

**External Reviewer's Report
Teacher Education Program
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia**

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July 6, 2018

Acknowledgements

Reviewing the work of one's colleagues is simultaneously an exceedingly difficult and rewarding task. It has been our privilege to learn about the teacher education program in an institution that is not our own. We extend our sincere thanks to the faculty, staff, and students of the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia for their willingness to share their views and experiences, and for making our site visit such an informative and pleasant one. We acknowledge the effort made by University of British Columbia colleagues, staff, and students, to be present during our time on campus and to participate in interviews. We appreciated the opportunity to meet with external stakeholders from the Ministry of Education, BC Teachers Association, and various senior district administrators from a variety of school jurisdictions.

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Teacher Education Program
Faculty of Education - University of British Columbia
Report of the External Reviewers

In our role as external reviewers, we were asked to review the Faculty of Education's Teacher Education Program. The reviewers were not provided with specific questions which the committee accepted and took to mean that all aspects of the program were open to review.

To this end, and prior to our site visit on June 5 and 6, 2018, we examined the *Self Study – Teacher Education Program*. The *Self Study* provided the reviewers with a strong overview. During the site visit, the review committee received additional written feedback from various faculty and support staff.

Many external stakeholders, administration, teacher candidates and support staff came to meet with the Review Committee. The Rural Teacher Education Program was very well represented. In contrast, there was a relative lack of representation from instructors, seconded instructors and faculty advisors at the Vancouver campus. This reflects perhaps different levels of commitment across the different groups and/or timing of the review during the final practicum. However, the meetings were respectful, professional and marked by forthright and lively contributions. The Review Committee is very appreciative of the various understandings of, and perspectives on, the teacher education programs voiced by those who attended and also by those who completed the survey.

This report is organized under two larger categories, strengths of the program and key observations, reflections and recommendations. Four areas are highlighted under the areas for consideration and improvement with recommendations following each of the areas. The report concludes with a summary of the recommendations.

Strengths of the Teacher Education Program

The Review Team was struck with the overwhelmingly positive relationship between the UBC Teacher Education Program and its external stakeholders within the wider community, including the Ministry of Education, School Boards, and School Districts. As we were informed there had been a prior history of fractured relationships, we interpreted this as a significant achievement, likely associated with a number of factors including: adequate resourcing of the outreach function of the program (faculty advisors and practicum coordination); the level of commitment of the staff and faculty within the Teacher Education Office to relationship building; the Dean's as well as the wider Faculty's responsiveness to and leadership within many policy

processes of mutual concern, such as the new process for provincial teacher education program approval.

The team was further impressed with the passion for high quality, evidence-based teacher education within the Teacher Education Office, and with the creative support systems available to it in the form of teaching and learning technologies and library resources. It also noted a sincere desire to contribute constructively to the teacher education mandate among many of the faculty within the four academic departments. Although remnants of the tension resulting from perspectival differences that had characterized the protracted timeline for faculty within and across the four departments to reach agreement on a proposed curriculum and delivery model for the teacher education program were still apparent, there seemed to be a general sense among most that the program was moving in the “right direction.” Indeed, the team was highly impressed with the calibre of the teacher candidates it met with and their infectious aspirations toward teaching excellence.

The review team fully appreciates that providing a teacher education program of the size and scale of the UBC Faculty of Education across four distinct academic departments, each with its own culture and priorities, within a research-intensive university is a highly complex challenge. The current teacher education program has been in place for approximately four years. It has made tremendous strides and has much to be proud of. Smaller scale and strategically purposed offshoots of the overall program, such as the version delivered by the West Kootenay Rural Teacher Education Partners (WKTEP), seems to have achieved considerable success. This appears to have been the result of the capacity for strategic flexibility in aspects of the WKTEP pathway where the main Vancouver-based program may be further constrained by the necessity of more consistent and at times rigid elements. This report has been prepared with a profound respect for the enormity of that challenge and in the spirit of identifying areas that might be considered and improved upon, and to venture some recommendations, based on both national standards for best practice and a distillation of the insights arising from the wisdom within this particular community of practice.

Key Observations, Reflections and Recommendations

Governance

Universities in Canada are normally organized with the idea of shared, collegial governance, and as such faculty involvement in shared governance is critical. The Teacher Education program under review is a service unit holding both a coordinating and liaising function within the Faculty. It requires and relies upon the commitment of the academic Department Heads and the faculty members in each of the four departments for shared, collegial governance to ensure students experience a coherent program that educates them to competently and confidently enter the teaching profession. The teacher candidates that the Faculty of Education sends out to the schools

in British Columbia are ambassadors not only for the teacher education program, but also for the Faculty of Education – in short, they can and do enhance the Faculty of Education’s reputation.

There was a general perception that a greater commitment to shared governance was needed on both Committee on Curriculum, Admissions, Standings, and Appeals (CCASA) and Teacher Education Advisory Committee (TEAC). As decision-making for the Teacher Education Program is made through these two committees it is important that the members of both continue to include tenured faculty members within the professorial ranks who are involved in the Teacher Education program. Problems with membership on CCASA and TEAC were identified in a number of different ways to the Review Committee: e.g., information not being communicated back to faculty members in departments, lack of input to the committees, etc.

The Teacher Education Program requires a great deal of collaboration across the four academic departments in order to carry out its coordinating and liaising function. The Review Committee acknowledges and appreciates the expertise and scholarship of the faculty members in each of the four academic departments. The Review Committee also recognizes and appreciates the independence of each of the departments and the expressed desire and commitment of each of the Department Heads to greater collaboration. However, in order to address the course fragmentation and increase the opportunities for interdisciplinary coherence within the current Teacher Education Program, a commitment toward further collaboration is necessary. This further collaboration might also serve to elevate the status of the Teacher Education Program among faculty members across the Faculty.

The Committee recommends:

- Terms of Reference regarding committee membership on CCASA and TEAC be renewed and clarified;
- All Heads provide an opportunity for the CCASA and TEAC committee members to present a report to the department at the Department Meeting; and
- Formal mechanisms for collaboration across departments be considered. Through this collaboration, opportunities exist to create one or more interdisciplinary courses that cohere with contemporary research in curriculum and pedagogy.

Scope and Sequencing of Teacher Education Program

In 2008, the Community to Reimagine Educational Alternatives for Teacher Education (CREATE) sought to reconceptualize the Teacher Education program in response to budgetary constraints and the societal, technological, and economic demands of 21st century public and private education. Since 2012, the Teacher Education Office has developed, launched, and implemented several different innovative programming initiatives such as, but not limited to: 1)

New Teacher Mentoring Project; 2) Community Field Experience; 3) International Baccalaureate Educator Stream; 4) Montessori Educator Stream; 5) West Kootenay Rural Teacher Education Program expansion; and 6) Indigenous Education Elementary Cohort. Part of restructuring the program sought to align it with other undergraduate programs across the university in terms of required credits for graduation. Most teacher candidates are now required to complete a total of 60 credits to graduate from the program. Part of the restructuring and reconceptualizing involved redistributing and reallocating the number of credits ascribed to different Departments and their respective courses in the program.

Another aspect of restructuring and reconceptualizing the program involved reducing the timeframe to complete the program from 12 to 11 months. The rationale for reducing the program to 11 months was to enable graduating candidates enough time to accept and be oriented to international teaching positions in August and/or receive provincial certification in time to start teaching positions in September. However, *several instructors and teacher candidates expressed concerns about the intensity of the condensed schedule*. The heavy workloads during certain terms have contributed toward increasing the anxiety and stress that certain candidates experience while in the program. Therefore, although teacher candidates expressed that the 11 month program enabled their “economic” access toward becoming a teacher in BC, many felt they are “rushed” through the program.

Part of the new program involved creating a new series of Inquiry Seminar courses. In the syllabus provided for EDUC 451 it states the following:

The inquiry process across the BEd (Elementary/Middle Years) program consists of:

- learning about teacher inquiry (EDUC 450 – Inquiry I);
- preparing to explore an inquiry question (EDUC 450 – Inquiry I);
- developing and sharing one’s inquiry process (EDUC 451 – Inquiry II);
- exploring links to practice and integrating the question into practicum planning (EDUC 451 – Inquiry II); and
- reflecting on the inquiry process, links to practice, ongoing questions, learning over the year and developing professional learning goals (EDUC 452 – Inquiry III).

Although some consistency is represented across the Elementary/Middle Years/Secondary programming for this series of courses, during our interviews there was evidence of a lack of consistency in its implementation depending on who was assigned to teach the course. This in turn was evident during our interviews with teacher candidates in terms of quality of experience during the course. Moreover, several professors as well as teacher candidates questioned the number of credits assigned to these courses. Nonetheless, we can see in the reconceptualization of the new program, that this series of Inquiry courses was created to provide a curricular and pedagogical space for candidates to bridge what they are learning within the different courses in relation to

(inquiry) questions they develop and issues they encounter during their practicum placement and community field experiences. These courses seek to provide a space for teacher candidates to inquire about themselves as future educators, as facilitators of the inquiry process in their classrooms, and as teacher researchers.

Rather than seeing this specific series of courses as a site for candidates to inquire and develop their professional competencies, the following additional concerns were raised by professors and teacher candidates:

1. Depending on who teaches the inquiry courses, there are redundancies across these three courses. Consequently, teacher candidates often feel that EDUC 451 and 452 are make-work courses.
2. Professors teaching courses assigned to different departments which have been reduced from 3 credits to 2 credits and integrate processes of inquiry felt that 3 seminars on Inquiry were unnecessary. Instead, they would like the Curriculum and Pedagogy courses to return to 3 credits. Professors expressed that there is a lack of time to address the major curricular and pedagogical concepts related to their respective disciplinary areas of teaching and learning.
3. Several teacher candidates and instructors advised that the graduates were not adequately prepared to teach the curriculum areas (e.g., literacy, mathematics, science).

There are several innovative teacher education cohorts that have specific thematic programming which is nested within the larger teacher education program. Such cohorts should enable professors to develop and implement a coherent program. Although it is clear that “learning outcomes” have been established for the larger program, some teacher candidates are still unsure what they are. This was also reflected in some of the course syllabi that were submitted for examination.

It was evident the governance structures have created some systemic barriers toward ensuring coherence and consistency across the teacher education program and its respective cohorts. Currently, the four Department Chairs are responsible for staffing their allocated courses within the teacher education program. During our interviews we learned about the difficulties in hiring a coherent team who could deliver each cohort program collaboratively on the main campus. Several teacher candidates expressed that they experienced the program as fragmented where professors did not make connections between or among their courses and respective assignments. Such fragmentation, or lack of communication among professors teaching within a specific cohort, also contributed to the unproductive redundancy of course content, readings, activities, and assignments.

Smaller teams, such as the West Kootenay Rural Education Program, were able to collaborate on developing and implementing a flexible yet coherent program. Therefore, the capacity to collaboratively plan and implement the scope and sequencing of the program seems to depend on the number, experience, and quality of instructors teaching across it.

Several teacher candidates expressed concerns about the kinds of content they were learning in courses such as, but not limited to EPSE 310 *Assessment and Learning in the Classroom*. Moreover, they questioned the sequencing of certain courses that either come before or after their practicum placement.

A Pass/Fail grading system is in place in the Teacher Education programs. The committee heard different rationales for the system (e.g., reduces stress for teacher candidates, the goal is mastery learning) and different understandings of the measurement principles associated with the pass/fail system. As well, we heard that it can pose difficulties for teacher candidates applying to graduate programs beyond UBC.

The Committee recommends:

- Consider extending program to 12 months, where preparation for the workforce is embedded;
- Encourage department heads to collaborate with each other and different cohort leads when hiring staff to teach within each cohort program;
- Organize a retreat for entire teaching staff to discuss the program as a whole and in relation to different cohorts to reduce unnecessary redundancies;
- Consider ways to embed inquiry within the curriculum courses to enable teacher candidates to better understand the ways in which inquiry is articulated within the K-12 BC Curriculum;
- Create a Teacher Education Professor Policy Guide that ensures the communication of larger conceptual framework, connections between courses and cohorts, sample course syllabi, descriptions of cohorts;
- Combine some methods courses at the Elementary and Middle Years Program to model an integrated/interdisciplinary approach for curriculum design and implementation that takes place out in the schools. Such integrated/interdisciplinary courses could be worth 3 credits (Science and Math, Art and Music, Science and Physical Education, etc.). This could create more time and space for courses such as, but not limited to *Literacy Practices and Assessment*.
- Re-consider the grading system and ensure that, whatever system is adopted, the associated measurement principles are understood and implemented consistently.

Indigenous Education

The Faculty is living up to its commitment as a signatory on the Accord on Indigenous Education (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010). The Faculty has hired 13 Indigenous scholars and opened an Associate Dean position in Indigenous education.

Committed to increasing the number of Indigenous teachers in the profession, the Faculty supports a community-based Indigenous Teacher Education (NITEP) program. This is especially commendable because direct government funding does not apply until the NITEP candidates come to UBC campus in Vancouver for their final (professional) year. The Associate Dean is currently reviewing the NITEP curriculum and plans are in place to expand to an additional site. The Committee heard that NITEP could have a stronger and more seamless relationship with the Teacher Education Office. In particular, concern was expressed that NITEP candidates require more support and advocacy from that Office during the professional year.

Building on its commitment to help educate all teacher candidates about Indigenous issues, a required course in Indigenous education (EDUC 440: Aboriginal Education in Canada) is part of the Teacher Education program. Currently, the Associate Dean is responsible for most of the teaching in EDUC:440. The Faculty does not have an Indigenous scholar whose research is in Indigenous Teacher Education and few of the Indigenous scholars on faculty teach in the program. Teacher candidates advised that EDUC 440 would be more beneficial to them if it were scheduled across the year (rather than in one term) and integrated across the life of the program. Currently, teacher candidates in the secondary program do not take EDUC 440 until their final term.

The Committee heard about incidents of racist behaviour directed towards Indigenous teacher candidates by other candidates and instructors. Some deeply offensive teaching content was described to the Committee. These attitudes and behaviours are found in other teacher education programs across Canada. They are completely unacceptable wherever they exist but especially within programs preparing those who will educate the next generation.

The Committee recommends:

- Revise membership on the Committee on Curriculum, Admissions, Standings and Appeals to include the Associate Dean of Indigenous Education as a voting member (rather than a non-voting representative of NITEP);
- Recruit at least one Indigenous Scholar to a tenured/tenure track position whose research is in Indigenous Teacher Education;
- Strengthen the alignment between NITEP and the Teacher Education Office;
- Consider scheduling/integrating EDUC 440 across the year rather than in one term;
- Establish safe and accountable processes for teacher candidates, faculty and staff to bring forward complaints about harassment and racism directed towards Indigenous peoples; and

- Establish opportunities for faculty, instructors, teacher candidates and staff to recognise how racism is manifested within the profession and discipline of education today and how to respond when they encounter it.

Culture and Climate

Our review team found evidence of frustration on the part of some faculty members within the academic departments as to decisions made about the Teacher Education Program several years ago as well as with respect to the vision and leadership of those who were implementing those shared decisions at this stage of the program's development. The Teacher Education Office faculty and staff continue to experience a level of criticism directed toward them from some quarters within the wider Faculty. We were concerned to observe occasions in which such views were expressed in a somewhat disrespectful manner and concluded that some faculty members may still have work to do to come to terms with the collective decisions that have been taken and to move forward in a constructive manner such that their expertise can benefit the program.

A complication inherent in the structure and composition of the Faculty of Education is that, while the teacher education program is not aligned with any one departmental home, many but not all professors across all academic departments have some role in the undergraduate teacher education program. As would be expected, some faculty prefer to focus their scholarly and teaching efforts on graduate students within their designated disciplines, and some hold general expertise or expertise in the general field of advanced education but are not certified teachers, or knowledgeable about teacher education. Thus, for some, the teacher education program seems a distraction, rather than a core function of the Faculty.

This context has contributed to some fractured relationships, and some of which seem still in the process of being rebuilt. There appears to have been considerable effort on the part of the Associate Dean and Teacher Education Office team to consult actively and to nurture effective communication with the departments.

Matters linked with decisional authority with respect to the curriculum and pedagogy associated with the teacher education program and its components seem not fully resolved within the Faculty. Some faculty focus on their academic freedom to interpret curriculum requirements using their own preferred approach while others appreciate the necessity of a coordinated and coherent program delivery and implementation approach.

There are also some operational challenges associated with finding an optimal balance between budget management, which incurs some inflexibilities in program delivery, and a desire to meet the needs of individuals (teachers and learners) through flexible approaches. Finally, it should be noted that a recently agreed upon timeline for transition of faculty positions to Management and Professional positions has affected morale for some members of the team in the Teacher Education Office.

The Committee recommends:

- Identify strategies to continue the work of improving interpersonal relationships across the Faculty, including those that may have been challenged by the philosophical and pedagogical differences of perspective that surfaced during many years of teacher education program revision; and
- Continue to build transparency and clarity as to where various decisions with respect to the program are made, and who holds responsibility for the processes of decision making.

Conclusion

Overall, the Review Committee found the UBC Teacher Education Program to be an ambitious and complex program, with many strengths and a number of challenges with respect to design, governance, and culture. The Committee recognizes and respects the challenge programs face in creating vibrant, coherent contemporary teacher education programs that are sufficiently flexible to adapt to ever changing conditions and contexts. The Committee offers a number of recommendations for consideration as the Faculty sets its course for the future.

Summary of Recommendations

Each of the categories discussed in this report contained recommendations specific to that category. The following summary of recommendations draws upon each of prior recommendations, collapsing some of them, and prioritizing them.

- Recommendation 1:** Improve and increase faculty commitment to teacher education. In particular:
- Terms of Reference regarding committee membership on CCASA and TEAC be renewed and clarified; and
 - All Heads provide an opportunity to the CCASA and TEAC committee members to present a report the department at the Department Meeting.

Recommendation 2: Create formal mechanisms for collaboration across departments to improve program coherence—which might include a faculty retreat. Consider:

- Creating one or more interdisciplinary courses that cohere with contemporary research in curriculum and pedagogy;
- Combining some methods courses at the Elementary and Middle Years Program to model an integrated/interdisciplinary approach for curriculum design and implementation that takes place out in the schools. Such integrated/interdisciplinary courses could be worth 3 credits (Science and Math, Art and Music, Science and Physical Education, etc.). This could create more time and space for courses such as, but not limited to *Literacy Practices and Assessment*;
- Embedding inquiry within the curriculum courses to enable teacher candidates to better understand the ways in which inquiry is articulated within the K-12 BC Curriculum;
- Removing existing course and assignment redundancies; and
- Extending the 60 credit program over 12 months.

Recommendation 3: Reconsider the grading system and ensure that whatever system is adopted, the associated measurement principles are understood and implemented consistently.

Recommendation 4: Elevate the status of Indigenous Education in the teacher education program. In particular:

- Revise membership on the Committee on Curriculum, Admissions, Standings and Appeals to include the Associate Dean of Indigenous Education as a voting member (rather than a non-voting representative of NITEP);
- Recruit at least one Indigenous Scholar to a tenured/tenure track position whose research is in Indigenous Teacher Education;
- Strengthen the alignment between NITEP and the Teacher Education Office;
- Consider scheduling/integrating EDUC:440 across the year rather than in one term;
- Establish safe and accountable processes for teacher candidates, faculty and staff to bring forward complaints about harassment and racism directed towards Indigenous peoples
- Establish opportunities for faculty, instructors, teacher candidates and staff to recognise how racism is manifested within the profession and discipline of education today and how to respond when they encounter it; and

Recommendation 5: Identify strategies to continue the work of improving interpersonal relationships across the Faculty, including those that may have been challenged by the philosophical and pedagogical differences of perspective that surfaced during many years of teacher education program revision.

Recommendation 6: Create a Teacher Education Professor Policy Guide that ensures the communication of larger conceptual framework, connections between courses and cohorts, sample course syllabi, descriptions of cohorts.