

Xiaobin Li

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Preparedness to Teach: A Comparison Between Consecutive and Concurrent Education Students

This study compared two groups of education students. One group consisted of students in a consecutive program, and the other consisted of students in a concurrent program. A survey that collected a sample of responses from 88 students in an Ontario faculty of education in the 1995-1996 academic year was analyzed quantitatively. The findings, contrary to some previous claims and present assumptions that concurrent students are better prepared than consecutive students, suggest that the combined effects of classroom instruction and practicum are sufficient to enable students enrolled in a consecutive program to develop feelings of preparedness to teach equivalent to those of the concurrent students. The results also suggest no significant difference in the number of self-reported classroom management and discipline problems encountered by the two groups during their practicum. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate a positive association between student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach and their reported practicum classroom management experiences.

Cette étude a comparé deux groupes d'étudiants en pédagogie, dont un groupe d'étudiants inscrits à un programme consécutif et l'autre à un programme concurrent. Une analyse quantitative a été élaborée à partir d'un sondage effectué auprès de 88 étudiants d'une faculté d'éducation en Ontario pendant l'année scolaire 1995-1996. Les résultats vont à l'encontre de ce qu'on a prétendu par le passé et ce qu'on croit présentement selon quoi les étudiants dans les programmes concurrents seraient mieux préparés que ceux dans les programmes consécutifs. En fait, les données suggèrent que la combinaison de cours en salle de classe et d'enseignement pratique suffit pour que les étudiants dans les programmes consécutifs se sentent aussi bien préparés à l'enseignement que ceux dans les programmes concurrents. De plus, les résultats indiquent qu'il n'y aurait pas de différence significative dans le nombre de problèmes de discipline ou de gestion de salle de classe rapportés par les stagiaires. Finalement, l'étude démontre qu'il existe une association positive entre la perception qu'ont les stagiaires quant à leur état de préparation à l'enseignement et leurs expériences de gestion de salle de classe pendant leurs stages.

Introduction

Canadian teacher educators have been seeking more appropriate and effective ways to prepare teachers. In efforts to reach this goal considerable attention has been focused on how well prepared newly trained teachers are when they begin teaching in elementary and secondary schools (Covert, Williams, & Kennedy, 1991; Reynolds, 1992). This concern naturally leads to the considerations of how education students are prepared in faculties of education (Grimmett, 1998) and to research intended to inform and improve various teacher training programs (Clarke, 1998).

Despite their various organizational arrangements, most Canadian programs have one of two enrollment paths: consecutive, or concurrent. In a consecutive program, after obtaining a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science

Xiaobin Li is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies. His research interests are in teacher development and educational finance.

degree or its equivalent, students study at a faculty of education in a one-year (or two-year, depending on the province) program to receive their Bachelor of Education degree. In a concurrent program, students studying for a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree at a university simultaneously complete the requirements for a Bachelor of Education degree, usually over a four-year period.

With regard to basic academic competence, the requirements for admission for consecutive and concurrent education students are also different. In a consecutive program (BA or BSc, then BEd) it is expected that a candidate have at least a BA or BSc or its equivalent to be considered for admission. In a concurrent program (BEd and BA or BSc) it is assumed that candidates have achieved sufficiently high marks on their high school courses to qualify them to enter the program. Moreover, consecutive students come from different walks of life and bring a greater variety of experiences to a faculty of education. Most concurrent students enter a faculty of education directly from high schools.

In the United States controversy persists about the difference between the Alternative Certification and the Traditional Certification programs (Stoddart & Floden, 1996). In Canada the Teacher Education Committee of the Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation published a position paper on teacher education, stating that the Federation endorsed a four-year concurrent program as preferable (Simmons et al., 1974). Today some associate teachers guiding student teachers in schools still believe that concurrent students are more committed to teaching than consecutive students and that concurrent students are more prepared for teaching. However, "most provinces have some form of one-year (or one-year equivalent) program in which education courses are interspersed with one or more short practice teaching periods" (Wideen & Holborn, 1986, p. 559). Some provinces have extended their original one-year consecutive programs into two-year programs. In Ontario, "approximately 85 percent of the 1990-1991 teacher education students attended one-year consecutive programs" and only "15 percent were in the final year of a concurrent program" (Smith, Herry, Levesque, & Marshall, 1993, p. 62). Concerning the differences between consecutive and concurrent education programs, there is little literature in Canada. It seems, however, that more research is needed to discover the advantages and disadvantages of concurrent and consecutive teacher education programs.

A common feature of Canadian teacher training programs is the inclusion of a practicum, an essential and integral component of an education program regardless of whether it is consecutive or concurrent. "All Canadian programs include some form of practicum" (Wideen & Holborn, 1986, p. 562), and researchers report findings that "corroborate the continued importance of the practicum in Canadian programs" (Castle, 1991, p. 1). The success of field experiences is important to the development of education students' feelings of preparedness to teach (Housego, 1990b).

At the University of British Columbia, Housego (1990a, 1990b, 1992a, 1992b) looked at how well prepared to teach students felt during various stages of their training programs. According to Housego (1990a), feelings of preparedness to teach are a set of self-perceptions that education students have related to the performance of a group of tasks central to teaching and applicable across

grade levels and subject matter fields. Housego (1990a) found that student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach grew continually during their teacher education year. The increases in feelings of preparedness to teach in some aspects were greater than in others, and the increases in feelings of preparedness to teach in various student teacher subgroups were different (Housego, 1990a). In addition, Housego (1992b) noted that in different terms of an academic year the increase of feelings of preparedness to teach was different. Housego (1994) also observed that first-year teachers who had graduated from the 1989-1990 University of British Columbia, Faculty of Education Two-Year Elementary Program had different feelings of preparedness to teach in different teaching tasks.

Teaching and classroom management cannot exist independently from each other (Levin & Nolan, 1991). Researchers believe that classroom management is an important part of teacher preparation that students should learn and practice in their coursework and practica (Covert et al., 1991). Although both new and experienced teachers recognize classroom management as one of the most important foundations of good instruction (Emmer, Evertson, Clements, & Worsham, 1994), management and control were often student teachers' most immediate concerns in the practicum (Hodges, 1982). Staab (1984) found that student teachers rated themselves lower on their classroom management abilities than on their personal qualities, preparation for instruction, or use of teaching skills. Student teachers rated instruction in disciplinary methods during coursework as essential (Wideen & Holborn, 1986) and mentioned classroom survival as an important factor that influenced their decisions (Hodges). "Problems with class control and discipline create the greatest anxieties in student teachers" (Reed, 1989, p. 60). Sometimes just keeping all the children quiet and busy became the primary reason for an assignment (Hodges).

Student teachers have self-perceptions as to how effective they are in dealing with children in classrooms (Klein, 1996). These feelings of self-efficacy also undergo changes when education students take courses or are involved in practice teaching. According to Bandura (1978), self-efficacy is a personal characteristic that grows out of the reciprocal relationships between the individual's predispositions, behavior, and the environment where the behavior occurs. In the context of teacher education, students are expected to derive feelings of self-efficacy from successful experiences both in class and field practice. It is meaningful to understand how these feelings of self-efficacy, or feelings of preparedness to teach, develop in students enrolled in instructional environments with different features such as those found in the consecutive-concurrent program distinction. The purpose of this study was to explore the difference between the consecutive students and the concurrent students in their feelings of preparedness to teach during the first half of their final year of teacher preparation. In addition, this study looked into differences between the consecutive and concurrent students in the number of classroom management and discipline problems encountered during practicum.

Education students' feelings of preparedness to teach might be assumed to be positively associated with their performance in the classroom. The better prepared to teach students feel, the better they would tend to perform in the

classroom. This study also examined whether there was a relationship between the classroom management experiences of students in practicum and their reported feelings of preparedness to teach. Knowing how education students' feelings of preparedness to teach develop is important in comprehending how teacher training programs work (Housego, 1994), and teacher educators may gain insights about how to improve these programs.

In this study three questions were asked: (a) Are there differences in feelings of preparedness to teach between the consecutive and concurrent students? (b) Do consecutive and concurrent students differ in the number of classroom management and discipline problems encountered during their practicum? (c) Is there an association between feelings of preparedness to teach and the number of classroom management problems encountered during practicum? The first question dealt with the relationship between program features and feelings of preparedness to teach; the second examined the program features and classroom management and discipline problems encountered during practicum; and the third explored if there was a relationship between students' practicum experiences and their feelings of preparedness to teach.

Method

Participants

The 88 respondents in this research were students enrolled in the preservice teacher education programs at an Ontario faculty of education during the 1995-1996 academic year. There were two groups: 47 fourth-year concurrent education students and 41 one-year postdegree preservice, or consecutive, education students.

These students were selected because they were in two educational psychology classes taught by the same professor. The textbook used in that course was *Educational Psychology for Canadian Teachers* (Bowd, McDougall, & Yewchuk, 1994). Chapter 11: "Classroom Management and Communication" addressed specifically the issue of classroom management and discipline. One class comprised almost all consecutive students, and the other comprised almost all concurrent students, with only one or two exceptions in each class. Data from the exceptions were regrouped to form two data sets: one set was entirely from the consecutive students, and the other was entirely from the concurrent students. All the students were expected to become certificated elementary school-teachers.

All consecutive and concurrent students had taken mostly similar courses during the fall semester. Both the consecutive and concurrent students had taken Ontario Education, Educational Psychology, Environmental Studies, Language Arts, Mathematics, and Expressive Arts (Music, Art, and Physical Education). In addition, the consecutive students were enrolled in Curriculum Planning, Educational Media, and Evaluation, which the concurrent students had completed in their third year. In the previous three years the concurrent students had also taken other courses and had been involved in teaching-related activities to which consecutive students had not been exposed. Table 1 shows the major program differences and similarities between concurrent students and consecutive students.

Table 1
Program Differences and Similarities between Concurrent
and Consecutive Students

| | <i>Concurrent</i> | <i>Consecutive</i> |
|-----------------|---|---|
| <i>1st year</i> | Education seminar | |
| <i>2nd year</i> | Introduction to student teaching | |
| <i>3rd year</i> | Educational media Evaluation Curriculum planning 20 weeks of half a day a week observing and student teaching 9 days of student teaching | |
| <i>4th year</i> | Ontario education Educational psychology Environmental studies Language arts Mathematics Expressive arts | Educational media Evaluation Curriculum planning Ontario education Educational psychology Environmental studies Language arts Mathematics Expressive arts |

Note. After the course portion of the fall term, the experiences of concurrent and consecutive students were identical.

Of the 88 students that took part in the study 14 were male and 74 were female. Sixty-six students were in the primary and junior division, and 22 students were in the junior and intermediate division. The youngest was 21 years old, and the eldest was 43.

Seven (17%) of the 41 consecutive students were male, and 34 (82%) were female. Twenty students (49%) were in the primary and junior division, and 21 students (51%) were in the junior and intermediate division. The range of ages of the consecutive students was from 22 to 38. The mean age was 26.2 with a standard deviation of 3.98.

Seven (15%) of the 47 concurrent students were male, and 40 (85%) were female. Forty-six students (98%) were in the primary and junior division and one student (2%) was in the junior and intermediate division. The range of ages of the concurrent students was 21 to 43. The mean age was 23.8 with a standard deviation of 5.08. These data are summarized in Table 2.

The features of the consecutive and concurrent programs were acknowledged as "treatments," and their effects on students' feelings of preparedness to teach were tested. The study assumed that these program features were in large part defined by group membership, that is, the characteristics of students enrolled. Individual differences were then included in the program labels such as consecutive or concurrent, and group membership was assessed in the comparisons between these groups.

Table 2
 Characteristics of Research Participants

| | <i>Consecutive</i> | <i>Concurrent</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| Range | 22-38 | 21-43 |
| Mean | 26.2 | 23.8 |
| SD | 3.98 | 5.08 |
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Male | 7 (17%) | 7 (15%) |
| Female | 34 (82%) | 40 (85%) |
| <i>Division</i> | | |
| Primary/Junior | 20 (49%) | 46 (98%) |
| Junior/Intermediate | 21 (51%) | 1 (2%) |

Procedures

At the beginning of the fall term of the 1995-1996 academic year, two classes of 88 students in the final year of their teacher preparation programs at an Ontario faculty of education were given a Participation Information Form that requested their participation in this study.

These students later completed a Student Teachers' Feelings of Preparedness for Teaching (PREP) scale (Housego, 1990a) three times during the academic year. The PREP scale was designed by Housego to explore the basis for, and development of, feelings of preparedness to teach in education students.

The PREP Scale has 50 items, each of which asks students how prepared they feel to handle a certain teaching task. For example, the first item is "Identify lesson objectives." Every item is stated so as to complete the sentence "I feel prepared to ..." and is accompanied by a 7-point Likert scale from "almost completely unprepared (1)" to "almost completely prepared (7)." The higher the total score is, the more the student teacher feels prepared to teach. "In repeated administrations it has been found to be highly reliable (between 0.95 and 0.97 based on Hoyt's coefficient, an index of item homogeneity) and valid for the purposes of the studies in which it has been used" (Housego, 1994, pp. 356-357).

The PREP scale was distributed for the first time shortly after the beginning of the academic year, in the second week of the fall semester. Along with the first PREP administration, information about students' background experiences was solicited with a form based on a format from Haines (1990). Eight weeks later, at the conclusion of the fall courses and before their first four-week practice teaching, in early November, the second PREP scale was administered. The third PREP administration followed their first practice teaching when the student teachers returned to the faculty of education in early January 1996. At that time participants were also requested to complete the Haines Inventory.

Haines (1990), in assessing the occurrence of classroom discipline problems during student teaching, created an inventory to investigate the degree to which each problem occurred. The source of the items in the Haines Inventory

was a study done by Reed (1989), who developed a typology of the most serious discipline problems experienced by student teachers at an American university. In the Haines Inventory each of the 17 classroom management and discipline problems is used as the subject of a sentence completed by "was a serious problem during my teaching experience." For instance, the first item is "Excessive and inappropriate talking was a serious problem during my student teaching experience." For each statement student teachers were requested to indicate their experiences by circling an appropriate number on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5). The total score of the Haines Inventory is obtained by adding all the item scores together. The higher the total score, the fewer classroom management and discipline problems are encountered by the student teacher. Table 3 presents the data collection schedule.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 6.1 was used to analyze statistical data. Group means of the consecutive and concurrent students from three data collections were calculated. Several t-tests for independent samples were used to compare the PREP means of the consecutive students with those of the concurrent students in September, November, and January. A t-test for independent samples was also used to compare the consecutive and concurrent students mean scores as derived from the Haines Inventory total scores. In addition, a bivariate correlation procedure was used to see if there was an association between the third PREP scores and the Haines Inventory scores.

Results

At the time of the first PREP distribution, information about students' background experiences was solicited. Such experiences may have helped to prepare them for teaching. According to the information provided, there were similarities and differences between the experiences of consecutive and concurrent students before the first PREP administration. Table 4 is a summary of the results. The 18 items in the table can be divided into three areas: formal teaching, informal teaching, and teaching-related experiences.

Practice teaching and supply teaching are categorized as formal teaching experiences. The most obvious difference between consecutive students and concurrent students is in the experience of practice teaching. The vast majority

Table 3
Data Collection Schedule

| <i>Group</i> | <i>Administration 1 Early September</i> | <i>Administration 2 Early November</i> | <i>Administration 3 Early January</i> |
|----------------------|---|--|---|
| Consecutive students | PREP and background experiences | PREP | PREP and Haines Inventory |
| Concurrent students | PREP and background experiences | PREP | PREP and Haines Inventory |

Table 4
Percentage of Participants' Reported Specific Background Experiences

| | Consecutive (N=41) % | Concurrent (N=47) % |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Practice teaching | — | 96 |
| Supply teaching | 22 | 11 |
| Volunteer teaching | 78 | 79 |
| Coaching experiences | 46 | 36 |
| Teacher's aide | 46 | 38 |
| Sunday school teaching | 10 | 40 |
| Teaching skiing, swimming, etc. | 49 | 49 |
| Tutoring | 63 | 53 |
| Officiating at sport events | 32 | 45 |
| Summer camp/program | 49 | 45 |
| Previous courses | 71 | 77 |
| Talking with teachers | 90 | 96 |
| Playing on teams | 76 | 79 |
| Previous work experiences | 83 | 85 |
| Being a parent | 17 | 15 |
| Books about teaching | 76 | 87 |
| Experiences dealing with children | 100 | 96 |
| Babysitting | 85 | 94 |

of concurrent students, 96%, indicated that they had had practice teaching experiences when they took the first PREP, whereas no consecutive students had the opportunity to participate in formal practice teaching. Concurrent students had been provided the opportunity for classroom observation and teaching one half-day each week for 20 weeks during their third year. They also practice-taught for nine full school days after the completion of their final examinations at the end of that year. More consecutive students (22%) did supply teaching than did concurrent students (10%).

The informal teaching experiences include experiences of volunteer teaching, coaching, teaching aide, Sunday school teaching, teaching skiing and swimming, and tutoring. More consecutive students had experiences of coaching (46% versus 36%), teaching aide (46% versus 38%), and tutoring (63% versus 53%), whereas more concurrent students had experiences of Sunday school teaching (40% versus 10%). Similar proportions of consecutive and concurrent students had experience in volunteer teaching and teaching skiing, swimming, and so forth. This indicates that both groups had some previous informal teaching experiences not related to the education programs in university. The Sunday school teaching experiences of the concurrent group (40%) and consecutive group (10%) represent the greatest difference in this informal teaching area.

The rest of the 18 items are included in the area of teaching related-experiences. More concurrent students had experiences of reading teaching-related books (87% versus 76%), babysitting (94% versus 85%), and officiating sport

events (45% versus 32%). With the exception of the practice teaching experience of the concurrent program, consecutive students and concurrent students had generally similar education-related experiences.

In addition to practice teaching the concurrent education program also provided students with other background experiences that consecutive students did not have. During their first year at university concurrent students participated in an education seminar. In their second year they were required to take an Introduction to Student Teaching course, and in their third year they took Educational Media, Curriculum Planning, and Evaluation.

Along with a t-test result for independent samples to compare the consecutive and concurrent students' mean scores as derived from the Haines Inventory total scores, the results of the t-tests for independent samples used to compare the PREP means of the consecutive students with those of the concurrent students in September, November, and January are presented in Table 5.

On the first PREP administration at the beginning of the academic year, the mean of the consecutive group ($\bar{x}=224.78$, $SD=53.12$) was significantly ($p<.01$) lower than that of the concurrent group ($\bar{x}=271.72$, $SD=35.46$).

On the second PREP administration following the class portion of the fall semester in early November, the mean of the consecutive group ($\bar{x}=256.16$, $SD=34.75$) was still significantly ($p<.05$) lower than that of the concurrent group ($\bar{x}=276.43$, $SD=33.57$).

The third PREP was administered in early January after the first four-week practicum for both the consecutive students and the concurrent students. On this assessment the mean of the consecutive group ($\bar{x}=294.13$, $SD=30.95$) was not significantly ($p>.05$) different from that of the concurrent group ($\bar{x}=302.39$, $SD=32.59$) any more.

There was no significant ($p>.05$) difference on the means of the Haines Inventory total scores between consecutive ($\bar{x}=63.32$, $SD=13.84$) and concurrent ($\bar{x}=64.97$, $SD=8.74$) students. Furthermore, a low but significant ($p<0.01$) positive correlation ($r=0.296$) between the third PREP scores and the Haines Inventory scores was obtained regardless whether the scores were from consecutive or concurrent students.

Discussion

The main issues addressed in this study were: (a) the influence of program features on the development of student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach; (b) the influence of program features on students' teaching experience while on practicum; and (c) the relationship between efficacy beliefs and students' teaching experience. In outlining the relationship between program features and efficacy, the effects of program duration were examined. In examining the relationship between efficacy beliefs and teaching experience, aspects of classroom management and discipline were considered.

The influence of program features on the development of student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach. PREP score responses of students enrolled in the concurrent and consecutive programs were compared at three different points: on entry to the program, after a period of classroom instruction, and following the practicum.

Table 5
Comparison of Consecutive and Concurrent Students PREP
and Haines Scores

| Administration | Group | N | Mean | SD | df | t-value | p |
|----------------|-------------|------|--------|-------|----|---------|------|
| 1 PREP | consecutive | 41 * | 224.78 | 53.12 | 86 | 4.93 | <.01 |
| | concurrent | 47 | 271.72 | 35.46 | | | |
| 2 PREP | consecutive | 37 | 256.16 | 34.75 | 74 | 2.59 | .012 |
| | concurrent | 39 | 276.43 | 33.57 | | | |
| 3 PREP | consecutive | 37 | 294.13 | 30.95 | 73 | 1.12 | .264 |
| | concurrent | 38 | 302.39 | 32.59 | | | |
| Haines | consecutive | 37 | 63.32 | 13.84 | 73 | .62 | .538 |
| | concurrent | 38 | 64.97 | 8.74 | | | |

The first assessment revealed a significant ($p < 0.01$) difference between the consecutive ($\bar{x} = 224.78$, $SD = 53.12$) and the concurrent groups ($\bar{x} = 271.72$, $SD = 35.46$) in feelings of preparedness to teach. The difference can at least in part be attributed to the fact that the concurrent program had been formally preparing its students for teaching during the previous three years. In their first year of the program concurrent students completed an education seminar that provided them with some general information about Canadian elementary and secondary education. This was followed by an Introduction to Student Teaching course in the second year. The third year of the program included three courses, Educational Media, Curriculum Planning, and Evaluation. In addition, during the third year concurrent students were exposed to classroom experiences of one half-day a week for 20 weeks plus nine full days of student teaching. In contrast, the consecutive students had just started teacher preparation courses as part of their one-year postdegree program.

The similar experiences of the concurrent students over the past three years had created a more homogeneous group, at least in their feelings of preparedness to teach ($SD = 35.46$). In contrast, the consecutive students were less homogeneous on the first PREP results ($SD = 53.12$). This difference in variation can be attributed to the fact that the consecutive students ($\bar{x} = 26.2$) were on average slightly over two years older than the concurrent group ($\bar{x} = 23.8$) and brought a greater variety of experiences from many universities, primarily throughout Ontario, and from different walks of life. Differences between the two groups—including the greater formal teacher preparation experience of the concurrent students, especially practice teaching—resulted in distinctly different feelings of preparedness to teach at the beginning of the academic year.

On the second PREP administration following the course portion of the fall semester, the mean of the consecutive group was still significantly ($p < .05$) lower ($\bar{x} = 256.16$) than that of the concurrent group ($\bar{x} = 276.43$). Between the first and second PREP administrations, all consecutive and concurrent students had been taking courses. Most of the courses they took were similar (see Table 1). At the second assessment the standard deviations of the consecutive group ($SD = 34.75$) and the concurrent group ($SD = 33.57$) were somewhat similar. Regarding their feelings of preparedness to teach, both groups had become more homogeneous. From the first PREP to the second PREP, the change in

standard deviation for the consecutive students ($SD=53.12 \rightarrow SD=34.75$) is quite noteworthy when compared with the concurrent students' change ($SD=35.46, \rightarrow SD=33.57$). Coursework appeared to have had a greater equalizing effect on the consecutive group than on the concurrent group.

The significant ($p<0.05$) difference in the means (consecutive $\bar{X}=256.16$ versus concurrent $\bar{X}=276.43$) does, however, indicate the continuing effect of initial group differences on PREP score responses. Despite a similar classroom instruction sequence of the first term in the preservice programs, there appears to be no marked shift in students' views with regard to feelings of preparedness to teach as measured by the group means.

After the practicum on the third PREP administration, the mean of the consecutive group ($\bar{X}=294.13$) was no longer significantly ($p>.05$) different from that of the concurrent group ($\bar{X}=302.39$). The original significant differences in feelings of preparedness to teach between consecutive and concurrent students as measured on the first assessment (consecutive $\bar{X}=224.78$ versus concurrent $\bar{X}=271.72$; $p<.05$) and the second assessment (consecutive $\bar{X}=256.16$ versus concurrent $\bar{X}=276.43$; $p<.05$) had disappeared following the practicum experience. Either the classroom instruction combined with practicum operated to erase the significant difference between the concurrent and consecutive students' self-efficacy feelings, or classroom instruction and practicum plus some combination of the program features jointly worked to diminish the difference between the two groups. Interestingly, both groups continued to become more homogeneous as reflected by the standard deviations of the consecutive ($SD=34.75 \rightarrow SD=30.95$) and concurrent ($SD=33.57 \rightarrow SD=32.59$) groups on the third PREP.

These results suggest that duration as defined in terms of the concurrent program, which distributes its training over a four-year period, is effective in fostering positive feelings of preparedness to teach among the concurrent students, but no more so than the consecutive program, at least by the end of the first term of the final year. The combined effects of classroom instruction and practice teaching—alone or in combination with the program features—are sufficient to enable the consecutive students to develop efficacy beliefs that are as strong as those of the concurrent students.

The necessity of combining both classroom and field experiences is not surprising. Housego (1992b) has maintained that the practicum was an important addition to classroom instruction in fostering feelings of preparedness to teach. Both program components appear to play complementary roles and together have a cumulative effect on students' beliefs about their teaching abilities.

The influence of program features on students' teaching experience while on practicum. Classroom management and discipline problems encountered by student teachers during the practicum were investigated using the Haines Inventory. There was no significant ($p>.05$) difference on the means of the Haines Inventory total scores between consecutive and concurrent students (consecutive $\bar{X}=63.32$ versus concurrent $\bar{X}=64.97$). This indicates no significant difference between the consecutive group and concurrent group in the number of classroom management and discipline problems reported. This finding is consistent with that of the third PREP Scale scores where no significant dif-

ference with regard to feelings of preparedness to teach was found between the means of the consecutive and concurrent students.

The relationship between efficacy beliefs and students' teaching experience. A significant positive correlation coefficient ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.296$) was obtained between students' feelings of preparedness to teach as measured on the third PREP, and reported classroom management and discipline problems as measured on the Haines Inventory. The positive correlation between the Haines Inventory and the third PREP scale offers a useful indicator of the validity of the Housego instrument. One would expect only a low correlation between the PREP scale and the Haines Inventory. Although other interpretations are possible, this low correlation is probably an indication that the two instruments are measuring different factors. The scope of the PREP items is much broader than that of the Haines Inventory, which addresses matters of classroom management and discipline. The PREP scale not only deals with classroom management and discipline problems, it also addresses the issues of curriculum planning, communicating with pupils, and evaluation.

This positive association between the PREP scores and Haines Inventory scores suggests that the more prepared to teach the students felt, the fewer classroom management problems they reported experiencing during practicum. This finding is consistent with that of Housego (1990a), who maintained that stronger feelings of preparedness to teach may enable student teachers to teach more confidently and secure pupil receptiveness. It also confirms Bandura's (1986) reciprocal determinism theory that efficacy beliefs are better stimulated by the addition of a behavioral component, the practicum, to the preservice experience.

Self-efficacy is a personal characteristic that grows out of the reciprocal relationships between the individual's predispositions, his or her behavior, and the environment where the behavior occurs (Bandura, 1978). In teacher education students are expected to derive feelings of preparedness to teach from successful teacher education experiences both at the university and in practicum. Student teachers in this study did develop such self-efficacy feelings during one term in the final year of their teacher preparation programs. Their feelings of preparedness to teach grew substantially in this term. The mean of the PREP scores of the consecutive group increased from 224.78 in September to 294.13 in January. The PREP score mean of the concurrent group increased from 271.72 to 302.39 for the same period.

According to Bandura (1986), the enactive sources (one's own performance accomplishment) are the most important sources of feelings of self-efficacy. The results of this study seem to suggest that practicum plays a more important role than classroom instruction in developing students' feelings of preparedness to teach. Many education students do value the practicum part more than the course part of their programs (Smith et al., 1993).

Conclusion

Some associate teachers may prefer to work with concurrent students, believing that these students are more committed to teaching and are more prepared for teaching. This study revealed that the consecutive students' feelings of preparedness to teach were not significantly different from those of the concur-

rent students after the end of the fall term in the final year of their teacher preparation programs. It also shows that the two groups reported having experienced similar numbers of classroom management and discipline problems during practicum. These two findings raise questions about the claim that a concurrent program is more adequate than a consecutive program (Smitheram, 1971; Smitheram & Hillis, 1974). The fact that advantages of a concurrent program disappeared after only one term supports Housego's (1992b) statement that many education students are confident that they will be good teachers after completing an education program and having further practice.

Although the concurrent students in this study as a group had stronger feelings of preparedness to teach on entering their final year of the teacher preparation program, the significant difference in such feelings between them and the consecutive students disappeared at the end of the first term. The results of this study imply that for developing student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach a consecutive program is as effective as a concurrent program, at least by the end of the first term of the final year of these programs. The findings of this study are in line with those of research conducted by Miller, McKenna, and McKenna (1998), who found that there appeared to be no observable teaching behavior differences, student output differences, or attitudinal differences concerning perceptions of competence of people prepared under the Alternative Certification and the Traditional Certification programs in the US.

As well, there is an association between how prepared to teach education students feel and the number of classroom management and discipline problems they encounter in practicum. The more prepared to teach the education students feel, the fewer classroom management and discipline problems they report experiencing during practicum. Or the fewer classroom management and discipline problems they report, the more prepared to teach they feel.

Caution should be exercised in generalizing the results of this study because of the size and nature of the respondent groups. Although statistical significance is used to indicate probability, respondents were not randomly selected, and they were from two classes in one faculty of education in Ontario. Future study could focus on the nature of specific experiences in the practicum and coursework or explore the relationship between student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach and their actual ability to teach. This study made only a preliminary assessment of the belief-performance linkage. In addition, longitudinal three- or five-year research to collect on-the-job feedback is suggested so that the long-term effects of consecutive and concurrent teacher preparation programs on student teachers can be better understood.

References

- Bandura, A. (1978). The self-system in reciprocal determinism. *American Psychologist*, 33, 344-358.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Special foundations of thought and action: A Social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bowd, A., McDougall, D., & Yewchuk, C. (1994). *Educational psychology for Canadian teachers*. Toronto, ON: Harcourt Brace.
- Castle, J.B. (1991). The supervision of student teachers: A revised report format. *Brock Education*, 1(3), 1-5.

- Clarke, A. (1998). Born of incidents but thematic in nature: Knowledge construction in practicum settings. *Canadian Journal of Education* 23(1), 47-62.
- Covert, J., Williams, L., & Kennedy, W. (1991). Some perceived professional needs of beginning teachers in Newfoundland. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 37, 3-17.
- Emmer, E., Evertson, C., Clements, B., & Worsham, M. (1994). *Classroom management for secondary teachers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Grimmett, P. (1998). Reconceptualizing the practice of teacher preparation: On not throwing out the concurrent model with the reform bathwater. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 44, 251-267.
- Haines, J.M. (1990 May). *Classroom management in preservice teacher education: Frequency of occurrence, beliefs, preparedness, sources of assistance, and methods of delivery*. Paper presented at the 1990 Annual Conference of the Eastern Canadian Association for Student Teaching, Kingston.
- Hodges, C. (1982). Implementing methods: If you can't blame the cooperating teacher, who can you blame? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(6), 25-29.
- Housego, B.E.J. (1990a). Student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 15(1), 37-56.
- Housego, B.E.J. (1990b). A comparative study of student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 36, 223-239.
- Housego, B.E.J. (1992a). Monitoring student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach and teacher efficacy in a new elementary teacher education program. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 18, 259-272.
- Housego, B.E.J. (1992b). Monitoring student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach, personal teaching efficacy, and teaching efficacy in a new secondary teacher education program. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 38, 49-64.
- Housego, B.E.J. (1994). How prepared were you to teach? Beginning teachers assess their preparedness. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 40, 355-373.
- Klein, P.D. (1996). Preservice teachers' beliefs about learning and knowledge. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 42, 361-377.
- Levin, J., & Nolan, J. (1991). *Principles of classroom management: A hierarchical approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Miller, J., McKenna, M., & McKenna, B. (1998). A comparison of alternatively and traditionally prepared teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49(3), 165-176.
- Reed, D. (1989). Student teacher problems with classroom discipline: Implications for program development. *Action in Teacher Education*, 11(3), 59-65.
- Reynolds, A. (1992). What is competent beginning teaching? A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(1), 1-35.
- Simmons, D.C., Derraugh, J.V., Gordon, R.N., Greenspoon, P., Sparrow, J.E., Davis, H.N., & Hood, S.G. (1974). *A position on teacher education*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Public Men Teachers' Federation, Teacher Education Committee.
- Smith, L., Herry, Y., Levesque, D., & Marshall, D. (1993). *On becoming a teacher: A longitudinal tracking study*. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.
- Smitheram, V. (1971). *Teacher education: Perseverance or professionalism*. Charlottetown, PE: University of Prince Edward Island.
- Smitheram, V., & Hillis, E. (1974). Avoiding guaranteed failure. In D. Myers & F. Reid (Eds.), *Educating teachers: Critiques and proposals* (pp. 52-68). Toronto, ON: OISE Press.
- Staab, C. (1984). Student teachers' perception of their competence versus the perceptions of university supervisors and sponsor teachers. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 30, 284-298.
- Stoddart, T., & Floden, R. (1996) Traditional and alternate routes to teacher certification: Issues, assumptions, and misconceptions. In K. Zeichner, S. Melnick, & M. Gomez (Eds.), *Currents of reform in preservice teacher education* (pp. 80-106). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wideen, M.F., & Holborn, P. (1986). Research in Canadian teacher education: Promises and problems. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 11, 557-583.