstrate this trust. Most associate teachers seem to reward conformity and punish experimentation. This in turn influenced how these student teachers approached their planning during the practicum and it may have altered what teaching strategies they choose to implement.

Expectations of Conformity

The next portion of the survey dealt specifically with the perceived expectations of conformity. It was interesting to study how specific provisions made by the associate teachers affected the student teachers reactions. Within the group of participants who experimented with different strategies (a total of 19), 5 were expected to use the information that the associate teacher provided, 13 were not expected, while 1 student teacher perceived this expectation occasionally. It was clear that most student teachers who experimented were not expected to use the material and ideas presented by their associate teacher. This freedom fostered an environment for experimentation. Not all student teachers who described an expectation to use the information provided by their associate teacher made a conscious decision to follow these perceptions. Five student teachers went against these expectations and continued to experiment with different strategies.

With reference to the remaining 14 student teachers who chose to mimic their associate teachers, 7 were expected to use the information that their associate teacher provided while 7 didn't describe this expectation. From this perspective, 7 student teachers didn't describe this expectation, yet decided to mirror their associate teacher's teaching style and consequently implemented the information that their associate teacher provided. Martin (1997) explained that

borrowing a routine did not seem to be mere mimicking but rather seemed to be an attempt to research into one's own pedagogy by verifying the fit between on the one hand, the routine itself and, on the other hand, how one wishes to teach." (p. 193)

It appeared that the expectations of the associate teacher may not directly influence the actions of the student teacher during the practicum. MacKinnon (1989) explained a similar circumstance, "compliance was, in the eyes of these student teachers, a taken-for-granted part of being an outsider in someone else's classroom" (p. 11).

One question in the student teacher survey asked directly whether or not the participants were expected to repeat their associate teachers' teaching style during their lessons. It was proposed that those student teachers who perceived an expectation of conformity would implement similar teaching strategies during their practicum, it was also thought that some student teachers would mirror their associate teacher without an evident expectation to conform. This presumption was correct in this regard, every student teacher, except one, who was expected to use similar teaching styles did, although 8 student teachers were not expected to mirror their associate teachers' teaching style yet still proceeded to conform. Eighteen student teachers' did not describe an expectation to use a similar teaching style so these participants indicated that they continued to experiment with different teaching strategies during their practicum. From this data, it was evident that an expectation of conformity effected the actions of the student teachers. In other cases it may be that those student teachers who chose to conform without a direct expectation were affected by the responses of the class. Copeland (1979) indicated that,

when a student teacher who had been trained in that skill enters that classroom and attempts its use, the attempt fits the system. ... On the other hand, if the student teacher attempts to utilize the skill in a classroom in which the skill is not a part of the ecological system, that attempt is not reinforced. (p. 196)

This description may explain the number of student teachers who mimicked their associate teachers without expectations to conform. Their associate teachers affected the 'ecological'

system in the classroom which in turn influenced the student teachers. It was possible that the students within the class responded positively to teaching approaches that resembled those of their teacher. Therefore, it was possible that the students' responses directly influenced the actions of student teachers, while the associate teachers directly influenced the students and indirectly influenced the student teachers.

Associate Teacher Feedback

The student teacher survey further investigated the effects of the associate teacher during the practicum, more specifically the feedback that they provided for the student teacher. This question dealt specifically with feedback pertaining to the choice of materials utilized in a lesson, and whether or not independent research was reinforced. It was expected that those student teachers who received negative feedback when they choose to use their own materials and ideas would be more likely to conform to the expectations of their associate teacher in order to receive positive feedback. Only one student teacher received negative feedback when he/she used his/her materials and ideas. This student teacher fell within the group of participants who mimicked their associate teacher, thus supported the hypothesis stated previously. Five student teachers didn't receive any feedback. This could have been interpreted as a negative response from the associate teacher: four continued to conform. In most cases, student teachers received positive feedback when choosing their own materials and ideas, and these numbers were divided among the two groups of participants. Before the data from the associate teachers' surveys were considered, it was necessary to summarize what information the student teachers' surveys contributed.

Summary

On numerous occasions, the data were evenly distributed between those student teachers who experimented with different teaching strategies and those who mimicked their associate teachers. Despite these results, some data emerged that contradicted this pattern. It appeared

that a one week observation period may be the optimum length of time to witness various approaches to teaching, to reinforce previous experiences and, consequently, experiment with diverse strategies throughout the practicum. The majority of student teachers who taught for 1 - 3 full days and 4 - 7 full days appeared within the group of participants who experimented with different teaching strategies. Those student teachers who conformed taught more full days than those who experimented (the lowest being 7 - 10 full days). This data indicated that associate teachers seemed to reward student teachers who conformed by allowing increased teaching time. This reward reinforced their student teachers' actions thus influencing their perceptions of conformity.

Most student teachers who conformed indicated that their teaching style was similar to their associate teachers', and others agreed that they used similar teaching styles but still experimented with different teaching strategies. Innovative student teachers said that they also experimented with different teaching strategies. It was evident that most associate teachers who increased their support throughout the practica were paired with student teachers who experimented with different strategies. It is also clear that most student teachers who experimented with different strategies were not expected to use the materials and ideas presented by their associate teacher, and not all student teachers who described an expectation to use the information made a conscious decision to follow these expectations. Every student teacher, with the exception of one, who was required to use similar teaching styles did, although some student teachers were not expected to mirror their associate teachers' style yet still proceeded to conform. It was evident that a perceived expectation of conformity effected the actions of the student teachers.

In most cases, student teachers received positive feedback when choosing their own materials and ideas, and these numbers were divided among the two groups of participants. Only one student teacher received negative feedback when he/she used his/her materials and ideas, this student teacher mimicked his/her associate teacher. It was obvious that the student teacher's perceptions of conformity were influenced by the expectations of the associate teacher.

These expectations were drawn from direct and indirect feedback, the support provided, by the associate teacher, and the amount of active teaching time permitted. It is now necessary to further understand and study the data that was received from the associate teachers.

Associate Teacher Surveys

Interpretations

The aim of this study was to examine and further understand the expectations of conformity during the pre-service placement. For the purpose of these interpretations, the information that was gathered from this survey was divided into two sections: a) the associate teachers who were paired with student teachers who conformed; and b) the associate teachers who were paired with student teachers who didn't conform.

The data indicated that 28 out of 36 student teachers conformed to their associate teachers' teaching style. This number was extracted from the questions in which associate teachers were asked whether or not their student teacher implemented a similar teaching style when compared to their own (refer to page 49). Two of these 28 associate teachers were unsure whether or not their student teachers conformed, but through a detailed examination of the rest of their responses it was decided that these surveys would be included in this group. The remaining 8 surveys fell within the second group because these associate teachers indicated that their student teachers didn't choose similar teaching styles.

The associate teachers confirmed that an overwhelming majority of student teachers conformed during their practicum. More attention was focused upon these surveys to assist in determining the cause of student teacher conformity. To assist with interpretations it was necessary to describe why each question was included in the survey, what responses were expected, and what interpretations or conclusions could be made from this information that assisted in answering 2 of the 3 research questions: (a) Did associate teachers expect pre-service teachers to mirror their practices during the practicum?; and (b) What circumstances during the practicum may have increased the likelihood of conformity?

The interpretations will follow the layout of the survey. The initial observation and teaching days are following by full time teaching days and the support provided by the associate teacher. The teaching style of the participants is examined followed by use of different strategies, the years of teaching experience, expectations of conformity, perceptions of conformity, and the associate teacher's learning experience during the practica.

Initial Observation and Teaching Days

The length of the observation time provided by the associate teacher was valuable data to gather. If these surveys indicated the presence of conformity during the pre-service placement, it was necessary to determine if a relationship existed between the observation days at the beginning of the placement and the rate of conformity. It was proposed that those student teachers who conformed received a longer period of observation. Almost all associate teachers who participated in this study abided by the expectations stated at the Faculty of Education, it was suggested that student teachers observe for approximately 2 days at the beginning of a new practicum. The 31 associate teachers who allowed their student teachers to observe for 1 - 3 days, also indicated in all but 2 instances that their student teacher conformed. A 1 - 3 day observation period may not be long enough to adjust to a new classroom environment which could lead to conformity. From the associate teachers' perspective a large majority of student teachers conformed and at this stage of the research it is difficult to make any conclusions as to why this situation occurred. It is significant to note that out of the eight student teachers who didn't conform, 2 observed for a full week. It is possible that a 1 week observation period may reduce the chances of student teacher conformity.

The process of student teacher integration into a classroom effected the overall experience during the practicum. The associate teacher survey required the participants to reflect upon this crucial time. When asked how many lessons per day the student teachers were required to teach when they first started teaching alone, most associate teachers replied with 1 to 2 lessons per day. If the student teacher wasn't teaching full days from the start, they received

greater opportunity to observe how the associate teacher organized, instructed, and managed the classroom. From the data that were received, the associate teachers abided by the expectations that were set out by the Faculty of Education. Only 2 student teachers were expected to teach full days at the beginning of the practicum, and both of these individuals conformed. Conformity could have been achieved without a significant observation period, instead possibly through oral and written expectations, the type of feedback provided, and through verbal and non-verbal communication. Bean (1997) indicated that

[i]f a cooperating teacher gave signals that a particular strategy ... was compatible with the discipline and the normal climate of the class, then the preservice teacher risked developing a lesson that used the positively sanctioned strategy. (p. 161)

When student teachers were expected to teach full days from the start, associate teachers may have thought that they were prepared for this challenge or have held the belief that “one learns by teaching or by experiences” similar to the associate teachers in Borko and Mayfield’s study (1995, p. 507). Four student teachers taught 3 - 4 lessons per day when they first started to teach alone. Significantly, half of these individuals didn’t conform to their associate teachers’ practices. One associate teacher indicated that his or her student teacher taught half days, and this individual didn’t conform. A half day in a classroom is interpreted as 3- 4 lessons a day. Therefore one more student teacher who taught 3 - 4 lessons per day at the onset of the practicum did not conform making it 3 out of 5 individuals in total. It may be possible that 3 - 4 lessons per day created a balance between observation and practice which allowed more than half of these individuals to experiment with different teaching strategies. Conformity seemed to be an issue that most of these associate teachers encountered, whether or not it was expected is yet to be discovered in the data.

Full Time Teaching Days

The associate teachers were then asked how many times their student teachers taught all day. It was necessary to understand how many full days student teachers taught because it may

have affected the presence of conformity. It was initially thought that increased observation time increased the rate of conformity. Because the initial observation time infringed on the number of full time teaching days, it was hypothesized that those student teachers who conformed would receive fewer full time teaching days. The majority of student teachers who conformed taught 7 - 10 days, while the next highest selection indicated over 10 teaching days. The rate of conformity increased the longer a student teacher taught during the practicum. Conformity could be the trade off for increased teaching time.

Six of the eight student teachers who didn't conform (numbers 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, and 35) had 7 - 10 or over 10 full time teaching days. It was evident that the majority of these student teachers were paired with associate teachers who taught less than 20 years (numbers 28, 30, 31, 33, and 34) therefore, there seemed to be an increase in the willingness to experiment and allow their student teachers to teach over 7 full days. The 1 student teacher who didn't receive the opportunity to teach a full day, who was paired with associate teacher #27, decided to use a similar teaching style compared to his/her associate teacher. This may have been a weak student teacher who attempted to follow his/her associate teacher, but was unsuccessful. Therefore, this participant did not receive the opportunity to redeem him/herself by teaching full days.

Support Provided by the Associate Teacher

It was necessary to understand the type of support that these associate teachers provided when the student teachers taught on their own. It was thought that associate teachers who provided sample lesson plans and specific instructions would be more likely to influence their student teachers to conform when compared against associate teachers who provided information on the subject matter. All 8 student teachers who didn't conform received information of the subject matter, half of these individuals were provided with sample lesson plans and specific instructions to follow, 1 participant received additional resources.

The associate teachers who indicated that their student teachers conformed provided a number of various additions to the answers provided including: background on students, rubrics,

demonstrations, feedback, curriculum expectations, timelines, crowd control, and brainstorm sessions. Although most associate teachers did not expect their student teachers to use similar teaching styles, the student teachers may have mistakenly assumed that their associate teachers expected them to conform because of the increased support that was provided. For example, it was possible that by providing some background information on the students in the class appeared helpful, but this approach also passed on the biases of the associate teacher. This approach could affect the teaching style of the student teacher and how this individual worked with certain students. These associate teachers could have provided more assistance based upon the requests of the student teachers, or the associate teachers could have provided more support and information to ensure a better understanding of how their classroom should work which increased the likelihood of conformity.

Teaching Styles of the Participants

The participants were asked to describe their student teacher's teaching style for two reasons: primarily to see if a relationship between teaching style and the rate of conformity existed, and secondly, to compare the teaching styles of the associate teachers with the student teachers. All student teachers who conformed were described as a traditional student teachers from the associate teachers' perspectives except one. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) stated that

[i]t now has become commonly accepted within the teacher education community that students become increasingly more progressive or liberal in their attitudes towards education during their stay at the university and then shift to opposing and more traditional views as they move into student teaching and inservice experience. (p. 7)

It was possible that these traditional student teachers were apprehensive about experimentation due to the pressures to succeed during the practicum. It was also possible that associate teachers

were more likely to categorize their student teachers as traditional when compared to their own teaching styles.

In order to affirm or renounce their previous assertions of conformity or nonconformity, the associate teachers were asked to describe the teaching styles of their student teachers so that it could be compared to their teaching style. The results for the group of student teachers who conformed are summarized in Table 11, 1 associate teacher survey was not included because he/she choose not to respond to one question which disallowed any comparison.

Table 11. - Comparison of Teaching Styles For Associate Teachers who Indicated Student Teacher Conformity

Associate Teacher Teaching Style	Student Teacher Teaching Style	Number of Identified Combination	Percentage of Identified Combination
traditional	traditional	8	29.6
combination of traditional / innovative	combination of traditional / innovative	4	14.8
combination of traditional / innovative	traditional	4	14.8
combination of traditional / innovative	innovative	3	11.1
combination of many styles	traditional	2	7.4
innovative	innovative	1	3.7
combination of many styles	combination of traditional / innovative	1	3.7
innovative	traditional	3	11.1
structured	combination of traditional / innovative	1	3.7

When the responses between associate teachers and student teachers teaching styles were compared, it was expected that those who stated that their student teachers conformed during the practicum would have selected similar styles compared to their student teachers. Most associate teachers who had a student teachers who conformed chose similar teaching styles, some with slight variations except 4 associate teachers. These participants indicated that their student

teachers used a similar style but they choose different teaching styles to describe themselves and their student teacher. Four associate teachers who indicated that their student teachers conformed picked different teaching styles, three of these were innovative associate teachers while their student teachers were traditional. These participants may not have wanted to implicate themselves as traditional teachers, it was possible that innovation was seen as an attribute. It was also possible that these student teachers didn't actually conform. The results for the group of student teachers who did not conform are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12. - Comparison of Teaching Styles for Associate Teachers who Indicated Student Teacher Nonconformity

Associate Teacher Teaching Style	Student Teacher Teaching Style	Number of Identified Combination	Percentage of Identified Combination
combination of traditional / innovative	traditional	2	25
traditional & self-discovery	traditional	1	12.5
innovative	traditional	3	37.5
traditional	innovative	1	12.5
self-discovery	traditional	1	12.5

Three associate teachers who indicated that their student teacher didn't conform suggested that their student teachers taught with similar styles as their own. These student teachers may have conformed and these associate teacher didn't want to describe themselves as traditional.

Most associate teachers established that their student teachers taught with traditional teaching styles to some extent, whether it be solely traditional or through a combined approach that incorporated a traditional style. One associate teacher made specific reference to this in a short answer portion of the survey, "Despite another teachers repeated attempts to encourage change and variety in style, the student teacher soldiered on with a rather tired assortment of

assignments” (associate teacher #1). Aside from this criticism, most associate teachers indicated a traditional style, but stressed how their student teacher still experimented with different strategies. From these responses, conformity would have increased experimentation in these instances. Conformity may be viewed as a positive experience from this perspective. One associate teacher indicated, “although she [the student teacher] followed a structured plan, she tried innovative activities and centers as well” (associate teacher #15). Another associate teacher stated, “The project she [the student teacher] did in social studies was to be done as a booklet (traditional) but their presentations could be no hold barred - traditional costumes, models, games, etc. from the country they studied” (associate teacher #11). The attraction to a traditional style on the part of the student teachers could have been a result of their experiences in the school system as students. It might be a matter of comfort and confidence, as these student teachers transfer to the teaching profession, increased self confidence may allow these individuals to experiment with different strategies that are not associated with a traditional style.

When associate teachers were asked to describe their personal teaching styles, it was initially compared with those of their student teachers. It was also necessary to determine if a relationship existed between a particular style and the rate of conformity. The majority of associate teachers who indicated that their student teacher didn’t conform described themselves as innovative. It was possible that the student teachers didn’t alter their practices from what was taught at the Faculty of Education, but still conformed because the innovative strategies in place in the classroom resembled those that the student teacher was familiar with.

The majority of associate teachers who suggested that their student teacher conformed described themselves as traditional or a combination between traditional and innovative. It may have been easier for student teachers to conform to traditional styles because of the experiences they had previously as students in the school system. It is also possible that these student teachers implemented a traditional style which contrasted the associate teachers’ practices but is supported by Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) as previously stated. The associate teachers who described themselves as experienced, structured, radical, or a combination of many styles all

indicated that their student teacher conformed. This could be a result of the teachings at the Faculty of Education, the personal preferences of the student teachers, or the external pressures of the student teacher evaluations.

Experimentation with Different Strategies

The associate teachers were asked to determine if their student teachers experimented with different teaching strategies. This question was included to gather additional information about the teaching placement in an attempt to better understand the overall experience. It was proposed that those student teachers who conformed during the practicum did not experiment with different teaching strategies. Contrary to this hypothesis, a large number of student teachers who conformed also experimented with different teaching strategies. This number could be high because these student teachers had tried to experiment with different strategies and were deemed unsuccessful, and in turn conformed to pass their evaluations.

The number of student teachers who experimented with different strategies who didn't conform was also high because they may have been successful in their attempts and continued to try new strategies. Associate teachers may have indicated that their student teachers experimented with new strategies because from their perspective, the lack of teaching experience would have made every new strategy an experimentation on the student teachers behalf. All but one student teacher who did not conform experimented with different strategies, the student teacher who didn't experiment with different strategies was a traditional student teacher who was paired with an associate teacher who had 30 years of teaching experience. The goal of this associate teacher was to direct this student teacher to a less traditional teaching style. The associate remarked that this student teacher

constantly used [a] lecture approach. So I [the associate teacher] had him do a lesson that wouldn't be effective with that approach. [We] discussed [the] results, altered the next lesson to be a cooperative style. [The] student [teacher] found it more successful although he was uncomfortable doing it. (associate teacher #35)

This was an example where conformity was the desired outcome. This traditional student teacher was paired with an innovative associate teacher. If this student teacher had conformed, he may have experimented with different strategies and explored a variety of approaches that would have prepared him for his own classroom and reinforced what was taught at the Faculty of Education.

Years of Teaching Experience

The following question of the survey required that the associate teachers indicate the number of years that they had been teaching. This information was gathered to study if a relationship existed between the number of teaching years and the rate of conformity. It was initially thought that student teachers who were paired with associate teachers who had more than 10 years of experience were more likely to conform. The majority of associate teachers who participated in this study had over 10 years of teaching experience. Twenty-one associate teachers of the 28 who indicated conformity had achieved this level of expertise. It was possible that a relationship existed between the number of years the associate teacher had been teaching and the rate of conformity. It was also feasible that student teachers acquired a level of respect for associate teachers with valued experience; this respect may have translated into the need to conform. It may have been easier for student teachers to approach newer teachers with a variety of teaching methods which increased their freedom for experimentation.

A similar pattern arose among those student teachers that didn't conform. Two out of eight student teachers were paired with associate teachers who had less than 10 years of experience. The remaining 6 student teachers who didn't conform were split evenly between associate teachers with 10 to 20 years of experiences and those with more than 20 years of experience. It is difficult to make any conclusions about the influence of associate teachers with less than 10 years of experience on student teachers because only 9 participants fell within this group.

Expectations of Conformity

The associate teachers were requested to provide information about their expectations of conformity. This question was included in the study to provide information as to whether an expectation of conformity increased the rate at which student teachers conformed. It was hypothesized that there would be a relationship between these two variables. This hypothesis held true, all associate teachers who expected conformity consistently or occasionally influenced their student teachers to conform. It was evident that those associate teachers who expected their student teachers to conform influenced these individuals to follow their expectations. Nineteen student teachers were not expected to conform, but they proceeded to do so, neglecting these expectations. It was possible that these student teachers felt comfortable following the routines and styles of their associate teachers. These student teachers could have held similar philosophical beliefs about teaching or the student teacher evaluations could have played a role in their decision making. The 8 student teachers who did not conform were paired with associate teachers who didn't have this expectation.

Descriptions of Conformity

The associate teachers were asked how they thought this practicum affected their student teachers. The participants were faced with four options: "confirmed traditional approach to teaching", "guided him or her towards a less traditional teaching style", "you taught your student teacher the necessary information for teaching traditionally", and "confirmed an already radical teaching style". This question was asked to simply summarize the overall experiences during the practicum. It was expected that those associate teachers who confirmed a traditional approach or taught their student teacher the necessary information for teaching traditionally would have also stated that their student teacher had conformed. With reference to the student teachers who conformed, most were guided to a less traditional teaching styles. This response implies that conformity can aid student teachers in their attempts to become more innovative during their practicum.

The next two highest responses included the associate teachers who “confirmed a traditional approach to teaching” and the associate teachers who “taught the necessary information for teaching traditionally”. The total numbers from these two answers surpassed the numbers received from the top response. This insinuates that although the presence of ‘positive’ conformity may allow student teachers to become increasingly innovative, ‘negative’ conformity that reinforced traditional teaching occurred more often. Those student teachers who didn’t conform were overwhelmingly guided to a less traditional teaching style during their practica.

Associate Teachers’ Learning Experience

It was interesting to study whether or not associate teachers learned from their experiences with their student teachers. A willingness to learn from an experience may indicate a willingness to encounter and experiment with new ideas and strategies. It was thought that associate teachers who learned from their student teachers may have been paired with individuals who didn’t conform. All but 5 associate teachers had something to learn from their experiences with their student teacher. The 5 associate teachers who didn’t learn anything were paired with student teachers who conformed. These student teachers could have been considered weak. Rather than seizing to opportunity to experiment with different teaching strategies these student teachers felt it was necessary to repeat their associate teachers teaching styles. One of these student teachers didn’t receive the opportunity to teach a full day throughout the entire practicum. This associate teacher stated that “at first [the student teacher taught] just by [the] textbook, [he/she] was made to explore other [methods]” (associate teacher #27). Another associate teacher stated that, “most lessons were teacher directed - [there was] some time for student to student involvement” (associate teacher #26). Another associate teacher who indicated that he/she didn’t learn from their student teacher stated that “he [the student teacher] was in his second teachable, (first is Phys. Ed, therefore no classroom) so it was necessary to have him learn classroom control first” (associate teacher #25). The last two associate teachers didn’t offer descriptions of the experiences with their student teachers. These

student teachers taught traditionally or had difficulty with some aspect of the practicum, they didn't have anything new to offer their associate teachers, as a result the associate teachers felt they had nothing new to learn from their experiences.

The 8 associate teachers who indicated that their student teachers didn't conform felt that learned something throughout this experience. One associate teacher wrote "The students seemed to appreciate his [the student teacher's] straight forward, simple explanations rather than explanations of why/how to do something" (associate teacher #30). A second associate teacher stated that he/she learned about "exit quizzes [that are] given to students at [the] end of [the] lesson to establish what students learned during [the] lesson and whether or not [the] lesson had to be retaught" (associate teacher #32). One other associate teacher simply realized "how unfamiliar the new teachers are with grammar (both spoken and written) [and how they] need more direction in content of courses before they venture out" (associate teacher #35). It was also indicated on another survey that a student teacher "shared a reading program that was used in Thunder Bay" with this associate teacher (#28). Some associate teachers gained knowledge on different strategies while others seized the opportunity to reflect on their own practices while observing how another individual handles their class. Before a comparison of interpretations between the student teacher and associate teacher surveys is completed, it is necessary to summarize the information from the associate teacher surveys.

Summary

Twenty eight out of 36 participants suggested that their student teachers conformed during the practicum. Because of this balance, it was necessary to focus more attention towards the data received from those associate teachers who indicated conformity. From this data it appeared that a 1 - 3 day observation period may not be long enough to adjust to a new classroom environment, rather, a 1 week observation interval may reduce the chances of student teacher conformity. When the student teachers first started teaching alone, 3 - 4 lessons per day created a balance between observation and practice, which allowed half of these individuals to

experiment with different teaching strategies, and reduced the likelihood of student teacher conformity. The number of full time teaching days indicated that conformity could have been the trade off for increased teaching time. Student teachers conformed more often when expected to teach more than 7 full days. Those student teachers who didn't conform also had an increased number of full time teaching days. The majority of these student teachers were paired with associate teachers who taught less than 20 years, therefore, there may have been an increase in the willingness to experiment with different strategies.

The type of associate teacher support was a crucial part of the practicum experience. The associate teachers who indicated that their student teachers conformed provided a number of various additions to the answers initially provided in the survey. These associate teachers could have provided more assistance upon their student teachers' requests, or the associate teachers could have provided more support and information to ensure a better understanding of how their classroom should work, which increased the likelihood of conformity. Overall, increased associate teacher support led to greater instances of conformity.

Every student teacher who conformed was described as "traditional" from the associate teachers' perspective, except one. It was possible that these student teachers were apprehensive about experimentation due to the pressures to succeed during the practicum. It was also possible that associate teachers were more likely to categorize their student teachers as traditional when compared to their own teaching styles. Most associate teachers who were paired with student teachers that conformed indicated that similar teaching styles were used. It may be easier for student teachers to conform to a traditional style because of the experiences they had as students in the school system. The student teachers that didn't conform were described as innovative in most instances.

It was possible that a relationship existed between the increased number of years that an associate teacher had been teaching and the increased rate of conformity. Student teachers could have acquired a level of respect for associate teachers with valued experience, this respect may have translated into conformity. It could have been easier for student teachers to approach

newer teachers with a variety of teaching methods, therefore they increased their freedom for experimentation.

Expectations of conformity also effected the number of participants who replicated their associate teachers teaching style. All associate teachers who expected conformity consistently or occasionally influenced their student teachers to conform. Although conformity aided some student teachers in their attempts to become more innovative during their practicum. Stating this, it is necessary to clarify that although 'positive' conformity may allow the student teacher to become increasingly innovative existed, the 'negative' conformity that reinforced traditional teaching occurred more often.

The learning experiences of the associate teachers reinforced previous assertions in the survey. The associate teachers who didn't learn anything were paired with student teachers who conformed. These student teachers taught traditionally or had difficulty with some aspect of the practicum. It appeared that associate teachers perceived conformity as an issue that occurs during most practica. They may feel that they have valuable information to transfer to the student teacher, therefore, through conformity the student teacher will learn the most about the 'real world' of teaching. It is now necessary to compare and contrast the findings from the student teacher surveys with the associate teacher surveys.

Comparative Interpretations

Although the student teachers and associate teachers who participated in this study were not necessarily paired during the practicum, it was interesting to study the differences and similarities within these two various perspectives. Among the two cohorts, 69 surveys were included in the study, 42 student teachers conformed while 27 experimented with different teaching strategies. The data from the student teacher surveys indicated that 14 student teachers mimicked their associate teachers while 19 student teachers experimented with different strategies. The associate teacher surveys suggested that 28 student teachers conformed and 8

didn't conform during the practicum. It was interesting to study what factors may have increased or decreased the probability of conformity during the pre-service practicum.

Both associate teacher and student teacher surveys included questions pertaining to the integration of the student teacher into the classroom. With reference to the number of observation days, similarities emerged between the two groups. Both student teacher and associate teacher surveys suggested that a one week observation period may be the optimum length of time to witness various approaches to teaching, to reinforce previous experiences and, consequently, experiment with diverse strategies throughout the practicum. With reference to the number of lessons the student teachers taught per day at the start of the practicum, 3 - 5 lessons reduced the risk of conformity from both perspectives. Once teachers began teaching full time, the rate of conformity increased with the number of full teaching days. Those student teachers who conformed taught more full days than those who experimented with different teaching strategies.

The questions about teaching styles and the relationship between the associate teachers and student teachers also provided insight into the issue of conformity. Opposing descriptions of the associate teachers teaching styles were supplied from the associate teachers and student teachers perspectives. Among the student teachers who conformed, associate teachers described themselves as traditional or a combination between traditional and innovative, and the student teachers described their associate teachers teaching styles as innovative or a combination between traditional and innovative. The student teachers who conformed would rather indicate that they were paired with an innovative associate teacher. Looking at the groups of surveys that indicated the student teachers didn't conform, student teachers were more likely to describe their associate teachers as traditional, whereas the associate teachers described themselves as innovative. The student teachers who didn't conform described their associate teachers as traditional because it implied that they experimented with different teaching strategies. In addition, associate teachers described themselves as innovative because they perceived their student teachers as traditional. It appeared that no matter if the student teacher conformed or

experimented with different strategies, the associate teachers and student teachers were more likely to describe themselves and each other in opposing ways with reference to teaching styles.

The various forms of associate teacher support also provided interesting data from the associate teachers' and student teachers' perspectives. Neglecting distinctions between student teachers who conformed and student teachers who didn't, associate teachers stated that they provided increased support in a wider range of categories throughout the practicum (i.e., personal background on students, feedback, curriculum expectations, timelines, crowd control, and brainstorm sessions). Contrary to this opinion, most student teachers stated that they received information on the subject matter, while one third of the student teachers were provided with sample lesson plans and specific instructions of follow. One student teacher received the topic only, while another indicated that his/her associate teacher wasn't very helpful. It was possible these associate teachers thought they offered their student teachers more than what the student teachers realized. Some student teachers may not have perceived the various information supplied from their associate teacher as support.

The last question that appeared on both student teacher and associate teacher surveys pertained to the expectations of conformity. Most student teachers didn't describe an expectation of conformity, and most associate teachers didn't expect their student teachers to conform. Seven student teachers described situations where conformity was expected, while 8 associate teachers implemented this expectation in their classrooms. Although a small minority of student teachers and associate teachers described or expected conformity, the majority of participants in this study proceeded to conform. Although a relationship existed between the expectation and the implementation of conformity, a number of student teachers decided to conform knowing that their associate teachers didn't expect it. It was possible that student teachers perceived themselves as a visitor in a classroom and felt it necessary to complete their practicum with minimal disruption to the normal routines that existed previously. Conformity could simply be a form of respect for an experienced teacher. Horwood (1981) stated,

The operation of a master-apprentice relationship in student teaching appears to be a reasonably effective way of introducing newcomers to the craft. In its finest form it includes mutual observation (both associate and student watch each other at work in systematic ways) and frequent reciprocal feedback. Unfortunately it also raises major problems. In the first place, we do not know what constitutes mastery in teaching. The opinions of peers and superiors is the usual guide. But such opinions are based on such complex and contaminated criteria as to render them very questionable. A second problem is that the master-apprentice model is, in essence, conservative. The novice is inducted into craft as it is practiced by those whose conformity leads them to be regarded as exemplary. Any desire to change or innovate which student-teachers might acquire tends to be damped out. (p. 78)

A number of variables contributed to decision making and behaviour during the pre-service practicum. Some of these issues will be discussed further and all will be summarized in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

A variety of interpretations of the data have been presented in the preceding chapter. In this chapter: significant information will be summarize, the implications of this information will be described, suggestions for future research will be provided, and final personal reflections are included.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to study the relationship between student teachers and associate teachers: student teachers' and associate teachers' descriptions of conformity during the pre-service placement and factors which may have contributed to student teacher conformity. The questions that guided this research were three fold: (a) Did associate teachers expect pre-service teachers to mirror their practices during the practicum? (b) Did student teachers describe an expectation of conformity within their field experience?; and (c) What circumstances during the practicum may have increased the likelihood of conformity?

Some associate teachers clearly indicated an expectation of conformity while other associate teachers may have implied this expectation through their verbal communication, non-verbal communication, actions, and feedback. From the associate teacher surveys, there was indication of conformity in approximately 77% of the classrooms. Some associate teachers implied that through conformity and replication student teachers were learning how to teach. From this perspective, conformity was an issue for these associate teachers but they regarded it as a way to improve the learning experiences for the student teachers.

Approximately 42% of student teachers indicated that they conformed to their associate teachers' practices some or all of the time during the practica. A detailed examination of the data suggests that this number could be as high as 75%. Approximately 40% of the participants

clearly described an expectation to conform by using the information that the associate teachers provided and 21% indicated that they implemented this expectation by conforming to their associate teachers' teaching style.

Conformity was an issue during the practica, these student teachers were torn between the expectations of the university and the expectations of their associate teacher. Within the Practicum Partners Handout the importance of observing the rules and routines is stressed in addition to observing how the associate teacher introduces, presents, and evaluates lessons, and their use of a variety of disciplinary strategies (pg. 26). It is up to the student teacher to find a balance between the expectations of the university - to uphold and respect the rules, routines, and strategies of the associate teacher, while attempting to implement the strategies taught at the university that may or may not be part of the regular practices of the associate teacher.

What circumstances during the practicum may have increased the likelihood of conformity? This question must be answered from two perspectives, the associate teachers', and the student teachers'. From this sample of associate teachers, it was evident that a variety of variables may contribute to an increase in conformity during the practica. For example, when associate teachers expected their student teacher to conform, these student teachers met these expectations. In addition, it appeared that the student teachers who conformed received increased teaching time and additional support from associate teachers. These student teachers were paired with associate teachers who had more than 20 years of experience more often than not. From the associate teachers' perspective it was apparent that student teachers were less likely to conform if they observed for one full week, and when they started teaching they taught 3 - 4 lessons per day.

Student teachers clearly indicated that when they described that there was an expectation to conform, they were more likely to abide by this expectation. One factor that seemed to effect conformity was the number of observation days that a student teacher received at the onset of a new practicum. It is possible that a one week observation period may reduce the rate of conformity. In addition, as the number of full days taught during the practicum increased their

chances of conformity also increased. One explanation for this result could be that those student teachers who conformed were deemed more successful by the associate teacher and were therefore rewarded with an increase in teaching time. Most of the associate teachers who increased their support throughout the practica were paired with student teachers who experimented with different strategies. Student teachers who received positive feedback when they chose to use their own materials were less likely to conform during the practica. From this information, it appeared that a number of variables contributed to the rate of conformity during the intricate preservice teaching practicum. It is now necessary to examine how this data affects the Faculty of Education, and those enrolled to participate in this program.

Implications

One of the most important aspects of research is how it affects practices and knowledge in the field in which the study relates. It is important to understand what implications this research has on future student teachers, associate teachers and the Faculty of Education from one Ontario university. The conclusions developed from this research should affect how student teachers are evaluated, the way in which student teachers and associate teachers are introduced to the classroom and the practica experience, what follow up support and procedures these student teachers should receive upon the completion of their practica, and how associate teachers are selected for this responsibility. It is evident that conformity occurs during the student teacher practicum. Some associate teachers perceive conformity as a practice that will assist the student teachers with their learning, while some student teachers perceive conformity as a behaviour that will better their evaluations or an expectation of the associate teacher.

Evaluation of Student Teachers

With reference to evaluations, it is understood from prior research that associate teachers are placed in an influential role during the practica. From the new information gathered from this research it is possible that the evaluations completed during the practica could influence the

participants involved. MacKinnon (1989) suggested that “[a] good evaluation was an important part of the student teaching experience” (p. 13). One student teacher involved in this study commented that he /she conformed “somewhat, it made for better grades on my reports.” It is unclear in most cases whether or not the student teacher evaluations increased the rate of conformity but it is apparent that it created a concern for some participants. A second student teacher commented that

[m]y associate teacher NEVER (sic) provided me with constructive evaluations after lesson plans were handed in - he waited until actual formal evaluations were due. It is interesting to see that some associate teachers would rather avoid communicating with their student teachers in favour of a silent, directionless atmosphere.

Clearly, formative assessment did not occur during this practicum. Although this data can not be generalized to the student teacher population, it should raise some concern among those who implement this program at secondary institutions. Associate teachers are key in providing student teachers with daily feedback and formative assessment, but they are too involved in the ecology of the classroom to provide an unbiased evaluation of the student teacher. It is necessary for administrators at Faculties of Education to take this information into consideration and design alternative procedures for the evaluation of student teachers.

Chiarelott, Davidman, and Muse (1980) raised concerns related to student teacher evaluations.

Questions on the teacher candidate’s appearance, professionalism, dedications, etc. require rather subjective distinctions to be made by the cooperating teacher, particularly when these categories are left undefined and undiscussed by the training institution. As a result, the way the candidate looks ‘on paper’ may be quite different from his / her performance in the classroom. ... [T]he content of the evaluation may have more to do with the cooperating teacher’s biases and idiosyncrasies than the candidate’s actual teaching performance” (p. 295).

As a result of this concern, Chiarelott, et al. developed an evaluation that utilized a ‘Likert-type scale’ with clear explanations for each level (1 - 5) and still allowed the associate teachers room

for comments. In an attempt to modify summative assessment, most associate teachers (2:1 ratio) that utilized this tool expressed a level of satisfaction. This demonstrates that a new form of assessment needs to be developed to improve the efficiency of student teacher evaluations.

Rather than focusing on summative evaluation, various academics have shifted towards a horizontal evaluation that focuses more attention on the personal goals of the student teacher (short term and long term). From these goals, the associate teacher, student teacher, and supervising teacher work together to develop “congruence between intent and practice” (Gitlin, 1981, p. 48). Lessons are observed with the goal of the student teacher in mind, and the associate teacher is able to link those goals to the actions of the student teacher in an attempt to help the candidate learn. It is suggested that this reflective approach can be transcended into student teacher evaluation by considering “the student teacher’s ability to develop a number of teaching intents which are clearly stated, represent a broad scope of educational issues, and are based on a reflective understanding of what is possible. Another criterion that can be used to evaluate student teachers is their ability to actualize intents in practice. ... A final suggested criterion is the student teacher’s ability to be self-critical” (p. 50).

Gitlin, Ogawa, & Rose (1984) studied the effectiveness of horizontal evaluations with “five cases involving supervisors who were trained in and used horizontal evaluation [and these participants] were compared with five control cases in which supervisors used other forms of evaluations” (p. 47). Sessions were videotaped over 20 months and analyzed by a research team. It was found that “horizontal evaluation provided the potential for supervision to go beyond an exchange of ‘tricks of the trade’ by helping student teachers develop a framework to reflect on practice and understand” (p. 52). It appears that it is possible to successfully evaluate a student teacher without complete reliance on summative assessment. This example of horizontal evaluation may improve the learning experience of the student teacher, but it is unknown if the rate of conformity would decrease as a result. This suggestion also requires a commitment on the part of the Faculty to provide associate teacher training in the form of evaluation and the associate teachers must be willing to dedicate their time to this training. The results from this

study at one Ontario University suggests that change is necessary within the Faculty of Education in an attempt to reduce the pressure that is currently placed on a summative assessment.

Cautionary Note Before Student Teaching

It may be necessary to increase awareness of the issue of conformity so that student teachers and associate teachers may make educated decisions about their actions during the practicum. If more student teachers were aware that conformity frequently occurred during the practica and that they wouldn't be penalized in their evaluations for experimenting with different teaching strategies, the rate of conformity may decrease. Through this enlightenment the student teachers may make an educated decision as to whether or not they agreed with their associate teacher's practices and decide if conformity may enhance or impede their skills. If associate teachers were made aware of their influence they may be more likely to listen to what these student teachers have to offer and create a learning environment for both student teacher and associate teacher.

Reflective Practices

A third impact that this data has on the Faculty of Education relates to the reflective practices of the student teachers. Although this Ontario University requires that a reflective journal be kept throughout the practica, it may be necessary for these student teachers to participate in small group sessions where they are permitted to share their experiences and reflect on what they learned throughout the practica. Through this approach, student teachers may become more aware of various practices that they look forward to implementing in their own classrooms, as well as those practices they witnessed that were unrepresentative of the teachings from the Faculty of Education. Goodman (1985) reported that the importance of reflective practices was exhibited by Dewey in 1904. Goodman states that Dewey

warned against placing students in public schools before they developed habits of reflection. He suggested that if students

were placed in 'apprenticeship' experiences too soon, they would be overtly influenced by the ongoing practices found in their placements. (p. 46)

It is important for student teachers to reflect and learn from their experiences and be able to share these with their peers. By implementing formal reflective sessions, student teachers will increase their awareness of the importance of reflection and be able to learn from one another.

Evaluation of Associate Teachers and their Selection

Because numerous studies completed previously indicate associate teacher influence during the practica, and the information gathered from this research indicated a large portion of student teachers conformed, it should be up to the university to require that associate teachers who wish to volunteer go through a selection process. This allows for only the best within the field to assist student teachers with their learning experiences. By screening associate teachers, those who expect student teachers conformity yet do not exhibit practices that the Faculty of Education espouses may be eliminated. Associate teachers could be selected on based upon their teaching strategies in the classroom and whether or not they correspond to the teachings at the Faculty of Education. It may also be of assistance for student teachers to be matched with associate teachers who demonstrate similar teaching philosophies and approaches to teaching. If student teachers were strategically paired with associate teachers the benefits of conformity would increase.

Faculties of Education could improved the quality of associate teachers that work with student teachers by providing training for these individuals. Killian and McIntyre (1986) investigated the effect of associate teacher training on the overall satisfaction experienced by the student teacher. They concluded that "the training status of the cooperating teacher does influence the FES's [field experience student's] experience. FES's placed with trained cooperating teachers had more interaction with students during early field experience" (p. 375). The issue of associate teacher training was also referred to with reference to student teacher evaluation. It may be that through training, associate teachers acquire the skills to implement a

successful approach to evaluation and provide the best possible learning experience for the student teacher.

Another way to ensure that student teachers receive the best possible experience during the practica would be to allow them to evaluate their associate teachers. This process would assist the university with the screening process and allow administrators to find a more appropriate match for the student teacher / associate teacher relationship. Student teachers could also be given the opportunity to suggest a number of associate teachers that they may want to be paired with and the university could attempt to make these connections to the best of their ability.

Continuing Student Teacher Support

A final recommendation that emerged from this research would be to create a support system for student teachers upon completion of the practica to ensure that they continue innovative strategies introduced at the university once in their own classrooms. This would extend reflective practices into the 'real world' of teaching and demonstrate the importance of this routine. To ensure that student teachers continue to challenge the world around them and pursue self improvement practices, contact with peers who are new to the profession increases their support system and provides an outlet for questions, comments, frustrations, and an opportunity to share learning experiences.

Spillane (1999) discusses 'zones of enactment' and how they create opportunity for practicing teachers to challenge their current beliefs and grow as professionals. "[E]nactment zones extend beyond their individual classrooms to include rich deliberations about practice and its reform" (p. 164). If it is necessary for experienced teachers to continue dialogue with colleagues, it should be priority for new teachers to do the same. By providing this extended support system, student teachers may be more likely to implement innovative strategies that were taught at the Faculty of Education but not demonstrated within the schools. Along with all of the

implications, it is necessary to examine where this research could go and what suggestions for extensions exist.

Suggestions for Future Research

A number of opportunities and suggestions for future research surfaced as this study progressed. Because of confidentiality issues, information regarding identity could not be requested, although it would be interesting to duplicate this study with attempts to match student teacher responses with their corresponding associate teacher. By extending the research in this way, additional similarities and contradictions could be identified, and a more thorough understanding of specific practica would be bestowed. In order to verify this study it is also necessary to increase the number of student teachers and associate teachers who participated in this study and to expand similar research to various institutions within Ontario or Canada. Throughout this research, a number of possible explanations were offered for the findings. None may prove correct, the explanations were designed to stimulate discussion and further research. Ultimately, the purpose of research is to provide possible solutions to current problems. However, in many cases a solution can not be found. It then falls to future researchers to continue the pursuit for an ultimate solution.

Although a large portion of the participants in this study indicated that student teachers conformed during the practica, it is necessary to acquire additional information about the long term effects of practica experience. Sandgren and Schmidt (1956) acknowledged that “attitudes of student teachers improve[d] during the period of time in which practice teaching is taken” (p. 679). In addition, Bunting (1988) studied the socialization of student teachers during the practica and found similar results. The significance of this study is that Bunting also indicated that

[n]o candidate underwent fundamental change in his or her belief orientation. The pattern of moderation suggests that student teaching worked not to redirect the thinking of candidates, but to expand their perspectives to include a wider diversity of methods and practices. (p. 45)

It is recommended for future research that this survey be readministered in one year to compare growth and personal reflection to see if student teachers or associate teachers changed their perspectives and opinions. It would be interesting to follow the cohort of student teachers who indicated conformity and discover if the experiences during the practica affected their approaches to teaching in their first year or within their first five years in the profession.

Conclusion

This research discovered that a significant number of student teachers in this sample conformed to their associate teachers expectations. This information should be of significant value to Faculties of Education. It is their mission to prepare new teachers for the profession, and the field experience plays a significant role in this preparation. As stated in the introduction of this research, the philosophical dilemma foundational to the practicum experience is that of change in the school system versus maintenance of the status quo. Is it the intention of the placement to prepare students to change the way we do education, or is it our intent to inculcate them in the processes currently in use in the classrooms? With significant numbers indicating that student teachers are conforming during the practicum, it is apparent that the university is setting the stage for new teachers to continue to approach the classroom in old ways. It is up to academics to continue to shed light on this area of research, but only when the universities act on the information will this data be of value. Asch (1955) stated,

Life in society requires consensus as an indispensable condition. But consensus, to be productive, requires that each individual contribute independently out of his experience and insight. When consensus comes under the dominance of conformity, the social process is polluted and the individual at the same time surrenders the powers on which his functioning as a feeling and thinking being depends. That we have found the tendency to conformity in our society so strong that reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people are willing to call white black is a matter of concern. It raises questions about our ways of education and about the values that guide our conduct (p. 34).

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APPENDIX A: COVER LETTER FOR ASSOCIATE TEACHERS

Dear Associate Teacher:

I am a graduate student at Lakehead University, and I am conducting research on student teacher conformity.

The purpose of this research is to study how student teachers and associate teachers perceive conformity during the pre-service placement. Please consider filling in the attached survey and return it in the self addressed envelope that is provided. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Participation in this research is voluntary and confidential. If you volunteer for a follow-up interview and are selected to participate, your real name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the written report. These interviews will be completed before August 2000. No person other than myself will have access to this information, and when the study is complete, the information will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. A report of the findings will be made available to you at Lakehead University's Faculty of Education Library upon completion of the study.

If you have questions regarding this study, please contact me at (807) 684 - 0756, or my advisor, Dr. Juanita Ross Epp, at (807) 343 - 8722. I look forward to your participation. Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Sincerely,



Natalie M. Marchment
Master's Candidate
Faculty of Education, Lakehead University

APPENDIX B: ASSOCIATE TEACHER SURVEY

Associate Teacher Survey

As an associate teacher you may be aware of the dilemma surrounding student teacher conformity. Is your role one of preparing students for today's schools, or providing an innovative learning environment for tomorrow's schools? With your most recent student teacher in mind, please respond to the following questions on the issues of conformity.

1. When the student teacher first arrived, how long did you demonstrate before asking your student to teach a lesson?

- I didn't demonstrate
- 1 - 3 days
- 1 week
- other _____

2. When the student teacher started teaching alone, how many lessons did they teach per day?

- 1 - 2 lessons
- 3 - 4 lessons
- all day
- other _____

3. How many times did the student teacher teach all day?

- 1 - 3 days
- 4 - 7 days
- 7 - 10 days
- other _____

4. What type of support did you provide when the student teacher taught alone?
(check those that apply)

- information on the subject matter
- sample lesson plans
- specific instructions to follow
- other _____

5. How would you characterize your student teacher's initial teaching style?

- traditional
- innovative
- radical
- other _____

6. Did the student teacher experiment with new teaching strategies?

- yes
- no

7. Comment further on the teaching style of your student teacher.

8. How many years have you been teaching?

9. How would you describe your teaching style?

- traditional
- innovative
- radical
- other _____

10. Did you *expect* your student teacher to use a similar teaching style?

- yes
- no

APPENDIX C: COVER LETTER FOR STUDENT TEACHER

Dear Education Student:

I am a graduate student at Lakehead University, and I am conducting research on student teacher conformity.

The purpose of this research is to study how student teachers and associate teachers perceive conformity during the pre-service placement. Please consider filling in the attached survey and return it in the self addressed envelope that is provided. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Participation in this research is voluntary and confidential. If you volunteer for a follow-up interview and are selected to participate, your real name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the written report. These interviews will be completed before August 2000. No person other than myself will have access to this information, and when the study is complete, the information will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. A report of the findings will be made available to you at Lakehead University's Faculty of Education Library upon completion of the study.

If you have questions regarding this study, please contact me at (807) 684 - 0756, or my advisor, Dr. Juanita Ross Epp, at (807) 343 - 8722. I look forward to your participation. Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Sincerely,



Natalie M. Marchment
Master's Candidate
Faculty of Education, Lakehead University

APPENDIX D: STUDENT TEACHER SURVEY

Student Teacher Survey

As a student teacher, conformity may be an issue that you have had to face during your practicum experiences. Are you expected to follow your associate teachers directions, or experiment with new materials and ideas? With your most recent practicum experience in mind, please respond to the following questions on conformity.

Section A: Initial Observation Days

1. When you first arrived, how long did you observe your associate teacher before you were asked to teach your first lesson?

- I didn't observe
- 1 - 3 days
- 1 week
- other _____

2. How would you describe your associate teacher's teaching style?

- traditional
- innovative
- radical
- other _____

3. When you first started teaching alone, how many lessons did you teach per day?

- 1 lesson
- 2 - 3 lessons
- 4 - 5 lessons
- other _____

4. What type of support did your associate teacher provide for your initial lessons?
(check those that apply)

- information on the subject matter
- sample lesson plans
- specific instruction to follow
- other _____

Section B: Full Time Teaching Days

5. How many full days did you teach during your practicum?

- 1 - 3 days
 4 - 7 days
 7 - 10 days
 other _____

6. What type of support did your associate teacher provide once you were "on your own"?
 (check those that apply)

- information on the subject matter
 sample lesson plans
 specific instructions to follow
 other _____

Section C: Expectations of Conformity

7. Were you expected to use the information that was provided by your associate teacher?

- yes
 no

8. Were you expected to repeat your associate teacher's teaching style during your lessons?

- yes
 no

Section D: Conformity

9. During this practicum, did you:

- mirror your associate teachers teaching style
 experiment with different teaching strategies
 other _____

APPENDIX E: LETTER OF PERMISSION



10 May 2000

Ms. Natalie Marchment
Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO
P7B 5E1

Dear Ms. Marchment:

Based on the recommendation of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project entitled: PERCEPTIONS OF CONFORMITY DURING THE PRE-SERVICE PLACEMENT.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Maundrell
Acting Chair, Research Ethics Board

/lw

cc: Dr. J. Epp, Supervisor