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## Teachers' Secondment Experiences

*This article explores seconded teachers' experiences as university instructors and faculty advisors in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. Data were collected in three one-hour semistructured interviews with each of the 17 participants. The purpose of the study was to understand more clearly the experiences of seconded teachers in the teacher education program through the use of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory approach. Seven phases or aspects of secondment are outlined: seeking the position; preparing for secondment; expressing self-doubts; adjusting to the tempo and workload; working with adult learners; looking for support; and returning to the school community. Overall, the themes that emerged in this research highlight five central issues: the contrast between university and school cultures; the value of reflection on practice; the strength of seconded teachers' commitment to classroom teaching; the stability and nature of seconded teachers' professional identities; and the usefulness of secondment as professional development.*

*Cet article étudie les expériences d'enseignants détachés alors qu'ils étaient chargés de cours et conseillers pédagogiques dans la Faculty of Education à la University of British Columbia. Les données ont été recueillies lors de trois entrevues semi-dirigées d'une heure avec chacun des 17 participants. Le but de l'étude est de mieux comprendre, par le biais de l'approche théorique à base empirique de Glaser et Strauss (1967), les expériences d'enseignants détachés dans le programme d'enseignement. On décrit sept phases ou aspects du détachement: la recherche du poste; la préparation au détachement; l'expression de manque de confiance; l'ajustement au rythme et à la charge de travail; le travail avec les apprenants adultes; la recherche d'appui; et le retour à la communauté scolaire. De façon globale, les thèmes qui ressortent de cette recherche mettent l'accent sur cinq questions principales: le contraste entre la culture universitaire et la culture scolaire; la valeur de la réflexion sur la pratique de l'enseignement; la force de l'engagement qu'ont les enseignants détachés face à l'enseignement en salle de classe; la stabilité et la nature de l'identité professionnelle des enseignants détachés; et l'utilité du détachement dans le développement professionnel.*

### Introduction

A primary function of teacher preparation programs is to provide an environment that promotes the transition from student to teacher. Another transition, through which teachers become teacher educators, however, is rarely acknowledged. Little attention is directed to the process whereby teachers assume the tasks of teacher education. Together the two transitions might be thought of as a continuum of professional development. The literature on seconded teachers'

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knowledge of teaching (Cornbleth & Ellsworth, 1994; Perry, Dockett, Kember, & Kuschert, 1999) and their attitudes toward and beliefs regarding their roles as teacher educators is limited. The extent to which the university setting and the practicum influence these attitudes and beliefs has not been sufficiently investigated.

Few studies (Adams, 1993; Dawson, 1996; Warsh, 1996) specifically recognize seconded teachers for their contributions to teacher education programs. Yet depending on the setting, seconded teachers and other nontenured faculty perform a considerable portion of the tasks of teacher education. In many faculties of education two distinct groups of teacher educators exist: the full-time faculty and the "shadow" or adjunct faculty, whom many student teachers associate most closely with their teacher education programs. Indeed, in the extreme, the tenured, full-time professoriate is invisible to many student teachers (Goodlad, 1990). Generally, the shadow faculty comprises experienced cooperating teachers who are seconded by the university to teach curriculum and instruction or methods courses and to supervise student teachers on practicum. Some may at the same time be enrolled in graduate education programs. After one or two years they return to their school districts and resume their former roles as teachers. Having participated in the process of teacher education in both school and university contexts, therefore, hypothetically they can assume either perspective. As faculties of education continue to try to improve their preservice programs, these seconded educators are important sources for informing the practice of teacher educators and improving the learning of preservice teachers.

It is believed that seconded and formerly seconded teachers are distinct from other teacher educators largely because of their experiential knowledge, a type of knowledge that reflects their classroom experiences, values, beliefs, and personal philosophies of teaching and learning. The research on which this article is focused is on both seconded and formerly seconded teachers. By definition, seconded teachers were temporarily released from their districts and employed by the Faculty of Education for usually a one- or two-year term; had a minimum of five years successful teaching experience at the elementary, middle, or secondary level; were practicing teachers at the time of appointment; and had recent experience as cooperating teachers. All seconded teachers who participated in this study served as faculty advisors. As faculty advisors they are responsible for working with both the schools and cooperating teachers to establish a professional working relationship and to assist in planning for student teachers' work. Faculty advisors routinely visited schools to support cooperating teachers and student teachers and to respond to staff enquiries about the university's teacher education program.

Little is known about the emerging role of seconded teacher educators except that the traditional role of the cooperating teacher is being expanded, sometimes through secondment, to include duties and responsibilities that were once assigned to full-time teacher educators (Cornbleth & Ellsworth, 1994; Wideen & Lemma, 1999). The expansion and redefinition of their role can be linked to efforts to unify the teaching profession and lessen the gap between professors of education in universities and classroom teachers in public schools. Goodlad (1990) and Kagan's (1990) work about school and university

cultures is important in understanding the complexities of fulfilling the seconded teacher role.

Our purposes are twofold: first, to explore seconded teachers' experience of and understanding of their roles as university instructors and faculty advisors, and second, to contribute to a better understanding of how the skills and knowledge of seconded teachers can be used more effectively to inform the practice of teacher education.

#### *Background Literature*

##### *Some Canadian Studies of Seconded Teachers*

Few studies have documented the experiences of seconded teachers in Canadian faculties of education. Adams (1993) examined the involvement of teachers seconded to the position of practicum associates at the University of Alberta and university associates at the University of Calgary. For a one- or two-year term these teachers instructed in a variety of courses and supervised student teachers. Adams' study detailed the progression of five associates through what she called phases or orientations (anticipating, commencing, establishing, enacting, reviewing, renewing, realigning, reentering, and retrospectively) within which she documented the personal and professional effects of secondment. In summarizing, she speculated that because of diminishing budgets and the reevaluation of teacher education programs, it was conceivable that the involvement of seconded teachers might be both reduced and redefined.

In another Canadian study, Maynes, McIntosh, and Wimmer (1998), concerned about the university dependence on "externals," that is, retired and part-time teachers employed to supervise student teachers, explored the participation of a group of such adjunct professors involved in supervision of field experiences at the University of Alberta. Among other issues, they focused on the "the absence of a formal recruitment and selection process for making these appointments ... [and] the 'hit and miss' nature of their connection to the university such that the externals' knowledge of our program ... was uneven at best" (p. 3). They concluded that the solution to the quality of supervision problem was not to involve more members of the academic community, but rather to improve the recruitment and selection process of the existing group of externals.

At Simon Fraser University a current project is documenting the experiences of faculty associates in the teacher education program. Warsh (1996) examined the experiences of approximately 100 faculty associates following their two-year secondments to the university, finding that many of them pursued administrative positions because they were no longer satisfied to remain as classroom teachers.

Also at Simon Fraser University, in a related study, Dawson (1996) analyzed data from five professors regarding their role in working with faculty associates in the teacher education program. Dawson concluded that major differences exist between school and university cultures and that faculty and faculty associates often value different forms of knowledge. Issues of power and authority were also identified as being important.

As part of the same research project, Beynon (1996) examined the experiences of faculty associates as they negotiate the transition from school where they are teachers of children, to university where they are teachers of adults.

Greene and Purvis (1995), aware of the paucity of research on another possible aspect of the secondment experience, examined the experiences of teachers returning to the classroom after completing graduate studies at the University of Lethbridge. They found that part-time and full-time graduate studies had a positive impact on how teachers thought about their teaching, but when teachers returned to the school community, their experience was that colleagues seemed to resent their new knowledge.

#### *Other Studies of Seconded Teachers*

In a review of 20 United States teacher education programs that include some form of clinical faculty in teacher education, Cornbleth and Ellsworth (1994) found three major types of clinical faculty roles: (a) an enhanced status of the traditional role of the cooperating teacher through title changes, increased preparation and prerequisites, and role differentiation; (b) additional involvement of classroom teachers in teaching university courses; and (c) broader participation by classroom teachers in teacher education program planning, admissions, and other decision-making. They speculated that enhanced clinical faculty participation might address some of the problems of teacher education and of US education generally (Carnegie Forum, 1986; Holmes Group, 1995).

Gilstrap and Beattie (1996) examined the participation of clinical faculty in other US professional development school sites. They found that as teachers become clinical faculty, they take on numerous responsibilities as mentors, coaches, communicators, counselors, supervisors, evaluators, reflective practitioners, school leaders, researchers, and collaborators, a significant expansion beyond the traditional role of the cooperating teacher.

In the US many of the reforms associated with professional development schools include the creation of an expanded role for clinical faculty. Hohenbrink (1993), Karlsberger (1993), and Sherrill (1993), in their studies of professional development school projects, all described clinical educator roles that evolved as part of those projects. Howey (1992) identified as one of eight general goals for professional development schools the development of clinical faculty to guide novice teachers. Howey and Zimpher (1994) concluded that the preparation of clinical faculty members is limited and suggested that various literature (e.g., teacher socialization studies, expert-novice studies, studies of beginning teachers' beliefs and teachers' reasoning) be employed to design for them a program of studies beyond the customary basic orientation.

#### *Method*

##### *Theoretical Perspectives Informing the Study*

Reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Wertsch, 1991). Taking a social constructivist perspective means focusing not on formal institutions themselves, but on the processes by which people experience and make sense of their lives. This is precisely what is attempted in this study.

Recognizing that seconded teachers personally construct knowledge about teaching is fundamental to understanding how they fulfill their roles as instructors and faculty advisors. Individuals do not construct knowledge in isolation. Indeed, the social setting and the interactions in it influence how individuals construct knowledge about the world.

The work of Lave and Wenger (1991) is also useful in explaining how seconded teachers make sense of the university culture. They present the notion that learning occurs in communities of practice, and as people gain access to a community they become increasingly involved. According to Lave and Wenger, "the form that the legitimacy of participation takes is a defining characteristic of ways of belonging, and is therefore not only a crucial condition for learning, but a constitutive element of its content" (p. 35). They suggest that entry to a community results from a process they call "legitimate peripheral participation." This means that an individual gains access to a community through growing involvement over time. Newcomers move from peripheral participation toward full participation. While this is occurring, individuals are involved in constructing new identities for themselves.

Lave and Wenger (1991) state that the key to legitimate peripherality is access by newcomers to the community. Because the period of legitimate peripheral participation is relatively brief for seconded teachers (usually between one and two years), they did not become absorbed in the "culture of practice" (p. 95). "To become a full member of a community of practice," Lave and Wenger write, "requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity; old timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation" (p. 101).

#### *Data Sources*

The Teacher Education Office in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia sent a letter of introduction outlining the study to prospective volunteers. A group of 17 seconded teachers was selected (5 first-year seconded teachers, 8 continuing seconded teachers, and 4 teachers who were reentering the school system after secondment), all of whom met the criteria described above. Ten graduate students who were assigned similar teaching and supervision duties also volunteered, but were not included because technically they were not seconded teachers. All the participants were seconded to either the elementary or the secondary 12-month teacher education program in which all students enroll in subject specific curriculum and instruction courses before undertaking an extended teaching practicum. Students are assigned to schools for a total of 15 weeks in their academic year, a two-week orientation practicum followed by a 13-week extended practicum during which teaching responsibilities increase gradually so as to provide time for systematic observation and reflection.

Data concerning the experiences of secondment were collected in three approximately one-hour semistructured interviews with each participant over a year. Interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and stored on computer disk.

A traditional form of qualitative analysis is the single case study. Cases usually present individuals, but they may also represent instances of larger phenomena. In an effort to present the different voices in this research in a meaningful context, four aggregate profiles were constructed using well-documented strategies for cross-case analysis (Abbott, 1992; Denzin, 1989; Eisenhardt, 1989; Fischer & Wertz, 1975; Gladwin, 1989; Huberman, 1991; Persol, 1985; Yin, 1984, 1991). Year one seconded teachers are represented in a composite profile called "Brenda," that is, the experiences of first-year seconded teachers are combined or aggregated and represented as the case of Brenda, an

elementary teacher. Similarly, year two or continuing seconded teachers are represented as "Frank," a secondary mathematics teacher; graduate student seconded teachers are represented as "Sarah"; and formerly seconded teachers are portrayed as "Gerald." In other words, 17 voices are captured in four aggregate cases, the stories of Brenda, Frank, Sarah, and Gerald. Presenting data in aggregate profiles opens the possibility that some individual detail might be lost in the reporting process. Aware of this potential problem, one of the authors reread the original transcripts, an exhausting but worthwhile task because it convinced us that we had presented the data fairly. It would have been redundant and cumbersome to present 17 individual case studies.

#### *Findings and Discussion*

The purpose of our study was to understand more clearly the experiences of seconded teachers in the teacher education program through the use of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory approach. The seven phases or aspects of secondment (seeking the position; preparing for secondment; expressing self-doubts; adjusting to the tempo and workload; working with adult learners; looking for support; and returning to the school community) that are outlined in this article build an understanding that is faithful to individuals' experiences.

#### *Seeking the Position*

Most of the seconded teachers who participated in this study did not actively seek the position. Usually faculty advisors with whom they worked in their classrooms encouraged them to apply. Having had experience as cooperating teachers convinced Brenda, Frank, Sarah, and Gerald that they understood what would be expected of them during secondment, as revealed in Frank's statement, "I felt like I had a pretty good understanding of the teacher education program and the role and expectations for student teachers, cooperating teachers, and faculty advisors." Gerald's appointment, however, was somewhat different. After completing a master's degree, his thesis advisor invited him to offer workshops for student teachers. Although initially he refused, finally, convinced his work with student teachers would be a valuable resource, he accepted, declaring, "I figured that if they had that much confidence in me, I should give it a try. It never occurred to me that I was university material." This is evidence of the separation of the school and university cultures. Gerald does not recall being formally interviewed for the position, nor does he remember whether the position was advertised.

Although most teachers did not actively seek secondment, Sarah left the classroom to pursue a master's degree in teacher education seeking a change from classroom teaching, and she welcomed the prospect of support through secondment. Sarah stated:

I enjoyed teaching, but I felt the need for a change. I could have asked for a transfer to another school, but the appeal of coming to the university to do graduate work and be paid as a seconded teacher was an excellent opportunity, one that doesn't come around very often.

Except for Sarah, seconded teachers did not actively pursue the position. Were it not for the encouragement and support of faculty advisors, it is unlikely that seconded teachers, with the exception of Sarah, would have applied at all.

*Preparing for Secondment: The Orientation*

In late August seconded teachers along with others assigned duties in preservice teacher education were invited to orientation meetings designed to acquaint them with the teacher education program. Course coordinators and experienced instructors shared program philosophies, outlined policy, suggested assignments, described evaluation practices, and answered questions. As newcomers to the university individuals were confronted with the difficult task of trying to make sense of the teacher education program, and more specifically their role in it.

In the first interview seconded teachers responded to the orientation programs provided by the Teacher Education Office and various departments. Critical of university expectations of newly appointed seconded teachers, Sarah remarked, "What surprised me the most was that there was no training. There was the assumption that if you can teach grade 2, you can teach university students. Part of the orientation should have helped us deal with teaching adults." Surprised to discover how things worked at the university and how little formal support was available, Brenda also expressed concern:

I thought there would be more opportunities to talk to other people who were already teaching at the university. I was a bit insecure about working with adults, having no experience doing so. During the first few weeks there were very few opportunities to share ideas and get organized, because everyone was so busy. I was confronted with having to deal with so many new things on my own.

Overall, seconded teachers generally appreciated the efforts of course coordinators during orientation meetings, as well as the support and encouragement they received from more experienced seconded teachers, sessionals, and faculty. Brenda, however, acknowledged her difficulty finding time to process all the information:

I was quite overwhelmed to say the least. It was a little scary sitting there and trying to sort out what the year would look like. I felt a bit like a beginning teacher. I had all these unfamiliar courses to teach; I had all this planning to do; and I had almost no time to do it.

Seconded teachers unanimously agreed they needed more time to plan their courses. At the beginning of their secondments teachers were understandably concerned about practical issues such as room locations, supplies, secretarial support, library privileges, and resources.

During the second interview seconded teachers again reflected on the orientation process. Frank likened his orientation to what he called the "fragmented nature" of the teacher education program, commenting, "The meetings helped me learn about specific courses but I felt like I was on my own in trying to figure out the whole program. There wasn't enough time to do everything."

Recognizing that they could have been better prepared for secondment, Brenda, Frank, Sarah, and Gerald suggested ways that the orientation might be improved. They needed assistance preparing to teach adults and more time to prepare courses. Gerald advocated a mentoring program, observing, "At least in most school districts there is some sort of assistance for beginning teachers. The same sort of thing should be available at the university." Unanimously the

seconded teachers called for a more coherent overview of the entire teacher education program.

*Expressing Self-Doubts and Loneliness*

In the early days of secondment Brenda, Frank, Sarah, and Gerald doubted their ability to handle the new position. Gerald said, "I never dreamed that I would end up teaching at the university. I'm mentioning this because I am the first person in my family to graduate from a postsecondary institution." Frank also worried about whether he was "up to the challenge" of teaching at the university level:

I remember how I felt at the end of the first week. I was really scared going out to the university as a classroom teacher. I remember driving out to the campus and thinking to myself that it had been a great week! If I can teach here, I can teach anywhere. It was a really empowering experience.

The first few weeks of secondment were crucial in setting the tone for what was to follow, clarifying expectations and defining roles. A special bond developed among the teachers who began secondment together, which contributed to a community-within-a-community phenomenon, a community of the seconded in the broader community of teacher educators.

Some seconded teachers had more difficulty than others adapting to their new roles. Indeed, some were uncomfortable even thinking of themselves as teacher educators, viewing full-time professors as the "real teacher educators." Brenda said, "In my heart of hearts, I am a classroom teacher, plain and simple." Ironically, the literature (Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996) suggests many full-time faculty prefer not to be labeled as teacher educators.

Seconded teachers never left behind their identities as classroom teachers. The first few months of secondment were particularly challenging as they tried to reconcile personal expectations for the role with those of the university. Brenda said:

The first month was a sink or swim situation; it was pretty frightening. In preparing my lectures, I would read a textbook and then try to relate the content to my own experiences as a teacher. I was a little unsure of what the university expected of me.

Goodlad (1990) noted that seconded teachers straddle two cultures, that of the university and that of the K-12 school system. It is important to recognize that part of the difficulty in making the transition from schools to the university lies in adapting to the various communities that are firmly entrenched on university campuses. Elementary and secondary schools are more often thought of as singular institutions, or as Kagan (1990) says, "places of a common professional culture with a sense of similar goals and purposes" (p. 50), whereas universities include a multiplicity of diverse communities.

Approximately six weeks into secondment Brenda, Frank, Sarah, and Gerald began working with student teachers in schools during a two-week orientation practicum. Performing the faculty advisor's role in classrooms in which they might have been teaching confirmed their identities as teachers. Brenda described her reaction, "Being back in the schools as a faculty advisor made me think about who I am and what I do for a living. I began thinking,

'What am I doing at the university? I'm a teacher.'" She worried, however, that over time she could potentially be "cut off" from both the school and university communities. Working at the university entailed leaving behind colleagues, friends, and pupils, yet seconded teachers continued to identify themselves primarily with their former schools. At various stages of secondment they reported feelings of loneliness. Sarah said:

I'm surprised by how lonely I feel. Maybe it's because I've been out on practicum and I've lost contact with other faculty advisors. But I think I was feeling a little lonely before. The university can be a very lonely place. I was used to the constant dialogue of a staff room. When I came to the university, all that dialogue stopped. This has been hard for me to adjust to.

Although the teachers said they experienced some degree of loneliness while at the university, it was most acute when fulfilling the role of the faculty advisor, visiting schools and observing others teach.

#### *Adjusting to the Tempo and Workload*

All seconded teachers made comments about what they termed "excessive teaching workloads." Sarah, for example, described her tiredness as a "fact of life." "In the fall semester of both years, I was very, very, very tired! It was overwhelming teaching three courses and supervising student teachers."

Seconded teachers reported that they were working harder than they had expected. "My day stretched to fit all the things that I had to do," Gerald recalled. "As a classroom teacher, I had a much better idea of what to expect. At the university, however, I found myself working long hours in the evening and on weekends." In the second year of their tenure at the university, seconded teachers expected the tempo and workload to ease due to familiarity with the role. They reported, however, that they were almost as busy as earlier.

#### *Working with Adult Learners: How Should I Know?*

Working with adult learners was both rewarding and challenging. Seconded teachers predicted that all student teachers would be highly motivated adults. Seconded teachers, however, were surprised to discover that not all student teachers were "model learners." Gerald recalled, "I was disappointed in some student teachers' attitudes. They complained a lot, and some of them didn't come to class. Then they had the gall to complain about their grades."

Seconded teachers expected that it would be easier to teach adults than children. Sarah noticed that elementary teachers, in contrast to secondary teachers who were perceived as more likely to be comfortable with university schedules, tempo, and grading practices than their elementary colleagues, were more likely to experience difficulties teaching adults. Observing that secondary teachers would probably be more able to deal "eyeball to eyeball" with student teachers than elementary teachers, Gerald concluded, "I don't accept the idea that any successful classroom teacher will automatically do well as a seconded teacher."

Seconded teachers acknowledged their relationships with student teachers as different from those they had with elementary and secondary pupils. "You have to keep your distance as a university instructor," Frank warned, "because it's not the same as when you're a classroom teacher. It took me a while to figure this out." Sarah said that she had learned a great deal about herself

through working with student teachers. "There are boundaries," she noted, "that have to be respected. Otherwise, you could get into trouble." By December of the first year of her secondment Brenda evaluated her relationships with her student teachers as follows. "I had difficulty, at first, maintaining a professional distance. I'm not sure why, but it was especially difficult working with student teachers who were having trouble adjusting to the program." Part of the difficulty in adapting to working with adult learners relates to the accelerated nature of course work at the university. Because of experiences like these, seconded teachers, as mentioned above, felt their orientation should have included more preparation for teaching adults in the context of a university timetable.

*Looking for Support: Other Seconded Teachers to the Rescue*

Adapting to the much larger university was problematic in a variety of ways for seconded teachers. The support network that they relied on as classroom teachers had largely vanished. Brenda, Frank, Sarah, and Gerald had several coping strategies that were directly related to their personal dispositions and previous experiences; however, most commonly they sought support from other seconded teachers. Often seconded teachers met to discuss planning issues. These informal meetings also had a therapeutic dimension. Through realizing that their experiences were similar, they gained a measure of peace of mind. Frank described some of the informal meetings he attended:

We tried to make sure that student teachers were treated fairly in multi-sectioned courses. I know, as an instructor, I found it really helpful when other people gave me copies of their plans. This was especially important for me during the first few weeks of my secondment when everything seemed to be happening so quickly.

Seconded teachers were generally complimentary about the Teacher Education Office's efforts to provide "technical support" as it might pertain to matters like clinical supervision techniques or writing reports. Sometimes, however, teachers said they needed a more personal and immediate type of assistance in dealing with problems. Other seconded teachers were not always helpful. Sensitive to age difference, Sarah, for example, had difficulty relating to older and more experienced seconded teachers. She sensed the power dimension in relationships:

I wanted to have a conversation with them, but they were more interested in giving me solutions. I think they saw their role more as my teacher, but I was looking for a colleague. The only thing that I can think of is that it had something to do with the fact that I'm considerably younger than them.

Seconded teachers do not appear to develop secure identities as teacher educators, in part because of the uneven support of curriculum departments and also possibly because of the lack of personal and focused help. It seems they want entry to the university community, yet they know involvement is short-term and gaining entry may not be the best investment of their limited time and energy. Although seconded teachers are given responsibility for many of the practical dimensions of teacher education, they remain on the periphery, never fully gaining entry to the mainstream university culture. In summary, seconded teachers took the initiative to organize their own support; the faculty

neither suggested nor designed it to any degree beyond the orientation phase, and departments had mixed success in welcoming and including them.

*Returning to the School Community*

Much has been written about the transition from student teaching to beginning teaching (Greene & Campbell, 1993; Sarason, 1993), but little research examines the experience of teachers moving from the classroom to the university and then back again to the classroom (DiPardo, 1993; Greene & Purvis, 1995; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992).

Seconded teachers had mixed emotions when returning to the school community. Although they enjoyed secondment, teachers looked forward to renewing relationships with colleagues, pupils, and their parents. Would the school schedule be confining? Would life be more stressful or less so? How would other teachers receive them? How would their teaching change?

*Transferring new approaches.* In the first three or four months after Gerald's return to classroom teaching, he wrestled with both his identity and with putting into practice what he had learned about teacher education as a faculty advisor and instructor. He was somewhat embarrassed to have fallen short of his own expectations: "I found it more difficult than I had anticipated. I found myself falling back into some of the types of teaching methods that really weren't the best and knowing it because I've been through this process of working with other teachers and student teachers." Ashamed, Gerald noted, "I've gone back to doing things exactly like I was before because they work for me." Reverting to previous practice was common among seconded teachers returning to their schools.

The secondment experience gave each of these teachers opportunities to reflect on their own practice, viewing it from different perspectives and comparing themselves with other experienced teachers. Brenda, Frank, Sarah, and Gerald expected to be more effective classroom teachers as a result of their university appointments. Brenda noted, "I think it will take me less time to do what I was doing before, because it is clearer to me now. I have a better understanding of the planning process. Secondment has been like a refresher course."

Most of Brenda's new knowledge came from reading and researching topics she addressed in her courses. She became more critical of her own performance: "Since coming to the university I have had the opportunity to think about the ways I can be a more effective teacher. I'm looking forward to adapting my practice when I return to the classroom setting."

*Watching others teach.* A common theme running through seconded teachers' stories is the importance they attach to watching other people teach. The opportunity to observe student teachers and cooperating teachers during the practicum was important to their professional development and a catalyst for reflecting on their attitudes and beliefs about teaching. Frank noted, "I rarely get the opportunity to observe my colleagues in action. I always thought that the lack of opportunity in observing others is one of the things that hampers our professional growth." He expected he might teach differently as a result of having observed student teachers and cooperating teachers teach.

Seconded teachers expanded their teaching repertoires during secondment. They picked up ideas from student teachers, cooperating teachers, and student

teachers' assignments. Before returning to the school community, seconded teachers expected to share new resources with colleagues. There is no evidence in the data, however, that they did share new resources with colleagues. According to Gerald, "Everyone is just too busy. I talk to the other teachers in my department, but I don't really know them very well. On occasion I've made resources available to them, but we don't plan together or anything."

*Gaining confidence.* Seconded teachers all believed that they had become more confident because of their secondment. The source of their new confidence rested in the feeling of being current with regard to educational theory. Gerald had this to say:

When I went back to the classroom I took all the things I had ordered in my mind about how to teach, the theory of it because it was a great chance to reflect, to read, to learn about reordering all the things I do in the classroom. Finding, in fact, that all the things I was doing were valid. There was a big jump in my confidence. I learned that theory is very important to understanding my practice.

*Developing professional discourse.* The language that seconded teachers used to describe their teaching is important in understanding the differences between school and university communities. Frank admitted that he did not possess a concise language about teaching, especially when talking about things like constructivism. Over the term of his university appointment Frank recognized that he had changed. "I can imagine that some of my colleagues may be somewhat intimidated by the language I might use to describe my teaching. Before coming here I would never have used words like epistemology and constructivism." Like Frank, Sarah acknowledged that she too talked differently about teaching because of her university appointment. An important dimension of the university experience for Sarah, however, was being a graduate student:

I should not have to apologize to anyone for speaking in a concise language. Teaching is a specialized field, and it's about time that people recognized that teachers have a specialized language. I'm pretty sure, however, that many of my colleagues will be intimidated by my language, but I don't see why I should have to tone it down.

Sarah seemed "hot and cold." At one time she worried about appearing better informed than her colleagues and overextending herself; at another she was forceful and "in their face" with her expertise.

As Brenda, Frank, Sarah, and Gerald neared the end of secondment, they wished to maintain and somehow extend the professional relationships they had developed in their new roles. This was not easy. No follow-up on secondment was planned by either the university or the school districts. Frank joked that he should start a club for "recovering" seconded teachers, a place where they could come together occasionally to talk about their experiences in the light of the transition made when returning to the classroom, and also where those about to embark on secondment for the first time could be prepared and supported.

Seconded teachers indicated that they would like to continue working with student teachers when they returned to the school community. Obviously the most common way for this to occur would be to become cooperating teachers

again. Seconded teachers were changed, especially through the faculty advising role, which gave them new insight into the often difficult adjustments that both student teachers and cooperating teachers make in working together in the practicum and forced them to strategize openly about teaching.

In an effort to promote collaboration among the various participants in teacher education, seconded teachers suggested ways to extend the role. Some welcomed the prospect of being faculty advisors in the districts to which they were returning. In addition, Sarah suggested that beginning teachers and teachers-on-call in her district might benefit from spending one morning per week in her classroom observing her practice. Seconded teachers preferred to think of student teachers as "works in progress," so Frank suggested that he would be ideally suited to working with first-year teachers in a part-time capacity, acting as a liaison between the school and the university. Seconded teachers could think of no reason why secondment had to be a "one-shot deal." They discussed continuing their teaching responsibilities at the university while simultaneously teaching children or youth in the school setting. All of these comments and suggestions reflect a desire to maximize the skills, expertise, and knowledge acquired and refined during secondment and to contribute to the professional preparation and continued development of colleagues, a serious commitment they were prepared to assume.

#### *Conclusions*

We began this study with two purposes. After exploring seconded teachers' experience of and understanding of their roles as university instructors and faculty advisors, five general expectations were evident: being a role model, serving as a liaison between schools and the university, becoming prepared through a successful orientation program, seeking ongoing support, and working with highly committed student teachers.

1. *Seconded teachers defined their roles based on their own student teaching experiences and their work as cooperating teachers.* They acted as role models when they demonstrated teaching practices and techniques that had worked for them as classroom teachers. These results are consistent with other studies. Adams (1993), for example, noted that seconded teachers took seriously the fact that they were role models and facilitators of learning. Seconded teachers discovered, however, that demonstrating classroom techniques in the university setting was difficult. For example, they were concerned that student teachers assessed their performance, and the strategies they demonstrated from a student's rather than a teacher's perspective. This problem has been reported by other researchers (Feiman-Nemser & Featherstone, 1992; Lortie, 1975). In sum, seconded teachers readjusted their expectations about student teachers' dispositions toward learning and teaching. They became much more patient in assisting student teachers to identify the complexities of learning to teach.
2. *Seconded teachers expected to be a direct link between schools and the university.* They believed they could narrow the gap between what they often described as the overly theoretical nature of university-based teacher education and the practical reality of the schools, although they sometimes acknowledged that they were unfamiliar with current educational theory.

They were confident that they could acquire the theory as needed and present it meaningfully in the real world of the classroom to student teachers, who, according to Zeichner (1990), are frequently preoccupied with "excessive realism."

3. *Seconded teachers expected the Faculty of Education to take an active role in easing their transition from the classroom to the university.* They expected a thorough initial orientation program, as well as ongoing support throughout the year. For example, strategies for teaching adults, grading assignments, and dealing with failing students would have been useful. The necessity of a well-organized orientation program for seconded teachers has been highlighted in other studies (Adams, 1993; Cornbleth & Ellsworth, 1994; Maynes et al., 1998).
4. *Seconded teachers believe that collaboration among teachers improves teaching practice.* Elementary teachers in particular indicated that they were used to planning and collaborating with other teachers. Before secondment, teachers expected to build similar collaborative relationships with full-time faculty. They did not anticipate that the most supportive relationships would develop instead among seconded teachers. The results of this research are consistent with the findings of Adams (1993) and Dawson (1996) who reported seconded teachers' concerns about out-of-touch full-time faculty and the difficulty of establishing meaningful professional relationships with them.
5. *This research has demonstrated that teachers began secondment expecting student teachers to be open-minded and enthusiastic adult learners.* General student teacher characteristics have been reported elsewhere in the literature (Britzman, 1986; Goodlad, 1990; Howey & Zimpher, 1996; Lanier & Little, 1986; RATE I-IV, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990). Overall, seconded teachers enjoyed working with preservice teachers, but they were disappointed and concerned that a minority of them lacked initiative, determination, collegial mentality, and a caring disposition toward working with children and youth, all qualities that are, they said, important to being an effective teacher. As experienced cooperating teachers, they were able to compare exemplary student teachers they had worked with over the years with current teaching candidates in terms of their willingness to take risks, engage pupils in meaningful learning, and reflect on emerging practice.

Regarding the second purpose of our study, two issues need to be considered in order that seconded teachers' skills and knowledge can be used more effectively to inform the practice of teacher education.

First, one must recognize that power favors the university in recruiting and hiring seconded teachers because the Associate Dean, in this case, deals directly with individual teachers rather than with schools or school districts. Seconded teachers have considerably less formal power and status in the teacher education setting (Brookhart & Loadman, 1990; Cooper, 1988). We think a better approach would be to select seconded teachers more carefully in the first place. School districts and the Faculty of Education could enter into more formal agreements about the hiring and redeployment of seconded

teachers. This might involve some extended teacher education responsibilities once secondment ends.

Second, the Faculty of Education could do a better job of educating seconded teachers about not only the preservice teacher education program but, specifically, the expectations and roles for the participants. Organizing individuals into small cohorts and assigning a coordinator would provide seconded teachers with a more personalized and immediate form of support. Adjusting to the much larger university setting is a major factor in a seconded teacher's transition from being a teacher to being a teacher educator. Secondment could be improved if the university employed a version of a mentoring program. Just as seconded teachers act as mentors to student teachers, they could be mentored by experienced teacher educators.

#### *Contributions of the Study to Teacher Education*

Overall, the themes that have emerged in this research highlight five central issues: the contrast between university and school cultures, the value of reflection on practice, the strength of commitment to classroom teaching, the nature of seconded teachers' professional identities, and the usefulness of secondment as professional development.

#### *The Contrast Between University and School Cultures*

Seconded teachers distinguished between the university and school cultures. One of the major differences they identified was the workload and tempo of the average workday (Apple, 1986; Brookhart & Loadman, 1990; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). For most seconded teachers, the flexibility of the university workday was a liberating experience. Although their workloads were demanding, they had time to establish new professional relationships, attend lectures, and talk to students and colleagues. Some teachers, however, missed the school-based community of support that they were used to as classroom teachers. As a result, some seconded teachers felt marginalized in the university setting. They were unsure to which community they belonged. Contributing to this marginalization was that for those seconded teachers used to working in collaborative relationships, finding new professional working relationships was difficult in the much larger university setting.

#### *The Value of Reflection on Practice*

The secondment experience provided teachers with frequent opportunities to reflect on their own practice. By assuming new roles (Huberman, 1992) as instructors in teacher education programs, seconded teachers understood more clearly their own teaching practice. Rather than being a career-altering experience, however, secondment was viewed as professional development, an opportunity to affirm what they already knew, and a source of theoretical rationales for practice.

#### *Strength of Commitment to Classroom Teaching*

Seconded teachers constructed their role in terms of the relationship between teacher and student regardless of the setting. Evidence of this can be seen in how they described their satisfaction with student teachers' performances, as evoking the same kind of feeling as when they watched their elementary or secondary students learn.

Seconded teachers were not usually seeking a career change. They viewed secondment as personal professional development and a renewal opportunity. This research suggests that the temporary, short-term nature of secondment as it now stands could be potentially detrimental to their careers. First, there is the displacement factor. They risk being assigned to different schools after secondment, which means that they have to establish new relationships with administrators, colleagues, students, and parents. Second, the perception among some school districts that secondment is like a vacation may not improve their prospects for promotion. Districts provide no clearly defined career paths for individuals after secondment and make no obvious efforts to use the new knowledge and skills that seconded teachers gain during their time at the university.

#### *The Nature of Seconded Teachers' Professional Identities*

Seconded teachers did not become full members of university communities. They developed professional relationships with other seconded teachers, but not with full-time faculty. Gaining full membership in the teacher education community would probably take more time than is available and more intentionality than is planned in the context of the teacher education community. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Dawson (1996), who concluded that most faculty members remain outside any involvement with seconded teachers. Taking on the roles of a university instructor and a faculty advisor were both professionally rewarding and problematic for the seconded teachers who participated in this study. Two dominant identities were maintained throughout secondment: classroom teacher and, if applicable, graduate student.

Seconded teachers took from the university those viewpoints and orientations to practice that were congruent with previously held images of their work and reinforced and validated their experiences. Although they were receptive intellectually to the theories and skills presented at the university, they tended to accept more fully the methods that had worked for them as teachers.

Some seconded teachers are at the same time graduate students. Their identities are perhaps more likely to be shifting or in flux. They are more likely to have sought secondment and considered leaving classroom teaching and pursuing an academic career. They may, therefore, occasionally downplay their identities as classroom teachers when interacting with professors. When working with student teachers, however, they downplayed their graduate student identity, instead promoting themselves as experienced classroom teachers. At times seconded teachers were somewhat frustrated trying to balance university teaching and practicum supervision with graduate study.

#### *The Usefulness of Secondment as Professional Development*

Teachers viewed secondment as professional development because they were forced to take on new roles and responsibilities (Yee, 1990). Taking on the role of a seconded teacher enabled experienced practitioners to revisit and renew their professional practice. Employing seconded teachers to teach curriculum and instruction courses and supervise student teachers connects preservice teacher education to the continuing learning of experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Fullan, 1995).

### Summary

In the past one of the most common forms of utilizing practitioners' involvement in teacher education has been through the use of cooperating teachers. The triadic relationships among classroom teacher, preservice teacher, and university supervisor has been a source of research and writing.

Goodlad (1990) called for teacher leaders who are comfortable in both the K-12 system and in higher education. Seconded teachers made an important contribution to the preparation of the student teachers with whom they worked by sharing their wisdom of practice. Seconded teachers are highly competent teacher educators who function where the challenges primarily exist—in classrooms.

This research and writing has prompted us to examine ourselves as teacher educators. Like the seconded teachers in this study, we have experienced some of the tensions they described. It would be facile to think that seconded teachers could or should handle the challenges associated with making the transition from teacher to teacher educator without supportive systems in place. To their credit, seconded teachers thrived in their roles as university instructors and faculty advisors because they are strong, innovative, and committed teachers.

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