

Report on Issues Related to Teaching Education

*Developing a Teacher Education Program for the Twenty-
First Century*

by

Dr. Ron Goddard, Dean
(rgoddard@ouc.bc.ca)

&

Dr. Robert Campbell, Associate Professor

Faculty of Education
Okanagan University College
3333 College Way
Kelowna, British Columbia
Canada V1V 1V7
(office) 250-470-6036
(fax) 250-470-6084

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Introduction

The opportunity is rare these days to develop a new, from the ground up, teacher education program. Many current education degrees are evolutions of decades-old models that address modern educational issues through curricular additions and deletions rather than through new programmatic design.

The occasion for devising new degree programs from scratch occurred at Okanagan University College (OUC) through the planned dissolution of a partnership with the University of Victoria (BC), whereby OUC offered the U of Vic Bachelor of Elementary Education degree for 13 years. Once OUC determined, several years ago, to offer its own independent education degrees, program consultation and development began with an aim toward creating innovative, modern degree plans that would win approval and accreditation from OUC's Education Council (equivalent to a university senate), the BC College of Teachers (the program accrediting body in British Columbia), and the BC Ministry of Advanced Education. Approval was forthcoming in 2001/2002, with new programs start dates of September 2002.

This report is an account of the research that went into developing the new programs and an explanation of the resultant program features. Theories, principles, and foundations we selected and investigated to inform program development were:

- Constructivism
- De-centralized practice
- Experience as interpreted phenomena
- Collaborative teaching and learning
- Reflective practice
- Information and communication technology

In the presentation of this report, we discuss each of these theories and how they situate in our programmatic practice. Teacher education, of all the post-secondary disciplines, seems particularly rife with trends and worn maxims that we were careful to avoid in developing our own programs. In doing so, we defined the theories accordingly:

Constructivism: constructed meaning that is authentic, contextual, and personally derived. Independence and problem solving are fundamental to cognition and therefore must play a central role in a viable teacher education program.

De-centralized practice: participatory learning away from the authority of place, practice, and content by de-centering content (the disciplines), methods (the teacher-centered classroom), and the Loci of education (through the Learning Communities).

Experience as interpreted phenomena: knowledge is not a rigid or finite set; plurality of perspectives, meaning, and methods; celebrate the dynamic diversity of life learning as a web rather than a progression—connectedness.

Collaborative learning and teaching: student teaching in a learning community setting within the schools, collaborative students projects throughout the programs, and colloquia weeks—team taught by faculty

Reflective practice: giving students the time and opportunity to reflect on what they see and do, as opposed to the cafeteria-style of course offerings. Students should begin constructing meaning from the beginning of their studies.

Information and communications technology: mobile computing for every faculty and student.

The presentation concludes with the program evaluation plan and recommendations for further program development.