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University of Alberta

"Training" Graduate Students to Teach

by

Lorraine Marie Woollard 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

in
Adult and Higher Education

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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **"Training" Graduate Students to Teach** submitted by Lorraine Marie Woollard in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

Dr. J. da Costa, Supervisor

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Date: April 14/99

Abstract

This study examined the training programs in place to assist graduate students assume undergraduate teaching duties in the Faculty of Education at a large Canadian research university.

Research was conducted qualitatively: information was gathered through eight semi-structured interviews, four with department chairs, four with graduate teaching assistants. Department chair data were analyzed first, both deductively and inductively; then, graduate teaching assistant data were dealt with, again deductively then inductively. The findings are organized to represent this analysis.

The conclusions of this study suggested no mandatory training was required; optional training was available but tended to concentrate on administrative, practical matters. There was some disagreement over the role played by previous education and previous teaching experience in preparing graduate students to instruct at a university level.

The key recommendation of this study was that a more formal approach was needed to prepare graduate teaching assistants for their instructing tasks.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The relationship between research and teaching, the twin functions of most large Canadian universities, is often a tempestuous one. In the past decade, the problem has been exacerbated by the funding cuts to post-secondary institutions: fewer people are being asked to perform more duties with less money. One solution that seems to be cost effective in increasing the number of teachers available is to assign more graduate students undergraduate teaching duties, often as a condition of their receiving financial assistance (Eble, 1988). This also relieves some of the pressure on the senior teaching faculty who are required to teach, conduct research, and provide service to their departments through committee work, administrative duties, and program development. But it may also perpetuate the belief, in some circles, that teaching is the least valued responsibility at the university because the senior faculty is willing to entrust it to the graduate students who have a lower status in the hierarchy of the institution. To counteract such a view, that teaching is the least valued function of a university because it is readily assigned to graduate students, universities ought to have in place some mechanisms for ensuring that the graduate students are, indeed, effective instructors. A "training" program, whose objective is to help graduate students become effective university teachers, would be one means of signalling that teaching matters.

In Canada, however, three-quarters of the graduate students assigned undergraduate teaching duties were not required to take part in any teacher training

programs as recently as 1993 (Piccinin, Farquharson, & Mihu, 1993). Yet at the same time, these graduate students were invariably required to complete rigorous methodology courses aimed at preparing them for their roles as researchers (Seldin & Associates, 1990). This differential training has two likely consequences: it reinforces the importance of research relative to teaching in a university setting and, more importantly, it increases the likelihood that the professorate of the future will not be adequately prepared for their teaching roles. This is happening at a time "when a storm over teacher effectiveness is gathering strength outside [the academy]" (Daly, 1994, p. 47).

Those graduate students who aspire to careers in academe may likely find themselves teaching a great many classes while they conduct their research; yet their lack of preparation for teaching may lead them to undervalue the importance of their teaching roles. While it does not necessarily follow that training graduate students in the craft of teaching will ensure their effectiveness, it does seem likely that some supportive training could be instrumental in maintaining both the quality of undergraduate teaching as well as the quality of the graduate student experience (Piccinin & Picard, 1994).

Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to examine the nature of the training given graduate students, at a large Canadian research university, who undertake teaching duties in a Faculty of Education. Particular emphasis was given to the training which occurred within each department, from the perspective of the department and of the

graduate students themselves; however, some attention was also directed outside the Faculty of Education to any training that may be provided by the university itself.

Research Questions

One principal question guided this inquiry: What programs are in place to assist graduate students successfully assume undergraduate teaching duties in the various departments of the Education faculty?

From this fundamental question, four more specific subquestions issued.

1. What formal, intensive training sessions are available?
2. What formal, protracted training sessions are available?
3. What informal training practices exist within the department?
4. What else is involved in the training for teaching?

Definition of Terms

Four terms which are important for understanding this study need to be clearly defined. What follows are the definitions given to all the participants of the study.

Intensive training: This term refers to pre-semester, early semester short-term training sessions designed to anticipate teaching assistants' needs.

Protracted training: This term refers to training that is ongoing throughout the semester, including but not limited to discussion groups.

Formal training: This term refers to training that is scheduled for all teaching assistants in the department. Attendance at

such sessions is required for all teaching assistants involved.

Informal training: This term refers to training that is of a happenstance nature, particular to one or two graduate students but not generally available to the entire population.

Researcher's Beliefs

My belief, based on my experience as a graduate teaching assistant, is that little formal training is offered graduate students who teach undergraduate classes. In the fall of 1998, I was afforded the privilege of instructing one undergraduate class in a Canadian Faculty of Education. Approximately one week before the term commenced, I was invited to attend a meeting, called by the co-ordinator for the course I was to instruct. I was not required to attend this meeting and, in fact, not all the prospective instructors were present. The course materials were made available at this meeting for those instructors who had not collected them the week before when they were first made available. The expressed purpose for this meeting was to deliver and discuss the course outline, reading materials, section assignments, and photocopying procedures. It was suggested that instructors arrange themselves into focus groups, consisting of three to four members, to provide support for one another. My focus group did not meet; I suspect others were similar. Two more meetings were called during the remainder of the term: the first, scheduled two weeks after the initial meeting, dealt with administrative matters such as scheduling guest speakers;

the second, very close to the end of the term, again dealt with practical matters such as final exam format and scheduling.

In terms of this study's definitions, what I have just described could loosely be identified as protracted training because it was ongoing throughout the semester. Attendance at these meetings, none of which lasted more than two hours, was voluntary. The topics discussed during these times were all of an administrative nature.

Prior to the commencement of the teaching term but four days after the meeting called by my course co-ordinator, I was invited to attend a meeting, called by the chair, which was open to all sessional and part-time instructors. Attendance, once again, was voluntary; many chose not to attend. The expressed purpose of this meeting was to review the expectations of the sessional and part-time teaching staff and their participation on committees within the Department, and to review the information in the 1998-99 Instructor's Information Handbook, distributed one month prior to the scheduled meeting. This meeting lasted under an hour and the bulk of the time was spent reviewing the Handbook.

In terms of this study's definition, what I have just described would constitute my intensive training: it occurred pre-semester. Attendance at this meeting was voluntary, its purpose was clearly administrative.

While there is perhaps some justification for offering graduate students in a Faculty of Education little training before assigning them teaching duties--many of them are likely experienced K-12 teachers--I believe it is a mistake to assume that the

majority of them easily and automatically adapt to their new teaching roles. It must be remembered that the focus of K-12 institutions is on teaching only; the focus of a university is on teaching and research. If a department offers its graduate students little in the way of teaching training, it may be tacitly communicating to them the relative unimportance of teaching (Boehrer & Sarkisian, 1985; Cunsolo, Elrick, & Middleton, 1996; Daly, 1994; Ramsden & Martin, 1996). Were they to have received some formal intensive and protracted training during their preparatory years, they may come to realize the significance of their teaching and subsequently grow to become effective instructors (Boyer, 1991; Wilkening, 1991).

> It is also important to recognize that, through the experiences they encounter as Teaching Assistants, the professorate of tomorrow is socialized into the role of teaching in higher education. To the extent that we provide first rate training, support and supervision for Teaching Assistants, they could be expected to be more effective faculty members in the future. (Piccinin, Farquharson, & Mihu, 1993, p. 115)

In order to strike a balance between the faculty's institutional role--teaching--and its professional role--research--(Volkwein & Carbone, 1994) I believe all university faculties, including Education, should provide graduate students assuming teaching duties with sufficient training to undertake this important role. This would signal to all concerned that they were working in an environment with a supportive teaching culture (Ambrose, 1995; Armour, 1995; Common, 1987; McKeachie, 1986; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995; Seldin, 1995).

Given these beliefs, methodological steps were taken to mitigate the effects of my predispositions on the research process. These steps are elaborated upon in the Research Method Chapter of this document.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to eight participants. While it surveyed four-fifths of the population of one group--the department chairs within the Faculty of Education who employed graduate students as instructors--it did not survey four-fifths of all the graduate students within the faculty assigned teaching duties. To counteract this imbalance, I was especially careful in purposefully selecting the students with an eye to maximum variation technique. By including graduate students from a variety of educational backgrounds who had a variety of teaching and life experiences and by including one representative from each of the four departments in the study, I was able to address this issue. While the total number of participants is small, the data gathering technique provided me with a great deal of information, ameliorating somewhat the effect of this phenomenon.

Limitations

Because of the very site-specific nature of the case studied in this research and the purposeful sampling technique employed, the generalizability of this study is quite limited. The purpose of the study was, however, exploratory in nature and was designed to describe the training practices which existed in the Education faculty of one large Canadian research university, from the perspectives of both the department chairs and the graduate teaching assistants. The findings of this study, produced

through careful analysis of all the interview data, paint a comprehensive picture of the teacher training programs at this institution's Faculty of Education; other faculties and institutions may find some of the findings relevant to their contexts. The purpose of this research, therefore, lends itself more to a notion of transferability rather than generalizability.

Significance

The literature indicates that, increasingly, Canadian undergraduates are being taught in their initial years of university by graduate teaching assistants. It also suggests that very little is known about the roles, responsibilities, and training of these assistants. In trying to construct a portrait of Canadian teaching assistants in 1993, Piccinin, Farquharson, and Mihu found the task very difficult because so little was known about them. They called for a national clearinghouse dedicated to gathering, organizing, and centralizing information on teaching assistants as a basis for improving their selection, deployment, training, and evaluation. This study, which describes in detail, the training offered graduate teaching assistants in a large Canadian research university, is one document which can be submitted to such a clearinghouse.

Because this research provides a comprehensive summary of existing training programs and offers a glimpse into what an idealized future training program could look like, it might allow other universities to assess the suitability of their programs relative to the one described in this study. Ultimately, this research may lead others to take a more careful look at the training offered graduate teaching assistants in

different settings; such scrutiny may just lead universities to actively promote excellence in teaching assistants.

Organization of the Thesis

Following this brief introduction, the remainder of the thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter Two reviews the literature thought to be salient for the research; because of a scarcity of literature on the subject of the training given Canadian graduate teaching assistants, a review of the literature on effective university teaching and on the relationship between research and teaching at a university is also included. Chapter Three details the method employed for conducting the study and describes both the context and the participants in the study. Data collection and analysis are outlined as are the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of both. Chapter Four presents the findings: first, those gathered from the interviews with the departments chairs and then, those gathered from the interviews with the graduate teaching assistants. Chapter Five discusses the findings relative to the literature surveyed for the study. Chapter Six offers conclusions, recommendations, and personal reflections.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

According to Piccinin, Farquharson, and Mihu (1993), there is very little known about Canadian teaching assistants; so little that, when they conducted their survey of 26 Canadian universities in order to describe this "unknown resource," many of the respondents expressed frustration in trying to fill out their survey. It seems they experienced great difficulty finding information concerning teaching assistants: their numbers, roles, remuneration, preparation, and training. Nor could they discover with any ease what policies governed teaching assistants' duties and responsibilities. In conducting the literature review for this study, I encountered a similar frustration; consequently, I chose to ground my reading in three general areas. The first body of literature deals with the relationship between research and teaching at the university level, the second with the definition of effective university teaching, and the third with the programs for training teaching assistants--both extant and ideal.

Research and Teaching

Large universities, such as the one in this study, are generally expected to perform two functions: to teach and to conduct research. According to many (e.g., Boyer, 1989; Cunsolo, Elrick, & Middleton, 1996; Daly, 1994; Ramsden & Martin, 1996; Seldin & Associates, 1990; Sykes, 1988; Tang & Chamberlain, 1997; Wright & O'Neil, 1994), teaching is increasingly being relegated to second place in importance, despite protestation from administrative powers to the contrary (Ramsden & Martin, 1996; Tang & Chamberlain, 1997). Ramsden and Martin (1996) concluded from their study of Australian universities that there was division over what

universities say they do to recognize good teaching and what the majority of the academic staff perceive they do; and over the value most staff would like it to be given and the value they believe it is accorded. Tang and Chamberlain's (1997) Tennessee study reported similar findings. A second study of three Australian universities, completed in 1996, found that support for teaching had not increased from 1991 to 1996 and that research "was still seen as more important than teaching" (Taylor, Gough, Bundrock, & Winter, 1996, p. 261). This report concluded:

> "it is research which is seen to define a real academic" and it is a fine research reputation which universities count. Moreover...the extrinsic rewards of research remain greater...[including] perhaps, the chance of an exemption from teaching...the notion that staff can buy themselves out of teaching in favour of research does little to increase the status of teaching. (p. 266)

O'Neill (1993) disputes this view: he claims most universities base tenure and promotion on teaching ability, publication record, and service (committee work, administrative duties, and program development) and that to succeed, faculty must excel in teaching or publishing but not necessarily both. Service, he contends, can strengthen either claim. Nonetheless, the predominant view in the literature surveyed is best summed up by Daly (1994): "It would seem that the tendency to subordinate teaching to research is spreading inside the academy at precisely the same time when a storm over teaching effectiveness is gathering strength outside it" (p. 47).

Many of these same researchers, along with others, seek to bridge the gap between research and teaching by expanding the idea of research to include

scholarship (Cunsolo, Elrick, & Middleton, 1996; Daly, 1994; Hughes & Tight, 1995; Taylor, 1993). Beginning with the premise that a great deal of research is not "read, or at least cited, by anyone" (p.47), Daly (1994) goes on to suggest that we "chang[e] the definition of scholarship in such a way as to include activities that might contribute directly to the improvement of teaching" (p.51). Echoing Cross (1994), Hughes and Tight (1995), and Cunsolo, Elrick, and Middleton (1996), he argues that teaching itself, within any discipline, is a respectable topic for academic research--thus attempting to bridge the two solitudes. Jenkins, Blackman, Lindsay, and Paton-Salzberg (1998) suggest there is "a teaching-research nexus" (p.135) that can have tangible benefits for the student being taught as well as for the researcher. They suggest that if students can perceive benefit to themselves from the research conducted, the rigid distinction between teaching and research can be softened. The best means of achieving this end, the authors postulate, is to link what instructors teach to the research they conduct. Colbeck (1998) cautions, nevertheless, that the integration of research and teaching is somewhat dependent upon the discipline involved; such a fusion is often more difficult in the maths and sciences than in the humanities. Hughes and Tight (1995), however, also suggest that perhaps there ought to be two separate hierarchies, one based on research, the other on teaching, and furthermore, there could be an indirect linkage forged--mediated through departments, disciplines, or professions, not individuals. Feldman's (1987) study indirectly supports this idea as he concludes: "The present review found that, on the whole, scholarly accomplishment or research productivity of college and university faculty

members is only slightly associated with teaching proficiency" (p.252). Perhaps the two solitudes exist and should each be accorded equal status.

On a final note, Krahn and Bowlby (1997) concluded from their study of University of Alberta graduates "that the experience of good teaching translates into greater satisfaction with the over-all university experience" (p. 171). On the other hand, Volkwein and Carbone (1994) found that the most favourable classroom experiences, as well as favourable faculty relations, faculty contact, intellectual growth and development, emanated from university departments rated highly on both research and teaching measures.

A review of the literature dealing with the stormy relationship between the research and teaching functions of a large university is useful for this present study because it provides a context in which to situate the training given graduate students assuming teaching duties.

Effective University Teaching

The second body of literature, dealing with what constitutes effective university teaching, is immense and varied. Fuhrmann and Grasha (1994), have posited that there are several approaches to defining effective teaching: "...based on personal viewpoints, quantitative distributions of teacher traits, and theories of human learning" (p. 251). They conclude, however, that "[we] not...make a priori assumptions about what good teaching is or is not" (p. 251). Nonetheless, there does appear to be some agreement amongst the various definitions.

Knowledge of one's subject matter continues to be a necessary, but not sufficient, contributor to effective teaching (Botman & Gregor, 1984; Boyer, 1991; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Eble, 1988). Increasingly, for effective teaching to occur, attention is being diverted to the teacher's awareness of student readiness and ability to learn the knowledge being presented (Boyer, 1991; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Ramsden, 1992).

> Teachers need to know more than just their subject. They need to know the ways it can come to be understood, the ways it can be misunderstood, what counts as understanding; they need to know how individuals experience the subject. (Laurillard, 1993, p. 3)

More and more, effective teaching is concerned with the inextricable link between teaching and learning, thus forcing those wishing to improve their teaching to become more aware of learning theory (Brown & Atkins, 1988; Erickson, 1984; Laurillard, 1993; Ramsden, 1992). In Becoming A Critically Reflective Teacher (1995), however, Stephen Brookfield cautions that to be effective, a teacher ought to use the awareness of individual preferred learning styles (e.g., Kolb, 1994) as a basis from which to introduce unfamiliar ones. This stretching, he contends, improves the whole educational experience (p. 60).

Preparedness, and organizational and communications skills are commonly cited as contributors to effective teaching (Brown & Atkins, 1988; Eble, 1988; Feldman, 1994; Lowman, 1994; McKeachie, 1986). For Lowman (1994) this clarity is what can produce "intellectual excitement" (p. 218) when it is accompanied by a

"stimulation of emotions" (p. 219). Here is where the consensus of opinion about what constitutes effective teaching becomes less clear: what role does personality play in such a stimulation? Teaching, because it involves social interaction, necessarily involves the personality traits of both the instructor and the student. Generosity, energy, enthusiasm, honesty, and a sense of proportion are desirable for good teaching, according to Eble (1972). Lowman (1994) suggests students prefer "democratic and approachable teachers" (p. 221). Ramsden (1992) suggests that respect and consideration for students, dispensed with benevolence and humility on the part of the instructor, are fundamental requirements of effective teaching. While agreement amongst researchers and teachers about the most desirable personality traits for masterful teaching is likely unobtainable, Banner and Cannon (1997) offer the following observation.

> The consideration of *what* is known and of *how* what is known is presented is always linked to another dimension of teaching--character and personality. Most of us have forgotten, overlooked, or deliberately suppressed our knowledge of the third dimension, and our teaching has been the poorer in consequence. (p. 42)

A very brief overview of the literature concerning the definition of effective university teaching is relevant for the present study because it provides a worthwhile goal at which to aim graduate student teacher training programs.

Teaching Assistant Training Programs

In the United States, university teaching programs were "designed to help international teaching assistants improve their spoken English language skills and learn about the culture of the American classroom" (Gaff & Lambert, 1996). The first program in Canada, founded at York University in 1960, had a similar aim and was implemented to provide help to new teachers (Donald, 1986). Programs evolved so that by 1986, they increasingly focussed on preparing graduate assistants to teach (Donald, 1986). Although by 1993, 76% of Canadian TAs had some training designed to prepare them for teaching duties, only 28% of them were required to undergo any instruction (Piccinin, Farquharson, & Mihu, 1993). Six Canadian universities offered courses for credit by 1993; half of these were actually graded, one was assessed on a pass/fail basis, the other two allowed for a pass with distinction (Piccinin & Picard, 1994). Much more commonly, graduate assistants attended a "TA day": this consisted of intensive workshop training sessions which typically dealt with practical matters such as grading, leading discussion groups, or improving undergraduate writing skills. Some universities held workshops for two weeks in the fall semester and "some universities, notably the University of Alberta, reported offering workshops for TAs throughout the academic year" (Piccinin, Farquharson, & Mihu, 1993, p. 113). According to an earlier study of what TAs wanted and needed, these workshops were appropriate because, over-all, TAs wanted training courses to "develop specific professional skills" (Ervin & Muyskens, 1982). Goodlad (1997) cautioned, as a result of his three year study of such workshops given at Imperial

College from 1993 to 1995, that to be of value, these workshops needed to be "interactive and experiential" (p. 92). He concluded

> subject knowledge alone...is not enough; to feel comfortable with and confident in, their roles as tutors, GTAs seek guidance in handling interpersonal situations and in explaining complex concepts, and highly interactive "hands-on" workshops seem to meet their perceived needs. (p. 92)

Whether or not these intensive training programs are adequate in the present climate is debatable. Much of the debate hinges upon the value attached to the teaching role at a particular university.

Smock and Menges (1985) stated that universities in the United States have an "ethical requirement to provide the highest quality instruction for [their] undergraduate students" (p. 22) and since between 30% and 50% of freshman and sophomore contact in the United States is with teaching assistants (Piccinin, Farquharson, & Mihu, 1993), if a university wishes to meet this "ethical requirement," the training of teaching assistants is of the utmost importance. While the amount of contact between undergraduates and teaching assistants in Canada may differ from that in the United States, there is little reason to doubt that the nature of this contact is important in determining the over-all satisfaction of undergraduate students with their university experience. Intensive pre-semester or early semester training, devoted to the development of isolated instructional skills, may not adequately prepare teaching assistants for their task.

Protracted training sessions offer two obvious benefits: by extending over the whole semester, they can expand beyond the basics of teaching skills; but more importantly, they can offer on-going support to TAs while they are actively engaged in the teaching process (Boehrer & Sarkisian, 1985; Erickson, 1984; Piccinin & Picard, 1994; Saroyan & Amundsen, 1995; Seldin & Associates, 1990). Protracted training sessions may lessen the lonely feelings amongst graduate students who "routinely report that they receive little or no guidance before they begin teaching or while they teach" (Boehrer & Sarkisian, 1985). Longer courses could include skill training, as well as discussion about theory, philosophy, and professional issues, to enhance both the quality of undergraduate teaching as well as the quality of the graduate student experience. An earlier American study (Smock & Menges, 1985) discovered that programs for training occur in a variety of fashions: through individual course instructors, "probably the most common," (p. 24); by individual departments; through a college of education; by individual colleges; or, through a central administrative office. While each approach has advantages and disadvantages, they concluded: "The strongest programs are apt to develop when central unit staff can communicate appropriate educational principles in the language and style of each academic area" (p. 32). In the Canadian experience, typically "departments or faculties plan and implement their own TA training programs and only the most elaborate ones draw on resources which are external to departments" (Saroyan & Amundsen, 1995).

On a somewhat contradictory note, Shannon, Twale, and Moore (1998) discovered that only an undergraduate degree in education produced any significant effect on TA teaching effectiveness, as rated by both the undergraduates taught and the graduate students teaching. University training programs, in the form of one day workshops geared towards orientation and procedures, as well as departmental programs, in the shape of meetings and week-long planning sessions, had very little effect. In fact, the researchers discovered that the more days graduate assistants spent in departmental training sessions, the lower undergraduates rated them on several of the effectiveness factors, notably group interaction, workload, and course difficulty. Undergraduates perceived these instructors' courses as easier and slower paced. Shannon, Twale, and Moore (1998) suggest these sorts of training programs bear little fruit because of their limited scope. They conclude that "training [ought] to be designed to foster the development of TAs' 'teaching ability'" (p. 458) with an emphasis on pedagogical methods, more interactive training processes, and simulation exercises--especially micro teaching opportunities. Likewise the authors believe that teaching assistants would benefit from what they term a "pedagogical practicum" (p. 460) wherein they work closely with one faculty member and gain teaching experience gradually, bolstered by continual feedback and subsequent time to reflect. They observe

> Universities must expand their efforts so that TAs are adequately prepared to teach the course for which they have been hired and so that students enrolled in these courses receive the quality of instruction for which they have paid.

> Current TA training efforts have fallen short of this mark, requiring serious revision before proving successful. (p. 457)

A great deal more research is needed to both uncover the actual role of teaching assistants in Canada and also to discover the training they are given to fulfill their role. Piccinin, Farquharson, and Mihu (1993) advocate gathering, organizing, and centralizing this information in a National Clearinghouse as a basis for improving the selection, deployment, training, and evaluation of teaching assistants. This could allow for the potential development of training programs on a cost-shared basis. Details of the existing programs are sparse (Saroyan & Amundsen, 1995); the present study aims to address this scarcity of information from the perspective of one large university faculty.

Summary

The literature reveals very little information about Canadian graduate teaching assistants and even less about the preparation they are given for undertaking teaching duties. While it is not abundantly clear from a brief review of the literature surrounding effective university teaching what, exactly, such preparation should entail, there does appear to be some agreement that an awareness of student readiness and ability, and an understanding of learning theory and learning styles would be a reasonable place to begin a training program. What does seem clearer, however, is that the institution of such a training program is contingent upon the importance a university attaches to teaching. And while large research universities probably do

value effective teaching, the literature suggests that many of them are seen to be more supportive of research than of teaching.

Chapter Three: Research Method

The research method employed in this study was designed to explore the nature of the training given graduate students at a large Canadian research university who undertake teaching duties in the Faculty of Education. To attain a rich description of the process, a qualitative research design was utilized. This chapter outlines, in detail, the following components of the design: (a) the context, (b) the participants, (c) the consent, (d) the data collection, (e) the data analysis, and (f) the trustworthiness of the data.

Context

The university selected for this study is a large Canadian research one which serves over 20 000 full and part-time students. The Faculty of Education, which is the focus of this study, provides undergraduate degrees in preschool, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary and adult education. Graduate degrees, Master of Education, Doctor of Education, and Doctor of Philosophy, are offered in four departments which focus on Educational Policy Studies, Educational Psychology, Elementary Education, and Secondary Education. The School of Library and Information Studies offers the Master of Library and Information Studies degree. An independent unit, referred to in this document as the University Centre, exists at this institution with the expressed purpose of

> support[ing] excellence in teaching and learning by helping instructors improve teaching skills, by encouraging them to explore new approaches to

teaching and learning, by striving to improve the academic environment for teaching and learning, and by supporting course and program development. In the fall of 1998, the university approved special funding for three years, allowing the University Centre to offer graduate students a training program, referred to in this document as the Teaching Program, designed to provide "opportunities for graduate students to develop an ethical, philosophical, and practical basis for post-secondary teaching and professional careers and to record this on their transcripts." What follows is a brief description of the Teaching Program which is relevant for this study because it does have the potential of affording training opportunities for the graduate teaching assistants in the Faculty of Education.[1]

In 1969, the General Faculty Council at the university first entertained the idea of instituting a teaching and learning centre. For the next twenty years, a Committee for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning engaged in a variety of activities aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning across the campus. One program which was initiated during this time was a general orientation for graduate teaching assistants. In 1989, a full-time director was appointed and the University Centre became an independent unit of the university, reporting directly to the Office of the Vice-President (Academic). The University Centre continued to host the orientation for the graduate teaching assistants as part of its mandate. In conjunction with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, the University Centre gradually broadened the

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[1] All the information included in this description of the setting was gathered from public university documents and through conversations with various personnel responsible for the programs offered.

services provided to the graduate teaching assistants, culminating in the development of the Teaching Program, which received its official recognition in the fall of 1998. Before the Teaching Program was in full operation, graduate students were welcome to attend training sessions which were offered to the faculty at the university; some did, however, the graduate students were not routinely made aware of these training opportunities. Only the Graduate Student Orientation, offered in September, was targeted directly at them and their needs.

The orientation was designed primarily to get the graduate teaching assistants thinking about their courses and how they could foster teaching and learning in them. Various workshops and seminars, offered now in the first week, of both teaching terms, were scheduled to discuss effective teaching strategies. Topics addressed in the 1998 fall orientation, for example, ranged from discussion of successful lecturing and computing fundamentals for teaching and learning to creating a positive classroom atmosphere and dealing with gender issues. Workshops and seminars were led by both faculty and graduate students, offering the registrants a variety of presentation styles as models. In addition to familiarizing graduate teaching assistants with all the resources available to them on campus, including the University Centre, the orientation also sought to provide the students with a support network that cut across discipline lines. The orientation, as well as the ongoing Teaching Program, was offered free of charge to full-time magistral and doctoral students across the campus. Only those students whose departments were participating members in the Teaching Program could apply the hours earned at these sessions towards

documentation on their transcripts, however. Nevertheless, those graduate students in non-participating departments could record these orientation sessions in the Teaching Record Book in anticipation of their departments becoming full participants in the Teaching Program, at which time the graduate teaching assistants could obtain retroactive credits. In essence, the Graduate Teaching Assistants' Orientation has now become part of the Teaching Program as it is described below.

The Teaching Program was developed after the University Centre studied what sorts of programs were available at other institutions, both in Canada and throughout the world. It was decided that graduate students at the university in this study would benefit by receiving some teacher training, for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, it would give them the opportunity to improve and develop effective teaching strategies. Secondly, it might improve their job prospects because successful completion of the three requirements would be noted on their university transcripts, in the form of a narrative statement. And thirdly, it was recognized by the staff of the University Centre that not all graduates would obtain employment at large research universities; some would be employed by smaller colleges and universities whose focus may be more on teaching undergraduate students than on conducting research. For these reasons, it was decided by the University Centre, with the support of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, that a free training program be offered to graduate teaching assistants from across the campus. Participation in the program was to be voluntary.

The program itself had three theoretical and practical requirements. First, graduate students were required to spend between 40 and 50 hours of formal classroom time, which included ten sessions (at least fifteen hours) of designated University Centre sessions in the core areas of curriculum, instruction, evaluation, management, and self-improvement. A number of presentations, workshops, and seminars--27 in the fall of 1998, not including the 22 offered during the Fall Orientation which could also be recorded for pedagogical credit--were held from September to late November. Graduate teaching assistants selected those offerings most relevant to their needs with an eye to completing both the total number of requisite hours as well as the total number of hours required in core sessions. After each University Centre session, an official with the Teaching Program would be available to sign individual Teaching Record Books, verifying attendance at the session. Once graduate students had fulfilled the pedagogical requirements, as documented in their Teaching Record Books, they would be deemed to have met the first requirement of the program.

A second requirement of the program, the production of a Teaching Dossier, could be competed at any time during the term. Generally one or two Teaching Program sessions dealt with the construction of such a document for those graduate teaching assistants unsure about creating a teaching portfolio. The University Centre offices also provided graduate students with a guide to producing such a record and with model Teaching Dossiers. In order to receive credit for this component of the program, graduate teaching assistants were required to present their dossiers to a

University Centre appraiser for examination and approval. Successful completion of this component was also recorded in the Teaching Record Book, fulfilling the second requirement of the program.

Meeting the third, and final, requirement of the program necessitated the full participation of the graduate students' departments. The Faculty of Graduate Studies, along with the University Centre, decided even before the Teaching Program was formalized that the various university departments would feel more ownership of the teaching program if they had a significant role to play. Thus, in order to become fully participating members of the Teaching Program, the department was required to submit to the Teaching Program Committee a written proposal for meeting the pedagogical and practicum requirements, to appoint a program co-ordinator to oversee the department's delivery of the program, and to provide graduate students with a list of potential teaching mentors. Once the proposal was accepted by the committee, the department became a participating member of the program. If graduate teaching assistants belonged to departments which chose not to be participating partners in the Teaching Program, those students could not complete the third requirement of the program: the practicum.

To receive credit, and have the credit recorded in the Teaching Record Book, graduate students must have completed at least two terms of teaching assistants' work, or the equivalent. They were expected to have substantial teaching duties in laboratory, clinical, or classroom settings, as outlined in their department's proposals and approved by the Teaching Program Committee. Graduate teaching assistants

were required to spend the equivalent of one teaching term exclusively with post-secondary students in order to fulfill this requirement, therefore making this component of the program the responsibility of the individual departments. If a department could not provide the graduate students with such teaching opportunities, it was not possible for those students to meet the requirements of the practicum. Nevertheless, Teaching Record Books could still provide formal verification of the other two completed components.

If the department could provide graduate students with teaching opportunities, it was also required to provide students with teaching mentors to supervise their teaching, as research advisors supervise their research. The department needed to provide a list of potential teaching mentors to the graduate teaching assistants, through the office of the department's program co-ordinator, and it became the graduate student's responsibility to approach and secure a teaching mentor. In addition to providing ongoing support to graduate assistants, teaching mentors were required to arrange for two micro-teaching events to be video-taped. With a University Centre appraiser, the teaching mentor provided a critique of these teaching events and affixed a signature to the graduate student's Teaching Record Book, noting satisfactory completion of this third requirement.

If graduate students were able to complete all three requirements of the Teaching Program as outlined above, prior to their graduation, a narrative statement would appear on their transcripts, noting successful completion of the program's components. In order to effect the appearance of such a notation, graduate students

were expected to submit the appropriate documentation, signed by the department's program co-ordinator and a University Centre appraiser, to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Even if students were not able to complete all three components of the program, they were advised to retain their Teaching Record Books as formal verification of the completed requirements.

At the time these data were collected, the four departments in the Faculty of Education which took part in this study were not yet fully participating members of the Teaching Program.

Participants

The first group of participants in this study, the chairs of the four education departments who employ graduate students as instructors, were purposefully selected for key informant interviews. Because of their expertise and knowledge about departmental policies, I believed they would be able to provide a clear picture of training, from an administrative position. Initially, all five department chairs within the faculty were approached informally, given my letter of introduction and a formal consent form (see Appendix A) and a one page summary of the study proposal (see Appendix B), and asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. A brief discussion with each revealed that four of the five chairs did employ graduate students as instructors and were likewise all amenable to take part in the study. The fifth department chair did not provide graduate students with teaching roles and was, logically, excluded. Inclusion of all four remaining department chairs served two

purposes: it provided me with a wide range of rich and in depth responses and it provided the participants with a degree of confidentiality.

The second group of participants in this study, the four graduate students, were selected from the accessible population by a combination of methods. Criterion sampling, which "involves the selection of cases that satisfy an important criterion" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 234), was used first in order to insure that all potential respondents met two criteria: (a) they were graduate students in any one of the four departments included in the study, and (b) they were currently teaching an undergraduate course in one of these departments. Next, each of the four chairs was asked to recommend six graduate students who had been given undergraduate teaching duties for the fall term, three of whom would be teaching for the first time, if possible (see Appendix C). While it was not possible, in every case, to provide me with the names of neophyte teachers, two of the chairs provided such a complete list; two suggested I contact the secretary responsible for graduate students in their respective departments to attain such a list. With lists in hand, I purposefully selected the final four participants, one representing each department, with an eye to maximum variation technique (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 232). In this sense, they were selected to represent as wide a range of teaching and education experiences as was feasible. What follows is a brief description of each of the four graduate students; pseudonyms are used to provide participants with a degree of confidentiality.

Les: Les, in the doctoral program, held a B. A., B. Ed., and M. Ed. Les previously taught for three months, as a replacement teacher, in the K-12 system. At University, Les had taught the same course three times and was about to begin a fourth term as an instructor, again in the same course.

Mel: Mel, also in the doctoral program, held a B. Ed. Mel previously taught full-time for two years in the K-12 system, then part-time while attending University part-time. At the University, Mel had taught the same course five times and was about to begin a sixth term as an instructor, again in the same course.

Pat: Pat, another doctoral student, held a B. Ed and M. Ed. Pat previously taught for approximately five years, including substitute teaching, in the K-12 system. Pat also taught for seven years at a technology institute. At the University, Pat began teaching one course, did so for several years, then taught a different course for the past three terms. In the term following my data collection, Pat was not teaching, but rather finishing the dissertation.

Sam: Sam, in the masters program, held a B. A. Sam had no previous experience in the K-12 system save as a parent volunteer. At the University, Sam taught for the first time in the fall of 1998 and instructed the same course in the winter term of 1999.

Once I had determined these four graduate students, because of their varied background of experiences, should be able to provide me with a rich body of responses, I contacted each one in turn. They, too, were approached informally at first, given the same letter of introduction and a formal consent form (see Appendix A) and a one page summary of the proposed study (see Appendix B) as were the department chairs, and asked to sit for a semi-structured interview. All four agreed verbally to take part in the study.

Consent and Confidentiality

Once all the subjects for the study had been selected, each was subsequently asked to sign a formal consent form (see Appendix A) at the beginning of his or her scheduled interview. Prior to this taking place, I had gained the necessary ethics approval from the University of Alberta by meeting its conditions for such approbation. Voluntary and informed written consent was given by all eight participants.

Data Collection

Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted, each lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews with the department chairs took place in July and August as that was a time convenient for them. Those with the graduate students were conducted from November to January, again to suit the respondents' schedules.

Interviews with the department chairs were conducted in their offices; three of the interviews with the graduate students were conducted in my office, the fourth in

the office of the respondent. All times and locations had been mutually agreed upon during the initial informal contact with each informant.

I conducted all the interviews, audiotaped each one, and transcribed the tapes verbatim. Transcripts of the interviews were returned to the respondents for their feedback, clarification, and approval. At this stage, participants were invited to delete any material they felt they had given which, upon further consideration, they wished to have omitted. One graduate student removed three short passages, two, four, and six lines respectively, from the eleven page transcript, citing concerns for confidentiality. All other transcripts were returned intact.

For each set of interviews, I developed an informal interview schedule, revolving around the sub-questions, formulated to uncover the training practices extant in the respective departments, both from the perception of the chair and a graduate student in each one. The interview guide used with the department chairs, incorporating but not limited to the above mentioned four questions, was developed first (see Appendix D). Once these four interviews were completed, I briefly analyzed the data for any obvious emergent themes that could fruitfully be explored in the second set of interviews with the graduate students. From this brief review of the data, I developed a second interview guide which included the four key questions as well as two additional ones which helped me broaden the scope of inquiry to encompass the themes which emerged from the cursory analysis of the first interviews (see Appendix E). Both these guides, it must be stressed, were exactly that: guides. Because I had established a comfortable rapport with all eight

respondents, what emerged from the discussions was an abundance of rich information.

After I conducted both the informal initial discussion with each participant and the more formal interview, I made summary notes in my research journal regarding my perceptions of the encounters. In this journal as well, I kept notes on my own experiences as a first time graduate teaching assistant. Both these sets of notes proved invaluable as I began my analysis of the interview data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was based primarily on the grounded theory approach in that "the categories [were] 'grounded' in the particular set of data that [I] collected" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 565). Because the main purpose of this study was to uncover the training practices in place at this university, from the perspective of both the trainers and the trainees, and then outline them in rich detail, it seemed logical to describe categories emanating from the data directly. Constant comparison was used as the means for discovering main themes and the connections amongst them. Settling with this approach towards my data, I first immersed myself in the four department chair transcripts.

Immediately after each interview concluded, I transcribed the audiotape myself. This afforded me the opportunity of instantly re-familiarizing myself with the content of each. I compared the typewritten transcript with the relevant notes in my research journal, and added notes, where appropriate, regarding potentially important themes. This process was followed for all eight interviews; however, I

chose to treat the data obtained from the interviews with the department chairs fully before I set about to analyze that gained from the graduate students. I did, however, follow exactly the same process for both sets of data, based on two separate open coding frameworks.

First, with my main research question firmly in mind, I analyzed each transcript line by line, for emerging themes, making notes and recording ideas in my research journal as I progressed. To guard against researcher bias, this preliminary analysis was shared with a critical colleague who agreed to follow an audit trail. Intersubjective agreement between myself and my colleague was reached through sharing, discussing, and debating these tentative findings.

Then I chose to deductively analyze the data because, during the initial analysis, I reasoned that both the department chairs and the graduate students had very explicitly been asked to answer four key questions, regarding both formal intensive and protracted training opportunities and informal training activities existent in their respective departments. I was able to group the answers to these shared questions under one of five major themes: intensive training, protracted training, course for credit, the University Centre training, and other training. For the purposes of this study, I deduced these themes from the substatements of the research problem. However, once I applied this analysis to the department chair transcripts, I was left with a great deal of interesting data which could not be placed in any of the predetermined categories. Assuming this would also be true when I turned my

attention to the graduate students' material, I chose to approach the data a second time, in an inductive fashion.

I returned to the data and began the process of open coding, again, with my research notes to guide me. In this stage of the analysis, I scrutinized the data for emergent themes; once satisfied that I had identified the most salient ones, I engaged in axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) whereby I reorganized the data to produce a coding framework that accounted for much of the data that could not previously be placed in the deductively obtained categories.

By employing both deductive and inductive analysis, first to the data collected from department chairs and then to that offered by the graduate students, I was able to obtain two very clear pictures of the training procedures in place in four of the five departments in the Faculty of Education at this institution.

Trustworthiness of the Data and the Analysis

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the data themselves was accomplished by returning the verbatim transcripts of the interviews to each participant in a timely manner. By reducing the time elapsed between the actual interview process and the production of a written transcript, I allowed the participants to review what was said almost immediately after it was said, thereby ensuring more fully the accuracy of the raw data. Three of the four graduate students made no alterations to their transcripts. One, as alluded to earlier, removed three short passages, citing concerns for confidentiality. This student also made minor grammatical revisions, for clarity. One department chair returned the transcript without amendment; two made minor

grammatical adjustments, again, for clarity. The fourth chair attached a brief note questioning the utility of using a verbatim transcript in interpretive research and went on to advise, "As a methodological point, I would urge you to begin to summarize and organize the written text directly from the audio tape. This would communicate more effectively." This chair also made two points of clarification, regarding the meaning of acronyms. All changes to the original transcripts were carefully noted, despite the fact that, with the exception of the graduate student's deletions, they did not alter the meaning of the text.

To further increase the trustworthiness of the study, I took several steps to reduce the risk posed by extraneous factors. In the first place, I took great care in designing the interview instrument. I consulted literature on the development of semi-structured interview schedules (e.g., Berg, 1998; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996) and sought feedback on initial drafts from established researchers and respected colleagues. Secondly, in order to mitigate against participants being circumspect with regard to their responses, I developed good rapport with each by having one or two informal "chats" prior to the interview date. By holding each interview in a location selected by the respondent and using unobtrusive recording equipment, I was able to create a comfortable atmosphere wherein probing questions could be freely answered. My own credibility was established, in part because I was a graduate student who had been assigned teaching duties, and in part, by my professional behaviour during the data gathering process, especially my prudent regard for confidentiality of all

respondents. To underscore this regard, I transcribed all interview tapes myself and gave written assurance of confidentiality to each participant (see Appendix A).

To guard against researcher bias, inasmuch as that is possible given that researchers select topics of interest to themselves in the first place, I took several precautions. As mentioned previously, I consulted with a critical colleague during the preliminary analysis of the data. As I moved through the subsequent deductive and inductive analyses, I, likewise, shared these interpretations with the same colleague. My colleague followed an audit trail, reading both the transcripts and my research journal in the process, in order to detect any obvious biases and questionable interpretations. And in order for me to detect more personal biases, I constantly referred to the sections of my research journal which detailed my experiences as a first time graduate teaching assistant as I analyzed the data.

Finally to enhance the over-all trustworthiness of the study, I sent a preliminary analysis of the findings to the participants. The department chairs were asked to review and comment on the findings relative to their portion of the study; the graduate students to theirs. The members of each group were asked to read over the summary and confirm to me that the study did, ultimately, what it set out to do.

Chapter Four: Findings

As detailed in Chapter Three, I chose to treat the data generated through the interviews with the department chairs first deductively, then inductively. Once I finished this two-step analysis with the first set of data, I applied the same technique to the second set of data obtained through the interviews with the graduate teaching assistants. The findings are reported accordingly.

Deductive Analysis--Department Chair Data

Data obtained through the interviews with the department chairs were coded according to themes related to the study's sub-problems. However, formal training, narrowly defined in the study as that requiring attendance according to a fixed schedule, was found not to exist in any of the Departments. Consequently, the findings outlined and described in this section need to be understood in light of this context.

Intensive training. The deductive analysis focussed first on the intensive, short-term training sessions graduate assistants were exposed to at the beginning of the term. In Department A, the chair assumed responsibility for this; in Department B, the individual instructor to whom the graduate assistant was assigned undertook this role. In Departments C and D, course co-ordinators were assigned to this duty; however, since these co-ordinators also assumed responsibility for any on-going, protracted training, the line between the intensive and protracted training sessions became blurred. Likewise, in the department where this was "professor-controlled," the division was not immediately evident. The chair of this department suggested that

"whether we [can] put something that is generic in at the front part needs to be examined."

Where the chair assumed responsibility for this initial meeting, the purpose was clearly defined as outlining "the Do's and Don'ts: here are the things that you must do to follow university requirements; here are the things that you cannot do." In the professor-controlled department, the purpose of a first meeting varied, depending upon the needs of individual instructors. In one of the departments where the course co-ordinator was charged with this role, graduate assistants "may be asked...to attend general orientation sessions that involve not just them, but the full-time staff and the sessional instructors as well." In the other department where there was a course co-ordinator, the purpose of the initial session was two-fold: to orient graduate assistants to the course assigned and to discuss some of the philosophical background to the individual course, relative to the whole teacher education program. University rules regarding course outlines, grading regulations, and expectations were also distributed at this initial session.

Two of the four department chairs suggested that graduate assistants could participate in the formal activities of the University Centre who offered an intensive workshop orientation for graduate teaching assistants every fall and winter session; one suggested that "we encourage them to go, but they're not required."

While the expressed purposes of these intensive sessions, generally no longer than two hours duration, seemed to vary somewhat from department to department, all took place at the start of the teaching term. Graduate teaching assistants were

invited to attend, but were not required to do so. Overall, the main focus of the intensive training sessions in the four departments was on orientation: to the courses being taught and to the regulations governing the teaching.

Protracted training. In all but one of the departments, the responsibility for any on-going training throughout the term resided with individual course co-ordinators. Responsibility in the fourth department rested with the individual instructor to whom the teaching assistant had been assigned. Course co-ordinators or individual instructors, as the case might be, chose the frequency of meetings: "about once a week," "every couple of weeks," "from time to time," or "on a fairly regular kind of basis." In two of the departments, these meetings were open not only to graduate assistants, but also to sessional instructors teaching the same course.

In one department, the chair succinctly expressed the purpose of these on-going sessions: "To keep everybody sort of moving together, through the course...so that people are not wandering off into content they've invented themselves...so that all students get a similar kind of course." Overall, the content of the affected courses in this department was set, with instructors--both sessional and graduate teaching assistants--having "some freedom to select, to emphasize some things more than others." Co-ordinators of these courses were expected to meet regularly with all the instructors concerned to "go over course content...where they should be at this time, and what materials are available."

In the two other departments where course co-ordinators were charged with the task of calling meetings over the course of the term, the purposes were not quite

as explicit. In both, "a mixture" of topics seemed to be covered, the underlying purpose being to discover "how the course is going." One chair suggested that "[we] try to make spaces for the instructors to talk to each other," while the other said, "we try to make sure that they're not alone, but there's little in the way of a formal kind of thing that works across all graduate assistants."

In the final department, where individual professors were assigned graduate assistants, no provision was made for protracted training as each professor had unique requirements. Although meetings were not called with some regularity by course co-ordinators, as in the other departments, the chair of this department suggested "there is a kind of a flow...most of the instructors meet with their teaching assistants on a fairly regular kind of a basis" to deal with issues such as classroom management, communication skills, bases of evaluation, and "things of this nature."

Course co-ordinators assumed responsibility for any ongoing training in three of the four departments. In the fourth department, consistent with its orientation to intensive training, individual professors undertook this duty. In all departments, meetings were called at the behest of the co-ordinators or the individual professor; graduate assistants were invited, not required, to attend. Topics discussed varied; the main focus of the on-going training sessions in the four departments centred around the general progress being made in the instruction of the course.

Course for credit. Three of the four departments have, in the past, structured a formal credit course to prepare graduate students for university teaching. At the time the data were collected, none offered such an option. One department, however was

exploring the possibility of re-instating such a course in the future; another was actively implementing a graduate program designed to study teacher education. This new program was conceived as having relevance to graduate assistants as well as to practising teachers in the school system. In the department where offering a formal credit course had not been explored, the chair pointed out that courses in adult education already existed within the Faculty of Education and graduate students were welcome to avail themselves of these opportunities, though few did. None of the chairs were averse to offering such a course, although one expressed the idea that "[he] was quite sceptical about it...based on graduate students that we have in our department"; equally, none believed such a course could be mandatory. Cost to the student, both in time and money, as well as instructional cost to the department were two reasons given for not requiring such a course. One chair opined that "a lot of it would probably be redundant"; another had "a hard time as seeing [it] as just being one course."

Regardless of the individual departmental attitudes towards offering a credit course to prepare graduate students for their teaching responsibilities, none of the four departments offered such an alternative. All, however, were in agreement that such a course could not be mandatory.

University Centre. Outside the Faculty of Education, and under the direction of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, the University Centre offered a structured training program--the Teaching Program--for all graduate students at the university. "The primary objective of this program is to provide opportunities for

graduate students to develop an ethical, philosophical, and practical basis for careers in post-secondary teaching and to record this on their transcripts." This program was both voluntary and free for students in full-time master's or doctoral programs. While all the department chairs in the Faculty of Education were aware of this program; some, in fact, very active in designing workshops and providing speakers for individual sessions, there was some disagreement as to the role the University Centre could play in training graduate assistants in the faculty for their teaching responsibilities.

All the department chairs agreed that the Teaching Program was worthwhile and that staff members were generally aware of the services offered; one respondent mentioned, however, that making graduate assistants more aware of it is "probably something we could do better at." Another, on the other hand, specifically sent "information that comes out of the University Centre and [we] encourage them to go...but they're not required." Another "[made] the information available to graduate assistants...and some of them choose to go and some of them don't...we don't require them to go." The fourth, while not commenting on how information received from the University Centre was transmitted to graduate assistants, stated, "We haven't had a mandatory attendance on these things for our teaching assistants."

Reaction to the efficacy of the Teaching Program in preparing graduates in the Education faculty for their teaching roles was mixed. One chair offered that he has had "pretty positive feedback"; another that "the reaction has not been positive enough that we've ever felt that we should recommend these to people highly." The

third chair detailed the example of an individual attending "at least a dozen of their workshops last year [who] found some of them very helpful." The fourth chair expressed the belief that "the Teaching Program is very good...for those quick sort of hour, two hour informational sessions."

In general, the comments pertaining to the role the Teaching Program played in preparing graduate assistants concentrated on the usefulness of a particular training session to the individual involved. One chairman summed up the majority view: "most things [workshops] are quite useful in a generic sense."

Other training. All four department chairs agreed that graduate teaching assistants worked together and that this practice would constitute a kind of informal training, particular to the individual assistants involved. The purposes of these contacts varied: from simply providing support to sharing materials and course outlines to exchanging classes. One chair said that graduate assistants "trade classes and things of this nature because one feels [he or she] can do a much better job on one thing rather than on another." Another gave a very detailed example of two assistants who worked very closely together, each in her own area of expertise, in designing assignments, grading assignments, and teaching individual classes for both sections of their respective courses. A third chair offered, "I suspect there's a lot of graduate student to graduate student contact that goes on--they share material and they know who else is teaching the course." And the fourth, remembering his experience as an assistant,

> assume[d] if I have a problem, I come to you and, in fact, I encourage that with all the instructors around here. When I have three people teaching the same course, I often get them together and say, okay, and somebody will say, "Well, I've done this and I've done this and I've done this." So the same sort of thing trickles down to the teaching assistants, I think.

A second area of informal training could occur in all four departments as a result of contact made between an individual graduate assistant and other members of the department: the course co-ordinators, sessionals and professionals teaching the same course, subject area specialists, thesis and dissertation advisors, or chairs of the departments. In every department, in the words of one, the chair tried "to create an atmosphere where they are encouraged to co-operate and work together" in some fashion. Graduate students were often invited to subject area meetings in order to forge this kind of link, for example.

Graduate assistants appeared to encounter a wide variety of potential training experiences because of their contacts with other members in their departments. All four chairs tried to create an environment wherein such exchanges were both fostered and supported.

Inductive Analysis--Department Chair Data

Following and building upon the deductive analysis of the data, the four respondents' interviews were analyzed inductively. All the data were re-examined to identify any emerging themes and patterns. What became evident from this analysis

were the philosophical bases upon which the various training programs were structured.

Key, in all four departments, were the experiences individual graduate assistants brought to the teaching task, both in terms of teaching or of education, or both. Also vital was the supportive atmosphere extant within the individual departments which was seen as instrumental in guiding the assistants in their duties.

Teaching experience. Graduate students were offered assistantships based upon their previous experiences: in three of the departments, A, C, and D, the most relevant experience sought was evidence of successful teaching. In the fourth, B, students were selected "on the basis of their skills, their knowledge pertaining to [the course]." In the departments where teaching experience was a critical hiring criterion, each chair made explicit what his department expected. Department A's chair stated, "they must have a teaching certificate or be eligible for a teaching certificate and we like to have them with some teaching experience." Department C's chair said that "we expect a fair bit of experience...in [that] subject area...it's not somebody who's taught two years or three years in the schools; we normally like to have people with five, six, ten years' experience." The chair of Department D mentioned that in addition to requiring teaching experience, "We also try to look for people who have some familiarity with the Alberta education system...generally, I guess there is an implicit criterion that they have some knowledge of Canadian schools and Alberta curriculum." That graduate teaching assistants in the Faculty of Education came to their roles with previous teaching experience in three of the four departments, was an

oft reiterated theme. In the fourth department, B, the chair acknowledged that they did get some people who had teaching experience but that factor was not a strong determinant upon which to build their training program.

While three of the departments have structured their training programs, in part, based on the graduate teaching assistant having had teaching experience, normally in the K to 12 system, two of them did offer that teaching at a University level constituted a different kind of experience. The chair of Department C suggested it was

> really different in several important ways--one is that they [the undergraduate students] are adults and many have had careers in other areas...I think the fact [is] that people are investing a lot--both financially and in terms of time, psychic energy...You know with kids what they're like--they just go to school.

Department D's chair, while believing the "gap" between the two experiences was getting smaller, agreed that "the older the person is, the more difference in the background that's there" then added

> but the expectations for [providing] university education are really much less than the expectations for instruction in Grade Two. And so, much of the compensation for the differences in background and much of the adapting for differences in background at the University are really the responsibility of the student.

The chair of Department A agreed with a statement made by me, the interviewer, that teaching in a University setting might be different than teaching in other situations,

but he did not clarify his view. Even though teaching experience was not a specified criterion in Department B for selecting graduate teaching assistants, the chair offered, "it might be different teaching in a secondary school than teaching in a university."

Allowing that University teaching might differ from other kinds of teaching, the chairs of Departments A, C, and D relied on graduate teaching assistants possessing previous teaching experience and approached their training practices with this in mind. Succinctly, Department D's chair summed up the majority view:

> We have people who have education backgrounds, people who have teaching experience, they have a lot to bring with them...and a lot to contribute to the education of undergraduate students. I'm not sure that is universally so across the university....We're selective in the sense that we're not likely going to take a student who we feel does not have appropriate background and plunk them into teaching responsibility.

Educational experience. Previous educational experience also emerged as being a relevant foundation upon which training programs were constructed. In most cases, not all, doctoral students were given preference in being assigned teaching duties. In three of the departments, B, C, and D, those assigned teaching duties were normally expected to have specialized in the subject area in which they were teaching. Preference in hiring was given to those who had completed masters' degrees in that area. In the fourth department, A, no such direct linkage was evident.

Two of the chairs, in Departments A and D, explicitly mentioned the foundational role Faculties of Education played in training graduate assistants simply, "they are teachers; they've gone through undergraduate programs." The chair of D added that not only had they completed undergraduate courses in teacher education, but that some had also used their experiences as graduate teaching assistants as a basis for their research:

> So if a person were saying I really want to have a career in teacher education, they might be doing a piece of research in teacher education. And so we have had several students who have used their own teaching in undergraduate programs as one of the sources for their data in their dissertations.

The chair of Department C, though not expressedly detailing the relevance of the groundwork completed in undergraduate courses to graduate teaching assistants, did refer to the vital importance of graduate work in the training experience: "What our people are researching is teaching, teaching and curriculum...it would certainly be a minority of dissertations and theses that are being done here that weren't doing it."

In three of the four departments, A, C, D, therefore, the fact that the majority of those selected for teaching duties had completed undergraduate degrees in education emerged as a second important basis upon which to structure further training opportunities. Two of these chairs (C and D) also predicated their approaches on the fact that many graduate teaching assistants chose to study teaching in their magistral and doctoral research.

Mentorship. All four department chairs cited the prevailing conditions within their departments as the final cornerstone upon which their training philosophy rested. Three of them, Departments B, C, and D, clearly named mentorship as a key factor. The chair of Department B was "actively looking at trying to put into play a mentoring type process...almost like a bit of a cascade model where you have a professor doing certain kinds of things, and it cascading down through." Another, from Department C, declared that "mentoring is the key." In his department, professors have a "vertical responsibility for their subject area so this [to mentor graduate students in their subject area] is an important part of their mandate." A third chair, from Department D, suggested that graduate assistants need

> the kind of help that beginning teachers need. And the research indicates, quite clearly, that, that's not a course--that it's the opportunity to work with somebody, fairly close by, who can mentor you who has had the experience before and can respond to issues as the need arises.

While formal mentorship programs were not yet in place, practices in all four departments lent themselves to creating atmospheres in which such programs could flourish. Graduate teaching assistants were invited to take part in departmental and subject area meetings, to contact their course co-ordinators or any other staff members teaching the same courses, and to approach the chair, or assistant chair, to deal with any concerns they may have. The supportive and open atmospheres created in these four departments figured prominently in the philosophical underpinnings of the respective training programs.

Deductive Analysis--Graduate Teaching Assistants

Once I completed both the deductive and the inductive analysis of the data obtained through the interviews with the department chairs, I followed the identical procedures with the data generated by the interviews with the graduate students. These data were also coded according to the themes related to the study's sub-problems. And to reiterate, formal training, narrowly defined in this study as that requiring attendance according to a fixed schedule, was found not to exist in any of the departments. The findings outlined and described in this section, therefore, need to be understood in light of this context.

Intensive training. I began the deductive analysis by concentrating first on any intensive, short-term training sessions graduate teaching assistants attended at the beginning of the teaching term. Three of the four students attended none. Mel opined that this experience was common in the department: "there were no required meetings or anything [one] just sort of went out and taught." Two of these three students, Les and Sam, did attend meetings, Sam the day before classes began, Les a couple of weeks into the term. The meeting in Sam's department was held with all of the graduate assistants and the lecturers for the course. The purpose of this meeting was to distribute course outlines, handouts, room assignments, class lists, and to outline "the boundaries on what [I] could do in the classroom." Sam stated that teaching and teaching strategies were left "entirely up to [me]." Les missed the first meeting of the department and consequently picked up the course materials the day

before the term began. Les attended a subsequent meeting a couple of weeks later which addressed practical matters such as exam schedules but added

> [the meeting didn't] actually give you any basics on how to teach the course or actually what content you should be addressing, how you should address [it] or anything in that sense...it's just the administrative aspects of the course that you deal with.

In Pat's department, there were a couple of day long workshops, held in September but not repeated in January, which graduate teaching assistants were expected, not required, to attend. The purpose of these workshops was twofold: to orient graduate students to the department and operational aspects of it, such as how to get photocopying done; and to give a general overview of the philosophy of the course. When Pat was assigned to a different course within the department in the following year, a co-ordinator was assigned to meet with all the graduate students involved. In this instance, there were a couple of "fairly lengthy meetings" called, one at the very beginning of the term and one about a month later. Sample course outlines and lists of suggested resources were shared in these sessions and while "[we] had a chance to talk about problems," Pat went on to say, "they [the meetings] helped as far as logistics...but as far as developing my classroom teaching skills and strategies, [they were] not helpful at all."

With the exception of Mel, all graduate teaching assistants were invited to attend some kind of meeting at the beginning of the teaching term; none of them were required to do so, however. It did not clearly emerge who took responsibility for all

of these meetings; in Pat's second teaching experience, a co-ordinator did and in the case of Les's meeting, a co-ordinator, likewise, was identified as in charge. The focus of these sessions varied somewhat; nonetheless, attention seemed to concentrate on administrative details. None of these workshops or meetings were offered to graduate teaching assistants only; where sessionals and tenured staff were also involved in teaching the same course, they, too, were invited to attend.

Protracted training. None of the four graduate students believed that anything in the way of on-going training existed within their departments. All, with the exception of Mel, did warrant that there was "the odd meeting and that kind of thing" as the term progressed. In Sam's case, for example, there was one meeting with all the teaching assistants that was "less than helpful." For Les, "it was also suggested that we were all supposed to meet in small groups," but few did. Les also said the teaching assistants were invited to attend Introductory Professional Term (IPT) meetings "but they were not useful in a sense: they just seemed to be a sniping meeting." Mel, who had no meetings at the commencement of the term nor during the term, expressed some surprise at this phenomenon:

> I always thought someone would come in and see what the heck you were doing in there, but no one did...I thought about inviting people in, just for my own CV, just to have some kind of evaluation from a colleague, but I haven't done that to this point...it's the time constraint.

Any meeting which occurred throughout the term that could be loosely identified as providing protracted training, as understood by these respondents, did

not require mandatory attendance. The data, however, did not expressedly yield up any information about the nature or frequency of these meetings, nor was it absolutely clear at whose request these meetings were held.

Course for credit. All four of the graduate teaching assistants would be amenable to taking a formal credit course aimed at preparing them for university teaching. They did, however, express varying degrees of enthusiasm for such a course. For instance, Sam was emphatically in favour: "Yes! I would take it. Yes! I would take it. Absolutely no question!" Mel was a little more circumspect in support, agreeing to take such a course contingent upon the instructor offering it:

> I am rather cynical in lots of cases about the kinds of instruction that happen at the University...so if it was someone that I respected and that I thought that their teaching was exceptional, then definitely, I'd like to take a course.

Pat, who would also take a course, said, however, it would depend on what the course itself was like. Pat went on to identify a very practical reason for taking such instruction: "If you were applying for teaching positions, I imagine it would be very useful on a CV." In a similar vein, Les, whose's "ultimate aim is to be teaching at a University" would also take advantage of such a course because "it would be useful."

Les warmed to the topic of a credit course and outlined a possible structure for one which should be "very practical based." A course ought to provide, from Les's viewpoint, "useful tips, useful pointers" that would help one with "just the interpersonal aspects of having to deal with adult students...what the differences are in terms of how you structure your classes, how to relate to your supervisees, things of

that nature." Sam, on the other hand, would support a course that was somewhat more theoretical: "Just the politics of it [teaching at a University] alone is a course." Likewise Pat, who in the process of research has come across "interesting sounding articles" which dealt with the topic of "teaching teachers to be teachers" would welcome a course which permitted graduate students to discuss such ideas with like-minded fellow students. Mel offered no such comment about the content of such a course but emphasized that the instructor of one would have to be someone who has thought seriously about "a philosophy of teaching."

While all four graduate students would definitely consider taking a course for credit, only Sam expressed the belief that such a course should be mandatory, even for those with a great deal of experience in the K-12 system. Les, Mel, and Pat would like the option of taking such a course, depending upon whether or not it suited their particular requirements.

University Centre. All four teaching assistants were aware of the existence of the Teaching Program offered through the offices of the University Centre. Two of the graduate students have attended sessions; two have not. Pat and Mel "received" information about the Teaching Program but were unaware as to who sent it because it just appeared in their mail boxes. Neither of them had attended any of the workshops. Pat and Mel, while citing time constraints, both gave further reasons for not attending. Pat said, "I have a hard time imagining how that kind of generic program for people who are TAs in Biology, or a Science lab...I guess I haven't seen anything that has convinced me that it would be useful." Pat went on to add, "I sort

of felt that it was irrelevant...I haven't taken a close enough look at it...I sort of dismissed it [as not being] too useful for me...it might be too generic, but I don't know that." Mel echoed Pat's sentiments: "[for a lot of topics] I feel fairly competent in already...how to...I don't even know what they are, I can't remember offhand, but...How to Lecture; I don't even do a lot of lecturing." The relevance, for Mel's particular teaching style, seemed not to be present; however, Mel did go on to say,

> if I had lots of time and nothing to do, I would check it out because I am curious to see what kinds of instruction they are giving and whether it is helpful and whether I could learn something, but given time constraints and my confidence level, it's just not something that I have done.

Sam, at the opposite extreme, found the Teaching Program to be "just great." At the time of the interview, Sam had attended only two or three sessions but was effusive in her praise for them, using words such as "good," "wonderful," and "great" to describe the experiences. In particular, Sam described a session on the importance of language in marking assignments as being particularly valuable: "And every time I write 'Good' I think about it--what does that mean exactly?" While very general information was provided about the program during a departmental meeting at the beginning of the term, Sam went to the offices of the University Centre to gather a more in depth description of the Teaching Program and "brought information back to the department and just stuck it on the bulletin board."

Les, as well, had brought more information about the Teaching Program back to the department. Les attended "a number of sessions" last term and "found them quite useful in a sense of just seeing how other faculties and students interact and seeing very much a difference in how we, as educators, interact with other educators." As for specific sessions, Les found some of them "very useful" and some of them "not particularly enjoyable"; nevertheless, Les attended because "I thought they would be interesting; I thought they would add something to...my understanding of what the differences are between being a high school teacher and dealing with students as opposed to dealing with adults."

All four graduate students were aware, to a greater or lesser degree, of the Teaching Program offered by the University Centre. Les and Sam, who had both attended sessions, found the program useful in meeting some of their perceived needs, or simply satisfying some of their curiosities. Pat and Mel, who had not attended any sessions, seemed more wary about the potential utility in doing so. All four graduate students mentioned time constraints which either prevented them from attending as often as they would like or, in fact, attending at all.

Other training. None of the four graduate teaching assistants clearly identified any activities that would constitute informal training within their departments. Mel, however, did own that, perhaps, some courses in the department

> have a different structure so that the instructors will meet and talk about the kinds of things they are doing...and actually talk about the philosophy of the course and what they were going to teach and how they were going to teach it.

Pat's first teaching experience involved co-teaching: first with a professor, then with a fellow graduate student. When asked if co-teaching with the professor was meant as training, Pat replied, "I think it was meant as...I have to be there, so you do too" but then went on to admit the observation was useful for the assessment required in the course, performed by the teaching assistant. Pat concluded, nonetheless, "...it was not to hone your teaching skills...I can't think of an instance where there was an actual attempt to say...here's an opportunity for you to grow as a teacher."

Both Les and Sam agreed with this general observation, that nothing in the way of informal training occured; however, both added the proviso that they were "not aware" of such happenings. Les, in particular, declared, "Not that I am aware of...there might be, but I haven't been made aware of it."

It is difficult to conclude, from these data, if anything exists in the way of informal training within the four departments; nevertheless, all four graduate students were in agreement that if something did exist, the onus was on them to discover it. Sam, for example, declared, "You have to seek it [training] out--you are expected to be a critical thinker, you are expected to be a self-directed learner....It is assumed that you can teach. There seems to be that assumption." Pat stated,

> Well, there are several people who are accessible; I think I could find a shoulder to cry on [but] there wouldn't be anybody who would come to you and say, "How's it going?"...if you sort of solicited help...but you would have to know what kind of feedback you needed or what kind of help you needed.

Mel and Les agreed this to be the case and went on to add that this suited them. Mel said, "I know that I could go searching out...but it's just not something that I have felt a need to do at this point." Les suggested

> [the course co-ordinator] seems to be fairly willing to give us leeway in how we approach the course...and so I don't think there is really much of a push on his part to force you to get any extra help or do anything, like any extra training...and I sort of appreciate the independence that we are given in that sense.

Finally, it was not clear from the data whether graduate teaching assistants would seek advice from other graduate students or from professors. Mel did, however, posit the following observation:

> I do think it would be helpful for grad students...to be able to have a community of graduate students because I think there's still a little bit of scariness between professors and grad students. Do you really want to be talking to professors about problems....You're putting yourself at some kind of risk.

On the other hand, Sam and Les felt no such risk involved; both had, in fact, approached a professor with a specific problem and both found the individuals involved not only approachable but also very supportive. Pat suggested that the atmosphere within the department had become "much more collegial" recently, but added that "part of that is, just having been around in the department for a number of years."

While avenues for informal training may exist within the four departments, none of the graduate student teachers were aware of them. All four believed, nevertheless, that they could perhaps search for assistance but that knowing precisely what it was they were seeking would be a first, necessary step.

Inductive Analysis--Graduate Teaching Assistants

The deductive investigation complete, I turned my attention to an inductive analysis of the data. All the graduate student interview transcripts were re-examined to identify any emerging themes and patterns in a process identical to the one used to study the department chair transcripts. What became evident from this perusal was that educational and teaching experience did crop up as relevant, as in the analysis of the department chair transcripts. However, these data also yielded three somewhat different themes: centring around the intrinsic qualities of individual graduate students, their perceptions of the existing system, and their suggestions for an alternative system. What follows is a discussion of these five themes.

Educational experience. Three of the four graduate students were in their Ph. D. programs but one of them, Mel, had not completed a Masters degree before enrolling in doctoral studies. With the exception of Sam, all held bachelor degrees in Education; Sam held a B. A. in Women's Studies and Psychology and had completed all the course work required for a Masters degree in Education.

Those who had completed undergraduate Education degrees did not identify this accomplishment as being particularly helpful for their university teaching assignments. Mel expressed the idea that "some professors...focus on what's a

stanine going to be and is my curve going to be all right and my class average...at least [I've] had some years of teacher training...so [I] should know something about teaching." Pat expressed her doubts about the undergraduate program more strongly:

> I think that we are taking a lot of money from teacher education students and pretending to send them out there with some kind of expertise, skills, knowledge, philosophy...that they just don't get...In the end, it all comes down to the students want it on their transcript that they've completed those requirements and can therefore go out and teach...and nobody cares about how much they've actually learned about teaching in that subject area.

Pat added, "...you can go through the whole program [a Masters in Education] quite nicely and have never considered the idea of how you teach teachers to be teachers. It is easy to do that." Les seemed to have been a case in point; no courses in Les's program related directly to teaching.

Sam, who did not have any teacher education, did, because of being introduced to a particular teaching strategy during an independent study course, master one teaching and learning approach prior to assuming teaching duties. In order to do this, however, Sam approached the professor who had developed the strategy and requested a one-on-one in-service with him. Sam's educational background, with the exception of this one short in-service, was likewise not very helpful for a university teaching assignment.

Both Pat and Les found that the courses they were assigned to teach did not mesh with their educational backgrounds. This created some difficulty, initially, for

both. Les mentioned, "I just thought that the course I was assigned to teach was a very poor mix with my background." The first course Pat was assigned likewise posed some difficulty: "I didn't feel that I was prepared or that I had a good handle on what I should be expecting, what the priorities were." The second course, in Pat's area of expertise, was "more comfortable as soon as [I] started teaching [it]." Mel offered, "I think that if they [graduate students] were expected to teach something that may be new to them since they came here to the university that, that might be another story [that is, might be 'frustrating']," but Mel's teaching assignment was not in this category.

In three of the four departments, graduate students were normally required to have completed undergraduate degrees in education prior to being assigned teaching duties. However, the three students who met this requirement did not single this out as being particularly beneficial to them as they began their teaching roles at the university.

Teaching experience. With the exception of Sam, all the graduate students had some teaching experience in a K-12 system. Les had three months as a replacement teacher; Mel two years as a full-time instructor, two as part-time; Pat, approximately five years, including individual days as a substitute teacher. Pat also had seven years teaching experience at a college level. Sam's experience in the K-12 system was as a parent volunteer.

Both Pat and Les expressed concern with their lack of experience: "it [teaching high school] is still teaching and it is something that I felt I was lacking in terms of experience" (Les);

> it's really kind of odd that you can have people with not a whole lot of classroom experience and I know that I felt a bit like an imposter...not having the years of classroom teaching experience when you've been asked to teach at the university level...It's something that took me quite a while to sort of get a level of comfort with (Pat).

Mel, on the other hand, expressed no such concern; instead offering the following comment: "I immediately felt at ease, successful." In fact Mel suggested that experience gleaned in the K-12 system was instrumental for developing a university course:

> I spoke briefly [with the course co-ordinator] about the course outline and just sort of got the parameters in my head and then I planned the course, the same way I would curriculum in school...you go to the curriculum guide and figure out what on earth you are supposed to teach and then you see how many days you have to teach it and then you put it together.

Regardless of the amount of experience they possessed or the perceived utility of it, all four teaching assistants believed instructing at the university was different than instructing in the K-12, or in Pat's case, the college, system. Pat stated simply, "...my school experience and the experience with [college] students and my

experience with university students--they are three very, very different kinds of experience." Les expressed a desire to

> add to [my] understanding of what the differences are between being a school teacher and dealing with students as opposed to dealing with adults, which is something new for me...it all comes back to independence...we grant our students the ability to do their own thing.

Mel observed that

> ...it takes more years to be a good school teacher than it does to be a good single course instructor at a university...there aren't as many constraints...there is no classroom management [on a daily basis] ...when you take that out of the teaching learning equation, it just makes things so much easier. And so you can really focus on instructing and developing relationships with students--which is a very different thing, too, with adults than it is with young children.

Sam, somewhat conversely, submitted the following view:

> ...university students, and thirty of them, in a small room is a little intimidating...they expect, they are very demanding--some are--there is a percentage of them that are very demanding: I paid my money, I want this, this is exactly what I want, on the other hand, they haven't developed the critical thinking skills or the self-directed learning to actually cope with that.

Sam postulated that "even if you do come from a K-12 system, it's [university] a totally different system. You're in charge."

The four graduate students perceived their previous teaching experiences, or lack thereof, as being more or less relevant for their roles as university instructors. Mel, with two years of full-time and two years of part-time K-12 teaching, drew a direct parallel between the two with regard to course planning. Pat, with five years of K-12 and seven years of college instructing, felt "a bit like an imposter." There was a consensus however: teaching at a university level constituted a different kind of experience that did teaching at a K-12 or college level.

Personal characteristics. What became increasingly clear as I returned to the data was the role personalities played with regard to training for each of the graduate students. All were quite candid with regard to self-assessment, for example. This, in turn, led each to a particular course of action: in the case of Sam and Les, it led them to the Teaching Program for assistance; in the case of Mel, to her own resources and preferred modus operandi, and in the case of Pat to a great deal of reflection about the entire teaching-learning transaction. Along with this frank self-assessment came the necessary self-motivation to seek that which appeared to be lacking.

Les and Sam, both with very limited teaching experience, were acutely aware of their limitations. Les, on several occasions, mentioned a lack of teaching experience as well as a lack of familiarity with the course content as being an impediment to success: "I can say I was not probably as successful as I wanted to be." By the same token, Les was also aware that it was necessary to "learn it [teaching strategy] as [I] went along...so I shouldn't have as high of expectations as

someone...who has much more experience teaching." Les, whose ultimate aim is to teach at a university, concluded our discussion:

> ...despite not being fully prepared and despite feeling my limitations at times, I appreciated the opportunity to teach in front of the class; and if I want to be doing this in the future, this is good experience and a chance to work out some of the rough edges in my own teaching approaches.

Sam expressed a keen interest in "being a good teacher" at the same time knowing, "[I] don't have any practical experience." Sam was also aware that pertinent life experiences could contribute to success:

> I have a whole background that is leading up to this [teaching]. I also have a performance background...the ham in me loves being out in front of the class. I wish I could do it a little better, in terms of the teaching, and that will come with experience.

Both Sam and Les chose to attend sessions offered by the University Centre in order to broaden their knowledge and experience. Les stated, "I thought they would be interesting; I thought they would actually add something to...my understanding of what the differences [are] between being a high school teacher and dealing with students as opposed to dealing with adults." Les also suggested the interaction with professors and students from other faculties gave him a much needed chance "to reflect on why we do things in education the way we do." Sam, asked what could be done if training were needed, replied, "Well, me personally I would just hunt it down...I went over myself to the University Centre and asked about it." Despite

having "many sleepless nights the first couple of weeks," Sam simultaneously would "walk into the chair's office and just ask if [I] need something." Realizing that there was an expectation that graduate teaching assistants were to be "critical thinker[s]" and self-directed learner[s]," Sam had personally sought help to fill experiential gaps.

> Mel, with slightly more teaching experience, had a great deal of confidence:
>
> Well, I was nervous...and I get nervous when I begin any new sections, but...I immediately felt at ease, successful. I sort of felt like I'd found my place and teaching is my very favourite thing to do here.

Initially, Mel returned to university

> thinking in terms of only working at sort of larger, more research-based universities and now, after having such a great teaching experience...would definitely consider working at a college or some place that's more teaching intensive, just because I enjoy it so much.

Because of feeling "fairly competent," Mel sought very little assistance, preferring, in fact, "my own autonomy...I'm quite happy with the way things have gone." Mel expressed some surprise that "[no one] would come in and see what the heck you were doing in there" but otherwise was very content with the existing procedures in the department because they offered independence and autonomy.

Pat, the most experienced graduate student with both K-12 and college teaching background, offered the following comment:

> coming in as a Masters student and being expected to teach...it just wasn't a good scenario...I spent a lot of time feeling very uncomfortable and

> feeling...like a real imposter in that classroom. And yet...not feeling there was really any place or there was no way to kind of figure what it was that I felt was missing...No help....The one really good teaching experience that I had came with a graduate student who shared my office and I co-taught a section with her and we had a chance to do a lot of informal chatting.

Pat observed, "There wouldn't be anybody who would come to you and say, 'How's it going?' And as far as anybody who...to give you any actual help...I can't think that, that's available at all." Nor did Pat actively seek any assistance, except in the co-teaching arrangement described earlier where there was a mutual sharing of ideas and teaching strategies, but instead reflected on individual classes alone: "I would get up to do a lesson, and then go back and reflect on it and take it apart and wonder how I would do it differently again...the learning would just come in leaps and bounds." Unlike Mel, Pat did not express a preference for the independence and autonomy, but rather observed, "...everybody's too busy, that's why."

No doubt, and some of the literature supports this view (Banner & Cannon, 1997; Eble, 1972; Lowman, 1994; Ramsden, 1992), personality does play a role in the teaching-learning transaction. What seems to be evident from these data is that personality also plays a key role in the training needs, real or perceived, of graduate teaching assistants.

Perceptions of existing system. All four graduate teaching assistants found a level of support for their teaching within their respective departments; nonetheless,

they also all tempered this recognition with an awareness of their positions within the organization. Sam, for instance, said,

> Yes, they would support me...however, this is a university, I mean they can stand behind me all they want, but if someone takes a shot, I am the one who is going to get hit, you know. And I am fully aware of that...which is a little scary because I didn't know that going in..oh, it's not that I didn't know, it's that I wasn't clear on how fine the line is.

Mel, in discussing the "risk" associated with going to a professor, offered the following comment:

> And so, as much as I appreciate that person's knowledge and expertise in some ways, I wouldn't want to share, I wouldn't feel safe at this point sharing a lot of the things that I do and the reasons I do them. Even though I really believe strongly in them...because there IS a power imbalance right now. And I want to be able to teach this course again.

Les, when questioned about the level of support for teaching within the department, gave an answer on a somewhat different tack:

> I think it's important for the other professors, in the sense that it frees them up from not having the responsibility of having to teach these undergraduate courses...and they're very appreciative of having graduate students have the responsibility for teaching these courses...Because it frees them up and I can fully understand that too...you don't have to have your doctorate or have gone

> through twenty years of teaching at university to teach the courses that we, as grad students, are given the responsibility for.

Pat was not as phlegmatic about the support for teaching:

> I really believe that the high status, the high profile professors are the ones who are bringing in all the research dollars and they pay a little bit of lip service to teaching through the undergraduate teaching award...but as far as it being a real priority...it's basically we'll just get who we can get to do it the cheapest...so we'll get sessionals, we'll get grad students...and anybody who can shirk the teaching, does.

One area of partial agreement between Les and Pat centred on the greater importance of research relative to teaching; Les, however, seemed willing to accept this: "It's obvious how much...more emphasis is put on research--even in an education faculty--than on teaching. The professors are too valuable to be teaching; they should be doing their research." Pat, on the other hand, stressed the following view: "It [teaching teachers to be teachers] needs to be taken a little more seriously as a teaching commitment." In an oblique fashion, however, Les did offer some support for Pat's view: "I don't think they make any special effort to move you up to a certain level of what an instructor at the university level should be. There's an assumption that you are prepared for it." Sam echoed Les's comment: "It is assumed that, because you are doing a Masters in Education, it is ASSUMED that you can teach. There seems to be that assumption."

All four graduate students specifically named one or two people in their respective departments who offered them support and guidance for the teaching duties they had undertaken and all felt secure in these relationships. But as well, all of them, in varying degrees, expressed some wariness about their places in the department as a whole.

Suggestions for an alternate system. Finally, all of the graduate teaching assistants offered some suggestions for an alternative way of preparing them for their roles as university instructors. While they were not in total agreement about the most efficacious means of achieving this, there was some consensus.

As described earlier, none would reject the idea of a formal course being offered for credit: Mel would take one, contingent upon the instructor; Pat, dependent upon the content and the provisions made for in depth discussion; Les, if it were very practical in nature. Les also would have appreciated, at a minimum,

> a brief couple day workshop, coming in and having our course co-ordinator go over what the material is...but just make sure you are well-prepared to come and discuss the issues and bounce the course material off some of the people who are teaching it.

Sam, alone, believed such a course should be required even for those with teaching experience in K-12, "for all of us who are out there."

Mel, on the other hand, "would make the sort of shadowing thing a mandatory credit kind of activity." Sam agreed that shadowing was a good idea. Les, oppositely, did not think "being an observer in another professor's class would be

very useful in the sense that you do that almost every day, in any case." Pat, who termed this "an apprentice model," discussed the whole concept at length and concluded: "And so, just throwing you in a classroom and say 'Teach' doesn't work, but just as sitting in a desk at the other side and watching somebody teach doesn't do it either." Instead, Pat "would be in favour of having a lot of feedback, of having people in your classroom."

Somewhat related to the idea of shadowing was the notion of mentoring. Only Sam mentioned this as a possibility:

> I already found one...so I don't know what it is like for other students, but I think that there should be mentors available. I think it should be part of their job description. I think mentoring should be part of the job description of both professors and assistant professors in here.

Sam also suggested, and was seconded by Mel, that graduate teaching assistants should have support for innovative teaching strategies:

> So what I would like to see is encouragement and support for more innovative teaching, especially when it has support in the literature...especially when it is based in solid research....It's not enough to do research, we have to put it into practice.

Mel offered a related idea, that research needs to be translated into practice, in a very wide ranging discussion of the question:

> Well, this just brings out the cynic in me because it's all about the question of what makes a good teacher which is pertinent here, there, and everywhere.

> It's hard for me to say because I don't always believe in structural changes as making significant difference and so I guess I feel like the real change happens in the kinds of people that you have teaching and what their philosophies are about education. And I am not sure if that is something that can be taught...although, hopefully, it can be to some degree because that's what we try to do here. But I think it has to do with putting more emphasis on developing relationships with students, real relationships with students, and letting go a little bit of some of the power structures that exist between "I'm a professor and you're a student." I think some other changes would have to do with evaluation and the kinds of ways we evaluate students here and whether it's reasonable to assign number grades to things like practice, teaching practice....And I think, a third thing...[was] modelling...there have got to be creative solutions...so that we can model the kinds of things we are talking about.

Ultimately Mel declared that "maybe a community of graduate students...where it's safe [and] you can really talk about things and discuss things" would go a long way in preparing graduate teaching assistants for the daunting task of teaching.

While no one panacea presented itself for training graduate students to teach undergraduate classes, several suggestions were proffered, some more forcefully than others. Suffice to say, all of the graduate teaching assistants in this study did have concrete suggestions for altering, if not improving, the training procedures within the Faculty of Education.

Chapter Five: Discussion

A review of the literature revealed very little information about Canadian teaching assistants, labelled an "unknown resource" in Piccinin, Farquharson, and Mihu's (1993) survey. As a result, this study was grounded, mostly from an American perspective, in three related areas: (a) in the relationship between research and teaching at the university level, (b) in the definition of effective university teaching, and (c) in the description of programs for training teaching assistants. The rational for such a tripartite review was that the literature on the relationship between research and teaching and the definition of effective university teaching might provide a context against which to view the existing teacher training programs. Consequently, the discussion begins with a comparison of the findings regarding the training programs in this institution as they relate to the literature describing teacher assistant training programs at other institutions. It moves on to explore links between what the literature identifies as constituting effective university teaching and what the training programs at an institution might do to facilitate the same. And it concludes by placing the findings of this study against the backdrop detailed in the literature surrounding the twin functions of a large university: teaching and researching.

Teacher Assistant Training Programs

Despite the fact that very little has been published regarding training programs for graduate teaching assistants in Canada, there is a remarkable similarity between what is known and the results of this research. The major finding of this study is that there is no mandatory training required before graduate students in the Faculty of

Education can take up teaching duties nor is there any as they progress through the teaching term. Piccinin, Farquharson, and Mihu (1993) discovered that only 28% of Canadian graduate students were required to undergo any training, although 76% of them did, in fact, have some. The results of this study indicated that one of the four graduate teaching assistants interviewed underwent no training prior to becoming a university instructor. Two others, although not initially identifying departmental meetings held early in the term as training sessions, were introduced to the administrative details surrounding university instruction early in the semester. The final graduate student did attend a couple of day long workshops prior to the commencement of the teaching term. Clearly the findings of this study re-affirm Piccinin, Farquharson, and Mihu's (1993) study: the majority of graduate teaching assistants are not required to undergo training before they step into an undergraduate classroom as the primary instructor.

Another link between the findings of this study and the earlier one by Piccinin, Farquharson, and Mihu (1993) concerns the nature of the training given teaching assistants. Their study found the most popular training session to be something they identified as a "TA Day": typically this was defined as an intensive workshop which dealt with very practical matters. Again, the experience of the graduate student participants in this study parallels their findings. There is also a measure of support for this viewpoint on behalf of the department chairs, recall the main purpose of the initial meeting in Department A: "[outlining] the Do's and Don'ts: here are the things that you must do to follow university requirements; here

are the things that you cannot do." While one of the other department chairs (Department C) suggested that in addition to discussing practical matters, graduate teaching assistants were invited to discuss some of the philosophical background to the individual course, relative to the whole teacher education program, the focus of these sessions clearly was on administrative details, not teaching strategies. The three students who attended some sort of meeting early on in the semester were unequivocal in the belief that these sessions had nothing to do with "developing [my] classroom teaching skills and strategies" or "giv[ing] any basics on how to teach the course or actually what content [I] should be addressing, how [I] should address [it] or anything in that sense." The nature of the voluntary intensive training given graduate teaching assistants seems consistent with that outlined in the literature, with one exception: sessional and tenured staff involved in teaching the same course were also invited to attend these orientation sessions.

Anything that could be loosely defined as protracted training within the various departments was also optional, mirroring the findings in the literature (Piccinin, Farquharson, & Mihu, 1993). An interesting finding here suggested some discrepancy between what the graduate students and the department chairs believed to be true with regard to ongoing training: none of the graduate students believed ongoing training was available at all; whereas, the department chairs all suggested that meetings were held "on a fairly regular kind of basis" to deal with the progress being made in the courses taught by the graduate students. Ramsden and Martin (1996) concluded from their study of Australian universities that there was a division

over what universities say they do to recognize good teaching and what the majority of the academic staff perceive they do. Tang and Chamberlain's (1997) Tennessee study reported similar findings. Perhaps this division between administration and staff perceptions about quality teaching is akin to the discrepancy between department chairs and graduate teaching assistants about protracted training.

The purpose of these ongoing meetings, from the perspective of the department chairs, seemed to be quite similar to the purpose of the earlier meetings, that is to monitor the progress of the course rather than to deal with teaching training. Perhaps because there was little to do with teaching strategies is another reason for graduate students to believe no training was occurring. In one department (Department D), the chair stated, "we try to make sure that they're not alone." If indeed this does occur and the graduate teaching assistants in this particular study were simply not aware of it, it does seem to be a step in the right direction. Boehrer and Sarkisian (1985) found that graduate students "routinely report that they receive little or no guidance before they begin teaching or while they teach," (p.12) making them feel that they're "not alone" would address this concern raised in the literature.

Raised also in the literature was a discussion of the merits of offering a course for credit whose purpose was to, among other things, "provid[e] graduate students who aspire towards academic positions with a solid training in pedagogy" (Saroyan & Amundsen, 1995, p. 16). Three of the four departments in this study have, in the past, structured a formal credit course; at the time of data collection, none offered such an option but two were, once again, entertaining the proposition. Saroyan and

Amundsen (1995) concluded that the success of the course on University Teaching and Learning, offered by the Centre for University Teaching and Learning at McGill University, led them to believe a fifteen credit certificate in university teaching is warranted (p.16). One department chair, who offered the view that it was difficult to see offering "just one course," was in the process of implementing a graduate program designed to study teacher education. Perhaps this program would find a parallel with the one desired by Saroyan and Amundsen (1995). Two of the department chairs, however, were sceptical about the value of offering such a course. This skepticism would appear to be shared by other Canadian universities as Piccinin and Picard (1994) discovered in their survey of 37 Canadian universities: in 1993, only six of them offered such a course for credit.

The courses described in these six cases were targeted at all the graduate students at the institutions, half the courses were sponsored by Education faculties and half by Faculties of Graduate Studies. Five of the six courses were under the direction of a single instructor, usually one with an education or a psychology background. Three stated objectives seemed to be common to the courses: dealing with the development of skills in applied teaching, the theory and research in learning and teaching, and the philosophy of higher education including professional and ethical issues. Topics included for discussion centred around the above stated objectives but also included general orientation issues. In three of the six instances, grades were assigned to participating students; in the other three, students were assessed on a pass or fail basis and in two of these cases, there was a provision made

for a pass with distinction. Interestingly, the description of these six existing courses is not unlike the description of a credit course as envisioned by the graduate student participants in this study.

As was evident from the findings, all the graduate students interviewed were open to taking a formal credit course aimed at preparing them for university teaching; all, however, had definite ideas as to what such a course should entail. An amalgam of the stated requirements, from providing useful pointers for dealing with the interpersonal needs of adult students to providing a forum for discussion about more theoretical and philosophical teaching matters, indicates a strong parallel between what these teaching assistants would want in a credit course and what was offered in the various credit courses in existence in six Canadian universities.

Not exactly one formal credit course but more a series of requirements related to the fifteen credit certificate in university teaching proposed by Saroyan and Amundsen (1995) is the Teaching Program offered at this institution. As described earlier, this program is offered, free of charge, to all graduate students of the university by an independent unit referred to here as the University Centre in conjunction with the Faculty of Graduate Studies. None of the departments, at the time these data were collected, officially participated in the Teaching Program for graduate assistants. According to Saroyan and Amundsen (1995) it is not surprising that the service provided by this office is underutilized by the Education faculty because typically "departments or faculties plan and implement their own TA-training

programs and only the most elaborate ones draw on resources which are external to departments" (p.5).

An earlier American study (Smock & Menges, 1985) which discussed the various advantages and disadvantages of offering training programs through individual course instructors, by individual departments, through colleges of education or other colleges, and through a central administrative office concluded that "the strongest programs are apt to develop when a central unit staff can communicate appropriate educational principles in the language and style of each academic area" (p. 32). The University Centre is such a unit; however, the perceptions of the participants in this study about the utility of the training program offered by such a central unit are mixed.

All the department chairs agreed, in principle, that the Teaching Program was worthwhile although none of the departments were fully participating members of the program. What this means is the graduate teaching assistants within the Education faculty could not complete all the requirements of the program, primarily because the departments provided neither program co-ordinators nor teaching mentors as required by the Teaching Program. Graduate students were, however, welcome to attend the training sessions offered through the offices of the University Centre. All the department chairs were aware of graduate students who had attended sessions and who found them useful, to a degree. Two of the graduate teaching assistants in this study had participated and generally found the experience worthwhile. One student commented on appreciating "seeing how other faculties and students interact and

seeing very much a difference in how we, as educators, interact with other educators." Piccinin and Picard (1994) suggested that one of the objectives of a more formal training program, such as the one provided by the University Centre, should be to enhance the quality of the graduate students' experiences, in part by building a sense of community amongst them. For this student, that particular objective may have been met by the Teaching Program. Interestingly, the two graduate students who chose not to attend speculated that the very generic nature of such a centralized program tailored to meet the needs of a variety of graduate students would not likely meet their needs. This finding would tend to contradict the attitude evinced by both Piccinin and Picard (1994) and Smock and Menges (1985) that a central unit might be the most effective conduit through which to offer graduate teaching assistants training.

While there is not a great deal of literature extant concerning the training programs for graduate teaching assistants in Canada, or indeed, concerning their very existence, the findings of this study tend to corroborate that which has been published (e.g., Piccinin, Farquharson, & Mihu, 1993; Piccinin & Picard, 1994; Saroyan & Amundsen, 1995). Graduate teaching assistants in this faculty, just as their counterparts throughout the country, are required to undergo very little training before they assume teaching duties. Sessions they do attend, on a voluntary basis, tend to deal with administrative details rather than with teaching skills and strategies or philosophical discussions surrounding the art of teaching. And while this institution does have a centralized formal unit designed, in part, to prepare graduate teaching

assistants for teaching, the various departments in this Faculty of Education had not yet joined this organization as fully participating members.

Effective University Teaching

The literature reviewed for this study on the topic of what constitutes effective university teaching represents only a small segment of what is available. The relevance of this research into effective teaching for this study centres around one highly debatable question: What skills, knowledge, or attitudes can be taught prospective university teachers with an eye to making the instructors effective? A comparison of the findings to this literature surrounding effective teaching reveals some shortfalls in the training at this institution.

There is some agreement that knowledge of one's subject matter contributes to effective teaching (Botman & Gregor, 1984; Boyer, 1991; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Eble, 1988). In this study, two of the four graduate students were assigned courses to teach which were perceived to be outside their areas of expertise. Potentially, this could reduce their effectiveness as instructors as is evidenced by the following comment made by one of them: "I didn't feel that I was prepared or that I had a good handle on what I should be expecting, what the priorities were."

A second contributor to effective teaching surrounds the instructor's awareness of student readiness and ability to learn (Boyer, 1991; Brown & Atkins, 1998; Feldman, 1991; Laurillard, 1993; Ramsden, 1992). Only obliquely did the findings address this issue. One department chair (Department D) suggested that "the differences in background and much of the adapting for differences in background at

the university are really the responsibility of the student." This may suggest that it is the responsibility of the student, not the instructor, to ensure there is a readiness and ability to learn. Regardless, the graduate teaching assistants in this study were not exposed to any discussion that would increase their awareness of such a readiness or ability.

Nor were they exposed to any formal discussion on the link between teaching and learning or learning theory in general unless these topics were dealt with in their undergraduate or graduate courses. Several researchers have identified such knowledge as relevant for effective university instruction (Brookfield, 1995; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Erickson, 1984; Kolb, 1984; Laurillard, 1993; Ramsden, 1992). It is perhaps appropriate at this point in the discussion to introduce the role previous education plays, according to the findings. There is some disagreement between the department chairs and the graduate students with regard to the contribution undergraduate educational degrees make to university instruction. None of the graduate teaching assistants cited the earning of an undergraduate teaching degree as particularly helpful for their university teaching assignments. One graduate student, in fact, declared that "you can go through [a Masters in Education] quite nicely and have never considered the idea of how you teach teachers to be teachers." A majority of the department chairs, on the other hand, believed an undergraduate education degree played a fundamental role: "they are teachers, they've gone through undergraduate programs." Two of the chairs (Departments C and D) added that a great deal of graduate research was conducted in the areas of teaching, teaching and

curriculum, and teacher education. This, too, could contribute to their potential effectiveness. A recent study conduced by Shannon, Twale, and Moore (1998) entitled "TA Teaching Effectiveness" would support the view of the department chairs. They concluded that only an undergraduate degree in education produced a significant effect on teacher effectiveness ratings from both the perspective of the undergraduates being taught and the graduate students doing the teaching.

This study would also lend some support to the majority view of the department chairs regarding previous teaching experience as expressed by the following statement: "We have people who have education backgrounds, people who have teaching experience, they have a lot to bring with them...and a lot to contribute to the education of undergraduate students." Shannon, Twale, and Moore (1998) discovered that those graduate students with some K-12 or college teaching experience rated significantly higher on student ratings than did those who were inexperienced. However, the ratings experienced teaching assistants gave themselves were not any higher. Perhaps the teaching assistants in the study did not rate themselves higher because of previous teaching for some of the same reasons this study's participants discounted their experience as relevant for their teaching assignments: either they felt they did not have enough to make any significant difference or they felt that K-12, college, and university teaching experiences were, in the words of one, "very, very different." Such personal perceptions of one's own effectiveness may, in fact, affect one's actual effectiveness in the classroom.

This leads to the final dimension of what contributes to effective university teaching: personality (Banner & Cannon, 1997; Eble, 1972; Ramsden, 1992). Clearly it is unreasonable to expect any training program to have much effect on creating an effective teaching personality, particularly because there is little consensus about what such a personality should look like. Banner and Cannon (1997) have suggested, however, that training programs should introduce "soft stuff" into graduate instruction that deals with the "human elements of instruction" (p.43). The limited time afforded training within the various departments in this study leaves little room for the introduction of such "soft stuff." The concentration on administrative details and logistics in the meetings which do occur would almost seem to favour a viewpoint that the "human elements of instruction" are, in fact, left to the individual to discover.

The findings of this study are not directly concerned with the effectiveness of graduate students who teach but rather with the nature of the training given graduate students. Nevertheless, in order to more completely assess the training, it was fruitful to include a brief survey of the literature surrounding what makes an effective university teacher in order to have a high standard against which to measure the existing training program. It would seem, the view of the department chairs, that holding an education degree and having previous teaching experience, are two solid predictors of teaching assistants' effectiveness, is substantiated by Shannon, Twale, and Moore's (1998) study. That some students are assigned to teach courses outside their area of expertise, however, may lessen their effectiveness as the literature also

suggests knowledge of one's subject matter is a contributor to effective teaching (Botman & Gregor, 1984; Boyer, 1991; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Eble, 1988). And while it may be true that possessing an undergraduate teaching degree might mean that graduate teaching assistants have studied student readiness and ability to learn (Boyer, 1991; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Feldman, 1991; Laurillard, 1993; Ramsden, 1992), the links between teaching and learning, and learning theory in general (Brookfield, 1995; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Erickson, 1984; Kolb, 1994; Laurillard, 1993; Ramsden, 1992), it is also possible that unless their undergraduate degrees were in the field of adult education, they may not be adequately prepared to deal with a university population effectively. All four of the graduate student assistants in this study believed that instructing at a university was, in fact, different than instructing in the K-12, or in one case, the college systems. The department chairs did share this view; however, in the main, they did not see the difference being as important as did the graduate students. The final contributor to effective university teaching, personality, cannot be reasonably taught in a training program as Ervin and Muyskens (1982) have stated, but that does not necessarily mean that graduate teaching assistants cannot improve their teaching effectiveness even if they do not yet possess an effective personality for teaching.

> Teaching ability has been described as a triangle at whose base are the corners of substantive knowledge and professional skills (i.e., qualifications) and at whose apex can be found personal characteristics (i.e., qualities). While a teacher's personal qualities must often be taken largely as a given (that is, a

> single training course is not likely to bring about any substantial changes), qualifications are much more amenable to improvement through training and education. (p. 343)

Research and Teaching

In order to find a suitable context in which to situate the training programs for graduate assistants in this faculty, I chose to review some literature on the relationship between teaching and research at the university level. Many scholars believe teaching is increasingly being relegated to second place in importance (e.g., Boyer, 1989; Cunsolo, Elrick & Middleton, 1996; Daly, 1994; Ramsden & Martin, 1996; Seldin & Associates, 1990; Sykes, 1988; Tang & Chamberlain, 1997) despite protestation from administrative powers to the contrary (Ramsden & Martin, 1996; Tang & Chamberlain, 1997). If this is true, it may account, in part, for the training programs offered graduate teaching assistants in this Faculty as they embark on their university teaching careers. The time to develop and conduct such training programs may be spent more wisely on producing research if it is perceived as being more important.

Two of the graduate students were of the opinion that teaching did occupy a back seat relative to research in their departments. One of these students, however, supported this state of affairs: "The professors are too valuable to be teaching things; they should be doing their research." Both these students speculated, however, that because they were teaching undergraduate classes, professors were freed somewhat from this teaching responsibility and could, therefore, concentrate on the more "high

status" research responsibility. Ramsden and Martin (1996) found this to be true in a recent study of Australian universities.

> While teaching and research are generally regarded as complementary aspects of an academic's job, and are often seen to be mutually reinforcing, teaching has become widely perceived to be less important in the academic reward system. Teaching is something that more successful academics have tended to be excused from, so that they can more assiduously fulfill the requirement to be productive researchers. (p. 300)

Charles Sykes, in ProfScam (1988), a wide ranging indictment of the American professorate, is more direct in this belief, quoting a passage from an American College Association report as evidence, he claims graduate teaching assistants are systematically exploited: "The teaching assistantship is now a device for exploiting graduate students in order to relieve senior faculty from teaching undergraduates" (p.41). While nothing in these findings support the notion that graduate teaching assistants do, indeed, free professors from teaching so they can concentrate on research, two of the study participants perceived this to be true, and the concomitant lack of support they received for their teaching efforts may help to underscore this belief.

Much of the literature suggested that protracted training sessions were of more benefit to graduate teaching assistants, partly because they offered on-going support to teaching assistants while they were actively engaged in the teaching process (Boehrer & Sarkisian, 1985; Erickson, 1984; Piccinin & Picard, 1994; Saroyan &

Amundsen, 1995; Seldin & Associates, 1990). While the findings of this study do not clearly suggest such a view, the issue of support for teaching assistants emerged as a contentious point: that it was necessary was a given, that it existed was debatable. Over all, the department chairs did not see training sessions per sé as providing such support, but rather identified an open and supportive atmosphere within the department as being the key. The chair of Department D was quite emphatic in this regard:

> ...the research indicates, quite clearly, that, that's (i.e., providing the help graduate assistants require) not a course--that it's the opportunity to work with somebody, fairly close by, who can mentor you, who has had the experience before and can respond to issues as the need arises.

The graduate teaching assistants themselves did not necessarily view protracted training sessions as providing on-going support; however, in varying degrees, they expressed a need for more support, or a different kind of support, than was in existence.

Boehrer and Sarkisian (1985) found that graduate students "routinely report that they receive little or no guidance before they begin teaching or while they teach" (p. 12). All of the graduate students found this to be true; the key here is in the word "receive." The graduate teaching assistants could, and in some cases did, find support within their departments when it was needed; the responsibility for finding the support, however, rested with the students themselves. While the findings of this study cannot confirm the prevailing view in the literature, that protracted training

sessions are beneficial because they offer ongoing support, they do suggest that the graduate teaching assistants in this study needed more support while they are engaged in the act of teaching than was available. The findings clearly support the view that the onus is on the graduate students to obtain whatever assistance is needed. Boehrer and Sarkisian (1985) posited that some were reluctant to ask for help: "too fearful, proud, or stubborn to seek help, even when it is readily available. As a result, teaching can be as lonely as graduate work" (p. 20). In this study, some of the graduate students did ask for help; nonetheless, they were judicious in selecting which individuals to approach.

Ultimately, it would seem that there is some support for teaching in this faculty, recall the words of one department chair (Department D): "...we try to make sure that they're not alone." Nevertheless, the literature does suggest that if a department offers its graduate students little in the way of teaching training, as is evident in the case of the departments in this study, it may be indirectly communicating to them the relative unimportance of teaching (Boehrer & Sarkisian, 1985; Cunsolo, Elrick, & Middleton, 1996; Daly, 1994; Ramsden & Martin, 1996).

Summary

The discussion of the findings relative to the literature revealed some interesting parallels, particularly with regard to training programs. Graduate teaching assistants in the Faculty of Education at the institution in this study are not required to attend any training sessions prior to taking up their teaching duties; three-quarters of the graduate teaching assistants across Canada are, likewise, not required to prepare in

any formal manner prior to assuming their teaching roles. Optional training sessions which do exist are remarkably similar: they tend to concentrate on administrative details. In the Faculty at this institution, however, sessional and tenured staff are also invited to such meetings.

Attempts have been made in the past to offer credit courses aimed at preparing graduate students for university teaching in two of the departments in this study; no courses exist at present. A review of the literature revealed that only one in six Canadian universities offered such a course for credit as recently as 1993. The literature review also uncovered information about centralized units at some universities which offer teacher training programs to all graduate students. Such a unit exists at the university in this study and while some of the graduate students interviewed for this study voluntarily attended some workshops, their departments were not participating members of the teaching training program at the time these data were collected.

Since graduate teaching assistants in this study were not required to undergo any formal training before assuming their university teaching roles, it was impossible to assess whether or not they were being prepared to be effective university instructors as described in the literature. What did emerge from the findings, however, was a belief on the part of the department chairs that holding an undergraduate teaching degree, as did the majority of the graduate students in this study, was a solid base upon which to develop effectiveness as a university instructor.

This belief was corroborated by the literature but was not shared by the graduate student participants in this study.

Finally, there was also some disagreement between the graduate teaching assistants and the department chairs regarding the support for teaching generally. The literature suggested that teaching assistants should have support while they are actively engaged in teaching and that on-going training sessions were an effective way of providing such support. It also suggested that if an institution offers little in the way of teacher training, it may tacitly be communicating that teaching has a lesser value than researching. The departments in this study offered little in the way of training; however, the chairs believed the climates within their departments were openly supportive of graduate students who taught. The students, on the other hand, unanimously believed that it was their responsibility to actively seek any support they required.

Chapter Six: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Personal Reflections

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of the training given graduate students who undertake teaching duties in a Faculty of Education at a large Canadian research university. Data were gathered by interviewing eight participants: four department chairs and four graduate teaching assistants. Two semi-structured interview guides were used to facilitate the discussions; four key questions were common to both (see Appendices D and E). Two additional questions were added to the guide for the interviews with the graduate students as a result of the information generated by the first set of interviews with the department chairs. All the data were analyzed twice: first deductively, according to a coding derived from the four common interview questions; then inductively, according to the emerging themes not accounted for by the first analysis. Department chair data were studied first, graduate student data second.

Included in this chapter is, first, a discussion of the factors to be considered when reviewing the results of the overall study; second, a discussion of the responses to the research questions and the conclusions emanating from these responses; and third, a discussion of the recommendations linked to the conclusions. This chapter closes with a personal reflection, based in part upon the study and in part upon my experiences as a graduate teaching assistant.

Factors to Consider

In qualitative studies guarding against potential researcher bias is an important concern. A complete awareness of the research design can aid the reader in assessing

the findings and subsequent conclusions of such a study. With regard to this work, four variables are particularly germane to a complete understanding: the research participants, the research context, the design, and the researcher.

Research Participants. The first group of participants, the department chairs, were purposefully selected by virtue of their positions as department chairs who engaged graduate students as instructors. This selection process eliminated one department within the faculty because it did not employ any graduate students in such a capacity. The assumption here was that these individuals would be cognizant of the training activities within their departments and while it is true they were, in fact, aware of what was expected to occur, none of them had much first hand experience with the training that did occur. In Department A, the chair assumed responsibility for the initial orientation meeting, but in the other three departments either course co-ordinators (Departments C and D) or individual professors (Department B) were responsible for the training practices. It is likely, therefore, that the first set of findings may have been different if those directly responsible for the training had been included in the study.

The second group of participants, the graduate teaching assistants, were selected by a combination of methods: criterion sampling, recommendation by department chair, and maximum variation technique. Ultimately, the final selection was purposefully made to include one student from each department and to include individuals who represented a wide variation in both teaching and educational

experience. Here, again, it is likely that different graduate students may have responded differently to the interview questions.

The size of the sample in this study, eight in all, is an important factor to keep in mind while reviewing the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Despite the limited number of participants, the data gathering technique generated a great deal of rich and varied information. Nevertheless, readers need to be mindful of the fact that this study's findings should be transferred to other contexts with caution.

Research Context. The institution in this case study is a large research university with a large Faculty of Education. However, a distinguishing characteristic of this university is the existence of an independent division referred to as the University Centre whose mandate is to

> support[s] excellence in teaching and learning by helping instructors improve teaching skills, by encouraging them to explore new approaches to teaching and learning, by striving to improve the academic environment for teaching and learning, and by supporting course and program development.

A branch of this organization, which reports directly to the Office of the Vice President (Academic), in conjunction with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, offers a program specifically for all graduate students at the University. As outlined in greater detail in Chapter Three, the Teaching Program "provides opportunities for graduate students to develop an ethical, philosophical, and practical basis for post-secondary teaching and professional careers and to record this on their transcripts." At the time this study was conducted, none of the four departments in

the Faculty of Education were officially participating departments; however, graduate students in that faculty were eligible to attend the pedagogical offerings of the Teaching Program, at no cost. The practicum component could not be completed without the department's participation. It is possible, therefore, that the existence of such an extensive program at the university may have some effect on the training practices within the four departments in this study.

Research Design. This study followed an interpretivist approach and utilized the research design of qualitative case study consistent with such an orientation. Data analysis drew upon some elements of the grounded theory approach in that categories and themes were derived from the information gathered through semi-structured interviews. In addition to analyzing data inductively, I also used a deductive approach to analyze the data collected. Member checking was performed to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts and the interpretations of the data collected. Veracity of the interpretations was accomplished by asking individual participants to review the findings relative to their portion of the study. A critical colleague followed an audit trail to verify both the analysis and interpretations presented. Despite these precautions, it is conceivable that different categories, themes, and interpretations may have emerged from the data had a different researcher performed the analysis. As in all qualitative research, these qualifications ought to be kept in mind as the reader reviews the results.

Researcher. The biases and the experiences of the researcher are a final factor noteworthy of consideration in a study such as this. As a first time graduate teaching

assistant, I decided to conduct the interviews with the chairs of the departments first in order to balance the perspective I was forming through first hand experience with the training programs within my department and the university. Prior to beginning this research, I had voluntarily participated in a teacher training program offered by a central unit at my university, attending fifteen sessions. As I conducted the interviews with the eight participants, I attended a fall Graduate Student Orientation sponsored by the central unit and continued to attend teacher training workshop sessions, fifteen more in total. I also attended, voluntarily, three meetings called in my department to discuss the course I was assigned to teach. My immersion in the various training sessions does allow me to assess them first hand; however, it may also be important for the reader to be privy to this information when reviewing the findings. At times, I found myself in conflicting roles: as a graduate teaching assistant and as a researcher conducting an inquiry into the training of graduate teaching assistants. I was conscious of my personal biases throughout the investigation, in part because of my research journal in which I detailed my experiences as a beginning graduate teaching assistant. Nevertheless, readers of this study may wish to consider the potential risk of researcher bias which may tend to increase when research is conducted within one's sphere of intimate experience.

Responses to the Research Questions and Conclusions

The main question which precipitated this study was the following: What programs are in place to assist graduate students successfully assume undergraduate teaching duties in the various departments of the Education faculty? Underpinning

this principal question were four subquestions: (a) What formal, intensive training sessions are available? (b) What formal, protracted training sessions are available? (c) What informal training practices exist within the department? and (d) What else is involved in the training for teaching? What follows is a discussion first of the subquestions, then of the main research question along with the conclusions drawn from the various responses to these questions.

Subquestion One: What formal, intensive training sessions are available?

Formal, intensive training, defined in this study as that which is scheduled, requires mandatory attendance, occurs pre-semester or early in the semester, and is designed to anticipate graduate teaching assistants' needs did not exist in any department. Both chairs and graduate students concurred on this point; no training was mandatory in any department. All four chairs, however, did describe optional intensive sessions which took place at the beginning of the term, usually in the form of a meeting called by a designated faculty official. From the majority Faculty viewpoint, the purpose of these sessions was to orient graduate students to the courses assigned and the university regulations governing the teaching of these. One graduate student attended such a meeting; one attended a short workshop; one missed the initial meeting; one said no such meeting occurred. Those who did attend agreed with the departmental view that the over-riding purpose of the meeting was administrative, dealing with logistics rather than with teaching and teaching strategies. Meetings which did occur were open to all personnel involved with the particular course, not only to graduate teaching assistants.

Insofar as graduate teaching assistants do need the practical information provided by these sessions (e.g., how to gain access to photocopy equipment, how to report final grades) in order to comply with the administrative details of their jobs, these information meetings could be construed as constituting training. The fact that attendance was not required, that the meetings were open to all instructors within the department, and that teaching strategies were not discussed leads to the conclusion that the nature of this training is rather narrow in scope and is not targeted at graduate teaching assistants only.

Subquestion Two: What formal protracted training sessions are available? Formal, protracted training, defined in this study as that which is scheduled, requires mandatory attendance, and is ongoing throughout the teaching term did not exist in any department. The graduate students, with the exception of one, owned that the odd meeting occurred during the semester but that they were not required to attend. These meetings, as the aforementioned ones, dealt mainly with administrative details rather than teaching strategies. All four chairs suggested that meetings were called with some regularity with an eye to monitoring the progress of the course and to providing a place for dialogue. This view was not generally shared by the graduate teaching assistants.

Although one department chair (Department B) suggested that teaching skills and teaching strategies may be discussed with particular graduate students, there appeared to be little consensus, either amongst the department chairs or between the department chairs and the graduate students, that protracted or continuous teaching

training was available within the Faculty. This finding leads to the conclusion that ongoing, protracted teacher training was not in great evidence within the confines of the Faculty.

Subquestion Three: What informal training practices exist within the department? Responses to this question were quite varied. In general, the graduate students claimed there was nothing within the departments that they were aware of that would constitute training for teaching at a university. And if something did exist, the onus was on them to discover it. Some of them had sought help for specific reasons and found it available; however, all of them candidly declared that if they did not seek out assistance, none was forthcoming. In general, all could find some level of support from particular carefully selected individuals, so in that sense, the opinion of the chairs that the atmosphere in their respective departments was supportive is corroborated, to an extent. The chairs also believed that graduate students worked together, giving one another additional support; one department chair (Department C) offered specific examples of this occurring. This was confirmed by one graduate student; nevertheless, another expressed a desire for a "community of graduate students" wherein all felt a measure of safety and comfort, implying that this sort of collaboration did not readily occur.

The graduate students held mixed views regarding the over-all level of support for teaching within their respective departments: one strongly believed teaching was not taken seriously enough; two believed there was very little support for innovative teaching, despite support for it in the literature; and the fourth graduate student

allowed that there was little effort on the department's part to move instructors up to a "certain level." Two of the graduate students believed research took precedence over teaching within their departments, but one of them endorsed this position.

All of the graduate students expressed a belief that they were on their own in their classrooms, without departmental feedback; some of them accepted this state of affairs more readily than others. Ultimately, all of them believed there was an assumption that they could teach. This view was tacitly expressed by the department chairs, as well: the majority view held that previous teaching experience and previous educational experience prepared graduate students for their teaching roles. Interestingly, this view was not generally shared by the graduate students, for a variety of reasons. The majority expressed some concern over their lack of teaching experience; all of them believed teaching in a K-12 system was different from teaching in a university setting. One graduate student with college teaching experience pointed out that even this type of instruction differed from the sort required at a university. Another believed teaching at a university was easier than teaching in the K-12 system; a department chair (Department D) shared this view. While all the department chairs agreed that university teaching was somewhat different than K-12 teaching, they simultaneously believed that previous teaching experience prepared graduate students to instruct at a university level.

Likewise, the majority of the department chairs believed that, because their graduate students normally held undergraduate teaching degrees, this also prepared them for their new teaching roles. This view was not shared by the graduate students

who, generally, neglected to identify this accomplishment as having much relevance for their university teaching. In a similar vein, the majority of the department chairs maintained that graduate students were assigned courses to teach in their areas of specialization thus making their task a little more comfortable, yet two of the four graduate students in this study perceived they were assigned courses not in their areas of expertise.

The responses to the third sub-question lead to three conclusions. First, if any informal training practices existed within the department, it was the responsibility of the graduate teaching assistants to discover them. Second, it was assumed by the department chairs that, because of previous teaching and educational experiences, graduate teaching assistants could handle their teaching duties. This view was not shared by the graduate students who viewed their roles as university instructors as different than their roles as K-12 or college teachers. And third, on the part of the graduate students, there was a perception that there was not an obvious support for teaching, be it innovative or at a certain level of effectiveness.

Subquestion Four: What else is involved in the training for teaching? There was some overlap in the responses to this question and the previous one with regard to levels of support for graduate teaching assistants within their respective departments. For example, all the department chairs clearly identified mentoring as a key component of their training practices, yet only one graduate student had a teaching mentor. It was an initiative on behalf of the student, not the department, that fostered this relationship.

What did become evident from these responses was the role played by the Teaching Program in some graduate students' training.

Two students, voluntarily and on their own initiative, were registered in this program, although at the time these data were collected, none of the four departments were officially participating in it. Both these students found the training offered by the Teaching Program to be useful, one of them found it extremely so. The other two students, although somewhat aware of what the program offered, had not participated, citing time constraints as a major barrier. Both also questioned the utility of the various workshops and posited that the content may be too "generic"; one, however, might attend to satisfy a personal curiosity about it, time permitting. The view of these two students was generally echoed by the department chairs. All were aware of the existence of the services provided, some of them were active in providing personnel to lead a number of the workshops. There was a general agreement that some of the training sessions could be and were worthwhile; nevertheless, none of the department chairs recommended the Teaching Program with a great deal of enthusiasm. Instead, they made the information available and left it up to individual students to choose those sessions pertinent to their own needs. Interestingly one chair (Department D) agreed with the two graduate students' view that the training may be too "generic."

One conclusion can be drawn from the responses to this final subquestion: while department chairs and graduate students are aware, some to a greater extent than others, of the training provided by the Teaching Program, there is a fairly wide

range in the level of support for and participation in the program. Both time constraints and the perceived utility of the training offered seem to be relevant factors affecting the individual's orientation to the program.

Main Research Question: What programs are in place to assist graduate students successfully assume undergraduate teaching duties in the various departments of the Education faculty? The previous detailed responses to the sub-questions clearly outline what is in existence within the various departments from the viewpoint of both the departmental chairs and the graduate teaching assistants. What completes the discussion is a detailing of what has been offered in the past and what should be offered in the future.

In the past, three of the departments had offered a course for credit; one was exploring the possibility of re-instating such a course in the future, another was actively implementing a graduate program designed to study teacher education generally. At the time the data were collected, however, no such credit course for university teacher training existed. All four graduate teaching assistants would take a course for credit, some with qualifications, but only one believed such a course should be mandatory. None of the department chairs believed such a course could be required. The most oft-cited reason for the existence of such a course was practical: it would be a welcome addition to the graduate student's curriculum vitae.

In a somewhat different direction, all the graduate students and one of the department chairs speculated about what could be added to the existing structure in order to better prepare teaching assistants for their role. The department chair opined

that making graduate teaching assistants more aware of the Teaching Program was something that could be done better. As described in the findings, there was no consensus amongst the graduate teaching assistants as to what one addition would be most welcome; nevertheless, all offered some suggestions. Shadowing a professor and having a teaching mentor were two related proposals; receiving a great deal of feedback on the actual teaching performance was another. The graduate students, in one form or another, expressed a desire for more support: some for just a generalized level of support and attention, some for a more specific encouragement for innovative teaching strategies and for translation of research into practice within their classrooms. All the graduate teaching assistants in this study enjoyed their teaching and were fairly satisfied with their achievements; but, all would have appreciated more opportunity to discuss the act of teaching with others engaged in the process.

Two conclusions present themselves from these findings. First, a credit course whose focus was on preparing graduate students for teaching successfully at a university should be an option within the Education Faculty. Graduate students, more than department chairs, are in favour of such an offering, if only for pragmatic reasons. And second, graduate students would welcome more opportunity to discuss their own teaching with other teachers in a collegial atmosphere.

Summary of Conclusions

1. The nature of the intensive training was narrow in scope--mostly dealing with administrative, practical matters.
2. Ongoing, protracted training was not in great evidence.

3. Any training that may exist within the department was up to the graduate teaching assistant to discover, either from the faculty or from other graduate students.
4. It was assumed by department chairs that, because of previous teaching and educational experiences, graduate teaching assistants could teach successfully. This view was not shared by the graduate students who viewed their role as university instructors as different than their roles as K-12 or college teachers.
5. On the part of the graduate students, there was not an obvious support for teaching, either innovative or at a certain level of effectiveness.
6. There was a wide range of awareness about the Teaching Program and a corresponding participation in and support of it.
7. A credit course whose focus was on preparing graduate students for teaching successfully at a university should be an option, if only for pragmatic reasons.
8. Graduate students would welcome more opportunity to discuss their own teaching and teaching, in general, with other teachers in a collegial atmosphere.

Recommendations

These eight conclusions form the basis for a discussion of the four recommendations that can be drawn from this research as they relate to practice. Although I recognize that policy recommendations about what ought to be done can never be based solely upon what is the case, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide detailed justification for recommendations. Consequently, I offer the

recommendations recognizing the above limitation. These recommendations are derived from comparisons I have made of what exists, what my informants have said about what exists, and what I believe would provide the foundation for improved graduate teacher training. The implications for carrying out the recommendations on the part of both the Faculty representatives and the graduate students are also touched upon. It should be noted that, although there are eight conclusions derived from this study, the recommendations are framed in such a manner as to address more than one conclusion, in most instances. It should also be noted that the organizing conclusion of the entire study is that there is no mandatory training required before a graduate student takes up teaching duties in this Faculty of Education.

Primarily, a more organized formal approach needs to be taken to train graduate teaching assistants for their teaching duties and its existence needs to be widely known. The majority of the graduate students in this study did not feel adequately prepared for their duties, and at the same time, realized there was a prevailing assumption that they were prepared. In order to insure that all of them, in fact, have some level of readiness, certain components of a training program should be mandatory.

The first component of a training program should deal with pedagogical issues as they relate to adult learners. Learning theory, learning styles, and the relationship between teaching and learning at a university level would all be appropriate topics for study. The second component of such a program should deal with curricular matters. In this segment, discussion would centre around the selection and organization of

content with a view to meeting the stated objectives of a particular course. Designing effective course outlines could lend a practical focus to this section. A third component of a training program should deal with instructional techniques: here, the content could address both traditional and innovative teaching strategies. A fourth component of a training program should deal with management issues, particularly as they relate to adult learners in a university setting. Techniques for creating positive learning climates, for dealing with gender and cultural diversity, and for making effective use of office visits would all fit in this section of the program. A fifth and final component of the envisioned training program should deal with what Banner and Cannon (1997) called the "human elements of instruction" (p. 43). This sector of the course would deal with interpersonal and intrapersonal skills as they relate to effective university teaching. If these five components could be woven into a training program, the graduate teaching assistants would both feel and be more prepared to assume their teaching duties.

The second recommendation deals with the nature of the intensive, pre-semester training offered to graduate teaching assistants. First of all, attendance at this meeting should be mandatory. In order to make the best use of the time expended in such a gathering, all prospective instructors should be sent a package of information detailing the practical information surrounding their courses: room assignments, course materials, technological support available, and university rules and regulations. This package should be in the teaching assistants' hands at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting so that a minimum amount of time at the

meeting is spent going over administrative details; a short question and answer period need only be in place to deal with matters for clarification. Co-ordinators of the individual courses who, in some departments, already provide this information should be charged with producing such an information package; however, the chair of each department should assume the responsibility for the meeting. The cardinal purpose for this meeting is for the department chair to discuss, with the department's graduate teaching assistants, the rights, responsibilities, and expectations of the department relative to teaching. This recommendation also addresses the fifth and the eighth conclusions in that it demonstrates to the graduate students a departmental commitment to teaching and at the same time, allows them a collegial forum in which to discuss matters pertaining to teaching. Indirectly, it addresses the third conclusion in that the department chair is able to discuss with the graduate teaching assistants what does exist within the department in the way of support and training. This should enable graduate students to more easily find what it is they need in order to teach their classes more successfully.

The third and fourth recommendations deal with the nature of the protracted, ongoing training offered graduate teaching assistants. In the first instance, course co-ordinators should be appointed for each course or for closely related courses as is the case now in the majority of the departments. These appointments should rotate amongst the faculty members so that, eventually, all will become more closely involved with graduate student teaching in their respective departments. This will signal, to the graduate students, a stronger commitment and support for teaching than

is now in evidence. The course co-ordinators should call bi-weekly meetings, according to a pre-determined schedule, for the entire teaching semester; attendance should be mandatory. Because some of the courses instructed by graduate teaching assistants are quite short in duration, some only six weeks, it is necessary for the meetings to be called bi-weekly. The chief purpose of these meetings is to provide a safe and supportive arena in which to discuss teaching and teaching strategies as the needs arise. Dependent upon the course and the individuals involved, these gatherings could lend themselves to a variety of activities: from the sharing of teaching plans and strategies to the discussion of philosophies of teaching. Graduate teaching assistants could also arrange to have their course co-ordinator visit their classrooms should they wish to have peer feedback. Another important function of these meetings would be to bridge the gap between K-12 and college teaching experiences and university teaching requirements, and the gap between teaching theory and teaching practice.

The fourth recommendation deals with protracted training but in a more official fashion. For graduate students to be offered appointments as teaching assistants, they should be required to take either a credit course in university instruction, designed by the Faculty of Education, or complete the Teaching Program. Students should be given the choice as to which route they prefer, but must supply evidence of their choice prior to teaching a second undergraduate course. In the event that such a choice is not made by the teaching assistant, then the chair of the department should assign that which he or she deems most appropriate, after

consultation with the graduate student. Graduate teaching assistants should be made aware of this requirement in the very first meeting they attend, under the direction of the various department chairs.

Putting these recommendations in place would require significant time commitments on behalf of all personnel involved: department chairs, faculty, and graduate students. Chairs, for example, would need to become fully conversant with the administrative details of the individual courses offered within their departments in order to field the pre-semester questions posed by graduate teaching assistants. They, or a designate, would also have to submit their department's written proposal to the Teaching Program committee for consideration in order to become full participants. And finally, the individual chairs, in conjunction with one another, would have to put in place the structure needed to develop and implement a credit course aimed at preparing graduate teaching assistants for university teaching within the Faculty of Education. Individual faculty members would be required to act as course co-ordinators, on a rotational basis. As well, they would also be required to act as either program co-ordinators or teaching mentors once their departments became participating members of the Teaching Program. No doubt some of them would also be actively involved in both developing and teaching the proposed credit course. And graduate students would have to make time in their schedules to attend the various meetings called by the faculty members involved in their training. They would also have to allocate the time required to complete either a credit course or the Teaching Program if they wished to be appointed as instructors. No doubt, time is a precious

commodity in a university setting; however, in a university and in particular, in a Faculty of Education, time committed to improving the quality of teaching undergraduate students receive is time well spent.

Personal Reflections

Because the university in this study was a large research university, it is safe to assume that a tension exists between its twin functions: research and teaching, as outlined in the literature. Two of the graduate students in this report suggested that research was viewed as more important within their departments. The level of attention given to training graduate students to teach undergraduates here, regardless of the reasons, would tend to support that view. To be fair, one of the graduate students who held the view that research took precedence, accepted that it should. It must also be added that this particular graduate student aspired to be a full-time university professor. Perhaps this suggests that the future professorate will be comfortable with the importance of research relative to teaching.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon the university itself to develop a teaching culture (Ambrose, 1995; Armour, 1995; McKeachie, 1986; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995; Seldin, 1995) that is openly supportive of effective teaching if effective teaching is to occur. The literature suggests that if a department offers its graduate students little in the way of teacher training, it may be tacitly communicating to them the relative unimportance of teaching (Boehrer & Sarkisian, 1985; Cunsolo, Elrick, & Middleton, 1996; Daly, 1994; Ramsden & Martin, 1996). Consequently, if the Faculty of Education requires graduate students attend intensive and protracted

training sessions within their respective departments as they teach their first undergraduate classes, they may communicate the opposite view: teaching well matters. Requiring graduate students to seek official credit, either by completing a Faculty-designed teaching course or by completing the Teaching Program, should they wish to be considered for re-appointment, underlines the genuine commitment the Faculty has to quality instruction. Although very significant time and energy commitments would be required on behalf of all the participants, departments chairs, faculty, and graduate teaching assistants, the ultimate result would be the development of a teaching culture highly supportive of effective, possibly innovative, teaching. For a Faculty of Education, this is an absolute necessity.

Such a focus on effective teaching could also bridge the gap between research and teaching because, as the literature suggests (Cunsolo, Elrick, & Middleton, 1996; Cross, 1994; Daly, 1994; Hughes & Tight, 1995), teaching itself is a respectable topic for academic research, more so in some disciplines than in others (Colbeck, 1998). Two of the department chairs supported this view. This study is an example of such research. Jenkins, Blackman, Lindsay, & Paton-Salzberg (1998) suggested that if students perceive benefit to themselves from the research conducted, the rigid distinction between teaching and research can be softened. The genesis for this study was my desire to prepare myself for teaching at a university. Just as the majority of the graduate teaching assistant participants did, I sought out the training I believed necessary to perform my duties effectively. Attending optional workshops offered by the central teaching unit and optional meetings offered by my department both

increased my awareness of the complexity of effective university teaching. Despite coming to my role as a teaching assistant with twenty years of very successful high school teaching behind me, and bolstered by an undergraduate teaching degree, I learned a great deal more about effective university teaching, about the nature of university undergraduates, and about the most effectual strategies for teaching these undergraduates. And in the final analysis, I believe I did a more effective job of teaching than I might have because this training forced me to critically reflect upon what I was doing in the classroom.

Along with Smock and Menges (1985), I believe universities, and particularly Faculties of Education, have an "ethical requirement to provide the highest quality instruction for [their] undergraduate students" (p.22). In the departments surveyed for this study, the chairs estimated that between 20 and 40 percent of the undergraduate introductory classes had graduate teaching assistants as primary instructors. In order to provide a high quality of instruction for these undergraduates, graduate teaching assistants may also need to be provided with a concomitant high quality of instruction for their task. The literature suggests, and is supported by the findings of this research, that graduate students "receive little or no guidance before they begin teaching or while they teach" (Boehrer & Sarkisian, 1985). Just requiring graduate teaching assistants attend a certain number of training sessions will not guarantee they will be able, or willing, to provide quality instruction; nevertheless, until such a program is implemented, future researchers can only speculate about the efficacy such a program may have.

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Appendix A: Letter of Introduction and Formal Consent Form

My name is Lorraine Woollard; I am a graduate student in _____ at the University of_____. As part of master degree requirements, I am conducting research on the training graduate students undertake in preparation for teaching undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education at the University of _____. The title of my project is "'Training' Graduate Students to Teach." A one page summary of my proposal is attached to this letter. I want to learn about both the formal and informal training methods currently in use.

I would like your permission to include you in my study. You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview, scheduled to last no longer than one hour. With your permission, I will audiotape the interview.

Neither you nor the department you are associated with will be identified in this study, thus assuring you of confidentiality. To this end, I will assign you a pseudonym and will transcribe the interview tape myself. Should you decide you do not want to participate in this study, please inform either me, or my research advisor, Dr. J. da Costa. Once the interview has been transcribed, I would like to share the transcript with you: to insure accuracy and to invite further discussion or clarification. Should you wish certain segments of the transcript not be directly quoted in the final paper, I will respect your wishes.

I, or my research advisor, Dr. J. da Costa, would be pleased to discuss any questions you have about this proposed study; please feel free to contact me at _____ and him at _____.

If you are willing to participate in my study, please indicate this by signing in the space provided below. Thank you for your consideration.

I_____ GIVE PERMISSION FOR Lorraine Woollard TO INCLUDE ME IN THE STUDY DESCRIBED IN THE ATTACHED SUMMARY.

Signature_____Date_____

Appendix B: Study Proposal

Title of Proposed Study:	"Training" Graduate Students to Teach
Key Research Question:	What programs are in place to assist graduate students successfully assume undergraduate teaching duties in the various departments of the Education faculty?
Method:	This proposed study will be a qualitative case study of the Faculty of Education at the University of _____. Four department chairs and four graduate students--with assigned teaching duties--will be purposefully selected to provide key informant interview data. Each participant will be interviewed for a maximum of one hour. I have developed the first interview guide after informal discussions held with the departmental chairs and designated co-ordinators of graduate student training sessions. This guide will be used in the interviews with the department chairs. Data obtained from these interviews, as well as from the earlier informal discussions, will be used to construct the second interview guide to be used with the graduate students. All interviews will be audiotaped, with permission, and scheduled at times mutually convenient to the respondents and the interviewer.
Data Analysis:	Information gleaned from the two sets of interviews will be studied for re-occurring themes and patterns, using standard qualitative data analysis procedures, notably open coding of information.
Significance of Study:	The practical significance of this study is evident: it will describe in rich detail, the training offered graduate students selected to undertake teaching duties in the Faculty of Education. Such a comprehensive summary will allow the Faculty to assess the suitability of the existing program in meeting the needs of both the undergraduate and graduate students. It will also add to the body of literature surrounding teaching assistants in Canadian universities.

Appendix C: Letter Inviting Nominations for the Study

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my study. Enclosed is a transcript of the interview I conducted with you on _____. Please read it over to ensure the accuracy of the document. Should you wish to make any comments, please attach them on a separate sheet of paper.

The second part of my study will begin in September, and for that I would like your assistance once more. I will be interviewing one graduate student from each department in the Faculty of Education who has been given undergraduate teaching duties for the fall term.

If you could provide me with the names and addresses of six such people in your department, that would greatly assist me in the selection process. If possible I would like you to suggest three people who have taught in previous terms and three people who will be teaching for the first time in September.

If it is convenient for you, I will pick up the transcript of the interview and the list of graduate students on _____.

Once again, thank you for participating in my study; I look forward to any additional comments you may wish to make.

Yours truly,

Lorraine Woollard

Appendix D: Interview Guide--Department Chairs

1. What role do teaching assistants play in your department?

2. What formal (scheduled, required attendance) intensive (short-term, workshop format) training occurs within the department?

3. What formal, protracted (long-term, ongoing, continuous) training occurs within the department?

4. What informal training practices are you aware of in your department?

5. What else in involved in the education of teaching assistants and aspiring university professors?

Appendix E: Interview Guide--Graduate Teaching Assistants

1. What background of teaching experience do you bring to your role as a graduate teaching assistant?

2. What educational background do you bring to your role as a graduate teaching assistant?

3. What formal (scheduled, required attendance) intensive (short-term, workshop format) training sessions did you attend prior to taking up your duties as a graduate teaching assistant?

4. What formal, protracted (long-term, continuous, ongoing) training sessions have you attended as the teaching term continues?

5. What informal teacher training are you aware of in your department?

6. What else is involved in your training for teaching?