

Title: **Enhancing professional development through school integrated teacher education (SITE):  
Rekindling the passion for teaching**

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We are teaching in difficult times – societal, curricular, and accountability pressures have dramatically increased the demands on teachers, often resulting in teachers leaving the profession early. It is often difficult for teachers to determine what is important for children to learn and what attracted them to the profession in the first place. Pre-service teachers are confused about what they are expected to be able to learn and teach; in-service teachers struggle to maintain the passion for teaching that they had entering the profession. This research project is an attempt to rekindle the passions we all need to maintain rewarding and sustained careers in teaching, by developing partnerships between school teachers, university instructors, and student teachers in order to collaboratively develop effective learning and teaching experiences for all participants.

School integrated teacher education (SITE) refers to systematic incorporation of school experiences into the teaching and learning of core concepts within university courses. This study involves multiple data sources drawn from:

1. Two years of student teachers enrolled in a five year elementary program
2. Bi-weekly group meetings with instructors and researchers
3. Term meetings with principals and teachers from four elementary schools involved in the project.

Specifically the paper will seek insights to the inform our understanding of SITE courses based on the following questions:

1. How does the school context structure course offerings and inform the development of teacher education programs?
2. How do SITE methods courses affect generalist student teachers' development?
3. How do SITE courses affect the professional development of university instructors and school teachers?
4. What factors enhance or hinder implementation of SITE methods courses?

The SITE project developed from research reported in Hopper and Sanford (2003) and represents the goal of building a successful partnership between schools and university. University instructors and school staff have collaborated to relocated portions of course offerings within schools. This type of innovation in teacher education programs is the exception rather than the norm (Clarke and Hubball, 2001; Grimmatt, 1998; Rolheiser, 1999; Rovegno, 1991; Samaras & Shelly, 1998; Wiseman, Cooner, & Knight, 1999), and often such innovative programs can become 'balkanized' within the traditional structures of teacher education (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

### **Theory supporting SITE project**

This project is shaped by three theoretical perspectives: (1) a critical action research tradition with a commitment to improve the practice of practitioners, to understand that practice and the situation in which the practice is conducted (Altrichter, 1993; Kemmis, 1982); (2) Vygotskian social constructivism, in particular tenets regarding situated learning, socially shared cognition, joint activity, semiotic mediation and zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, 1985); and (3) a developmental perspective to teachers' development as acknowledged in reviews of teacher education studies (Kagan, 1992; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

The bi-weekly group meetings of the project team involved application of a critical action research focus with meeting minutes created by a graduate student and regularly circulated to the group. Plans were collaboratively developed, acted upon, observed and reported back to the group for reflection and re-planning. Within the courses taught by members of the project team, a commitment to social constructivist principles was recognized. In particular, assignments were designed with a joint activity

focus where students solved problems in groups of 2 or 3. Also, the whole class engaged in an online discussion community where each student took turns in leading the discussion. Within classes, students socially shared the same experience situated within a school context. They either watched an instructor teach an elementary class, taught a lesson with their peers observing, or observed different classes being taught by school teachers. The courses were designed with a commitment to child development and similarly the project was designed with a commitment to student teacher development. Following reviews by Berliner (1988), Kagan (1992) and Wideen et al. (1998) of literature on teacher education, a developmental model summarized below was used to guide course development over the two terms.

1. Initially, novice student teachers struggle to think about themselves as teachers and have concerns that reflect uncertainty as to whether they can lead a class and assume the responsibilities of a teacher.
2. Then as novices develop their thoughts they move from a focus on themselves to concerns about managing pupils, learning classroom procedures, planning lessons and presenting information clearly.
3. Novices then attend to children's actual learning because they have developed procedural skills that have become automatic, allowing them to focus more on whether they have helped children learn.

To address this developmental model, course content in the PE304 course was taught around a series of visits to a local school. Initially, student teachers observed the instructor teach classes of elementary students, focusing on management techniques, feedback and organization. As the term progressed student teachers volunteered to teach with the instructor and by the end of each term small groups of university students taught a class for a teacher in the school. In addition, in the second term student teachers also took a course (EDUC200) where they visited three other elementary schools to tour the schools, observe classes and assist teachers in classroom activities. In all these experiences the student teachers were encouraged to ask questions of the instructors and teachers in relation to what they saw. Students also shared insights in a course journal and a course listserv (e-mail discussion forum).

### **Context: Teacher Education literature**

Historically in teacher education there has been difficulty in linking theory with practice (Grimmett, 1998; Zeichner, 1992). It is a well established that novice teachers tend to teach the way they were taught (Britzman, 1991; Lortie, 1975). Usually this leads to inappropriate didactic teaching methods. In physical education teacher education this problem has been well documented (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Templin & Schempp, 1989), and this is the case in generalist programs despite substantial developments in the understanding and implementation of developmentally appropriate physical education (Gallahue, 1996; Wall & Murray, 1994). More recently there has been a growing call for collaboration between schools and universities for the implementation of school-based PE courses (Siedentop & Locke, 1997). Similarly, in the last decade, spurred in the USA by the Holmes report (Holmes-Group, 1990), by teacher dissatisfaction with teacher preparation in Australia (Ewing & Smith, 2002), and in the UK by governmental reforms to higher education (Goodison, 1993; Mawer, 1996), increasing numbers of teacher education courses are being taught at school sites. In agreement with other scholars (Goodlad, 1990; Goodlad, 1991; McDermont, Gormley, Rothenberg, & Hammer, 1995; Russell, 2001) we proposed that teacher education would be more meaningful if methods courses and actual classroom teaching were closely integrated, not simply relocated.

Within teacher education there is a growing body of knowledge on teaching that is based on a collective, action research model for teacher learning (Carr, 1986; Altrichter, 1993; Elliott, 1991; Hopper, 1997; Tinning, 1986). This body of knowledge focuses upon teacher learning as "knowledge-of-practice" Cochran-Smith (1999). As such, the knowledge-of-practice conception does not separate formal knowledge and practical knowledge for teaching. In knowledge-of-practice, the assumption is

that through inquiry, teachers across their professional career make problematic their own knowledge and practice as well as the knowledge and practice of others. Practice is more than practical. The knowledge that teachers need to teach well is more than what emanates from systematic inquiries. Knowledge-of-practice is constructed collectively within local and broader communities. In this view of teacher learning, teacher knowledge is not separate from the knower, but is constructed within his or her intellectual, social and cultural contexts of teaching.

**Methods and Inquiry and Data Sources**

This study seeks to draw together teachers (student, in-service and university) in the common pursuit of professional development of their practice in relation to a school context, and to document the processes and outcomes of this experience. Qualitative data from journals and listserv entries from one class of student teachers engaged in two SITE courses was collected and analyzed. Analysis using qualitative software (Nvivo) and paper/pencil memoing created coding used to develop initial data sets that were integrated and synthesized into a meaningful “data library” for the research program. A combination of audio-visual, survey and ethnographic methods were used to document rich, descriptive detail on participants’ experiences and perceptions. Drawing on principles of self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), all participating teachers (university instructors and school teachers) revisited their own pedagogy through an examination of minutes from meetings, analysis of student teacher data, still images and video recordings, and analysis of lessons-as-planned compared to lessons-as-taught. This data was used to inform our understanding of the influence of the campus/school-based courses upon the situation of learning to teach and the role of teacher/teacher educator in a school site. One researcher documented the collaborative group dynamics of meetings in the project to make us more aware of developmental sequence of the group. Awareness of group development over the length of this project provided valuable insights regarding group dynamics as they occurred in the project, assisting in the diagnosis of successes and problems (Tuckman, 1965; Bolman and Deal, 1997). Two researchers studied the student teachers’ reflective journals and e-mail discussions from the SITE courses focusing on student teachers’ common focus and their development as teachers. And finally, two researchers studied the student teachers’ attitude to teaching PE using a repeated measures questionnaire. The Self-Efficacy and Attitude to Teaching (SE/AT) questionnaire was designed based on Ajzen’s (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB; see Armitage & Conner, 2002).

The TPB suggests that influences on human motivation (typically measured via intention) are attitudes (based on evaluations of a behaviour), subjective norms (perceived social influence), or perceptions of control (skills, opportunity and resources to perform a behaviour) (see Fig.1 for model). Research with TPB indicates that people will increase their motivation towards a behaviour (i.e. teaching PE) when attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of control are all positive (e.g., Rhodes and Courneya, 2002).

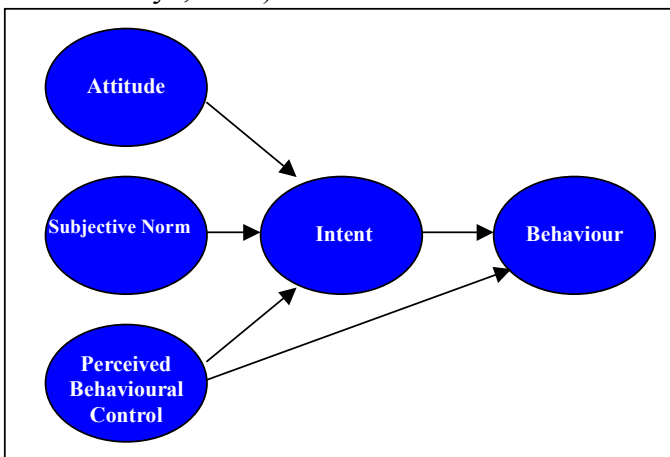


Figure 1 Theory of Planned Behaviour model - Ajzen, 1991

**Findings**

Initial findings in relation to each of the research questions will be used to describe a broad overview of how the project is developing. These findings represent multiple perspectives from members of the research team with data triangulated from quantitative and qualitative data sources.

Passion for teaching children

1. How does the school context structure course offerings and inform the development of teacher education programs?

This question represents a fundamental shift in teaching behaviour. Four instructors had taught both a campus and SITE based course. One instructor commented, “Once you have taught this way you cannot go back.” For this instructor, the campus-based method of instruction was a pale imitation of the richness afforded by student teachers learning to teach PE with real children. All instructors who taught the SITE course and who had previously taught the campus course commented that they felt they had to “keep up with the student teachers” rather than “tell them what to learn”, that “they asked such good questions about teaching...not about how to get marks.” As one instructor said, “The students develop a lot faster...they realize what a PE lesson looks like.” For the instructors it was harder to teach a SITE course because they had to teach an unfamiliar class of children in a school with the class of student teachers watching, they had to connect experiences in the school to ideas they were teaching, and they had to co-ordinate with the school. However, the benefits from such commitment far outweighed the cost, a “far superior experience.” As one instructor commented, for this class “you had to be up...the children test your teaching skills so you had to be ready for anything.” Each instructor smiled when they talked about teaching in the school. They had funny stories to tell of what children did like an artificial leg falling off when a child skipped – a leg he immediately picked it up screwed back on and carried on to the beat of the music, or how well kids performed tactically in a game, or how excited students teachers got about teaching a child to do a headstand. These experiences energized the instructors, rekindling their passion for teaching.

The campus-based courses had similar assignments to the SITE courses except student teachers only got to experience ideas as learners and to teach each other in peer teaching episodes. The SITE courses visited a school five times each term, with the student teachers teaching a class of children once each term. Fig 2 present a sense of the student teachers’ experiences in the first term.







<b>Sept</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Oct</b>
		
Teaching methods taught on campus	Lessons modeled at the schools	Student teachers (ST) observe from the stage
<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Nov</b>
		
STs join in with children in PE lessons	STs teach peers a practice games lesson for school	STs teach lesson taught on campus to class in school

Figure 2: Picture progression of integrated learning experiences for the first term in SITE course

In the second term the same student teachers carried on with their PE methods course but also took a course (EDUC 200) entitled “The role of teacher” to prepare them for their first practicum.





Jan	Jan	Feb	Feb
			
STs work through new content on campus in PE course	In EDUC 200 STs tour schools and compare in seminar	EDUC 200 - STs observe lessons in schools	EDUC 200 STs teach their peers twice in course

Figure 3: Second term with students taking another SITE course as well as PE course

In the second term the PE methods course focused on content for dance and gymnastics and the instructors modeled sequences of 2 or 3 lessons with the same class. As in the first term, the student teachers in groups of three taught different classes of children. Figure 4 shows images from the term.

Feb	Mar	
		
3 lesson sequence taught in school for dance & gym	STs teach developed dance lessons to peers	STs teach lessons in schools in grade of upcoming practicum

Figure 4: Images from PE methods course in the second term

In summation, the SITE course showed what PE could look like, it challenged the university instructors to teach the way they preached in their courses, it energized the learning of course content and reminded the university instructors of how much fun it was teaching eager, sometimes hard to control, children. Within the university program this combination of theory and practice was unique. Some instructors brought children in to be taught at the university, but none went to the school to teach. The school context, we feel, brought more legitimacy to what the instructors’ taught.

The EDUC 200 course was one of three sections of EDUC 200. The other sections in the program did not go to the schools in organized visits for many reasons not to be discussed here. This has created concern for some student teachers not in the SITE based EDUC 200 course. For now the SITE EDUC 200 course is seen as special by the student teachers that get to take it. The school experience made the PE 304 course their favourite course for most of the student teachers. As shown in Figure 2, the PE gym lends itself well to locating 24 adults with 24 children in a physical space to share the same experience. Other subject areas do not normally have the same capacity. Reflecting on how such an approach can be offered in other subjects like Music, Language Arts, Math and Science is an area we will be examining further.

**Reflective journals, listserv and survey on motivation to teach**

How do SITE methods courses affect generalist student teachers’ development? To address this question data was drawn from two years of student teachers’ listserv entries, the reflective journals from this year of the study and the SE/AT survey of three classes taking PE 304.

### Listserv Entries

The listserv entries are e-mails completed by the student teachers over the course of the two terms. Student teachers made one entry every three weeks and managed the listserv for one four day period during the term. Responses were focused on course readings, class activities and student teachers' personal experiences related to the topics of the class. The listserv entries from one year were analyzed using the NUD\*Nvivo software, by three research assistants who were instructed to assess the value of the listserv and comment on any insights it gave them on student teacher development. The following themes are the common observations made by the researchers about the listserv assignment.

#### Time and Thought

The listserv created an opportunity to extend the class time. Students discussed ideas presented in the course readings and connected these to activities practiced in class. They had time, alone with their own thoughts, to share ideas connected to the comments of their peers. Students shared experiences they had had as coaches of children or as students learning to teach. The listserv became a place to share thoughts on ideas shown in class. As the course progressed students would admit their personal doubts about certain topics, for example teaching dance, then later especially after seeing children taught dance in the school, admit to a change of opinion and a forming belief that they could do it. As one student said after teaching dance in the school, "Being able to teach on Thursday, just even that little while was AWESOME!!!" The sense of confidence shared with others allowed a common passion for teaching connecting each student teacher.

#### Social support and humour

The researcher assistants commented on the social dynamics that grew on the listserv over the two terms. As student teachers took turns leading the discussion, praising each other's effective comments and encouraging those who shared doubt, a strong trusting relationship developed. It was noticeable that humour gradually entered into the student teachers' entries as they got to know each other. Students shared funny cartoons related to class topics or expressed their ideas couched in cynicism such as "Well I'm going to attempt to answer this question, but I speak through the wisdom of Dimetap, so here it goes!" Near the end of each term students became very stressed by work demands from too many courses, however they still sought each other out over e-mail. Increasingly social arrangements were co-ordinated over the e-mail. This means of communication created a professional network outside of the class where students met socially, increasingly coming to support each other. Even when the course had finished students still used the listserv to contact each other to meet up again after their practicum experience.

### Student teacher Journals

From twenty-four journal entries for the same students in the PE 304 and EDUC200 courses the following pattern of development was identified over the final term.

#### Content Analysis of Journals

##### First Journal – January

- Fear of practicum, PE, classroom management...
- Seeing value in school visit opportunities offered.
- Luck of the draw—why is EDUC 200 not all taught with a school based experience.
- Have faith PE 304 and EDUC 200 will prepare them well for the upcoming practicum.

##### Last Journal – April

- Questioning classroom practices
- Seeing the importance of planning and preparation



- Confidence building
- Building networks and connections with teachers in schools

This snapshot of the journals highlights the fear, excitement and positive attitude created by the mere mention of working with schools. By the end of the courses the students felt a sense of confidence as a teacher. They had dressed as a teacher, been addressed by children as a teacher, and had help a teacher teach a lesson. A sense of confidence had developed from a sense of familiarity with “being” in the teacher role. The student teachers completed a final readback of their journals to complete the assignment. All journals were a pass/fail. The following list highlights the key content of the readbacks.

#### FINAL JOURNAL READBACK – April

- Appreciation for the modeling done by instructors.
- Great satisfaction experienced when visiting schools.
- Positively affected by inclusion in the school – being treated like a teacher, going in the staff-room.
- Importance of task progression: refining and extending
- Transition from student to teacher – thinking like a teacher and imagining how they would handle situations they had observed. Learning routines and procedures used by teachers.
- Overcoming fear of management, recognizing “Problem behaviour is not the person, it’s the behaviour.”

The readbacks represented recognition of growth and help acknowledge for the student teachers that they felt ready for their first practicum. All commented in their readbacks that they were amazed at how much they had learned from being in the schools. In particular, the following quote highlights how the SITE PE course had the capacity to totally change a student teacher’s attitude to teaching PE.

I am totally amazed at the turnaround in attitude I have had over both terms regarding PE. My many positive experiences have turned my attitude of "I don't like PE, don't want to teach PE and I would like to work in a school with a PE specialist" to "I love PE, I can't wait to teacher PE, and it would be fun to be a PE specialist.”

The systematic experiences of seeing and doing PE in schools had made even the least comfortable student teacher feel they could teach PE with passion and excitement, not dread and fear. Fourteen of the twenty-four student teachers commented on having an indifferent or negative PE perception of PE as a child. The next set of data taken from analysis of the SE/AT questionnaires sheds more light of this transformation in attitude.

#### Results from Analysis of SE/AT questionnaire

The questionnaire was implemented to assess the student teachers’ motivation to teach PE. Results were analyzed for two SITE classes (n=43) and one CAMPUS class (n=20). One instructor taught two courses, one a SITE course the other a CAMPUS based course. Repeated measures were taken to assess changes in elements of Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) components. Descriptive statistics for all items and both samples are presented in Table 1. A 2 (treatment/control) x 3 (pre/mid/post-test) repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (RM MANOVA) was conducted with six variables (attitude, Planned Behaviour Control (PCB), PBC of opportunity, PBC of resources, PBC of skill, and SNS) serving as the dependent variables (see Table 2).

Main effects ( $p < .05$ ) were examined at pre, mid and post intervention in order to determine which independent variables contributed to the difference. There was statistical significance between the SITE and CAMPUS classes at the  $p < .05$  level for the dependent variables of attitude, PBC, PBC of opportunity, PBC of resources, and PBC of skill.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for integrated and non-integrated classes over two-terms

Variables	Integrated		Non-integrated	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Attitude	6.08	.595	5.81	.662
PBC	4.80	.773	4.78	.853
PBC-Opportunity	5.23	1.25	5.00	1.38
PBC-Resources	4.73	1.23	4.73	1.23
PBC-Skill	5.38	.945	5.46	.937
SNS	4.90	.906	4.66	1.02

Table 2 Between-subjects factor for integrated and non-integrated classes over two terms

Variables	F	P-level
Attitude	8.35	< .05
PBC	110.68	< .05
PBC-Opportunity	52.52	< .05
PBC-Resources	89.28	< .05
PBC-Skill	98.55	< .05

The Social Normative (SN) variable showed unusual behaviour for the SITE classes compared to the CAMPUS class. Focusing on the SN variable no significance difference was highlighted using the multivariate analysis of variance (RM MANOVA). For the SITE group at time 1, 2 and 3 over the two terms a two-tailed t-test was run. A significance difference was noted at a p value of < .05.

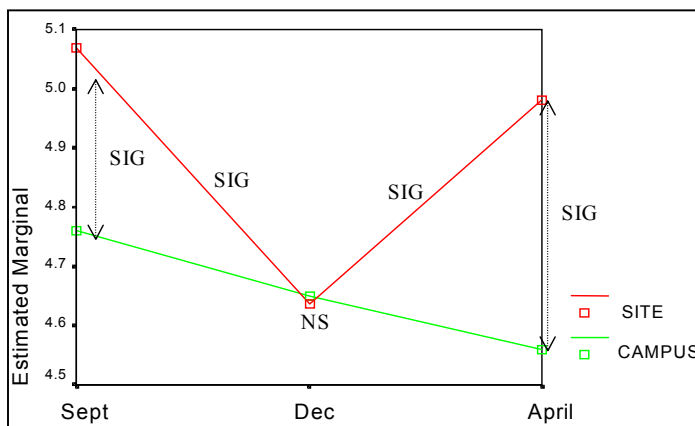


Figure 5: Social Norm over two-terms

Figure 5 highlights this difference.

While there is very little change with the PDPP group, it appears that the social norm for the B.Ed students reforms significantly over the two-terms.

Finally, three other classes of the PE304 class were surveyed at the end of the course. One class was a SITE (n=21) class the other two were CAMPUS based (n=16, n=14). A One-way ANNOVA was performed on the SITE group (n=63) and CAMPUS group (n=51) revealing a significance difference (p < .05) for each of the variables.

Discussion on SE/AT results

The SITE course appears to have had a positive impact on the attitude, PBC, and SNS of PE 304 students in the present study. After engaging in the SITE program, students had a significantly more positive attitude about teaching PE, more than their non-integrated counterparts. Also, their perceived behavioural control, or self-efficacy, consistently developed over the 8-month period. In addition, when compared with the campus-based students, the SITE students appear to have reframed their social norm and reform their social group. The PDPP students, on the other hand, seem to have



maintained their social norm that did not change. The two-term PE 304 course appears to have had a significant influence on social norm for regular B.Ed students.

Due to the institutional restrictions for the design of this quasi-experimental design, certain limitations to interpreting these results need to be noted. One of the limitations of this study is that the SITE and campus groups are divided by program, B.Ed and Post Degree Professional Program (PDPP) respectively. However, the PDPP students are generally older and have more academic experience than the B.Ed students. Also, these students do have weekly experience in the schools as part of their program, but not within the content of a course. Although they do have experience in the schools, it appears that the structured and integrated experience of the school context within a course may be the determining factor that has caused the difference between groups. Future research will further investigate this finding by creating an opportunity for PDPP classes to be involved in the integrated program. The results of the other post-course SE/AT survey for three more PE304 classes adds further support that the SITE course adds to student teachers motivation to teach PE.

### Student Teacher Development

The journals and the questionnaire indicate a powerful influence from the school experience. The challenge of working with children in PE lessons and in a schoolteacher's class helped the student teachers define themselves as teachers. They developed confidence in teaching PE that surprised them, especially in light of many student teachers' negative perceptions of PE. The powerful social dynamic in the SITE courses, highlighted in the listserv data and SE/AT survey, was also noted in SITE courses in the previous years when the research project was first piloted. It would seem that the social constructivist principles used in course design coupled with the situated challenge of experiencing and working in the school context creates a strong and trusting relationship between the student teachers. With the connection through the listserv the student teachers share each other's fear of teaching a class and not being able to manage it, but together they felt that they overcame this fear by handling a PE lesson, at times with considerable success. Even when lessons went a little out of control, the student teachers found that the problem past, they coped and that nobody got hurt. A key experience that they together shared was the excitement of an instructor's lesson that went really well, or a lesson they taught with their peers that surprised even the teacher of the class. A lesson that went really well was very intoxicating, it energized, it inspired, it tapped into the passion of teaching and it was shared.

### **Professional development of teachers and university instructors**

How do SITE courses affect the professional development of university instructors and school teachers? A key factor in addressing this question is recognizing the influence of the group meetings on the university instructors and the schoolteachers. The university instructors had a support group that met every two weeks. The group was comprised of three assistant professors, a full-time instructor and two graduate students. Each member of the group made the meeting a priority in their timetables.

### Overview of group meeting

In looking at the patterns of the group's discussions over the eight months, a recursive pattern became apparent in the talk. At times, the group focused on a concrete level on their teaching of the student teachers: what has occurred, what has been successful or unsuccessful, and their immediate plans. The group also relied on the discussion to further and deepen their reflection, and to consider the broader goals and intentions of the project and what they were hoping to accomplish in creating experiences for student teachers. Frequently, larger program issues were discussed: frustrations and progress made, how the existing program either supported or conflicted with good practice in teacher education, the complexities of the politics involved, and where the group identified need for change. Finally, there was an ongoing effort to step back from the experience, and to notice and identify

research issues and patterns in the experiences, to discover enabling meanings of what had transpired on an individual and group level, and to identify the path forward for the project.

Fig. 6 summarizes the recursive, inter-active process of the group meetings. Each meeting contained a mixture of issues focused on teaching, research and program. Frustrations were shared, reflected upon with ideas offered. Plans were made and then followed up on at subsequent meetings.

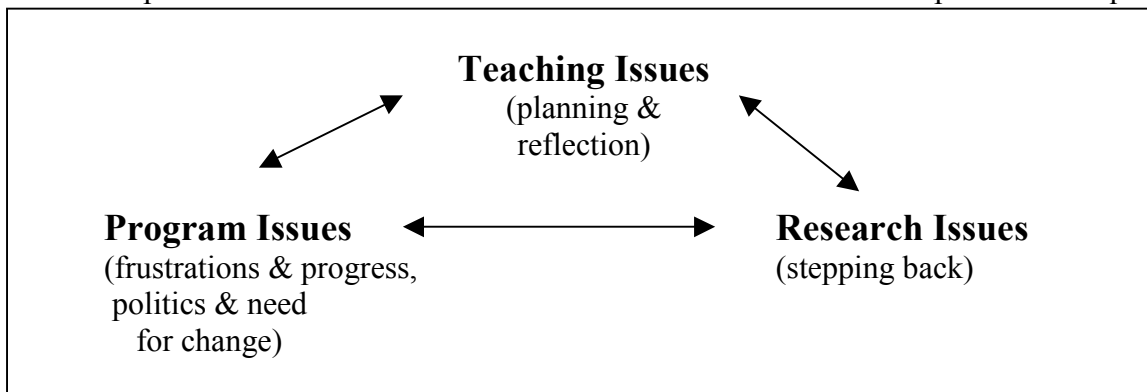


Figure 6: Recurring patterns of the group meetings for the research team

These recurring patterns of the group meetings have been supported by group development theory, specifically Tuckman’s (1965) Model of Group Development. Tuckman (1965) suggests groups follow a predictable pattern of development over time in the areas of both task behaviour and relationship behaviour. Beginning with task behaviours, groups move through a Forming Stage, where group members make contact and develop trust, establishing base level expectations and agreeing on common goals. Next comes the Storming Stage where differences of opinions, ideas and feelings surface. Power and control issues are evident as group members struggle with independence and counterdependence issues. In the Norming Stage decisions are made through negotiation and consensus building where members agree about roles and processes for problem solving. Performing occurs when members have moved through all the other stages and are ready to work collaboratively and find solutions to problems that arise.

Addressing group dynamic issues and group process was of utmost importance in this study and will continue to be as the researchers attempt to move the SITE project into the teaching culture and education program at U.Vic. Often, when new programs are implemented the change process can sometimes be viewed as chaotic and unplanned (Fullan, 2001). Key partners often question why programs need to be changed in the first place. Even when stakeholders embrace change, it can be difficult to adapt and fully comprehend just where the ‘change’ will be taking them and what the ‘change’ will demand of them. Evans (1996) suggests that “although systems theory does allow for intuition, it virtually disregards the role of emotions, interpersonal dynamics, culture, and other crucial non-rational influences in organizational functioning.

The partners in the SITE project include many players: faculty and full-time instructors, graduate students, pre-service teachers, public school administrators, practicing teachers and public school students. The successful implementation of the SITE project demanded consideration of the complexity of bringing together so many partner groups. Each group was moving through their own group development process. Then, as each partner group began to work with other partner groups, further group development was embraced. This area of the research project has yet to fully developed, for this paper be aware that this area needs to further examined using Tuckman’s model.

Meeting with the teachers

A key element of the project was the ongoing and developing relationship with the teachers. At the meetings principals from four elementary schools involved in the project and teachers from each school met with the research team for lunch and discussion. At the meetings the research team would

share their insights, describe the teacher education program to the school staff and describe a brief history of the project. A focus in the meetings was to get insights from the teachers. The teachers expressed how pleased they were with the program. They were totally committed to the idea of getting student teachers into school early. As one principal said, “we were keen to support this idea because so many practicum students we get at a later time and they haven’t even been near the classroom it seems and I couldn’t understand it so it just made sense.”

The school staff saw the project as an opportunity to learn by being involved in well thought-out PE lessons. As one teacher commented about this program, “a big difference from the school point of view is that you are willing to teach children in the school with student teachers. Poor student teachers are so much work: these student teachers are not ‘dumped’ off and abandoned, but rather taught in the context of the school.” Also teachers commented that the “teacherly conversations” encouraged by the student teachers caused them to consider their own practice, to reflect on practices they had examined. As one teacher stated, “to learn by being asked to consider your own practice.” Student teachers would ask them questions such as why certain routines were set up or why some children sat in certain spaces. Student teachers would praise aspects of the teacher’s work, show genuine interest in how the teacher planned a day, get excited about how the classroom was set-up. When the student teachers taught, the teachers were impressed by their professional commitment. As one teacher said, “I think all the students that we dealt with were very conscientious, really wanted to do a good job and when they taught they would do whatever they had to make the lesson work.”

Another key aspect of the program, especially for the principals, was the continuity of the SITE experiences. For some schools this approach had operated for four years in some form or another. It had become a part of the school’s annual plan with the gym time scheduled for the university class. Also, the teachers saw it as very important that the student teachers came to the school over two terms because they could recognize changes. Some student teachers often volunteered in the schools in their own time. All the student teachers brought energy to the school culture. When the children knew they were going to get PE with the University students they were excited. As one principle stated “helps to spark the school...get things going.”

For the university instructors teaching in the schools, there was a definite sense of collegiality with the school staff. As one instructor commented, “When I first taught at the school I felt it was like a test ‘can you handle my class,’ now its about ‘what will be best for the kids’ learning.” In the school the university instructor teaches parts of a lesson, other parts are taught by a student teacher volunteer or other parts are taught by all the student teachers. Using the resource of so many adults meant that children learned so much in one lesson. For the teachers this became such a benefit because they could follow up with lessons using the content from the lesson taught by the university class.

Finally, the school staff felt that the project represented a sharing of passion for teaching. Student teachers who taught in the schools would share resources with the teachers. In turn, teachers involved with the EDUC 200 course would share ideas and resources with the student teachers. University instructors would share their ideas in PE304 but then seek insights on children and share stories of teachers’ activities in classrooms in classes at the university. Teaching became a sharing of passion between committed teachers both practising and those intending to teach.

Finally the meeting led to several plans being made to help develop the project further. These are summarized below:

- Develop a cohort model for placing student teachers in schools during follow-up practicum experiences to help student teachers be more comfortable and effective in the school.
- Consider letting student teachers return to the same school for later practica because they become so effective in the school and could do so much more in the school if they returned.
- Inviting more methods courses from the university to get involved in the schools in the same way as the PE304 course.

- Develop dual placements (two student teachers placed in the same classroom) because student teachers gain so much from watching each other and could learn to work in a team-teaching environment with the teacher or their peer.
- Get student teachers in the next year of the program to see the school at start-up: to see how school and classroom routines are established and initial relationship built with children.

All these plans implied a closer relationship between schools and university program. All these plans focused on allowing student teachers to contribute more to the learning environment of the school.

### **Conclusion and Educational Significance**

The final question, “What factors enhance or hinder implementation of SITE methods courses?” serves as a suitable endpoint reflection for this paper. At present, we are aware that the pilot group in the SITE courses experienced frustration as they passed into year 4 of the program. The problem focused on the lack of integrated school experience. In a sense, the school experience became fragmented, discounted from course contents. The SITE courses allowed the passion of learning to teach with children in classrooms, to be linked to theory and to direct what was learned in course. The project team is involved in trying to develop the program better to reflect this integration, but it will take time and many conversations. However, the schools want to help so the spaces are available for this progress to be made.

In conclusion the SITE courses were an incredibly significant experience for the student teachers. The SITE course was a positive experience for children in the school to have so many adults giving individual attention. And the ISTE courses created a professional development for the project people, inspiring a collaborative program development where school staffs’ became linked to program development. We feel that these cross-institution connections is vital for the development of teacher education across a career life-time.

Themes that arise from the teacher education literature of the past two decades include: 1) lack of research on site-based programs in teacher education (Samaras & Shelly, 1998; Watson, Crandall, Hueglin, & Eiseman, 2002; Wideen & Lemma, 1999); 2) lack of recognition of the complexity of the learning contexts in teacher education (Segall, 2001), with learning to teach often reduced to simplistic technical tasks (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999); 3) widespread dissatisfaction with existing hierarchical models of teacher education and a need to highlight continued professional development for all (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Hamilton, 1998; Russell, 2001). This paper seeks to address these themes by showing how school integrated teacher education courses create a relationship between school personnel, university instructors, student teachers and students that rekindles a passion for teaching and learning as the school and university to create a mutually supportive educational community.

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