

STUDENTS OR PROFESSIONALS: IDENTITY CONFLICTS IN EXPERIENCE-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION¹

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ABSTRACT. Focus group and questionnaire data are used to explore the tensions experienced by teacher education candidates between the roles of teacher and of student. Data are from a series of evaluation studies of a one-year teacher education program that was restructured to provide an extended practicum beginning on the first day of the school year and ending in December. During this time, candidates were expected to act as teachers; also the program expectation was that the candidates would treat their teacher education year as their first year as professionals and not as their last year as students. The analysis reveals conflicts between these roles: e.g., assessment requirements within the practicum and within courses seemed contrary to the espousal of professionalism, and the emphasis on learning from experience ran counter to candidates' early wishes to be told what to do. The paper concludes that those features of the professional and student roles that offer a productive counter-point need to be identified for teacher education.

ÉTUDIANTS OU PROFESSIONNELS: CONFLITS D'IDENTITÉ CHEZ LES ÉTUDIANTS INSCRITS À DES PROGRAMMES DE FORMATION DES MAÎTRES AXÉS SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE PAR L'EXPÉRIENCE

RÉSUMÉ. Les tensions que subissent les professeurs stagiaires partagés entre leurs rôles d'enseignant et d'étudiant ont été analysées à l'aide de groupes de discussion et de questionnaires. Les données sont issues d'une série d'études évaluatives sur un programme de formation des maîtres d'une durée d'un an restructuré de manière à y intégrer un stage prolongé. Du jour de la rentrée des classes jusqu'au mois de décembre, les étudiants étaient censés remplir les fonctions d'un enseignant tout en considérant leur année de formation comme leur première année d'exercice plutôt que leur dernière année d'études. L'analyse met en évidence des conflits entre ces deux rôles. Par exemple, les impératifs d'évaluation du stage et des cours semblaient s'opposer à l'adoption d'une attitude professionnelle et l'importance accordée à l'apprentissage par l'expérience contrariait l'aspiration initiale des étudiants à suivre des consignes. Les auteurs en déduisent qu'il faut caractériser, pour les besoins de la formation des maîtres, les rôles professionnel et étudiant, de façon à trouver une complémentarité productive.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is about tensions and identity conflicts experienced by teacher education candidates in a restructured one-year teacher education program. The principal feature of the restructured program was its extended practicum, beginning on the first day of the school year and ending at the Christmas break. Restructuring was intended to promote reflection on experience-based learning and the development of a critical stance. These were emphasized to encourage teacher candidates to direct their own learning both during the program and in their continuing development as professionals.

This paper is derived from the data of a series of evaluation studies directed at the restructured program. Here, data from the first year of implementation (1997-1998) are explored for evidence of teacher candidates' success at treating the year as their first year as learning professionals rather than their last year as students. Our analysis of the pilot year (1996-1997) evaluation data suggested that the transition from student to professional was an uneasy one (e.g., Lock, Munby, Hutchinson, & Whitehead, 1999; Martin, Munby, & Hutchinson, 1999). Data from the next year did more than reinforce this view; it allowed us to document tensions and identity conflicts experienced by the candidates during the extended practicum and the program's on-campus courses. The next section of the paper briefly describes the restructured teacher education program. The general approach to the evaluation studies is then presented. This is followed by an analysis of the data from the perspective of the tensions between being a student and being a professional.

THE RESTRUCTURED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

The restructuring of teacher education at Queen's University is described by Upitis (1999). Briefly, program restructuring was guided by contemporary views of the function of experience in learning to teach (e.g., Munby & Russell, 1994; Schön, 1983), and of the significance of communities of practice (e.g., Lave, 1991). Perez Gomez (1997), for example, noted that practical work is considered to be an instrument that aids in the development of pre-service teachers' knowledge "because it allows the possibility of knowing, comparing, questioning, reflecting, and choosing" (p. 7). Hamberger and Moore (1997) argued that "Teacher educators [must] accept the premises that a professional is developed and not made and that undergraduate education is only a beginning" (p. 308) suggesting the need to consider developing on-going communities of practice.

The teacher education program was restructured to provide all 600 teacher candidates with extensive experience-based learning opportunities. There are three practica experiences that are punctuated by course work and consolidation periods at the Faculty. The first practicum is four months in duration, and is preceded by an intensive weeklong orientation period in

August and followed by an equally intensive weeklong consolidation period at the beginning of the January term.² Two field-based core courses are taught concurrently with this extended practicum. These courses, entitled “Critical Issues” (CRIT) and “Research, Theory, and Professional Practice” (RTPP) are intended as opportunities to focus candidates’ reflections and development during their placement experiences. Teacher candidates return to the Faculty of Education during the first practicum for a two-week, on-campus, “rotation period” focusing on the academic component of these two field-based courses. Candidates are assigned in groups to Associate Schools, rather than to Associate (or Supervising) teachers for the extended practicum. A faculty liaison is also assigned to each school.

In January, candidates are enrolled in the equivalent of two “methods” courses in curriculum and instruction, and one half course in educational studies. Also, candidates select a “program focus” such as Early Primary Education, International Education, Outdoor and Experiential Education, to name just a few from the list of 24 offerings. The program focus functions somewhat like a course and is the occasion for candidates to develop a professional portfolio that is be discussed at length during an exit conference in May. The second practicum experience, a three-week “alternative” placement in February, is arranged by the teacher candidates themselves and may be conducted in an alternate setting related to the program focus and not necessarily in a school. The program includes a third practicum that is also arranged by the candidates and is scheduled for four weeks in May. All evaluations in the program are based on a pass/fail system of grading where the emphasis is on creating a collaborative, self-directed learning environment rather than a competitive norm-referenced one.

Theoretical framework for the evaluation studies

The evaluations studies of both the pilot year (1996-1997) and the first full implementation year (1997-1998) were conceived as a series of loosely coupled studies, each with a specific purpose (e.g., Munby, 1999). For example, some studies were directed at the impact of the extended practicum on professionals in schools, and others were designed to detect problems in specific portions of the program. The entire series of studies was intended to allow program developers to learn how to improve the program during its implementation. Thus the emphasis was upon using multiple methods to establish validity within a conventional approach to utilization-focused evaluation using quantitative methods (e.g., Galuzzo & Craig, 1990; Patton, 1997).

The research relevant to the analysis for the present paper is the literature on the socialization of pre-service and beginning teachers. Tensions between the roles of teacher candidate and teacher have been suggested by Britzman (1986). Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) described the conflict as follows: “Pre-service teachers have been and continue to be students.

They are going to be teachers. Yet, while they participate in course work, they are neither clearly one nor the other" (p. 92). Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) used "fictive identity" to capture the dynamics of trying out new roles before shedding customary ones. Sugrue (1997) noted: "Identification with teaching as a profession is an important first step for intending student teachers" (p. 216). Our reading of the research shows that these tensions can be found in other arenas of professional preparation (e.g., Booth, Hargreaves, Bradley, & Southworth, 1995).

METHOD

Both the pilot year and the first full implementation year were evaluated using a series of studies employing different data collection techniques to maximize validity (Eisenhart & Lowe, 1992) and to offer candidates a variety of modes for telling us about the program. These loosely coupled studies extended over two years. They were based on focus group data, individual interview data, questionnaires, and artifacts, and were conducted by a team of three faculty members, one research assistant, and three graduate students. Data used in the current paper were collected in April 1998, the end of the first full implementation year, and analyzed by the research team during May and June. The issue of identity conflicts emerged during the analysis of the data. Specific questions about tensions between the roles of teacher candidate and professional were not put to the candidates. Two types of data were used in this examination of identity conflict: focus group data and questionnaire data.

Focus groups

A table of random numbers was used to create two focus groups from the population of 600 candidates: one for elementary school (N=8) and one for secondary school candidates (N=6). A neutral facilitator conducted each session and worked from a script designed to have candidates assess the influence of their experiences in the restructured program upon their professional growth and learning. The content of discussions was limited to five topics in order to collect detail-rich data while avoiding participant fatigue (Morgan, 1988). The first question asked candidates to comment on their perceptions of the highlights of the teacher education program. The second question referred to how the teacher candidates learned how to teach. Third, candidates were asked about the types of questions that they formulated during the fall-term extended practicum. The fourth question investigated how well the winter term enabled the candidates to answer their questions. Finally, teacher candidates outlined how they intended to continue to grow and develop as teachers. The focus group interviews lasted about 60 minutes, and the taped proceedings were transcribed verbatim. Further information on the use of focus groups in this research is in Munby, Lock, Hutchinson, Whitehead, and Martin (1999).

Questionnaires

An 18-item questionnaire, based on one validated in the pilot year (1996-1997), was used to assess candidates' views on components of the program. The questionnaire addressed these issues in three groups of items. The first group of questionnaire items was intended to elicit information about the candidates' feelings of general satisfaction toward the restructured program. The second group of items was aimed at the candidates' assessments of how the new program helped them develop professional attitudes and competencies. Third, candidates were asked to respond to items that asked about specific aspects of the program, such as the extended fall practicum, the field-based courses, and the program focus courses, with their associated three-week alternate program. This final group of items also was aimed at understanding the relationship that existed between the extended practicum of the field-based fall term and the winter term courses.

Candidates responded in two ways to the 18 statements of the questionnaire. First they used a standard response set: "Yes," "Unsure," or "No." In addition to this standard response set, the questionnaire provided a space for written comments next to each item. Two additional open-ended questions were posed at the end of the questionnaire asking candidates to identify the element of the program that was the "most important to keep as it is" and the element that was the "most important to change."

The questionnaire was distributed to all candidates during the final week of formal classes in April 1998 before candidates left for the May practicum. Of the 600 questionnaires distributed, 387 were completed and returned – a satisfactory response rate of 64.5%. (Responses were entirely anonymous.) For the evaluation studies, the data were categorized by: the total sample, program of study (i.e., consecutive, concurrent³), and candidate division (i.e., intermediate/senior, primary/junior, technological education). For the present focus on role tensions, the quantitative data were analyzed in conjunction with written comments for each item on the questionnaire. Themes derived from this analysis were then compared with themes emerging from a categorical analysis of the focus group interview data. (Questionnaire items and the quantitative responses are in Appendix A.)

RESULTS

As we have said, the perspective of role conflict was suggested to us strongly by what we read in the data as we pursued other evaluation themes. It is important to note that the conflicts are apparent in the data from different teacher candidates, so we are not reporting on role conflicts as experienced by individual teacher candidates, even though there is some evidence of this in what follows. Rather, we are reporting what we take to be evidence of conflict within the overall group of teacher candidates. In this respect, the analysis presents a gauge of how the candidates have made the transition from

thinking of the year as the last as a student to the first as a learning professional. The design of this research does not allow one to impute cause, although some of the statements below suggest how the candidates attribute change.

The analysis of data from the focus group interviews and questionnaire responses showed that teacher candidates were experiencing tensions in their role as both students and professionals. The tensions seemed to fall into three groups: tensions about role in the extended practicum, tensions surrounding self-directed learning, and tensions in the area of assessment.

Tensions about role in the practicum

We noticed a tension between the roles of student (or teacher candidate) and of professional when our candidates spoke or wrote about the practicum experience. As the data from the questionnaire show, the extended practicum was highly valued for its contribution to their sense of becoming teachers. On item 19, 75.2% of candidates responded that the practica were the most important program components to keep as is. Further, on item 6, 90.7% of the candidates responded that the program enabled them to learn to teach from experience. One candidate argued that having such a lengthy practicum allowed her to grow because "it was the closest thing to any real experience that we could have." The value candidates placed on having a four-month extended practicum to help them experience being a practicing teacher was also evident in these statements: "I felt like I was a part of the school," "My confidence as a teacher grew significantly over the extended practicum," "It allowed me to bond with students and staff, as well as become involved in the community." Indeed, the practicum experience was valued above all other experiences that the candidates had while in the program. One candidate put it this way:

I'm a little apprehensive about the term, "how did you learn to teach?" so to speak, because it makes it sound like there is some process or some equation that you can plug factors into and get the right answer, and that's not it at all. I agree with – like everybody's said, you learn by doing.

While 87.6% of the candidates indicated that the extended practicum "helped me to become the kind of teacher I want to be," they also recognized that this "stint as a beginning professional" was just beginning. "I think it takes years for a person to become the teacher that they want to be." "I'm still working on becoming the ideal teacher."

We seemed to be hearing the voice of the learning professional when candidates advocated the value of the practicum for "learning from experience," and when they report that they still had much to learn. But there is a different voice speaking when we heard some report that the year made them "feel burned out" and that such lengthy practicum experience was not required. In this vein, we heard candidates argue that having a practicum experience toward the end of their year was "not needed!" "The May

placement was unnecessary as we already had so much practical experience. I would have rather been finished or had more classes.” It appears that there was a tension between meeting the requirements for graduation as a student, and continuing in a setting where one could grow as a learning professional. One candidate wrote, “21 weeks is a long time; it became tiring and laboursome; the final four weeks (in May) are hard to consider doing.” Another candidate felt that ending her education with a field-based experience did not provide the end that she wanted of her student career: “ending with a placement is not the kind of closure I would like. Where do I guide the questions that will surely arise during my next placement?” The need to be a student, to be guided, and also to have an end to the university year as a student is evident here.

Self-directed learning

A second group of tensions in roles surrounded the candidates’ experiences with the program’s emphasis on self-directed learning. The candidates enjoyed the opportunity to choose action research projects of interest to them for the “Research, Theory and Professional Practice” course. They enjoyed having meaningful “discussions with peers,” and experiencing an alternative placement related to their program focus interest. One candidate noted the sense of empowerment that he gained from the flexibility of the focus program course work: “It was really powerful . . . to take on a project and make ourselves the real learners in the center. . . . it’s been enormously empowering in terms of how I would go about doing the teacher thing with students, because I was totally there as a student myself.” About the value of arranging their own practica placements, others argued, “it is important to experience new learning environments,” “I loved being able to choose where to go,” and “I appreciated the space to do something non-traditional but teaching-related.” So this program flexibility was appreciated by many. It seemed helpful for creating a self-directed learning environment in which candidates could pursue their own interests and could address concerns about teaching that were most relevant to themselves. Yet many candidates felt that they would prefer a more structured program. Of making their own placement arrangements for the alternate practicum in March and for the May practicum, one candidate wrote, “what exactly does the Practicum Office do? They should set this practicum up!” Another felt that the program “should have been more structured in terms of where to go” for the alternate placement.

Elements of the program that encouraged self-directed learning carried with them an emphasis on reflection. It is hardly surprising that 80.6% of the candidates responded to item 7 of the questionnaire that the program “supported and guided me in learning to reflect on my teaching.” Indeed, many candidates felt that this reflective element was critical to their development as a professional. One candidate wrote, “the program spent some

time covering reflection and creative journaling, taught us how to use a journal if we were not comfortable with it." Others reported, "I liked how we had the same people in most of our classes. This enabled people to be more open and reflective with each other," "reflection is a very important part of teaching," "an important task for any professional." But reflection was not wholeheartedly endorsed. Contrary voices were: "this program could be called 'Reflection'"; "to a nauseating extent; reflect, reflect, reflect"; "reflection is good but I didn't like being forced into it."

Neither was there uniform acceptance of a self-directed approach in all the courses. Some welcomed the flexibility: "it was entirely up to us whether or not we would make this program work." Others did not; and this was most salient in the criticisms candidates expressed about the content and structure of the winter-term classes. Indeed, when asked "of everything that makes up this program, what is most important to change," 42% of candidates responded with the winter-term courses. Indeed, with only 53.8% and 52.5% of the candidates responding positively to the value of the two field-based courses (respectively) in encouraging them to reflect on their teaching, the message was strong that a change in pedagogy was necessary.

Suggestions for change included a need to improve class structure and organization, a need to include more information about the practicalities of teaching, a concern for more class hours, as well as a need for instructors "to actually teach" and have high standards of the candidates. During the focus groups, candidates also expressed a desire to be "taught more theory" and a need to have instructors "answer more" of their questions for them. Indeed, one candidate sought more of a balance between structure and self-direction, commenting:

a lot of us have been disappointed simply because a lot of it [course work] has been self-directed learning. . . . in terms of actually getting concrete information or getting tools that you can somehow plug into your experiences . . . we haven't been getting these things.

Another candidate expressed her view of this tension within the program, "We're touching on so many issues but not really going into any depth or details. I suppose it opens you up so that . . . you can go and explore things on your own But that's not what we paid for!"

During the first year of full implementation, instructors were in the midst of changing their courses to meet the needs of candidates with extensive experience. But it is notable that the candidates would seemingly prefer to rely on "being taught" as "students" rather than utilizing the rich resources available to them to address their individual questions. This issue is further exemplified by one candidate's frustration that "the most useful thing I've done is being told to write a curriculum unit. And of course it was just a skeleton they wanted, but something like that, why don't we have to do ten

of those?" Indeed, the data revealed that the image of a professional as a resourceful seeker of knowledge ran into conflict with the student role of passive receiver of knowledge. One candidate's comments illustrate this tension,

The library, the resource center, is a gold mine . . . I can't speak highly enough of the people in that place and the things that are there . . . but, I'm not disciplined enough. I don't come when I don't have class, and I don't just sit there, and whatever. But, if I did, boy, would I be good!!

One final example from the data is helpful: "I was enjoying sleeping in in the morning and just sitting passively through classes, rather than being responsible and being adult all the time." As qualitative researchers, we welcome the candor as a signal of the trustworthiness of the data.

Assessment

Within a professional context, the goal of assessment is formative—to help teacher candidates grow and develop in their profession. Yet from the student perspective, assessment may often be considered as summative because students are accustomed to receiving grades, and because professional certification is their ultimate goal in the program. The data showed that students experienced degrees of satisfaction in the practica, in the course work, and in the summative evaluation system of the program because they behaved and were treated as both students and professionals simultaneously.

ASSESSMENT DURING THE PRACTICA. During the extended practicum, the pre-service teachers were welcomed into the associate schools and treated as regular staff members. The candidates were expected to be involved in organizing extra-curricular activities, in attending staff and committee meetings, and in participating in every aspect of school life. Yet they were also engaged in field-based courses, and the teachers and administrators with whom they interacted were responsible for completing assessments of candidates. One candidate commented about this dual role, "you're going into your practicum, worried about just sort of exploring what you can do with the kids but you were being evaluated at the same time." Another candidate said, "It was a constant evaluation process . . . it is hard to take risks in that environment."

It was not surprising to hear candidates report that relationships between them and their associate teachers influenced their professional growth. One candidate argued that having an associate teacher who had a different philosophy of education "does screw up your professional development and growth" because it became harder to take risks and to try out teaching strategies that the associate might not approve. The candidate continued, "you learn to teach by exploring your own methods. . . . It is important to

be able to explore them” free from the worry of what might appear on the assessment report at the end of the placement.

ASSESSMENT IN COURSES. Some candidates were far from satisfied with the assessment procedures employed within their courses, suggesting that they were looking for the kinds of assignments familiar to them as university students rather than the kinds of assessment approaches they had learned to implement as professionals during their extended practica. So rather than performance assessment they tended to want grades. One candidate noted the value of a more discrete grading system for discerning student achievement levels: “it just doesn’t seem right to me that everybody should finish with the same degree of success as everybody else.” Indeed, the candidates tended to be competitive about their sense of achievement in the program: “Some people barely attended class all term and will get the same degree I do.” When asked “of everything that makes up this program, what is most important to change,” 5.9% of the candidates responded that the methods of assessment employed in the program needed to be reconsidered.

In addition, individual candidates seemed to interpret course assignments according to their predominant frame of reference as either student or professional. For instance, it is from a student’s perspective that one candidate commented, “you weren’t really sure what the profs here in Kingston wanted from those assignments.” Another candidate speaking from the perspective of a learning professional noted,

With the time we spent on campus, it’s been very self-directed, and I’ve set my own expectations for myself. No one else is going to tell me what I have to do, because ultimately I have to do something really bad in order to not pass. So that’s been kind of nice, that I can get out of it what I want. And you actually do spend a lot of time reflecting on your growth. . . . That didn’t work as well as I wanted it to . . . what can I do better next time? What can I do differently? . . . But you really have to take responsibility for your own learning because nobody’s going to be after you about it.

Indeed, it was the student voice that found there was no point in going to class, rather than the professional voice that saw an opportunity for growth: “Ask anyone – there was very little incentive to go to most classes because they were graded Pass/Fail.” One candidate spoke to this dilemma and affirmed the philosophy of the restructured program,

Teacher’s college is competitive to get into. It’s competitive again to get a job, yes But, we are going to be each other’s colleagues, and I think it’s important that we pull together here to make what we want out there so much more real.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN THE PROGRAM. Toward the conclusion of the winter term, candidates were required to participate in an exit conference

during which they were expected to use the professional portfolio they had developed throughout the year to comment on their growth and learning as a result of the program and to provide examples to illustrate this development. As in the other areas of program assessment, candidates viewed this form of evaluation from both a professional and student perspective. The learning professional's point of view could be seen in statements like: "These exit conferences that we're having, this is like a check and balance thing. Technically, to successfully participate in an exit conference, you have to have done something"; and "I'll do a little inventory for myself and say, okay, I really did learn this. Or, I wanted to get better at this and I didn't yet, so maybe next year I'll work on it."

In contrast the student perspective was evident in the suggestion that external motivation was necessary to add meaning to this form of assessment. One candidate stated, "it's only peer-evaluated. I appreciate peer evaluation, but if I'm sitting with two friends and there's no professors around, and they like 'excellent,' chances are you're going to get 'excellent.'" Another candidate said,

but even since there are no grades, if there was some sort of intimidating kind of . . . if I had to meet with a professor and an important person and say, this is what I've learned this year . . . at least that would have scared me into having done something already.

A third candidate seemed aware of the tension between the two roles:

the idea of the portfolio is to have us as professionals internalize the concept of professional development. . . . We obviously have not internalized this concept, and hence it becomes a little self-defeating, right? . . . It becomes busy work. . . . If you're not honestly doing the stuff all the way along, then . . . you can call it what you will, or make it show and tell . . . but that's not professional development.

DISCUSSION

The analysis in this paper has been of data obtained for rather different evaluative purposes. Yet as we have said, the evidence of tension between the role of student and of professional was so obvious that it was clearly important to investigate its manifestations in the available data. Although we have not sought evidence of tensions held by individual candidates, we have illustrated the tensions between the roles of students and of beginning professionals within the group of teacher candidates. These conflicts seem most pronounced around three areas: the practica, the program's emphasis on self-directed learning, and the assessment practices of the program.

It is not surprising to hear echoes of the student role in our data. Our teacher candidates are students in the university's institutional view. And our candidates are well versed in this role. In our data, one candidate accurately

recalled the effort made by the dean in her remarks at the opening of the 1997-1998 year to encourage candidates to set this student role aside:

It is very clear, and has been since the first day when the dean stood up in the auditorium and said that we are not a teacher's college, we are a faculty of education. This is not your last year as a student, it's your first year as a professional. Those two statements made it very clear as to what the sort of philosophy behind this institution is, and the move that is trying to be made, and I think that's good except the areas where you still need to be a teacher's college and we need to be students . . . there are skills that we need to be taught.

It is of more than passing interest, we believe, that the dean revised this portion of her opening remarks at the beginning of the 1998-1999 academic year, saying that the year for the candidates was *both* their last as students and their first as learning professionals. But saying it differently does not erase the challenge of finding the balance between preparing first-year professionals who are resourceful, reflective practitioners and supplying eager students with the abundance of information they seek. The teacher education program was restructured in an attempt to seek this balance. Specifically, the program was restructured so that an emphasis could be placed on the development of communities of practice (Lave, 1991) and so that the function of experience in learning to teach could be honored (Munby & Russell, 1994; Schön, 1983). This philosophy of education is not only contemporary, but also is in a process of evolution. Indeed, we are continuing to engage in evaluation studies in an attempt to create a program that encourages and guides pre-service teachers to develop into reflective practitioners.

It is not surprising to find few research studies in this area of identity or role conflicts in teacher education. Zeichner (1999) argued that, until 1986, most of the research conducted in teacher education focussed on discrete, behavioral teaching strategies rather than on the process of learning to teach. In fact, in early research, teacher learning was seen through the lens of behaviour modification in which learning to teach was equated with learning to perform various teaching strategies (McDonald, 1973). The philosophy of teacher education was transformed with the acknowledgment of various modes of teacher thinking and the interaction of teacher belief and practice (e.g., Clark & Peterson, 1986). The movement toward teacher self-study has also revolutionized the practice of teacher education (Zeichner, 1999). As these areas of research continue to develop and as research findings further inform us about how teacher education influences teacher cognition (e.g., Zeichner & Gore, 1990), we might then develop further our understanding of the influence of program structure on teacher development.

By listening to teacher candidates in this evaluation study, we have found where an experience-based program encounters tensions between the roles

of beginning professionals and final-year students. We believe that the tension between being a student and being professional is a profound one. It may well underlie all professional programs in which sustained practicum experience receives substantial institutional commitment. Indeed, contradictions between being a first-year professional and a final-year student pose boundaries to the potential of an experience-based program. We would never have uncovered this tension without the range of data available in the evaluation studies undertaken during the pilot and full implementation years of the program. But it is one thing to discover the tension, and another to do something about it. We need to decide if the tension is productive or unproductive. We need to debate the place of faculties of education in “professionalizing” students: Can it be done? Should it be done? What elements of professionalism can be learned from a combination of experience and explicit instruction? And what features of the two roles, professional and student, can be enhanced by various program elements so that the two identities are not so much in conflict but in a productive counterpoint that is the most fruitful for becoming a learning professional?

Our large data set has allowed us to see the tension and so to ask the questions. But the answers await further research. This thought from one teacher education candidate echoes our view: “there is so much more to learn.”

NOTES

1. The paper is from the research project “Mapping the Authority of Experience in Learning to Teach” funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
2. This arrangement has been modified for the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 academic years to allow approximately 3 weeks of on-campus preparation before the candidates begin their extended practicum.
3. Queen’s University has a concurrent program in addition to the consecutive program. The final year of the concurrent program occurs after the requirements for the B.A. or B.Sc. are fulfilled, and is virtually the same as the consecutive program. Both programs lead to the Bachelor of Education degree.

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APPENDIX A

THE QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE EVALUATION OF THE FIRST FULL YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION (1997-98), WITH RESPONSES FOR THE 387 RETURNS EXPRESSED AS PERCENTAGES.

	YES	NOT SURE	NO
1. Generally, I liked the field-based teacher education program at Queen's	88.4	8.0	2.6
2. I think the extended practicum helped me to become the kind of teacher I want to be	87.6	7.8	4.7
3. The alternate (Feb/Mar) practicum provided me with valuable experiences	88.4	6.5	4.7
4. I feel confident in my abilities to begin a career in teaching	84.0	14.5	1.0
5. I would encourage others to enroll in this program	80.6	15.5	3.1
6. I feel this program enabled me to learn to teach from experience	90.7	7.2	1.6
7. This program supported and guided me in learning to reflect on my own teaching	80.6	12.9	5.9
8. This program helped me to retain a critical stance	65.4	27.1	5.7
9. This program encouraged me to work with and learn from my peers	93.0	4.4	2.3
10. This program allowed me to reach some of my own professional goals	90.7	5.9	3.4
11. The extended practicum helped me to formulate questions for the winter term.	77.5	10.1	9.8
12. The RES, THY, & PROF course helped me to reflect on my teaching	53.8	17.8	25.8
13. The CRITICAL ISSUES course helped me to address issues that arose in my teaching	52.5	18.1	27.7
14. The fall term WORKSHOPS helped me to address some of my questions about becoming a teacher	44.4	21.7	27.1
15. The courses in the winter term helped me to address some of my questions about becoming a teacher	71.6	15.8	10.1
16. The CURRICULUM and INSTRUCTION courses helped me to address some of my questions about becoming a teacher	74.7	13.7	7.8
17. The ED. STUDIES (EDST) course this year helped me to address some of my questions about becoming a teacher	59.7	7.0	15.0
18. The PROGRAM FOCUS (FOCI) course helped me to address some of my questions about becoming a teacher	80.1	10.9	7.0

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