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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the scope of "failure" in the period of practice immediately prior to teacher certification, by examining personal experiences of 25 preservice teachers who "failed" or hovered in failure-like circumstances. Indicators of failure included poor interpersonal skills, lack of primary focus on students, lack of commitment and attention to lesson preparation, lack of enthusiasm for and interpretation of content knowledge, poor classroom management, and poor general preparation for the school placement. The paper concludes that the underlying assumptions and structure of student/practice teaching should be reconceptualized, as for many individuals its traditional format, scope, sequence, and emphasis proves problematic and sometimes entirely mis-educative. Other implications for teacher education include the need to establish more pertinent selection criteria for prospective teachers, to offer preservice teachers extensive and continuing counseling and guidance, to provide greater levels of care and attention to student/practice teaching placements, to provide increased levels of effective supervision and facilitation of their practice, to provide opportunities for substantial remediation, and to provide exit counseling and vocational guidance when necessary. A taxonomy of "failure" factors is presented. (Contains 57 references.) (JDD)

"FAILURE" IN STUDENT / PRACTICE TEACHING: A SKELETON IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION CLOSET

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Abstract

There is scant published material which focuses on "failure" in student / practice teaching; "failure" is a phenomenon which provides a window through which to examine the practices of teacher educators and the substance and configuration of preservice teacher education programs. Using personal experiences of preservice teachers who "failed" -- or hovered in failure-like circumstances -- we explored the scope of "failure" in the period of practice immediately prior to teacher certification, and developed a taxonomy of factors that proved productive for this exploratory study.

We collected 25 records from two very different teacher preparation institutions of student / practice teachers who "failed" over a ten year period. These records were examined and analyzed with the purpose of establishing demographic profiles of individuals who "failed" and the collective circumstances surrounding their "failure". Finally, we drew some implications for teacher education: the need to establish more pertinent selection criteria for prospective teachers; and, after selection, to offer preservice teachers extensive and continuing counselling and guidance; to provide greater levels of care and attention to student / practice teaching placements; to provide increased levels of effective supervision and facilitation of their practice; to provide opportunities for substantial remediation where potentially productive and beneficial; and, for those individuals who, despite such measures, "fail", extensive exit counseling and vocational guidance.

Most importantly, we suggest that the underlying assumptions and structure of student / practice teaching be reconceptualized, since for many individuals its traditional format, scope, sequence, and emphasis proves problematic and sometimes entirely mis-educative. Lastly, we suggest the need for further focus on this window of our practice by researchers who consider the

role of supervisors, practitioners, and placements, as well as the congruity and focus of programmatic philosophies and orientations as they impact and interact with the perspectives and goals of preservice teachers.

Authors' Notes

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"FAILURE" IN STUDENT / PRACTICE TEACHING: A SKELETON IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION CLOSET

The task of restructuring teacher education is an essential step in the improvement of schools in the United States of America and elsewhere. Yet, despite the well-publicized failings of schools and teachers and the less-admitted dismal efforts of teacher preparation institutions and programs (see, e.g., Goodlad, 1990; Leslie & Lewis, 1990; *A Nation at Risk*, 1983), we do not have crystal clear pictures of where we have gone astray. While the volume of creditable research on schools, classrooms, teachers, and teacher education has multiplied over the last decade (Houston, 1990; Wittrock, 1986), we do not have resolute, focused images of optimal preservice teacher preparation programs. Indeed, teacher educators are accused of not having a powerful theoretical base and "that student teaching has failed to evolve much beyond the medieval apprenticeship training model" (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990: 514; see, also, e.g., Applegate, 1986). Critics suggest that field experiences, including student / practice teaching, reflect a lack of theoretical frameworks (Bush, 1987; McIntyre, 1983) which drive conceptually sound organizational and implementational aspects of learning the practice of teaching (Watts, 1987; Zeichner, 1987).

Thematic Foci and Orientations in Teacher Education

Thematic Foci

Instead of theoretical frameworks in teacher education, there are currently a plethora of thematic, instructional and curricular foci, most of which are often touted as being superior to past models of preparing teachers. Examples of recent thematic foci which serve to unify the activities of teacher preparation include loosely and diversely defined concepts such as, "Teacher as Reflective Practitioner," "Teacher as Problem-solver," and "Teacher as Researcher"

(Barnes, 1987; Duckworth, 1987; Geiger, 1989; Howey & Zimpher, 1987). In addition, preservice teacher education instructional and curricular foci identified by Zeichner (1983) include: "behavioristic" which emphasizes development of specific, observable teacher skills; "personalistic" which focuses on developing personality characteristics of expert teachers; "traditional craft" which stresses teaching as a craft of which apprenticeship in the classroom is the central feature; and, the "inquiry-oriented" approach that promotes preservice teacher inquiry about the contexts and methods of teaching (see, Duckworth, 1986).

Building upon Zeichner's (1983) perspectives, Doyle (1990) identified five major paradigms or themes that underlie thinking about the development of preservice teachers. These perspectives essentially underpin the conceptualization of preservice teachers at the threshold of their new careers, that is, programs define, to varying degrees of emphasis, teachers as: (1) "good employees" who accept the prevailing norms and practices prevalent in schools; (2) "junior professors" who view effective teaching as related to knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences; (3) "fully functioning persons" who view self-knowledge and psychological maturity as the bench mark of success; (4) "innovators" who have been exposed to the most recent instructional approaches incorporating current research and theory; and, (5) "reflective professionals" whose preparation fosters inquiry about teaching and the development of observational, analytical, interpretative, and decision-making skills.

Orientations

Feiman-Nemser (1990) delineated five conceptual orientations in teacher preparation programs that integrate and subsume the frameworks of Zeichner (1983) and others (Hartnett & Naish, 1980; Joyce, 1975; Kennedy, 1987; Kirk, 1986; Zimpher & Howey, 1987). These orientations, which refer to the goals of teacher education programs and the means for achieving them, often exist side-by-side in

the same program to a lesser or greater extent and are not tied to particular curricular or thematic teacher preparation perspectives.

The "academic" orientation emphasizes the teacher's role as intellectual leader, scholar, and subject matter specialist; the "practical" orientation focuses on the elements of craft, technique, and the primacy of experience in learning to teach; the "technological" orientation attends to developing the knowledge and skills associated with teaching and defines competence in terms of performance. Learning to teach in the "personal" orientation focuses on the developmental processes associated with learning to understand, develop, and promote oneself effectively. In the "critical / social" orientation, the teacher is both an educator and political activist who participates in school curriculum and policy development. This approach seeks to develop democratic values and works to improve school conditions and educational opportunities through community involvement.

Student / Practice Teaching

Each of the programmatic foci delineated by Zeichner (1983) and the perspectives categorized by Doyle (1990) place varying degrees of importance on the student / practice teaching component in the process of learning to teach. Some, such as the "behavioristic" and "traditional craft" (Zeichner, 1983) orientations, place very high emphases on student / practice teaching. So also do some of the perspectives identified by Doyle (1990), especially those associated with the "good employee", the "junior professor", and the "innovator". Teacher preparation alternatives identified by Feiman-Nemser (1990) also reflect the emphasis on practice / student teaching as a measure in which to gauge student success through either "academic", "practical", "technological", or "critical / social" teacher preparation goals.

Just as programmatic foci differ and represent various shades and intensities of pedagogical positions, so too there is considerable diversity among prospective teachers themselves and the school and classroom settings into which they are placed to develop their professional practice. Each of these elements represents components in a vivid spectrum of characteristics and orientations that have significant bearings on the induction of new teachers. In the midst of these various programs and settings surface individuals who do not succeed in student / practice teaching. And we, as teacher educators, have not articulated clear explanations as to why some student / practice teachers "fail" to demonstrate competence at the conclusion of their teacher preparation. Who are these individuals who are unable to fulfill their personal / professional expectations and those of our particular programs? What can we learn about them and from them to improve our own programs and practices?

Why Study "Failure"?

While we believe these more recent programs and models for teacher preparation are generally promising and productive, theoretical foundations are still not pushed to the forefront in many programs. Thus, a retrospective examination of our efforts as teacher educators may usefully inform present and future practices on these matters. Indeed, we propose more than a glance in the teacher education closet of the immediate past; we suggest a full inspection of a little-spoken of matter, that of "failure" in student / practice teaching. We say, "little-spoken of matter" in referring to notions of "failure" because of a scarcity of research on the subject. Also, we do not often discuss our "failures" in public. An examination of this oftentimes unacknowledged, sometimes taboo, topic helps us recognize the fallibility of our work as teacher educators, the imperfections of our programs, and the weaknesses and strengths of the student / practice teachers with whom we work. We do this at a time when most experienced

teachers, principals and school district administrators, and even some teacher educators, suggest that student / practice teaching is one of the most significant, if not the most significant, component of teacher preparation (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Paese, 1989).

Examination of "failure" in student / practice teaching provides a window on our practices. It has potential for developing insights into an area of teacher education -- student / practice teaching, and the interaction between our practices and the characteristics of student / practice teachers themselves (c.f., Knowles, 1988; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984; Rathbone & Pierce, 1989) -- that is commonly seen, not only as the essential element of preparation, but as the culminating, capstone experience, the measure of success in teacher education (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Maxie, 1989; see, Tabachnich & Zeichner, 1984). Conversely, we sense that contexts and circumstances surrounding field experiences as central and integral components of preservice teacher preparation are not often considered as major contributing factors in preservice teachers' "failure" (see, Guyton & McIntyre, 1990).

That the topic of "failure" is taboo may be over stated. While, on the one hand, we -- as teacher educators -- do not want to admit failure in our work, we have often found, on the other hand, that our colleagues are occasionally willing to talk about it. Everyone, it seems, has a "failure story" to tell; tales reminiscent of "war stories" which classroom teachers tell over lunch in the faculty room. Invariably, these "failure stories" are about student / practice teachers who, because of their idiosyncrasies, "did not make it." Usually teacher educators identify the central and contributing problem associated with the "failure" by couching it in terms of what the particular preservice teacher could not accomplish in the period of practice. And, sometimes, the cooperating teacher is implicated as being a contributing factor. Less frequently is responsibility

attached to the teacher educator, the degree of congruity between the student / practice teacher and the school placement conditions and demands, or the preparation program itself. Rather, the problem is often cast beyond the realms of schools of education -- into the backmost reaches of the teacher education closet.

That we sought other perspectives about preservice teachers who were on the verge of "failure" occurred because we felt inadequately prepared to deal with the social, emotional, programmatic, and professional complexities that arise when "failure" occurs within our domains (see, Knowles, 1988; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989). We have seen the wide, white eyes of "failure" and have sensed the agony of such experiences. Our drive to be more effective teacher educators, able to deal constructively and insightfully with all preservice teachers under our charge, has been a powerful motivating factor for the completion of this report.

Definitions of "Failure"

We use the term "failure" to refer to situations in which individuals are judged to perform unsatisfactorily in their student / practice teaching placements for a variety of reasons. "Failure", as defined in the *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) is, ". . . the fact of running exhausted or coming short, giving way under trial, . . . failing to effect ones purpose, want of success." Such a definition sheds light on the many facets of "failure" in teacher education. Preservice teachers enter student / practice teaching, usually at the end of their formal university preparation. For many, it is the first time they are seriously tested as they try on their new roles as nearly full-time teachers in the classroom, and some of them come up short (c.f., Ryan, 1986). Some individuals cannot meet the sometimes unrealistic expectations that they and others place upon them. Some are burdened and burned by the pace, complexities, and circumstances of classroom developments, especially those circumstances which are moving towards disorder and chaos. Other individuals are thrown headfirst into the

murky waters of curriculum without substantial support to buoy them. Under such circumstances there are only two options – "to sink, or to swim." And, many experienced practitioners believe that for optimum development of prospective teachers, such options are appropriate. However, whether the trial is by water or by fire, both are unnecessarily asphyxiating. For other prospective teachers, non completion of student / practice teaching means they did not meet their goals, their purpose for being in teacher education programs. Any way that it is viewed, "failure" is a difficult, damning experience.

Individuals' Views of "Failure"

> Most of us experience failure at some time in our lives. But usually it is in private and has little consequence. Clearly, the failure of a student teacher is public knowledge. Every pupil in the student teacher's classes knows about it. The cooperating teacher, the principal and the university supervisors know about it, as do peers and family. While student teaching peers may empathize, non-teaching friends and family often ask embarrassing questions and display no knowledge about the difficulties of teaching. To make matters worse, they often believe the adage: "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach" (Knowles, 1988:1).

To fail at teaching, especially student / practice teaching, is a confounding experience (Ryan, 1986). Embarrassment and private ridicule, then, can profoundly effect those who fail. Preservice teachers who fail often exit schools and teacher education programs in a flushed flurry and a fury, some threatening litigation as they go. Some shout and scream at supervisors, making embarrassing accusations, with the sound of their voices muffled behind closed doors and emerging red-faced and red-eyed. Others, passively and embarrassingly, slink out the door, afraid of what their peers and professors

think of them, quietly endorsing the closed lips of our colleagues, and encouraging the turning of backs toward their problem. Some remove themselves from programs a hair's breadth before the damning final grade is awarded. Still others appeal their failures or ask to redo their practicum under more favorable mentors or contexts only to miss the mark of their goals -- an acceptable student / practice teaching performance - again.

Institutions' Views of "Failure"

Johnson and Yates (1982) reported that 15 percent of schools and colleges of education never fail student teachers, 50 percent failed less than one percent, and 15 percent failed one percent. Institutions have differing views of "failure"-- some implied, others formalized. But, generally, "failure" in student / practice teaching is not part of teacher educators' vocabularies. While not openly recognized as a regular and consistent outcome of student / practice teaching, "failure" is assigned by institutions in two main ways. Assessing a low or failing grade for student / practice teaching may often seal the fate of a potential new teacher. This occurs because typical state certification requirements insist on pass rates above a "C". In other cases, grades of "B" or less usually remove the chances of new teachers obtaining legitimate public school teaching positions; they are simply sifted from pools of applicants in tight job markets. To compound the problem, low grades carry with them weak letters of recommendation from cooperating and supervising teachers -- and their chances for obtaining a desirable classroom teaching appointment, or any position at all, are further reduced.

The first case scenario just mentioned requires institutions to play an active role; they merely do not recommend individuals for state certification. Belonging to the second group of cases virtually establishes a *fait accompli.* Our experience concurs with the position of Johnson and Yates (1982), suggesting that few

institutions actually assign failing grades to preservice teachers for the field components of their course work. Although the supplemental anecdotal records of the preservice teachers whose records we examined document unsatisfactory student / practice teaching performances, their transcripts most often carried grades of "no credit" or "withdrawn" for the experiences. One way institutions choose to deal with this problem is to require additional student / practice teaching assignments as a way of raising potentially damming grades that fall above an "F" but below a "B" -- grades that would otherwise be regarded as "failure" by personnel directors of school districts and others who play central roles in new teacher hiring processes.

The two institutions primarily represented in this study take very different positions regarding failure. The mid-sized parochial institution considers that by allocating a grade of "C" or lower to a preservice teacher's student / practice teaching, the implicit message is that the person has "failed". However, that situation rarely occurs because preservice teachers are usually removed *en medias res* from difficult placements and placed in more favorable alternative sites to complete their practica. In extreme cases, failing practicum students are counseled out of the teacher education program. The other institution, a large public regional university, also awards letter grades for student / practice teaching. However, at the larger institution it is easier to "fail" than at the smaller institution because remedial decisions or administrative actions are slower in forthcoming; consequently, more individuals "failed" at the end of their practica after struggling through their initial school placements. Rarely are alternative placements sought or offered.

For supplementary data we tapped records from a major research university which does not award letter grades; "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" are the only grade options for the practica. Rarely -- never in the minds of

contemporary supervising faculty -- is a grade of "U" awarded. Instead, "failure" is only acknowledged when preservice teachers are not recommended for state certification. And, this happens at all of the institutions from which we obtained empirical or anecdotal evidence.

Early Observations and Awareness of "Failure"

Our early observations of "failure" profoundly affected the course of our explorations. We present recollections of specific preservice teachers as evidence of those early observations and our growing awareness of the problem as teacher educators and supervisors of student teachers. When compared to latter findings and perspectives, they document the progression of our thinking and research motivations.

Gary's Observations

Two incidents stand out as landmarks in the early years of my career as a teacher educator. Both had to do with preservice teachers who hovered in the grey of "failure". One of the incidents involved Angela, a 38 year old, second-career, preservice teacher. The other incident involved Elizabeth (a pseudonym, as are all of the names in the article), a young, articulate, intellectual; a woman whose family had a long-standing involvement in public education. Both were in student / practice teaching at the same time; they were cohorts in the same secondary preservice teacher preparation program.

Angela. I have previously written about her situation (see, Knowles, 1988, 1990b; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989). It was Angela's devastating experience that first raised my awareness about this unresearched group of preservice teachers. The program of which she was a part failed her miserably. I also felt personally responsible, despite the fact that the evidence pointed to other factors that appeared to seal her fate. We -- that is, the teacher education program and faculty

-- did not provide for her needs as a student of teaching practicing the craft and methods of the teaching profession.

While, intellectually, she grasped appropriate teaching methods and classroom management strategies, when it came to the period of practice she was not assigned the most secure and optimal arena in which to adequately try out and develop her skills -- although others may well have been very successful under similar circumstances. A set of difficult circumstances lead to her placement in a junior high school classroom and school in which she felt frightened of the scale of the school and the size of the students, and with a course load assignment that was somewhat incongruous with her subject matter preparation. In addition, her personality did not easily lend itself to the rigors and demands of teaching because she found it very difficult to assert herself.

Indeed, she maintained, and I agreed with her, that her personal history provided no experiential basis for thinking about teaching and for acting like a teacher. Instead, it reflected patterns of behavior quite inappropriate for working with large numbers of youngsters in confined classrooms. She was, however, very good at working with small groups of students. Yet, teacher education faculty did relatively little to help rectify her inadequacies and broaden her skills; nor was the program structure designed to assist individuals like her. As a result, and despite innovative planning of daily lessons, she was unable to teach sometimes unruly students in ways that encouraged and substantial learning to occur. *In lieu* of a "failed" grade, she was eventually withdrawn from student / practice teaching. And, I felt terribly guilty that our program failed her. We did, however, continue to talk together about her experience long after the event, and that proved to be of great benefit (Knowles & Hoefler, 1989).

Elizabeth. She had two different student / practice teaching placements. Problems arose soon after Elizabeth began her first placement, teaching in a

junior high school. She had serious conflicts with her assigned mentor, an older, near retirement, cooperating teacher. Her teaching was "acceptable", so the experienced mentor reported but nevertheless Elizabeth insisted on a change -- and we agreed that a change could prove beneficial, given the appearance of open wounds of conflicting educational ideologies.

The second placement was in the classroom of a 26 year-old woman, a highly regimented English teacher who also "happened to coach basketball". The coach's classes were ordered like well-drilled squads. Elizabeth experienced "no problems" teaching, so she stated. The mere presence of her cooperating teacher removed the slightest idea of misbehavior from the minds of the senior high school students -- a powerful influence even when Elizabeth had charge and the cooperating teacher was out of the room. Elizabeth completed the second assignment and was recommended for provisional certification. The following year three weeks after the first term began Elizabeth, now a new and beginning teacher, had serious difficulties. This time she was "failing" in the classroom. Not only had she not made any substantive provision for congenial classroom management strategies but she was quite oblivious to the students' needs because she thought that she already knew all about them.

Elizabeth's case drove home the danger of the false securities about one's performance because of unique contextual conditions in student / practice teaching. Elizabeth never learned during that "preparation for the real world of classrooms" experience to deal with rambunctious and difficult pupils, nor was there any incentive to do so. In addition, her contextual knowledge of schools and students was limited by her relatively narrow focus of prior experience; in a sense she imaged the students to be much like the high school student she had been, which was definitely not the case.

Mary's Observations

Three very different preservice teachers who "failed" student / practice teaching come to mind. Most frustrating, much of what happened to these students of teaching was unanticipated although, in retrospect, several clues should have alerted us to their potential problems. A quick glance at anecdotal records suggests that all three had unsuccessful student / practice teaching experiences because of weaknesses in classroom management techniques. Upon closer inspection however, personal histories as well as cultural, personality, and professional competency factors emerge as clear precursors of their "failure".

Marisela. Contextual factors in student / practice teaching almost put an end to Marisela's career before it began. A petite, 20 year-old Southeast Asian-American, Marisela was dark-complexioned and dressed expensively, leaning towards her ethnic traditions. The daughter of two physicians, her education through high school was had at private, parochial schools. Although her parents had mixed reactions to her aspirations to become a teacher, they approved of her enrollment at this parochial university and its teacher preparation program.

An accomplished student with a GPA of 3.81, Marisela believed that she was well-prepared to teach and requested a challanging whole language placement with a female teacher well known for her expertise and success in teaching whole language. Her request was honored and she was assigned to the women's urban fifth grade classroom where many of the students towered over her in both in stature and real life experiences; two-thirds of her students were African-American and almost all were from families of poverty. Her cooperating teacher, Mrs Stein, was an articulate dynamic person who individualized instruction through a non-traditional curriculum and was highly attuned to her students' personal and familial circumstances. Almost immediately Marisela had trouble understanding and managing the multiple needs and demands of

urban students and with communicating effectively with them. Her previous field experience placements were with younger children in suburban settings and, based on her own experiences, Marisela had an idealized vision about teaching that did not fit the inner city classroom context.

The first period of instruction observed by the university supervisor went poorly for Marsela. She was uncomfortable, so the observer reported, discussing a story assigned by Mrs. Stein about a drug-related incident. Written in colloquial African-American dialogue, Marisela floundered with the meanings of the story and the language. When students made fun of her and mimicked her, Marisela lost control of the class, her confidence, and her self-esteem. Even after talking through her difficulties with the supervisor, Marisela was at a loss at know how best to relate to the students and how to replicate her cooperating teacher's successes. She could not understand why the students were "so rude" and why she was so miserably "failing". The principal and cooperating teacher considered her "gentle and halting responses, and shy mannerisms, inept, child-like, and inappropriate" for the classroom -- "Marisela was obviously not teacher material." Although Mrs. Stein had an excellent teaching reputation, she was <u>not</u> an appropriate mentor for Marisela because of sharp methodological, philosophical, and personality differences.

In the third week of the practicum, the university supervisor removed Marisela from the inner city school classroom and placed her in a traditional, suburban, first grade setting that was more closely matched to her own personal elementary experiences. Comfortable with her surroundings and with the expectations that were placed on her – and on her first grade students – Marisela's artistic drawing and storytelling talents and hands-on creativity with young children bloomed and was valued, challenged, and channeled. Her new cooperating teacher called her a "born teacher" and claimed Marisela to be "the

most creative, [and] best student teacher that I've ever worked with." This success was replicated again in a later kindergarten / early childhood certification placement.

Connie. Elements of personal history, "lack of with-it-ness in the classroom" and a "slow to warm personality" proved problematic for Connie, a twenty-five year-old transfer student from a community college. Connie's directness and stoicism, evident amid more animated and younger peers, was regarded simply as a artifact of her experiences and maturity. Peers did not quickly warm to her and she seemed indifferent and cool to their attempts to engage her in conversation. In reality, she would become very focused on a task at hand and had trouble attending to the whole situation and managing multiple concerns at the same time. Connie experienced difficulty getting along with her first cooperating teacher, a bubbly out-going young woman who wanted Connie to act like her, (which Connie could not and would not do), and subsequently Connie was not recommended for kindergarten certification.

With the support of the university supervisor in a second practicum, Connie barely met the criteria for elementary certification. Her lack of flexibility, initiative, and leadership in the classroom was not altogether anticipated. On reflection, Connie discovered that these were deeply ingrained behavioral patterns typical of her family interactions, where initiative was not valued and she was told what opinions to hold and exactly how to do things. In the classroom Connie found it difficult to assert herself and was not intuitive about her own needs or the needs of students. By focusing on the critical images of prior negative models of teaching rather than on pictures of more appropriate classroom actions, Connie was unable to successfully make the transition from being a student of teaching to a teacher of students.

Michele. Poor grasp of pedagogical and content area knowledge and low self-esteem should have prompted close supervision, support, and counselling in Michele's case. A shy, thin, pale transfer student, she was easily overlooked; she did not demand the attention of her professors and she did not get it until it was almost too late. Michele's academic achievements were regarded as "adequate and improving", yet displayed gaps in the most basic skills. Early field placement evaluations were uneven but showed glimpses of promise. She desperately wanted to become a teacher like her mother. A poor classroom performance with second grade students captured my attention. Michele did not know how to nurture and motivate young children or how to explain subject content in ways they could understand. In a second placement, again in a traditional setting, Michele did not improve and complained bitterly that the cooperating teacher did not like her. Finally, she was placed with "the best cooperating teacher, the best supervising teacher, in the best non-traditional setting" with sixth grade students. Although Michele finally had a successful student / practice teaching experience under "optimal conditions", her future success in elementary teaching is uncertain.

In summary: These stories of preservice teachers experiences served to remind us of the tenuous nature and multifaceted character of of "failure". There are other accounts that we could have related but those we have told illustrate some of the basic dilemmas we and the prospective teachers faced. To more effectively deal with the problems surrounding those in these circumstances, and to help our understandings, we turned to the teacher education literature.

What Others Have Observed:

"Failure" in the Research Literature

"Failure" in student / practice teaching is clearly not a topic of wide interest. After a thorough search of ERIC / CIJE data bases, reviewing the titles

of paper presentations at major teacher educational research-related conferences over the last five years, and scanning major, influential, research publications -- such as the *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (Houston, 1990), the *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (Wittrock, 1986), practice reports, and influential monographs -- only a handful of articles or papers centrally dealing with, or substantially mentioning, student / practice teacher "failure" were identified, and these include work by Ellwein, Graue, and Comfort (1989), Knowles (1988, 1992), Knowles and Hoefler (1989), Pape and Dickens (1990), Riner and Jones (1990), and, Schwab (1989). Other articles or papers located mention only associated or peripheral aspects of "failure". This dearth of available knowledge surrounding "failure" is another motivation for our work.

Numerous factors are cited as contributing to the "failure" of student / practice teachers. In this brief review we have organized the origins of problems and difficulties associated with "failure" into three clusters, and these relate to personal, professional, and contextual circumstances. In addition, we present the obvious weaknesses in the research literature pertaining to the topic.

Personal Perceptions of Self as Teacher and Patterns of Past Performance

A first group of factors relate to preservice teachers' development of a sense of self-as-teacher: role conflict or the discrepancy between the idealized role and the role demanded by the reality of the teaching situation (Knowles, 1988, 1992; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989; Schwab, 1989); role ambiguity associated with little sense of how they want to act or, conversely, how they do not want to act in the classroom (Knowles, 1988, 1992; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989; Schwab, 1989); and, personality traits not conducive to optimal teaching and classroom leadership (Knowles, 1988, 1992; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989; Riner & Jones, 1990). Like the following group of factors relating to professional knowledge, these are replicated in the experiences of beginning teachers whose very survival depends on their

development of a resilient sense-of-self (Bullough & Knowles, 1991, Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1989, 1992; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Knowles, 1991, 1992; Ryan, 1986).

Patterns of past performance and personal histories suggest a subset of factors which also contribute to individuals' inabilities to successfully master classroom teaching: inconsistent levels of participation and performance in university course work (Pape & Dickens, 1990); an unwillingness to ask for help (Pape & Dickens, 1990); a lack of time and resource management associated with role overload (Goodman, 1987; Pape & Dickens, 1990; Schwab, 1989); physical or mental dysfunction (Riner & Jones, 1990); and, previous difficulties in educational settings (Knowles, 1988). As with the previous clusters of factors, these are also evident to some extent in the experience of beginning teachers.

Professional Knowledge of Curriculum and Instruction

A second cluster of factors relates to curriculum and instructional matters, and this is the area that has been given greatest attention in the relatively scant research. Emphases include: "reality shock" (Gaede, 1978) as experienced when student / practice teachers' initially confront classroom realities (Knowles, 1988, 1992; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989; Schwab, 1989); lack of practical training (Schwab, 1989); lack of instructional skills (Knowles & Hoefler, 1989; Pape & Dickens, 1990); inability to implement appropriate classroom management strategies (Knowles, 1988; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989; Pape & Dickens, 1990); inability to select and relate goals to objectives (Pape & Dickens, 1990); lack of awareness of available procedures, routines, and alternatives (Pape & Dickens, 1990); problems associated with developing evaluation procedures and setting criteria for self or student performance (Pape & Dickens, 1990); inadequate image of students' characteristics and abilities (Knowles & Hoefler, 1989; Pape & Dickens, 1990); and discipline problems (Knowles, 1988; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989; Martin, 1988; Pape

& Dickens, 1990). Many, if not most, of these factors are also the same ones associated with the problems and difficulties that beginning teachers face (Bullough, 1989; Bullough & Knowles, 1990, 1991; Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1989, 1992; Ryan, 1986; Veenman, 1986).

Contextual Influences

Contextual factors make up the third group: isolation and lack of collegiality (Schwab, 1980); and, inappropriate immediate role models, as in the cooperating teacher (Knowles, 1988; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989). In addition, lack of understanding of the institutional culture of schools as associated with one or a combination of: setting (rural, urban and inner city, or suburban); orientation (public or private); philosophy (traditional or non traditional); mismatch of grade level placement with preparation; and, lack of confidence when dealing with the cognitive and social maturity levels of students. These factors have been interpreted as indices of "failure." Similar factors beset beginning teachers (Bullough, 1989; Knowles, 1991; 1992).

Major Weakness in the Literature

One of the major weaknesses in the associated literature on "failure" is the lack of attention to collective programmatic actions and the consequences of particular preservice teacher education practices within institutions. It is clear, from our reading of the literature and from recollections of personal experiences with "failed" preservice teachers, that accountability for problems associated with their "failure" rests, at least partially, on decisions about field experiences that often exclude serious consideration of domains related to school contexts, and domains related to preservice teachers' backgrounds, philosophies, and predispositions.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Categories for Understanding "Failure"

From an analysis of the pertinent literature and from interpretations of early informal observations, we initially concluded that preservice teachers who "failed" during student / practice teaching displayed weaknesses or inadequacies that, if and when they could be established, provided insights into the subsequent events surrounding their particular circumstances of "failure". To guide our research we generated a list of factors that were believed were significant for understanding the failure phenomenon (see Table 1). This taxonomy aided in making decisions about the kinds of data to collect; the categories provided the focus for the kinds of questions we asked as we reviewed the records of each individual.

Table 1 about here

Records of "Failure"

As mentioned, the data gathering was done primarily at two different university sites although a third site contributed to one of the case studies and to our general framing of the study. We examined documents, dated as early as 1980 and through 1990, from "official" and "unofficial" preservice teachers' records in these different preservice teacher education programs, focusing on those records of individuals who failed student / practice teaching or who failed to be recommended for certification. As we anticipated, there was little consistency in the quality or quantity of the records available from the different institutions. Clearly, some institutions see a greater need to monitor preservice teachers' success, or lack of it.

Table 1: Categories for Understanding "Failure": Preliminaries to Method

1. Personal history-based characteristics
   - i. Patterns of social interactions and personality
     - Personal interaction skills with professors and others
     - Social habits and acceptance by peers
   - ii. Academic history
     - Standardized testing
     - Academic grade point average
     - Work habits / academic responsibility
   - iii. Knowledge of self as teacher
     - Previous role models of teaching
     - Familiarity with expectations of teachers
     - Degree of comfort working in schools
2. Proficiency at expected teaching / professional practices
   - i. Scope of content area knowledge preparation
     - Mastery of content area knowledge
     - Interpretation of content knowledge for students
     - Enthusiasm for content knowledge
   - ii. Curriculum and planning skills
     - Clear lesson plans and objectives
     - Organization and planning skills
     - Uses variety of curriculum methods
     - Consideration of students' developmental needs
   - iii. Classroom management and discipline
3. Externally imposed factors
   - i. Personal circumstances
     - Marital / relational pressures
     - Financial needs
     - Occupational interference
     - Health problems
   - ii. Student / practice teaching contexts
     - Interactions with university supervisor
     - Interactions with cooperating teacher
     - Interactions with students
     - Incongruent subject matter / grade level placement
     - Practicum attendance and professional conduct
     - Adjustment to school setting / culture

First, from the "official records" we developed demographic profiles of the people who "failed" during student / practice teaching. For the most part, this process consisted of collecting data across a variety of characteristics and circumstances pertaining to the individuals -- although, expectedly, there were many incomplete records (as high as about 75 per cent on some items) due to inconsistent record-keeping and monitoring procedures within and between institutions, and lax filing and reporting procedures. We endeavored to collect data pertaining to age, gender, marital status, grade point average (GPA, overall, and for education classes), admission date, outcomes of admission interviews, the kinds of emphases made by referees about the preservice teachers in letters of recommendation, the kinds of emphases the preservice teachers made in their letters of application (or self statements) to the teacher education program, previous careers (if any), academic majors and minors (if other than education), placement school and classroom, student / practice teaching subject(s) (for secondary majors), course work load, other employment during the period, and, other pertinent data. Unfortunately, many of the above categories were not always available and, until more complete and uniform information about the experiences of preservice teachers is recorded by institutions, our analyses will continue to be hampered.

Second, we constructed "collective circumstances" surrounding the "failure" experiences of the prospective teachers. This was done by summarizing formal documentation, such as formative and summative evaluations, narrative accounts of remediation efforts and circumstances of "failure", brief notations by supervisors, and, where available, pertinent information about family circumstances, extra school employment, and official letters to and from the student / practice teachers themselves. The reconstructed records, containing numerical and text data, were systematically analyzed using simple descriptive

statistics and content analysis techniques. We report on salient details that proved productive in our analyses, doing this primarily by presenting demographic profiles, collective and common circumstances of "failure", and by reporting salient examples of the kinds of experiences represented in the data.

Findings and Discussion: Program Characteristics, Demographic Profiles, and Collective Circumstances Surrounding "Failure"

In presenting the demographic profiles and collective circumstances surrounding "failure" we first provide contextual details about the two institutions' programs. The selected program characteristics from each institution represent aspects that are central in the thinking of the teacher education faculty. Preservice teacher selection criteria and preservice teacher characteristics inform us about the similarities and differences as what constitutes "failure" at each institution. The demographic profiles and selective and collective circumstances presented are based on that data which, on analysis, was most pertinent. We present cases, observations, and discussions, to illuminate both the people involved and particular, related issues facing the respective institutions. A summary concludes this section.

At a Large, Regional Public University

Selected program characteristics. This Southwestern University has a student population of approximately 29,000 and draws admissions from a three state area. Other teacher preparation alternatives in this geographic area are three small to mid-size state universities and a large parochial university, all within a 75 mile radius. In most situations, other teacher preparation programs were not vying for the same school practicum placement sites. Students who apply for acceptance into the program as preservice teachers represent diverse backgrounds and ages. The Department of Teacher Education has 10 full-time

faculty to teach 300 to 400 preservice teachers each year. Recent admittees were exposed to programmatic goals and orientations similar to the "inquiry-oriented" framework outlined by Zeichner (1983) and partially characteristic of Feiman-Nemser's (1990) "academic" and "social / critical" conceptual orientations.

The most significant screening of prospective teachers in both the elementary and secondary programs occurs when application is made to the teacher education program at the end of the second year of university studies. A required GPA of 2.5, supporting documents including a career statement and recommendations, acceptable test scores on the SCAT Battery (which measures verbal and mathematical skills) and a personality test (usually the MMPI) were required of preservice teacher applicants. While there were no absolute minimum scores required by the admissions committee, scores on these tests in combination with other factors determined by the admissions committee provided a first screening of prospective teacher applicants. The mean GPA for accepted undergraduate preservice teachers rose from around 2.5 in 1980, the year in which the case records were first examined, to over 3.3 in 1989. Acceptance criteria for graduate preservice teachers was similar but more flexible.

The ages of the preservice teachers most recently admitted into the graduate and undergraduate programs exhibited a range from 20 years to nearly 60. There was a trend towards admitting greater numbers of older, second-career preservice teachers, many of which had extensive academic and experiential qualifications. Program records representing this shift over time were not available for examination, however elementary and secondary cohorts in 1989, for example, evidenced about 50 and 70 percent (respectively) of prospective teachers who had begun or established careers in other professions or trades.

The presence of transfer preservice teachers -- from other universities, junior colleges, or community colleges -- was not evident in the records which

were examined and the representation of this group of prospective teachers in the larger population is not known.

Demographics profiles and collective circumstances. Of the nineteen preservice teachers whose records of "failure" were available (see, Table 2: Cases 1-19), four were in the elementary or early childhood programs and the remaining were secondary or middle school prospective teachers. Due to incomplete records it was impossible to calculate a rate of "failure". In reality, there were two groups of "failed" preservice teachers -- 10 who withdrew voluntarily or at the request of the university immediately before the end of student / practice teaching and nine who were "failed" by their evaluators. A comparison of the two groups was illuminating. Those who withdrew had an average age of 28 (median, 26) years and those who persisted until "failure" had an average age of 32 (median, 32) years, revealing, when compared to the average age of the total preservice teacher body, an over representation of older preservice teachers in both groups. Gender differences between the two groups of "failed" preservice teachers were also significant. Of the group that withdrew before completing their practicum, nine were men and one was a woman. The one person who was requested to voluntarily withdraw practicum was a man "very much lacking in social sophistication." Of the group which completed the practicum there were four men and five women.

There are several possible explanations for these differences. Younger prospective teachers who were men may recognize their limitations and withdraw rather than "fail" or may give up or become discouraged sooner; older men and women students of teaching may tend to be more tenacious, "sticking it out" and, subsequently, "failing". The latter case may be due to a number of reasons: older preservice teachers may perceive they have fewer alternatives for employment or further education; older individuals are also more likely to be

married or have significant others and have less time available for lesson preparation and other activities associated with student / practice teaching; and, older students of teaching may get discouraged less easily and be more optimistic about their chances of eventual success.

That many of the prospective teachers were older than traditional preservice teachers and had varied life and work experiences, yet were only in their late 20s to early 30s pursuing teaching as a career, brings into question the level of their commitment to education. Some of them had tried their hand at many occupations, seemingly on a trial basis; there was little reason to believe that the opportunity to engage in student / practice teaching was anything more than trying on another coat. Given the expected maturity of older prospective teachers, many of the self statements did not present clear conceptions of teaching or of their futures, or of commitment to their professional development and the profession of teaching.

A few prospective teachers indicated that they did not know what else to do with their degrees and felt pressed to pursue teaching as the only likely avenue of employment. Some realized on entering classrooms that they were ill-suited for classroom teaching. They faced the dilemma of much time invested in teacher education and no workable avenue through which to see that professional preparation through.

From the limited data available, many (about 30 percent) of the "failed" preservice teachers were married, and several of them had children who were of high school age. This was not surprising, given the presence of older, second-career preservice teachers in the program. However, this information was not always available in the records and, specifically, did not include those who married while moving through this program of study, since marital status information was not updated during the course of program participation. Nor

were we able to identify those who were single parents and the sole breadwinners -- although personal experience suggests that these people were also well represented in those that "failed". In addition, because of family responsibilities, a few married preservice teachers "felt compelled" to "keep trying" despite the poor fit or mismatches of abilities.

The ratios of preservice teachers who were men to those who were women revealed were two to one in the secondary program; but each gender had an equal distribution of "failure". Men were overly represented and more inclined to withdraw from both the elementary and secondary programs by a ratio of nine to one. Men appeared to be less inclined to respond to their perceived weaknesses or perhaps were not even aware of them until tested during student / practice teaching. Prospective teachers who were men tended to experience more conflicts associated with their subordinate relationships with cooperating teachers and their understandings of the context of schools. In addition, men made more vocal and vehement oppositions to their recorded or prospective "failures" despite compelling prior evidence suggesting they were poorly-suited to classroom teaching. Proportionately, men were over represented by those who "failed" and were about twice as likely to "fail" as women.

Loosely linked to the high numbers of men represented in the records were the relatively high proportion (about 28 per cent) of appeals. Most were made by older men who disbelieved vehemently the university's decision affecting their future. Many of these individuals felt that their life experiences well fitted them for service in schools, despite the fact that they had highly inflexible viewpoints about schools and the needs of students and did not take directions well. Interestingly, none succeeded in their appeals, even those who threatened legal action.

The grades of those that "failed" and those who voluntarily withdrew were, at the time of termination, located at the lower end of the performance range compared with others of their cohort groups (GPAs of 2.8 and 3.1 respectively). This occurred consistently over the duration of the 8 years for which records were available -- although the "failing" GPA rose, as did the GPA of successful students of teaching -- from about 2.3 during this time. While these kinds of GPAs were respectable within the university they were not necessarily indicative of success within the Department of Teacher Education program.

Some of the "failed" preservice teachers had very low SCAT Battery test scores, even to the extent as for us to question the correctness of their records. The average scores were higher on verbal measures than on the mathematical dimension, with the average total score at 50.00, barely a pass, and there was no correlation to age, gender, or major areas of concentration.

Circumstances and problems which precipitated and led directly to the "failure" of student / practice teachers (see, Table 3: Cases 1-19) were primarily classroom-based. These problems were not dissimilar to those that teacher educators perceive most preservice teachers to experience, except they differed in intensity and the degree of confounding circumstances. The major problem confronting the prospective teachers was the issue of classroom management. Other concerns were related to the effectiveness of their teaching, as assessed by supervisors or cooperating teachers and which included management issues. The next most frequent problems included, communication problems, organizational difficulties, and, for a few individuals, family and personal dilemmas.

A common characteristic of these individuals was an "inability to evaluate and respond adequately to students' needs" either with individuals or in group settings. Classroom management and organizational problems centered on their

inability to cater for the diverse needs and abilities of students and organize appropriate routines. In a few cases, outside influences beyond the scope and responsibility of the program appeared to be largely responsible for the "failure": in one case, an abusive husband; in another, severe financial problems; and another, "family problems". The oldest person who "failed" had "serious problems accepting criticism and in dealing diplomatically and fairly with other staff members [of the school in which the person was placed]." Inflexibility and lack of willingness to respond to new ideas may particularly confront older student / practice teachers. Lack of punctuality and associated "good employee" attitudes, did not figure prominently in the records; such attributes were infrequently mentioned as serious contributing factors of "failure"..

The themes evident in the self-statement summaries, evaluations, and explanations of circumstances were several and general. Some preservice teachers were nervous or uneasy around students and in some cases around people in general. Weak interpersonal skills were commonly mentioned; words such as "inarticulate" and "poor self-expression" recurred throughout the records.

For example, Kenneth, 30 years-old at entry to the program, was rated moderately highly by interviewing faculty members prior to admittance. While the interviewers recognized his varied experiences and interest in children, one of them noted that his "verbal efforts were not too effective" and rated him "low" on verbal communication. The letters of recommendation pointed to a potentially good teacher, one letter even suggested that "his personality was his outstanding feature." Another letter, however, was more cautious: "While Kenneth involves himself in classroom discussion, he seemed only to communicate well on a one to one basis." On entry to the program he maintained B grades, slightly below the mean for his peers in the program. There were no other major pointers to his

difficulties mentioned in the records, except that he worked in the evenings and planned to do so through student / practice teaching.

Kenneth was rated low on all the criteria for formal and informal evaluations of his performance in the classroom: "Although he seemed to know [very well] his subject areas, he was unable to present the material in a manner in which children could understand. He would proceed with lessons without ever assessing childrens' response to the material." Enthusiasm was not evident in his teaching and no testing or reviewing ever took place in his classroom. He seemed afraid to engage students. In addition, he was not able to control the class -- not unexpectedly -- and completely misinterpreted his own lack of progress. He thought he "was doing fine", considering the very few successful lessons as the norm. Kenneth's case illustrates the interrelatedness of the problems that were experienced, of which an inability to effectively communicate with groups of students was central.

Others, such as Robert, a 38 year-old father of six children, displayed well-developed interpersonal skills -- he was a very successful salesman -- when he had a captured audience. But, when unruly students no longer paid attention to his enthusiastic renderings of great literature and his professorial-like pontifications, he retreated from them and displayed all the characteristics of a person with very low self-esteem and an inability to communicate. He effectively became inarticulate.

There were also indications that the subject matter -- the content of the lesson -- and / or preservice teachers' own performances were of paramount importance: classroom students were not the focal point of their teaching. For example, Kenneth, emulating professorial teaching, placed the greatest effort and emphasis on the form and appearance of his subject matter presentation -- lectures -- as opposed to evidence of students' learning and concern for their

needs. He once said that he "imagined [himself] as a great orator" and indeed practiced particular passages in front of the mirror for long periods of time.

Others, such as Kay, thought that attention to subject matter at the expense of all else "would produce competent students". As a result, and as in Kenneth's classroom, the students quickly dismissed her as being not interested in them. Soon after, she lost control of the class and could not regain it because she did nothing substantial to rectify the situation. She was crippled by her sole attention to academics.

Another factor which was pervasive in the records was a lack of lesson preparation, evidenced by the unrealistic expectations most of the prospective teachers had for what classroom teaching would be like. Such comments included: "naive about teaching," "poor preparation," "disorganized," "poor classroom control." Almost all the cooperating teachers and university evaluators whose reports were on file had these kinds of complaints. In many cases the pressure of working another job (in one case, two jobs) in addition to family responsibilities proved too great. Most preservice teachers clearly did not anticipate the lengthy period of daily and weekly preparation required to teach large groups of school students. Having made little preparation for lessons in advance meant that the prospective teachers "were flying by the seat of their pants", and impromptu performances quickly led to serious breakdowns in classroom management.

Offensive attitudes -- at least as interpreted by students -- were also noted in the practices of prospective teachers. These tended to accompany individuals whose classroom management was nonexistent and whose views of students were derogatory. This was particularly evident in persons who imagined they knew everything about students. For example, in an effort to assert his authority

over students, Max assumed the posture he had learned as as an Army drill sergeant.

Many of the older preservice teachers in particular had serious difficulties with the school contexts in which they were placed. This was especially so among the men who thought they were entering teaching "to save the kids and the world." For example, Mike, an experienced writer sometime columnist had serious difficulties with the philosophy of the cooperating teacher and, indeed, of the school. He made efforts to contradict some of the stated perspectives of the cooperating teacher and subversively thwart her actions, thinking that he was doing the "morally correct thing". While this was an extreme case, serious discontinuities between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers may well have put the prospective new teachers at serious disadvantages -- and those disadvantages were not corrected.

In summary: Poor interpersonal skills, lack of primary focus on students, lack of commitment and attention to lesson preparation, and most universally, poor classroom management and general preparation for the school placement were powerful indicators of "failure". In addition, unrealistic expectations for the classroom experience contributed to the demise of several prospective teachers at this public Southwestern University.

At a Medium-sized, Private Parochial University

Selected program characteristics. This private Midwestern University has a full-time undergraduate enrollment of approximately 6,000 students and a part-time graduate population of approximately 4,000 students. Competition for highly qualified teacher education majors is keen as there are at least four state colleges and universities within a five mile radius, and four other private educational institutions offering teacher preparation programs within a 50 mile radius. The

campus is located on the southern fringe of a small midwestern city with a primarily African-American populace.

Since 1988, the admission rate for full-time freshmen has averaged 71 percent with approximately 130 to 150 enrolling as declared education majors. The typical first year education student is a recent high school graduate, usually female, from a private or middle income public school, with a solid "B" average college preparatory background, and ACT scores above 20.

The graduate teacher education program, in existence since the 1960s, requires for admission a 2.5 GPA and three letters of recommendation. For candidates with a GPA below 2.5, a writing sample is required and evaluated by three faculty to assess suitability for graduate level study. Most applicants pass this secondary screening and approximately 40-50 individuals annually enroll in the program annually in a ratio of two women for every man. A typical graduate preservice teacher is a 30 year old woman.

Total teacher preparation enrollment regularly tops at about 670 with approximately 150 to 175 graduating from the program each year. The Department of Education employs 24 full-time faculty and numerous part-time faculty to teach and supervise student / practice teaching placements. All undergraduate preservice teachers are exposed to urban as well as suburban field placements and have a required practicum each year prior to student / practice teaching. Graduate preservice teachers are rarely exposed to extensive experiences in school settings prior to student / practice teaching unless they have previously worked in the schools. The university competes with two other educational institutions for highly desirable local field and student / practice placements and cooperating teachers. Heavily inter-disciplinary, the teacher preparation curriculum roughly corresponds to Feiman-Nemser's (1990) "academic" program orientation.

Screening of potential preservice teachers occurs at several different times during their teacher preparation. After being admitted to the university, undergraduate preservice teachers are not admitted into the teacher education program until the end of their second year. Candidates make formal application to the department after they have completed four required, entry level, education courses, received positive reports from two field placements, passed the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST, a standardized basic skills screening in reading, math, and writing), and maintained a 2.5 GPA in both university and education course work.

After entry to the teacher education program preservice teachers who do not meet grade requirements -- approximately two to three individuals out of approximately 150 each year -- are counseled out of the program at the end of their second university year because of observed personality or attitudinal attributes deemed unsuited for dealing with children. Another critical screening of elementary preservice teachers occurs at the end of an intensive integrated semester-long teaching methods / field-experience sequence in the junior or second year. At this time about one in ten prospective teachers are identified as having some difficulties with subject matter content, basic teaching-related skills, classroom management, or interpersonal communication. At the recommendation of advisors, professors, and the department chairperson, a few transfer out of the program without a loss of graduation credits. A few other preservice teachers are conditionally accepted for student / practice teaching provided they receive tutoring, counseling, or additional course work to remediate perceived deficiencies in their preparation. Secondary preservice teachers are also screened a second time but in a less integrated and formal way. Even with this kind of close scrutiny, every year as many as 20 prospective teachers fail to

gain certification at the end of their studies and, of that number, approximately one-third have unsatisfactory student / practice teaching experiences.

Demographic profiles and collective circumstances. The case records of two undergraduate and three graduate preservice teachers who had unsatisfactory student / practice teaching experiences between 1989 and 1990 were examined (see, Table 2: Cases 21-25). Another case (see, Table 2: Case 20) was of an individual whose student / practice teaching was eventually completed at a local state university.

In the case of the younger preservice teachers who were unsuccessful in their practicums, women elementary teachers with shy or retiring personalities were at risk of "failing" because they not assert themselves in classrooms. While most preservice teachers are flexible and persevere in their placements, these three preservice teachers seemed to need nurturing mentors, different grade level placements, and alternative school cultures to ultimately succeed in their student / practice teaching.

All three of the graduate preservice teachers were stunned by evaluations of their inadequacy in their practica. Because they had all recently taught in some capacity -- as substitute teachers or a part-time instructors -- they thought that teaching was something that they could do and that they knew how to do. The fact that they all possessed master's degrees and had not been able to attain employment in their initial areas of expertise suggests that they turned to teaching after exhausting other possibilities. As mid-life career changers they were in the precarious position of needing to succeed, and not being able to change deeply ingrained interpersonal and behavioral characteristics; especially ways of communicating and thinking that were adequate for temporary teaching employment but not sufficient or desirable in a permanent teacher. Two individuals chose secondary education as a way to parlay their graduate degrees

into a particular certification area; the other graduate student chose her certification area according to reported job openings. All of these individuals were eventually certified upon the completion of their studies.

Instances of "failure" in the practicum are illustrated in the stories of Marisela, Connie, and Michele, individuals whose cases were pivotal in our early thinking about this study. All experienced interpersonal difficulty in getting along or being understood by others and all had conflicts with their cooperating teachers in the schools. None could be described as having dynamic outgoing personalities, yet they were firm in their resolve and commitment to become teachers. Marisela, who came to the university as a freshman, was an excellent student; Michele, who transferred in as a sophomore, was the weakest of the three; Connie transferred as a junior to a local state university after completing an associate's degree at a near-by community college.

Marisela and Michele were both removed from their initial placements by the university supervisor within the first few weeks after unsatisfactory evaluations. In Marisela's case, a lack of understanding of the school culture and the personal, social and academic needs of wordly-wise urban fifth graders overwhelmed her. She was unable to assert herself and take control of the classroom and interpret content knowledge for her students. In a second placement with much younger conforming students she was able to express herself creatively with multiple hands-on and story-telling activities.

Almost the reverse was true of Michele. Placed with younger children in a very traditional parochial elementary school, Michele was placed with an upbeat cooperating teacher but one who was very intolerant of incompetence. She expected Michele to follow her approach. Her first university supervisor assessed her teaching as a being low quality and Michele appealed her grade. In a second placement with fourth graders and a new supervisor, Michele fared better. In a

third placement with still older elementary children and a hand-picked nurturing cooperating teacher, Michele seemed to hit her stride. For her, multiple placements eventually spelled student / practice teaching success.

Connie was not as fortunate and struggled for the fifteen weeks of the undergraduate practicum before failing to be recommended for certification. Connie was very unlike her bubbly, creative, and flexible cooperating teacher and they saw eye to eye on practically nothing. Her college supervisor was very sympathetic and offered Connie a second kindergarten placement but she was "too burned out" emotionally and financially to repeat the experience. Connie fared slightly better in her elementary placement and was recommended for certification but, as she was still operating on a survival level in her practicum, she never fully developed those skills necessary to excel in the classroom.

The graduate preservice teachers who had unsuccessful experiences had several things in common: they were all considerably older than their peers (mean age, 43, compared to low 30s), all possessed master's degrees, and all were teaching on a substitute or part-time basis in institutions with large urban populations.

Dianah, a 47 year-old divorced Hispanic woman, turned to substituting as a teacher's aid in an inner city multi-handicapped classroom as a means to support herself and her daughter. She possessed an undergraduate degree in Home Economics and a master's degree in Spanish but had been unable to find a full-time teaching position. Her teacher certification application looked like a patch-work quilt, with courses from several different local colleges and universities listed to fulfill requirements, often concurrently. She was currently applying for multi-handicapped certification because the school in which she substituted needed such a teacher and she was familiar with the position.

Dianah's stubborn and determined personality did not endear her to others. Her interpersonal skills could best be described as abrasive and manipulative. She did not to trust the criteria or the system by which preservice teachers were certified. She regularly sought to have rules bent for her purposes and was very defensive. Her "pushy posture created ripples wherever she went."

Dianah's student / practice teaching placement was split between a vocational and an alternative school in two secondary developmentally handicapped classrooms. Although her supervising teacher wrote volumes on Dianah's "need to actively work with groups and with students on specific practical applications," such as employment related skills and personal-social skills, Dianah persisted in tutoring one-on-one and writing generalized lesson plans that "lacked specific objectives, activities and developmental sequence." Frustrated with Dianah's lack of responsiveness to specific suggestions for improvement and the lack of input by her cooperating teachers, the university supervisor extended her practicum until she mastered and demonstrated appropriate skills. At the conclusion of the practicum, Dianah's cooperating teachers deemed her as "satisfactory" and gave her an "A" while her university supervisor gave her a "B" -- a grade Dianah bitterly contested. Dianah's supervising teacher commented: "If Dianah had put forth half as much effort into improving her work as she did trying to get around doing it, she could have had a very successful experience."

Winston, a 46 year-old Nigerian, came to the United States of America after completing high school. He attended a small black college in the Midwest and graduated cum laude in 1976 with a degree in accounting and earned his MBA in 1979 from a large Southwestern university. For eight years he worked as a substitute teacher in local city schools, substituting over 100 days in each of the

previous three years. He decided to seek certification as a secondary business and accounting teacher.

Letters of recommendation mention his seriousness of intent, ability to work hard, and two degrees as evidence of his ability to successfully complete graduate studies. Not apparent from Winston's previous records were serious problems with verbal communication and his rigid, formal demeanor.

Winston received a "failing" grade after his first ten week practicum and was not recommended by his cooperating and supervising teachers for a career in teaching. Winston's grade appeal was denied and he chose to complete another practicum in an inner city high school. At the end of his second placement, he earned a "B minus" grade, still "needing improvement in verbal articulation, voice projection, modulation in rate of speaking, expression of enthusiasm."

Although Winston was "a very hard and serious worker," his stoic personality, his difficulty with expressing himself clearly to students and giving them appropriate feedback and directions were problematic in his teaching. The second time round his tenaciousness and hard work paid off with a minimal passing grade in student / practice teaching but did not remediate perceived weaknesses in his personality and communication style, and personal characteristics for teaching.

Susan, like Winston, was a poor communicator even though she concurrently taught English part-time at the local inner city community college. She had a B.A. in English and an M.A. in English Composition, both from a state college on the West Coast. Thirty-seven years-old, Susan had never married and was an "excellent student" with an overall GPA of 3.85. A timid and sensitive person with a small voice, Susan's only "B" on her certification application was in a secondary English and speech methods class. Her first placement as an English teacher with two cooperating teachers in a suburban public high school

was a disaster. After four weeks, the assistant principal sent a two page letter to the university supervisor outlining Susan's considerable difficulties with classroom control, lesson organization and presentation, and discipline.

Susan was removed from the first school placement and put in a small private parochial high school with a "sensitive, conscientious" mentor who "devoted many hours to making her student teaching experience effective." Although Susan's difficulties were not alleviated -- she remained timid and uncomfortable conducting class discussions and had difficulty with classroom discipline -- she showed marked improvement over the six week period. Susan's cooperating teacher found her eager to learn and develop skills, sensitive to student writing, conscientious, and good at one-to-one consultation. At the conclusion of the second practicum, Susan received a "B" for her efforts, typical of the outcomes at this institution where individuals are often given multiple placements to improve their "failed" grades.

In summary: Poor personal interaction skills with supervisors and students, lack of enthusiasm for and interpretation of content knowledge for students, and poor classroom management skills were universally problematic for these preservice teachers who experienced "failure" in their practica.

Summary of Cases at Both Institutions

Age and gender distinction appear significant in the "failed" student / practice teachers at the two institutions. Older male elementary and secondary preservice teachers were over represented in the large public institution. At the private institution, the "failed" undergraduate preservice teachers tended to be young women, while "failed" graduate preservice teachers were older individuals making mid-career changes. More older, men, second-career preservice teachers, "failed" at the large, regional public university than at the smaller parochial university, perhaps also a reflection of the gender differences in

enrollments at each institution. Preservice teachers in the smaller institution who at first "failed" were given additional opportunities to successfully complete their practica – and all were eventually certified. In both settings, lower overall GPAs than those of their cohorts were evident, and low results on standardized tests were indicative of potential problems. Poor interpersonal skills, inability to respond adequately to pupils' needs, weak interpretation of content, and inadequate planning and organizational skills were cited in the records of many of these preservice teachers. Poor classroom management was seen as the obvious weakness by cooperating teachers and university supervisors.

Not substantially addressed in the records, but significant in many cases, were the contextual circumstances in which these "failed" student / practice teachers found themselves. Many appeared, so the records suggested, to be "fish out of water" in their grade level placements and school settings. And, these placements were often very different from that which the individuals expected. Preservice teachers' internalized visions of classrooms, based on prior experiences and the programmatic emphases and experiences immediately prior to the period of practice, often did not constructively match the realities of assigned tasks and classrooms. Mismatches with the school placement, as indicated by serious and dysfunctional difficulties and conflicts associated with cooperating teachers' styles, methods, and philosophies, proved fatal to some preservice teachers. Weak or even negative interactions between preservice teachers and students affected other individuals. Inappropriate grade level placements -- supposedly too high or too low -- were problematic for some elementary preservice teachers. Often in the records negative interactions were couched in the language of poor classroom management, deficient organizational skills, or weak understandings of content. Placement schools' orientations or curricular emphases -- such as, for example, whole language, open classroom,

traditional classroom -- was an issue for others. Table 1, a taxonomy of categories for understanding "failure" developed prior to examining the records, proved to be most accurate in its indication of potential "failure" in the practice period of teaching.

In a sense, the phenomenon of student / practice teacher "failure" can be reduced to mismatch of models among the key players and contexts, that is between the student / practice teacher and: previous school experiences as they influence internal images of good teaching; the teacher program; and, the cooperating teacher and school community. None of these factors in and of themselves explain "failure" but taken in context and together they provide pictures of emerging patterns of the antecedents of "failure": at a personal level, issues and factors are identified through the observation of dispositions and attributes of preservice teachers and the monitoring of their academic performance; at a program level, factors are evident in the results and impact of course work and practicum experiences, and the more general impact of models of preservice teacher preparation; and, at a contextual level, factors are influenced by the settings and styles of the cooperating schools and teachers, besides the influences of supervisors and other mentors.

Implications: Characteristics, Contexts, and Circumstances to Counteract

There are two major implications from our explorations of "failure". The first suggests modifications to current practices. The second is related to future and alternative conceptualizations and structures for achieving the kinds of goals that are implied in student / practice teaching as it is generally currently conducted.

Modifications to Current Practice

One of the major implications suggests that concerted changes need to occur in the manner in which teacher education programs attract, admit, and subsequently prepare preservice teachers for student / practice teaching assignments. In addition, there are also implications having to do with the relationships of theory to practice, the scope and expectations of student / practice teaching, the quality of guidance by university and school personnel to ensure productive experiences, opportunities for extensive remediation where evidence points to its value, and the need for some kind of substantial debriefing to help preservice teachers make sense of the experience.

Program selection criteria. There is a need to reevaluate the usefulness of present structures and screens associated with entry to the formal preparation of preservice teachers (see, Freeman, Martin, Brousseau & West, 1989). We suspect that there are many institutions who utilize outdated methods to evaluate and test prospective teachers. Selections must be more closely based on the available research about the qualities and predispositions of successful teachers and the academic preparedness of exemplary teachers. It is quite unrealistic to expect to transform everyone who applies for admission to preservice teacher education programs into accomplished beginning teachers. Further, it may be unethical for programs to admit individuals whose philosophical orientations and other evidence points to obvious mismatches between individual and institutional views of the educational world of schools, mismatches that may eventually lead to mis-educative experiences for prospective teachers. Larger programs with only one thematic perspective may serve prospective teachers better by offering multiple thematic orientations as, for example, is currently done at Michigan State University and other institutions.

In particular, preservice teachers' prior patterns of academic achievement and experiences of schools may provide revealing insights into their potential potency to effect change in our Nation's schools. In addition, given the high incidence of subject matter incompetence evident from the records of those who "failed", greater attention should be placed on facilitating the highest levels of subject matter expertize in prospective teachers. It is a gross mistake to foster academic and subject matter mediocrity in future teachers, a mistake that has undoubtedly influenced the low status of the teaching profession. And, this emphasis must be followed by the development of high levels of proficiency in translating academic content knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge. Extensive attention to this matter is central to resolving some of the problems associated with "failure". The predominance of "junior professor" mentalities among some student / practice teachers should be of little surprise since most teaching methods courses are unable to substantially transform the university liberal arts perspectives and subject matter, central in the thinking of prospective teachers, into useful constructs for elementary and secondary students.

Low levels of academic subject matter knowledge may be especially evident in otherwise first-rate second-career preservice teachers. The lag in subject matter preparation and opportunities for teaching that subject matter often hampers these individuals, and special care needs to be afforded in the selection and preparation of this group of potential teachers. It is not appropriate to accept at face value outdated transcripts and experience without offering substantial opportunities to update subject matter expertize as relevant to schools and classroom teaching. Yet, to do this through traditional course work may unnecessarily discourage and confound decisions by otherwise competent individuals who are considering the profession of teaching. Moreover, the kinds and modes of preparation offered in traditional teacher education programs

serving young, adult life experience-deficit, undergraduate preservice teachers may be entirely unsuited to the preparation of more mature individuals, and we should not expect the case to be otherwise. Teacher educators have possibly lagged in presenting programs that are androgogically sound - that is, consider the pedagogical needs of adults (see, Knowles, 1970, 1980).

Ongoing intensive counseling and guidance. Many of the "failed" preservice teachers may have benefited from intensive ongoing counseling which could have performed two functions for them. First, it could help bring to firm realization the inadequacies in the levels of individuals' preparedness for teaching, suggesting remedial activities and alternative courses of action. There were many individuals who claimed that they knew nothing of the seriousness of their situation or the precariousness of their prospects for succeeding and gaining teaching certificates. Regular, intensive, direct, honest, formative and summative evaluations, both face to face and confidential, could alert prospective teachers to the seriousness with which they should approach their preparation. These kinds of intensive evaluations would serve to introduce more personalized and individualized programs of preparation for prospective teachers, especially second-career individuals who may be overly prepared in some areas and underprepared in others. Too often, counsellors and advisors superficially examine and discuss the experiences and preparedness of these people. This matter also suggests the need for pinpointing prospective teachers strengths and weaknesses and, accordingly, designing individualized programs that meet their specific needs. It is unrealistic and ineffective to insist that all prospective teachers be exposed to the same course work given the extensive variations in life experiences and competencies evident in students of teaching.

Appropriate contexts for practice. Many dilemmas arise when preservice teachers internalized models of teachers and classrooms - based either on their

own school experiences or from teacher preparation programs – do not match models they encounter in schools (see, Weinstein, 1989). In addition, some cooperating teachers are unable to mentor preservice teachers in productive ways, to help them negotiate the gaps between internalized role models and the realities they find in placement schools. And, these mentors should not be virtually solely responsible for the development of competent practice in the preparation of prospective teachers. Other key and influential players are sorely needed since this is a task for all involved in teacher education programs.

One way in which schools of education can respond to these gaps and mismatches is through multiple field-experience placements for prospective teachers. In several instances, individuals who had unsatisfactory student / practice teaching experiences and who were obviously not going to be assigned passing grades or be recommended for teacher certification were removed from their original placements. They were given new placements in completely different contexts. Some succeeded, others "failed" a second time. Why? Unfortunately, unless one has intimate knowledge of the student / practice teacher who is withdrawn from one or more different placements, it is often impossible to piece together explanatory information together from official records. In fact, if a preservice teacher has an unsatisfactory field placement experience at any level prior to student / practice teaching it is entirely conceivable that, given the generally impersonal school placement policies, the individual could be placed in a similar position for student / practice teaching with disastrous results. And, that is exactly what happened in at least one instance. Sensitive and methodical placements producing mild cognitive dissonance, appropriate for inducing appropriate levels of cognitive changes, are clearly in order. The practice of placing student / practice teachers in classrooms according to close convenience -- gas money considerations -- for supervising personnel is

clearly in question. If budgetary limitations and convenience threaten to dictate placements in schools either because of the lack of preparation of cooperating teachers or restrictions on the numbers of supervision sites and the need for few faculty to supervise large numbers of student / practice teachers, programs need to cautiously reconsider their ethical responsibilities to prospective teachers.

Clearly, greater attention needs to be given to both preparing preservice teachers for extended classroom placements and preparing cooperating teachers for the extended participation and interaction with developing beginners. This is especially critical in the cases of second or third career preservice teachers, who, for the most part, have less direct contact in the schools prior to student / practice teaching than typical undergraduates, and, as graduate students, have significantly shortened practica. It is disconcerting that many teacher educators have long-paid scant attention to the seriousness and importance of the position held by the mentor teacher in the development of autonomous and progressive new teachers. Massive discontinuities between philosophies of programs, preservice teachers, university faculty, and cooperating schools and teachers, do nothing to develop the professional competencies of new teachers as individuals able to make significant inroads into the dilemmas and complexities of contemporary and future schools. Inattention to the development of significant levels of compatibility between the key players, especially between the program goals and those of the school site, serve to maintain the status quo in schools and does nothing to develop new kinds of teaching to meet the different and difficult challenges facing young or inexperienced teachers.

Effective supervision and facilitation of appropriate practice. Supervision of student / practice teachers has traditionally been more evaluative than formative. Changes in the intensity and structure of supervision may be to the advantage of many prospective teachers. Irreconcilable models of supervision have been mis-

educative to some individuals who "failed" and, we suspect, have not constructively facilitated the professional development of many others (see, Richardson-Koehler,1988). Greater levels of congruence between personalities and philosophies of prospective teachers and supervisors may prove productive, as would different roles of supervisors. The role of supervisors could benefit by re-formation. For example, greater levels of classroom participation engaging is such activities as team teaching, modelling, and problem-solving at more intense levels than overworked supervisors usually perform are necessary. Large numbers of preservice teachers can not be adequately guided by one supervisor. We suggest that university supervisors have responsibility for intimate, small groups of preservice teachers in an effort to personalize the process evaluation and guidance and to achieve more closely desired ends. Many of the failed preservice teachers in this study were unaware how badly they were performing until well into their practicum. Certainly, more intense contact with supervisors over the duration of program participation has potential for alleviating many major difficulties in the period of practice before they become seriously destructive to prospective careers and become mis-educative experiences in the process. This thinking also speaks to the need for extending the period of induction beyond student / practice teaching, past even the first year of service, well into the early period of becoming a teacher.

Remediation opportunities. Opportunities should be offered to preservice teachers to modify their thinking about and conceptualization of practice. Potentially most productive are opportunities to examine those aspects of prospective teachers' practice that hinder their further professional development and / or acceptance by students. This may entail their retaking particular classes or courses, gaining more substantial experiential and theoretical bases for their actions, or where necessary, embarking on an array of studies independently or

in small groups, engaging in field experiences, receiving ongoing counselling, or other such guided activities that enable individuals to overcome recognized weaknesses or deficiencies in preparation. This calls for greater flexibility in teacher preparation programs than we currently witness. And, we must not be weak-kneed about the prospect of asserting remediation, but is should not be provided in traditional forms – taking just another course. These kinds of modifications demand creative translation of state mandated requirements into productive experiences for prospective teachers.

Exit counseling and vocational guidance. For those individuals who "fail" in their student / practice teaching endeavors, it is extremely useful to provide extensive and intensive guidance and support. The damning nature of "failure" rips at the cords of self-esteem, and individuals need opportunities to talk through such experiences. Ideally, this activity might be best accomplished if individuals were assigned teacher educators as mentors who closely monitored preservice teachers' progress or lack of it at levels more intense than typically seen in current practices. Being attuned to individuals' desires, intents, weaknesses, and strengths, such mentors and counselors could facilitate the overcoming of personal and professional tragedies related to "failure" or near "failure". Sound vocational guidance, exploring other satisfying vocational options, is also most essential at this point.

Further, all student / practice teachers could benefit from extensive "debriefings" of their experience, helping them to make sense of complex and often ill-understood events and circumstances. It may well be more conceptually and internally consistent to organize student / practice teaching on an experiential education model in which greater levels of attention are focused on making meaning out of the experience itself (see, Joplin, 1981; Knowles, 1990a). Too often, prospective teachers are flung to the socialization forces of schools as

beginning teachers, without the benefit of substantially making sense out of their first extensive period of practice. Moreover, recommendations for employment do not serve the purpose of debriefing.

Exploring Alternative Models of Practice

While others have explored the pitfalls and advantages of student / practice teaching (e.g., Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1986) and have brought into question its value and assumptions about its structure, we believe it is important to attend to the matter further. We are not convinced that it serves well the preparation for practice of many individuals. We noted several cases where the context, duration, focus, and intensity of the experience was most mis-educative. Further, student / practice teaching is traditionally thought of as a capstone experience, a view which needs to be broadened and integrated to include other experiences important in the process of learning to teach. To have one's prospective professional success rest on one kind of experience is not ultimately helpful for the development of exemplary practices. Notions of prospective teachers being guided by only one cooperating teacher through singular placements could give way to multiple placements over shorter durations and over the entire course of one's preparation program. These are not new recommendations but, indeed, if teachers of tomorrow are to be prepared to meet the multiple demands of complex and depressed urban environments, and the variety of other contexts found in a culturally pluralistic society, then extensive opportunities for teaching in other than the most traditional school settings is in order.

Further, to limit those experiences to grade level settings synonymous with the level of most comfort or certification sought blinds the perspectives of prospective teachers, limiting their professional knowledge about learning over various stages of the human lifespan. This is analogous to placing blinders on a

draught horse, a practice intended to restrict viewpoints. Elementary teacher certification candidates can also benefit from working in preschools and high schools. Secondary majors can learn much from preschools and elementary school classrooms. Similarly, to view teaching and learning as only the domain of public schools is a mistake. Besides, having opportunities to observe and practice in public schools, recognition must be given to the fact that there are many other sites in which effective examples of teachers teaching and learners learning occur. Some of these sites include community centers, recreation centers, clubs of various kinds, summer camps and day programs, tutoring centers, neighborhood learning groups / centers, parent operated instructional groups, and even parent taught home schools. Teacher preparation institutions would be well-served to encourage the use of these multiple sites for serious practicum experiences and not treat them as the domain of informal summer work experiences. As teacher educators, we have great responsibilities associated with developing the professional practices of new teachers who can instruct and assist learners in these various settings that are sure to make up the multiple learning contexts of the future.

Explanations and Directions

Throughout the paper we have deliberately used the terms "student / practice teacher" and "student / practice teaching". Our purpose has been to draw attention to the clumsiness of both the structure and the the intent of the practice. Are the prospective teachers "student teaching" or "practice teaching"? Is it the singular most important practical preservice experience that prospective teachers have? If, indeed, we wish to establish greater credibility with other professions, and give potential new teachers the credibility they deserve as they enter the field, then we have to do more than change the name of the activity; we need to rethink

its purpose, potential outcomes, structure, context, and duration, to identify several aspects that are long overdue for an overhaul. Much needs to be done.

Finally, the scant attention to the matter of "failure" in the research literature verifies the need for more research on the matter. This effort has been productive and has allowed us relatively translucent windows to our own practices. In particular, understandings about the antecedents of "failure" (see Table 1), and ways to remedy the various situations, are sorely needed. We have barely scratched the surface.

In making our analysis of "failure" and in developing productive implications, we believe we have provided a useful criticism that may be helpful as we think about entering a new era in teacher education, an era that can only be creatively entered into if we are willing to accept that our closet at present has a few skeletons in it, one of them being "failure" in student / practice teaching.

Table 2a: Cases of "Failure" in Student / Practice Teaching Practica

	Date of Initial Failure	Age at Entry of Program	Gender	Undergraduate or Graduate Program	Major Certification Area	Grade Point Average	Initial Evaluation
Case 1	1981	25	M	U-sec	SOCIOLOGY	2.68	U
Case 2	1981	22	F	U-sec	HEALTH ED	2.74	U
Case 3	1981	29	M	U-sec	ENGLISH	2.8	U
Case 4	1982	25	F	U-sec	ENGLISH	2.72	U
Case 5	1982	31	F	U-sec	P. E.	2.81	S/U
Case 6	1982	25	M	U-sec	HISTORY	2.93	U
Case 7	1982	31	M	U-sec	ENGLISH	2.78	U
Case 8	1983	33	F	U-sec	FRENCH	2.81	U
Case 9	1985	37	M	U-sec	HISTORY	3.39	U
Case 10	1985	35	M	U-sec	SPANISH	3.23	U
Case 11	1986	32	M	U-elem	EARLY CHILDHOOD	2.03	U
Case 12	1986	28	F	U-sec	HOME EC	2.69	U
Case 13	1986	22	M	U-sec	HISTORY	3.67	U
Case 14	1987	46	F	U-elem	ELEM ED	3.19	U
Case 15	1987	37	M	U-sec	HISTORY	3.21	U
Case 16	1987	38	M	G-sec	ENGLISH	3.62	S
Case 17	1987	24	M	U-middle	COMMUNICATION	2.78	U/S
Case 18	1987	24	M	U-elem	ELEM ED	3.33	N.A.
Case 19	1988	30	M	U-elem	ELEM ED	2.91	U
Case 20	1984	23	F	U-elem	EARLY CHILDHOOD	3.2	U
Case 21	1989	37	F	G-sec	ENGLISH	3.85	U
Case 22	1989	46	M	G-sec	BUS ED	3.53	D
Case 23	1990	47	F	G -K-12	MULTI HANDICAPPED	n.a.	U
Case 24	1990	20	F	U-elem	ELEM ED	3.81	U
Case 25	1990	20	F	U-elem	ELEM ED	2.54	U

U-elem	undergraduate elementary
U-sec	undergraduate secondary
G-sec	graduate secondary
U	unsatisfactory
S	satisfactory

Table 2b: Cases of "Failure" in Student / Practice Teaching Practica

	Offered Another Placement	Completed Alternate Placement	Grade Appeal	Final Practicum Grade	Marital Status	Previous Occupation
Case 1	N	NO	NO	W	M	Religious worker
Case 2	N	NO	YES	W	S	Transfer student
Case 3	N	NO	NO	W	N.A.	Aluminum siding installer
Case 4	Y	NO	NO	INC	N.A.	Work 20 hours per week
Case 5	Y	NO	NO	INC	S	Substitute teacher - 6 years
Case 6	N	NO	NO	NO CREDIT	N.A.	Housekeeper at hospital
Case 7	N	NO	YES	NO CREDIT	M	Construction worker
Case 8	Y	YES	NO	NO CREDIT	M	N.A.
Case 9	N	NO	YES	NO CREDIT	M	Substitute teacher
Case 10	N	NO	NO	W	N.A.	Substitute teacher - 1 year
Case 11	Y	NO	NO	NO CREDIT	N.A.	Teacher's aide
Case 12	N	NO	YES	NO CREDIT	M	Housewife/mother
Case 13	N	NO	YES	W	N.A.	Cashier at grocery store
Case 14	N	NO	NO	NO CREDIT	N.A.	Housewife/mother
Case 15	N	NO	NO	W	N.A.	Marines; Boy Scout leader
Case 16	N	NO	NO	W	M	Salesman (father of 6)
Case 17	N	NO	NO	W	N.A.	Boy Scout leader; religious worker
Case 18	N	NO	NO	W	M	Transfer student
Case 19	N	NO	NO	NO CREDIT	N.A.	N.A.
Case 20	Y	NO	NO	B	S	Transfer student; rental sales
Case 21	Y	YES	NO	B*	S	Part-time teacher
Case 22	Y	YES	YES	B*	N.A.	Substitute teacher
Case 23	N	1ST EXTEND	YES	B*	DIVORCED	Substitute teacher
Case 24	Y	YES	NO	A*	S	Student
Case 25	Y	YES(2)	YES	A*	S	Transfer student

* recommended for certification
W withdrawn
INC incomplete
N.A. data not available

Table 3a: Cases of "Failure" in Student / Practice Teaching

Deficiencies noted in anecdotal records and student / practice teaching evaluations

CIRCUMSTANCES		CASES 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PERSONAL											
Personal interaction skills with professors and others	A										√
Social habits and acceptance by peers	B						√				
Standardized testing	C	√				√			√		
Academic grade point average	D	√						√			√
Work habits / academic responsibility	E	√						√		√	√
Previous role models of teaching	F	√	√	√		√				√	
Familiarity with expectations of teachers	G				√			√			√
Degree of comfort working in schools	H				√		√			√	
PROFESSIONAL											
Mastery of content area knowledge	I			√							
Interpretation of content knowledge	J		√			√	√		√	√	
Enthusiasm for content knowledge	K			√					√		
Clear lesson plans and objectives	L	√	√	√	√				√		
Organization and curriculum planning skills	M	√	√	√	√	√			√		
Uses variety of curriculum methods	N						√		√	√	
Classroom management and discipline	O	√	√	√	√		√		√	√	
CONTEXTUAL											
Marital / relational pressures	P				√				√		
Financial needs	Q				√			√	√		
Occupational interference	R				√			√			
Health problems	S								√		
Interactions with university supervisor	T		√								
Interactions with cooperating teacher	U		√	√				√			√
Interactions with students	V			√		√	√				
Incongruent subject matter / grade level placement	W										
Practicum attendance and professional conduct	X		√	√		√		√			√
Adjustment to school setting / culture	Y										

Table 3b: Cases of "Failure" in Student / Practice Teaching

Deficiencies noted in anecdotal records and student / practice teaching evaluations

CIRCUMSTANCES	CASES														
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
PERSONAL															
A		√	√	√			√	√		√	√		√		√
B			√					√		√		√	√	√	
C	√	√													
D	√	√						√				√			√
E	√	√						√					√		√
F			√		√					√			√		
G				√	√	√		√	√	√					
H			√								√			√	
PROFESSIONAL															
I									√	√	√	√	√		
J	√		√	√			√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
K	√		√					√	√	√	√	√			√
L	√	√			√	√			√	√	√	√	√		
M	√	√		√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√		
N									√	√	√	√			
O	√		√	√		√			√	√	√	√		√	√
CONTEXTUAL															
P		√													
Q					√			√		√			√		
R					√										
S															
T			√				√						√		
U			√	√						√	√			√	√
V	√			√						√	√	√		√	√
W			√	√						√				√	√
X		√							√	√					
Y								√						√	√

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