Graduates’ Perceptions of the Impact of
Central Michigan University’s
Master of Arts in Community College Education Program
on Teaching Practice

Capstone Project
Master of Arts in Community College Education
Central Michigan University

Submitted to
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Durham Cohort
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Dedication

To my husband Rick, my foundation

To my daughters Cory and Ali, my cherished gifts

To my families, my roots
Acknowledgements

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Thank you sincerely for your time and for allowing me to “borrow” your voices. Without them this work would not have been possible.

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My dear friend, your ever present energy and spirit transcends distance and has been incredibly enabling.

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Thank you for shepherding me through the process.
Abstract

Perceptions of the impact of a Master of Arts in Community College Education on teaching practice are explored in a descriptive study involving eight program graduates. The 33-credit program, provided by Central Michigan University and hosted by specific Ontario community colleges, is designed to deliver graduate studies to educators and trainers with a focus on teaching practice and leadership in a community college environment. The program is offered in a cohort format in weekend sessions over a two-to-three year period. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to identify and describe graduates’ perceptions of the changes related to teaching and teaching-related practice. The study concluded that the most significant impact was the enhancement of graduates’ confidence, including enhanced confidence in teaching practice, increased willingness to take risks, and a sense of personal development, renewal and achievement. Another area of impact included an enhanced focus on learners evidenced by an increased awareness of diverse learning styles, increased empathy for learners, redefinition of the teaching role, and recognition of the critical role reflection plays in teaching practice. Teaching skills and general skills were believed to have been enhanced. Graduates also reported an improved understanding of the college system and the broader issues it faces.
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................. 4  

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................. 7  

CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM DEFINED .............................................................. 8  
  Problem Statement .......................................................................................... 8  
  Purpose of Study ........................................................................................... 11  
  Definition of Terms ....................................................................................... 12  
  Limitations of the Study .............................................................................. 14  

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................... 15  

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY ........................................................................ 23  
  Population/Sample .......................................................................................... 23  
  Data Collection Method .............................................................................. 25  
  Data Analysis Methods .............................................................................. 30  

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS ..................................................................... 33  
  Introduction ...................................................................................................... 33  
  Teaching-Specific Impact ............................................................................. 38  
    Enhanced Professional and Personal Confidence .................................... 38  
    Enhanced Learner Focus .......................................................................... 42  
    Enhanced Teaching Skill Base ................................................................. 47  
    Awareness of Reflection as a Critical Element of Practice ..................... 52  
  Teaching-Related Impact ............................................................................ 54  
    Perceptions Regarding Enhanced General Skill Set ............................... 54  
    Enhanced Awareness and Understanding of the College System and Related Issues ................................................................. 59
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ......66

Summary ............................................................................................................................... 66
Conclusions .............................................................................................................................. 71
Recommendations ...................................................................................................................... 73

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................75

APPENDICES .......................................................................................................................79

Appendix A ............................................................................................................................. 79
Appendix B .............................................................................................................................. 81
Appendix C .............................................................................................................................. 82
Appendix D .............................................................................................................................. 83
Appendix E .............................................................................................................................. 85
List of Tables

Table 4.1
Perceptions Regarding Enhanced Personal and Professional Confidence ..........38

Table 4.2
Perceptions Regarding Enhanced Learner Focus ...........................................42

Table 4.3
Perceptions Regarding Enhanced Teaching Skill Set ..................................47

Table 4.4
Perceptions Regarding Enhanced General Skill Set ....................................54

Table 4.5
Perceptions Regarding Enhanced Awareness and Understanding of the College System and Related Issues ..............................................................59
Chapter I: The Problem Defined

Problem Statement

As the Ontario community college system matures a considerable number of faculty are choosing Central Michigan University’s (CMU) Master of Arts in Community College Education program (referred to in this paper as the program) to inform their practice and further their educational credentials. The CMU program is “…designed to deliver graduate studies to both educators and trainers; for example, adult learning instructors, community college faculty or corporate training professionals” (Central Michigan University [CMU], 2001). Students attend classes, in cohort groups, on weekends, generally while maintaining a full-time professional workload. The course focuses on “…increasing the knowledge of educators and trainers who want to develop their understanding of current educational practice related to: learning styles, instructional techniques, integration of technology in the classroom and the successful development of meaningful curriculum” (CMU, 2001). According the recruiting materials in The Cohort Notebook, the 33-credit hour program:

Combines courses in management, administration and research skills specifically required in educational settings, and provides a solid basis in general education theory and practice. Core courses offer students a philosophical basis for sound curriculum development, examine how to integrate technology into the
Graduates’ Perceptions

classroom and provide practical instruction in utilizing human relations skills effectively (CMU, 2001).

There appears to be a generally accepted assumption that improvement in practice will occur as a result of further insightful study of the education system, its components and educational practice (Grisham, Berg & Jacobs, 2002). In reality, does this pursuit have the impact it is presumed to have? In light of the personal and institutional costs involved, it is important to question the efficacy of such programs.

Is teaching practice altered or modified as a result of graduate training? Is the CMU graduate equipped to perform the significant and often complex tasks demanded of college teachers as a result of his or her studies? Are college professors better equipped to play an active part in the peripheral roles accepted by faculty: program co-ordination, college governance, community outreach, strategic planning, faculty and student recruitment and selection, and fundraising? More specifically, can the CMU graduate participate more fully, more knowledgably, and more skilfully in essential teaching responsibilities including, “…determining proper goals for student learning, designing courses, selecting learning materials, making assignments and assessing the achievements of those goals, understanding and working effectively with diverse students, giving academic and career advice, and constructing and assessing curricula in the department” (Gaff & Pruitt-Logan, 1998 p. 77)? Does the CMU program become a change agent for individuals or institutions?
In the education community we often assume that the learning process is transformative: that the theory examined in classrooms at all levels of education will change learners’ perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, and that educational research will inform education practice. When educating teachers, the assumption is that the learner will be able to apply these theories to his or her professional practice. Corporate and educational organizations invest significant time and money in the educational advancement of their employees. These organizations expect a return on their investment: improved employee performance.

Consider that in July 2003, Durham College had 10 employees enrolled in one of the two cohorts of CMU’s Master of Arts in Community College Education program operating at the college’s Oshawa campus. Eight of these learners were full-time employees, five of whom continued to teach following graduation from the program. Durham will pay a total of $100,000, which equals 50 per cent of the tuition costs for its eight full-time employees. Individual learners pay $14,000 in tuition and spend 372 hours in class. There are, of course, other related individual financial considerations and countless more hours committed to work outside the classroom.

Considering the enormity of this outlay, what is the return on investment for these individuals and institutions? Brent and Haller (1998) suggest that “…investment in graduate training …is justified only to the extent that the benefits produced exceed associated costs” (p.3). Does this investment directly impact teaching practice and if so, how?
Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine and describe graduates’ perceptions of the impact the completion of the CMU Master of Arts in Community College Education program has had on their teaching practice. It explores the depth and extent of this impact, focusing on specific areas where teachers believed they were able to apply theory, concepts, attitudes and insights gained during the program to their teaching practice. The study explores graduates’ perceptions of their teaching practices before and after the CMU program to determine if, and to what degree, their practice changed as a result of the program. This descriptive study will look for variables and patterns of application expressed by the participants. Once identified, these variables can be more extensively researched in a future study. This is not a study of comparative efficacy, but rather an exploration of the perception of graduates from a particular program.

The participants were all graduates from Ontario-based CMU cohorts, and they have taught in the Ontario community college system for at least one year prior to entering the program. They continued to teach in that system for at least one year following completion of the program.
Definition of Terms

Program
In the context of this paper the term program refers to CMU’s Master of Arts in Community College Education offered in the cohort-based fashion at several community colleges in Ontario.

Teaching Practice
Pedagogically based interactions and/or behaviours including those involving the self, learning materials, colleagues and learners.

Cohort
“Groups of students who enrol at the same time and go through a program by taking the same courses at the same time” (Imel, 2002, p.1).

Transformative Learning
Transformative learning is the process of individuals changing their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their world (Mezirow in Imel, 1998, p. 3).
Teacher Effectiveness

Teaching effectiveness is a teacher’s ability to meet personal and institutional objectives related to teaching practice.

Teaching-Specific

This term refers to factors or changes in behaviour or attitudes that have a direct impact on the classroom.

Teaching-Related

This term refers to factors or changes in behaviour or attitudes related to peripheral activities and responsibilities associated with teaching and which may have an impact on the classroom but do not necessarily occur within the classroom.
Limitations of the Study

Both resources and time limit the scope of this study. Since 1977 Ontario has hosted 53 cohort groups at 12 different colleges. With an average of 20 students per cohort, approximately 1,000,000 students have participated in this program (R. Giroux, personal communications, March 17, 2004). Time and resources limit this study to a very small sample of these graduates and therefore limits the ability to generalize the findings more broadly. However, the sample should serve the purpose of this research which is primarily exploratory in nature. The study identifies a number of variables that may assist in future research.

The researcher’s participation in the CMU program may be perceived as a limitation in that a particular researcher bias may exist and in turn may shape findings, interpretations and conclusions. On the other hand a close familiarity with the program may allow for a greater depth of understanding and insight into the relevant issues surrounding this study. This role of participant observer/recorder may also put the participants at ease and result in more candid, less guarded responses.
Chapter II: Literature Review

As the Ontario community college system matures, a considerable number of faculty are choosing the CMU Master of Arts in Community College Education program to further their educational credentials and inform their practice. As mentioned, the CMU program is “designed to deliver graduate studies to both educators and trainers” (CMU, 2001). Students attend classes in cohort groups on weekends, generally while maintaining a full-time professional workload. The program focuses on “…increasing the knowledge of educators and trainers who want to develop their understanding of current educational practice related to: learning styles, instructional techniques, integration of technology in the classroom and the successful development of meaningful curriculums” (CMU, 2001).

We live in a time of creeping credentialism. In 1997, 45 American states had a master’s degree as a minimal requirement for principals, and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration recommended doctoral degrees in school administration for building-level administrators (Brent & Haller, 1998, p.3). But, do these credentials increase the efficacy of administrators? Brent and Haller cite a study which attempted to measure perceived principle effectiveness. It concluded that principals with only a bachelor of arts scored higher than those who had earned a master’s or doctorate (1998). Closer to the classroom, does a master’s degree with an education focus improve teaching practice and the
ability of teachers to effectively discharge their other teaching-related responsibilities? Or, does the graduate simply accept his or her degree hoping that “…the title behind their name will bolster their professional credential and consequently, increase their future earning “(Schneider, 1998, p. 8)?

Using graduate studies in school administration as an example, the prospect that graduate studies will improve is not likely. A summation of the literature on this subject revealed “…that there is little evidence that graduate training increases the effectiveness of school administrators in general and, principals in particular” (Brent & Haller, 1998, p. 4).

The debate surrounding the effectiveness of graduate studies for pre-service teachers and for school principals continues, with both sides of the debate having ample literature to support their position. Much has also been written about the effectiveness of graduate programs for new teachers (Gaff & Pruitt-Logan, 1989), but there is very little that examines the impact of programs designed for working teaching professionals (in-service teachers) and a significant absence of literature that explores the impact of graduate studies for those practising at the college level in the U.S. or Canada (Bers & Calhoun, 2002). This literature search found only two empirical studies specifically investigating the impact of graduate studies on teaching practice, neither of which included post-secondary teachers. A third study investigated the impact of a unique doctoral program on its participants; however these participants were not engaged in teaching related occupations.
The first, a study by Rigsby and DeMulder (1998), looked at the impact of an innovative school-based master’s degree program at the Institute for Educational Transformation at George Manson University’s Graduate School of Education. The program built around a philosophy of “…teaching and learning emphasizing work within teams, developing reflective practice, school based enquiry and continuous improvement” (Rigsby and DeMulder, 1998, p. 1), enrolls teams of teachers (two to six) from a given school who progress through the program together. The students who are all working, certified elementary and secondary teachers, attend classes over three summers and occasionally over the intervening academic years. Rigsby and DeMulder’s analysis of students’ portfolios suggest that this program had produced significant changes in their professional and personal lives. In terms of teaching practice and teaching related responsibilities students reported the development of stronger professional voices; improved confidence in their professional judgements; increased self-efficacy and power; a greater knowledge and sense of self; increased technological proficiency, improved understanding of the writing process, improved teaching practices; changed educational philosophy; improved professional and personal relationships; and broader mentoring and modeling for others.

In a study conducted at the California Institute of Integral Studies, 20 participants in a unique doctoral program described as an “…innovative adult transformative learning and change program in a small graduate school” reported
that the program had “…significantly affected both their personal growth and their actions as facilitators of social change” (Barlas, 2001, p.2).

A Canadian study conducted at the University of Lethbridge explored the impact of its Master of Education program whose central focus is the professional development of practising classroom teachers (Greene & Purvis, 1995). Students can attend on a full- or part-time basis, but many attend part time while teaching full-time. Greene and Purvis studied experienced teachers who had completed studies in this program and explored their transition from graduate studies back into the classroom. It is important to note that these were public school teachers in both the elementary and secondary streams. Among other issues, the researchers looked at the graduates’ classroom practices, relationships with colleagues, beliefs about teaching, and beliefs and practices about students and student learning.

The majority of those studied at the University of Lethbridge felt there was a direct relationship between their academic studies and classroom realities. The program was seen to validate current practice, to provide time to reflect on practices, and to clarify or challenge thinking. However, the impact was not always so direct. Other participants spoke of personal benefits which still had impact on the classroom but in a less direct manner. These included a better understanding of their role in the educational process, improved self-awareness and self-confidence, and an increased ability to think critically.

According to the literature, several factors enhance the chance of graduate level learning impacting graduates’ teaching practice. The factors
include the immediacy of opportunity; compatibility of culture between institution of study and the culture of the institution of employment; and the graduates’ learning context or program delivery method (Gaff & Pruitt-Logan, 1998, Greene & Purvis, 1995, & Imel, 2002).

Opportunity is one factor that influences the transition from theory to practice. Teachers learn to teach by teaching. Perone (1997) suggests that the more significant lessons about content, curriculum and pedagogy are not those learned during pre-service teacher training, but occur when teachers actively reflect on continuing teaching practice. The notion of immediacy of opportunity suggests that graduate students who have the ability to immediately practise the theories and concepts developed and discussed during their studies and those who have access to continuing teaching are more likely to agree that graduate studies have had an impact on their teaching practice (Gaff & Pruitt-Logan, 1998, Greene & Purvis, 1995).

The culture or environment in which a teacher functions may be another significant factor in the graduate student’s ability to put into practice what he or she has learned. Gaff and Pruitt-Logan suggest that in many cases, the values and culture in the graduate institution are very different from those in which their students will find employment. This is supported by Greene and Purvis who found that many full-time graduates experienced significant cultural differences between the institution in which they studied and the institution to which they returned to teach. These differences may be more evident when graduate students, trained in a university environment return to the rigors of elementary or
secondary teaching. Those returning to post-secondary classrooms may find a closer alignment between the cultures of the learning and teaching institutions and therefore may experience an improved ability to transfer teaching practices.

As mentioned, the CMU course uses cohort groups as its primary method of delivery. Current research indicates that when cohort groups are used in higher and adult education, when they focus on critical reflection and knowledge production and when students are encouraged to challenge previous frameworks and engage in the construction of knowledge with other learners and teachers, transformative learning is likely to occur (Imel, 2002). In her study of doctoral students in California Barlas (2001) reported that learning environments involving diverse learners in intense, extended contact with each other tend to foster critical thinking and transformative learning.

The literature also indicates that cohort groups provide support in learning and risk-taking (Imel, 2002). Is a graduate student in this environment more likely to risk innovative teaching practices given that he or she can return to the graduate classroom almost immediately following his or her freshly modified practice and engage a forum of professionals in thoughtful analysis of their teaching/learning venture? Is this risk-taking behaviour more likely to occur as a result of this type of learning environment? Certainly research shows that learners exposed to a cohort learning experience generally feel very positive about their learning experiences (Imel, 2002), but does this positive learning experience necessarily equate with improved teaching performance?
As noted, Imel suggests that transformational learning often occurs in cohort learning environments. Is the CMU experience transformative? Faris (2003) argues that learning can only be confirmed if a change in behaviour or attitude is evident. The literature suggests two views of transformative learning. Imel notes that Mezirow, who first introduced transformative learning in 1978, defined it as a process through which “…learners constitute, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experience” (1998, p. 3). It explains how adult behavioural and attitudinal frameworks shift in response to critical reflection on experiences and examines the impact of learning on these framework shifts. In 1997 Mezirow suggested that “…transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds” (Imel, 1998, p. 3). More recently, Boyd, Myers and Taylor pose a definition of transformative learning that is more psychological in nature, drawing more on intuition, creativity and emotional process. They argue that the process involves a fundamental change in personality resulting from the resolution of a personal dilemma. Imel concludes that “…no single mode of transformative learning exists” (1998, p. 4). Due to differences in teachers, learners and contexts, transformational learning does not always occur, nor should it necessarily be the only goal of education. Whether defined primarily as a “cognitive, rational, and objective” process, or as an “intuitive, imaginative and subjective” process, the question of whether this particular educational program resulted in a transformative learning experience still remains (1998, p.3).
As noted, there is a limited body of literature that studies the efficacy of master’s level education programs subjectively or objectively, or the ability of program graduates to convert theory or content from their studies into effective teaching practice at the post-secondary level. However, based on the studies indicating that elementary and secondary teachers engaged in master’s level studies in education have reported a positive impact on teaching practice as well as personal development, it would be reasonable to expect that the CMU program would have a similar impact on its participants. The dearth of available studies may indeed support the need to investigate this issue further. As more and more individuals and institutions invest heavily in the development of themselves or their employees, the return on investment must be considered. An attempt to determine how and to what degree the completion of the CMU program has impacted teaching practice is timely.
Chapter III: Methodology

Population/Sample

Eight individuals participated in this study. Each graduated from CMU’s Master of Arts in Community College Education program offered in partnership with four Ontario community colleges; Sir Sanford Fleming College in Peterborough, Durham College in Oshawa, Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Toronto and Georgian College in Barrie. Three participants studied with Durham cohorts, two with the Fleming cohort, one at Humber and two moved between two cohort locations (Humber/Durham and Humber/Georgian).

These individuals graduated at various times, with 15 years being the longest period since graduation and one year being the shortest. The average length of time since graduation was between seven and eight years. Participants were purposefully chosen from a variety of cohort locations and from varying cohort timeframes so that the data would be broadly rather than narrowly based.

To be eligible for the study, participants must have taught in the Ontario community college system for at least one year prior to entering the CMU program and then continued to teach in the college system for at least one year following graduation. Pre-CMU teaching experience of participants ranged from as few as two years to as many as 17 years, while post-MU teaching ranged from one year to seven years. Six of the participants are still engaged in
teaching at the post-secondary level or above (four on a full-time basis). Four individuals are engaged in various administrative roles, three in the community college system and one in the private sector.

It is important to note that teaching positions in Ontario’s community college system did not necessarily require formal teacher training or an undergraduate degree. While every participant in this study had an undergraduate degree, the discipline areas of those degrees varied. Participants’ engagement in previous teacher training ranged from an education-focused undergraduate degree to little or no formal training other than a variety of professional development seminars and workshops. Two of the participants have received doctoral degrees since graduating from CMU.

At the time of the study, three of the participants were in the 35 to 44 age category, while the other five are between 45 to 54 years of age. The participants included seven females and one male.

The participants were located using an informal network of CMU graduates. Initial contacts resulted in referrals to other suitable candidates. The candidates were informed about the purpose and nature of the study by letter or e-mail and those who met the criteria were invited to participate. At the time of the interviews the researcher had a professional relationship with three of the participants. The researcher has had minimal previous contact with three and has had no previous contact with the other two individuals.
Data Collection Method

Teaching practice - the pedagogically based interactions and behaviours involving the self, learners, learning materials and colleagues - is as individual and unique as the teacher, highly contextual, and constantly changing. As well teaching is as much art as it is a science, and it is at the same time personal and professional.

The purpose of this study is not to measure precisely and in observable terms, the impact of the CMU Master of Arts in Community College Education program on the teaching practice of its graduates, but rather to understand the graduates’ perceptions of how the program shaped them and their teaching and teaching-related experiences. To effectively facilitate the purpose of this study, a qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted. This approach was best suited to the goals of this study because it focuses on providing an understanding of how the program was experienced and applied by the participants.

Individual face-to face, audiotaped interviews were chosen as the primary data collection instrument for several reasons. The perceived credibility and acceptability of the interview method was one of the key reasons this method was chosen. The exploratory nature of this research demanded that the participant be given full opportunity to express his or her unique experience. Although individual interviews are time consuming to conduct and transcribe, they provided the opportunity to explore a phenomenon in depth. The flexibility
to fully explain the purpose of the study, to clarify questions, to further probe responses as required and to react to individual participants can provide a database far richer than that provided by the use of a questionnaire (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

Rather than viewing the interview as simply a process in which one person attempts to gain information from another, the researcher, who also participated in the CMU program, and who followed a feminist approach to interviewing, viewed the interview as an opportunity for joint construction of meaning. U.S. psychologist Stephanie Riger has argued this perspective: “Traditional research methods, as indeed American culture, emphasize objectivity, efficiency, separateness and distance….Let us consider as well connection and empathy as modes of knowing, and embrace them in our criteria and in our work” (Reinharz, 1992, p.24). The very nature of this study - the fact that the researcher and participants shared a common significant educational experience, a common vocation, and in some cases a common work environment - made the chance of a completely objective interview unlikely. The predictable subjectivity of this method is acknowledged:

This apparent inevitable subjectivity, is however, both a weakness and a strength….The more involved the researcher is, the greater the degree of subjectivity likely to creep into the observations. On the other hand, the greater the involvement, the greater the opportunity for acquiring in-depth understanding and insight (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p.223).
Rather than ignoring these conditions, an effort was made to use them to
develop a rapport with the participants and to encourage further insightful
responses. However, the researcher hoped that a keen awareness of the
likelihood of observer bias reduced its effect. Every attempt was made to listen
carefully and fully to participants’ responses, to probe deeply when appropriate,
to avoid leading the participants and to interpret as objectively as possible to
produce evidence-based findings.

A review of the questions used in research conducted by Green and
Purvis (1995) provided a model for the development of the interview questions
used in this study. Six key open-ended questions, each with specific probes,
were developed to be used in a partially structured interview format (see
Appendix A). The initial questions were more factual and objective in nature, but
became more subjective and affective as the interview proceeded. Participants
were sent the key questions, minus the probes, in advance of the interview (one
participant did not receive the e-mailed questions in advance of the interview) to
allow them time to further understand the nature of the study and to give them an
opportunity to consider their answers. This was deemed necessary, given that
many of the participants graduated several years ago and some had not been in
an active teaching situation for a few years.

A simple demographic card was also developed (see Appendix B). It
served two purposes. Firstly, it helped capture relevant demographic information
about each participant and helped to put the findings into context. Secondly,
when interviewing an unfamiliar participant, the information provided on the card
acted as an ice breaker by providing the researcher information upon which to begin to develop rapport with the participant.

Potential participants were contacted by phone or e-mail. The purpose of the study and the participant criteria were discussed. Individuals who were interested and met the criteria were invited to participate. They were sent a cover letter (see Appendix C) which introduced the researcher and further explained the study, as well as a copy of the key questions. Interview times and locations were arranged at the mutual convenience of the researcher and the participants. Most interviews took place in the participant’s office or a small meeting room at the participant’s workplace.

Each interview was audiotaped and then transcribed by the researcher. Interview lengths ranged from 40 to 90 minutes, with the average interview lasting approximately one hour. Immediately before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the consent form and the interviewee completed the form (see Appendix D).

An effort was made to develop a rapport with each participant. The most obvious starting point was the shared CMU experience, which in most cases provided an almost immediate bond and fostered a shared comfort and trust between researcher and participant. Individual interviews were loosely structured, allowing the flexibility to move in a new direction or to probe more deeply as guided by the participant’s responses. Interview questions were not necessarily addressed in order. In some cases, not every question was addressed and in other cases questions were added because of the direction
taken by the participant or to clarify responses. Considering that “…the aim of
the qualitative interview is to find out about the participants, where they are
‘coming from,’ what they believe, experienced, [and] felt…” (Gay & Airasian,
2000, p. 222), participants were given relatively free reign within the framework of
the general questions. Every effort was made to provide an environment in
which to fully articulate and give personal priority to the participant’s experiences
and responses. To give each participant control over the depth and extent of his
or her responses, the time spent on each area and the movement from topic to
topic was predominantly participant-led. As is typical in qualitative research, the
questions and emphasis evolved somewhat, but not substantially, as the number
of interviews increased.

During the data collection process, several strategies highlighted by Gay
and Airasian were employed to maintain the integrity and validity of the research.
These included developing a rapport with participants to obtain detailed, honest
information; recognizing that the shared connection with the participant creates
implicit researcher bias; using verbatim transcripts; and attending to contradictory
results.

These processes and strategies provided a data collection method
capable of facilitating the exploratory mandate of this qualitative study.
Data Analysis Methods

As is typical of a qualitative study, the process of analysis actually began during the data collection stage. A combination of the Gay and Airasian model and the method of analysis suggested by Kirby and McKenna (1989) was employed. The Gay and Airasian model suggested a process that involved systematically searching, categorizing, integrating and interpreting the data, while Kirby and McKenna encourage a continuous process of reflection on both the data and the process of analysing it where the researcher moves between data and concepts and between individual ideas and researcher interpretations. The combination of constant reflection and a semi-structured process provided the appropriate balance between thinking and doing. The structural model provided the forward momentum while the reflective model took the researcher back time and again to the literature and the transcripts.

Engagement with the data started immediately during the data collection stage: during the actual interviews. As the interview unfolded the data was shaped by the reaction and responses of the researcher and the participant. Notes were made as soon as possible after the interview regarding the rapport built with the participant and the tone of the interview.

The process of transcription, although tedious, allowed the researcher to begin to become familiar with the data. It was during this process that the initial ideas for themes and categories began to emerge. Because the process of transcription and the process of interviewing overlapped, the interviews were
sometime altered slightly to incorporate questions based on issues that may have surfaced in previous interviews.

The participants’ names were eliminated in the process of transcribing the tapes. Each participant was given an alpha code so that small pieces of data could be linked back to a particular participant. That process facilitated the constant movement of data without losing the source of the material. Once all the tapes had been transcribed the manuscripts were copied. One set was held in tact for further reference and the second was used for analysis.

During the first full collective read of the manuscripts, each was scanned and relative bits of data were coded so that they could be identified relative to the subject matter and location. As an initial set of themes became evident the pieces of data were physically cut, coded and sorted into five different categories which included elements of data that seemed to fit together or helped describe a particular phenomenon or concept. At this stage the data was “arranged and rearranged until some measure of coherence [became] evident” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 146). This process was based on the relationship between data, categories and the dynamic links emerging from the two. As files developed and links were established, some substantive categories and themes emerged.

The information in these categories was then charted. Charting provided a clear list of the categories and the themes within each category, and indicated which participant or participants had made that response. This provided a
summary of the data by category and theme and provided a fairly accurate idea of the depth or thickness (Gay & Airasian, 2002) of each theme.

The process at this point became quite reflective and messy. The data was manipulated in an attempt not to change it, but to order it. The literature was revisited as were the data. The result was a reconfiguration of the categories and themes and a further breakdown of each theme into specific elements (see Appendix E). Once a relatively solid framework of categories, themes and elements had emerged, the data was left for a period of time, allowing for reflection from a distance and a return to the data with a fresh perspective.

After some minor reconfiguring, an attempt was made to describe the findings. This was not the end of the analysis. As is the case in qualitative studies, the data took on a life of its own. The process continued throughout the writing stage with some reworking of themes and elements until the researcher was satisfied that the analysis accurately reflected graduates' perceptions.
Chapter IV: Data Analysis

Introduction

This study examines participants’ perceptions of the impact of the CMU Master of Arts in Community College Education program on their teaching practice. Every participant indicated his or her teaching practice was enhanced to some degree following completion of the program. Several participants questioned the degree to which the changes resulted from a process of natural maturation versus a direct link to the program. However, all participants believed that the CMU program had a significant impact on their personal and professional lives. Upon initial questioning, some participants said that their teaching practice had not really changed, but would proceed to articulate significant changes in attitudes or behaviours. For others the changes were more a matter of degree. For example, one participant commented, “I’m an interactive type person. So really, before I took the course, I always wanted to try and get the students involved…I still do that now, but I hope [now] more effectively.”

Once deconstructed and reconstructed, the data revealed two broad categories containing six general themes related to perceived changes (see Appendix E). For the sake of clarity and analytical structure the themes divided into two categories: teaching-specific changes and teaching-related changes. In teaching, the boundaries between classroom-related teaching activities and responsibilities and other teaching-related responsibilities are blurred. However,
for the purpose of this study, participants’ responses were considered in light of those most specifically related to the interactions in the classroom (teaching specific) and those peripheral activities and responsibilities related to teaching which impact the classroom but do not necessarily occur within the classroom (teaching-related). These categories are not absolutely distinct. However, the application of these categories assists in the organization of the data. The data was analysed using the following framework:

Category:

1. Teaching-Specific Impact

Themes:

- enhanced professional and personal confidence
- enhanced learner focus
- enhanced teaching skill set
- awareness of reflection as a critical element of practice

2. Teaching-Related Impact

Themes

- enhanced general skill set
- enhanced awareness of the broader college system and related issues
When the breadth and depth of data for a particular theme was abundant, a table precedes the analysis of each theme showing the elements of the theme and the number of participants who spoke about the particular element. Each theme was analysed and supported using direct quotes from the participants. Much of this section is given over to the voices of the participants so that their reflections and perceptions can be heard firsthand.

To appreciate the degree of change identified by the participants, it is important to have some concept of their pre-CMU teaching practice, and their motivation for taking the program. Also to clarify the level of change, participants’ perceptions of their teaching practice prior to CMU have been integrated with their perceptions of the changes in their practice. Although participants mentioned different motivations for taking the CMU program, including the desire to broaden network and resource channels (two); the programs reputation (three); the programs community college focus (four); a desire for change institutionally and personally (five); the desire to acquire the credential (six); and the accessibility and feasibility offered by the cohort format (six); it is worth noting that six mentioned they where motivated by a desire to improve or enhance teaching-specific or teaching-related practices, while only four were motivated by a desire for increased employment opportunities.

The participants’ views about their teaching practice prior to CMU were as mixed as their backgrounds, although one of the participants remarked, “If you look at the folks who took the course, they were all dedicated teachers. It mattered to them that their students succeeded.” Four participants received
some previous formal training with respect to teaching, either through teacher’s
college or intensive short programs on teaching principles and strategies. One
participant suggested that the formal training was valuable but may also have
created unnecessary boundaries. “I remember having my inspections by the
ministry inspectors, because I was teaching high school… and all teachers
should do this, and all teachers should do [that]… and in your classroom you
make sure you are doing this and you are doing this. So there was a very, very
prescribed approach.”

Others with less training reported feeling quite unprepared for their
teaching responsibilities as evidenced by this comment “I didn’t have any
teaching background…it terrifies me that I actually taught before [CMU].” In the
college system hiring decisions were based historically on the richness of
candidates’ workplace experience and related expertise rather than their
academic background. Many teachers entered the system directly from the
workplace and began teaching with minimal teacher training. One respondent
used the term “trial by fire” when describing the process. “[I]n the college system
we bring in people because of their experience out there. And to go into a
classroom and to understand all these other types of things…and people struggle
with that. [A specific teacher] knows his stuff like the back of his hand…but he
just couldn’t cope with the kids.”

That aside, the participants generally perceived themselves to be
competent teachers prior to their CMU experience. Descriptors used in the
discussion of their teaching style during this period included approachable (one),
fun (one), interactive (two), resourceful (one), confident (one), creative (two),
enthusiastic (two), organized (one) and fair (one).

One participant spoke about an approach that attempted to challenge students and referred to the class as a “community of learners.” Another indicated the learning environment in the program at his or her college had a stronger learner focus than that being encouraged in a specific CMU course.

The participant’s concern was evident:

There were things that I didn't agree with because of the journey I was going through in the [college program] curriculum development. So, we were going from a very didactic type curriculum to one that was empowering and egalitarian, where you and the students learn together in the classroom. You both studied together the body of knowledge… rather than the sage lecturing…[but] the course at CMU still had that [the sage] mentality. And that was against everything we were doing. So, that was a bit of a struggle for me; quite a struggle.
Teaching-Specific Impact

Enhanced Professional and Personal Confidence

Table 4.1

Perceptions Regarding Enhanced Personal and Professional Confidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced confidence in teaching practice</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased willingness to take risks</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of personal achievement, development and renewal</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enhanced confidence is clearly the most pervasive theme in the entire study. This theme has been addressed in the teaching-specific category because many of the references to confidence and affirmation link specifically to teaching; however, it must be noted that the issue of confidence was addressed eloquently in every category and theme identified in the study.

Without exception, participants believed that the confidence they found as a result of the program impacted their personal and professional lives and, many saw this as the most significant impact of the program. Primarily they spoke
about being more confident as teachers, whether that appeared in the form of a new-found confidence based on new knowledge, affirmation or even reaffirmation of existing practice. While participants with an academic education background spoke in terms of affirmation of previous formal learning, “It said to me, you know those things you learned years ago and have been using, [they are] pretty solid,” others spoke about affirmation of experiential learning, “So some of those teaching practices you sort of instinctively thought, this is how its done, were affirmed.” Another suggested, “It demonstrated…the intuition that I had always gone on wasn’t so far off”. Others spoke about confidence related to specific areas of teaching and attributed it to the positive feedback received from professors and fellow learners. For example, one participant said, “…confidence just in terms of my delivery, just because of the feedback. You get so much positive feedback and people are so incredible about looking at different angles, thinking outside the box, going beyond the little evaluation form being used.” Graduates also spoke about having developed a generally more mature approach to teaching and learning.

It is generally agreed that one of the manifestations of confidence is a willingness to engage in risk-taking behaviour. The participants unanimously reported an increase in their willingness to take risks in the classroom. Some attributed the rationale for this behaviour to a strong support system developed during the program. “I think I was more willing to take risks, because I knew I had the really nice support group to encourage me to try new things.”
Risk was defined in several ways, including experimenting with new courses, techniques, strategies and technology; sharing power with learners; stretching learners; and increasing interactivity. Addressing risk, learner behaviour and assessment, one graduate commented:

You learn there is a two sided street. There has to be some responsibility put back to the student to get equity in the classroom. I guess the other thing was, in trying to accumulate marks…giving the students choices in the way they are going to accumulate marks for a class so that they are not all bound by the same conditions.

The commitment to risk-taking behaviour appears substantial. Risk-taking sometimes results in a period of disequilibrium for the learner and the teacher. One participant reported being quite willing to endure the initial resistance from the learners knowing that the evaluations from the students might suffer in the short term, but confident that the learners would eventually engage. Others indicated that their level of confidence made them more resilient. Speaking about a less than successful attempt to make adjustments to their teaching approach to include different learning styles, one graduate reported:

I failed. It [didn’t] work. And in the past I would have dragged my butt back to my office and said ‘I hate this job; I want to quit’. But now I walk out of the classroom and say ‘Well, that didn’t work. I tried it, now let’s see how I could maybe [rework it],’ and I will learn from that.
This risk-taking behaviour appears to reach beyond the classroom, with participants taking a controversial position on college issues and being more willing to take a stance in important debates. “I think I’ve become a person who speaks out more now, than I ever did [before]. I do that. I speak my mind more.”

Three graduates specifically spoke about the risk involved in leaving the classroom and pursuing administrative positions. In the same vein another suggested that people “…are looking at me now to take on that kind of role [administrative] and I think I am more ready for it now.”

Others spoke of the concept of confidence in broader and sometimes more personal terms. “I think that leaving the program feeling really good, feeling really confident about what I was doing as a teacher, probably kept me in the classroom. I think it did. I had never thought of that before, but I think it did.”

There was also a suggestion that the confidence was not always immediate. Two participants spoke about confidence gained to continue their formal education. “I think the thing with CMU is you don’t realize until afterward how much it has changed you…it gave me the opportunity to then go on and the self-esteem and the confidence to get my doctorate. Now when I finished, I never thought I would, but as time when on [I did].” One participant perceived the change in confidence as “a life altering thing for me.”
Enhanced Learner Focus

Table 4.2
Perceptions Regarding Enhanced Learner Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Participants Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced awareness of diverse leaning styles and</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diverse learner needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced awareness of personal learning style and</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>its impact on teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced empathy for learners and their circumstances</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-formed perceptions of the role of the teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although participants generally perceived themselves to be competent and in some cases quite progressive in their practice, there were responses that suggested practice that was much less than learner-focused. They included descriptors such as directive (one), lecture based (two), standard, rigid, predictable or traditional (four). Their classroom practices often appeared to be driven by the particular teacher’s teaching or learning style, their perceptions about teaching practice or by content.
The following comments help articulate the shift in focus from a teacher focus to a more learner-centred focus. “I realized I had to not just do what was good for me, but what was good for different students. So I had to do a bit of this and a bit of that because there are those students who love structure and have to have the structure… and we have those kids who had to do the hands-on stuff.” Participants also suggested that they had increased their awareness of the learning process, their own learning preferences and the diversity of existing learning styles. One participant commented:

I think I was taught how to teach and I think that was a big deal. And I guess what I mean by that is I was made aware of the huge number of factors that impacted how we learn and by understanding how we learn, the flip to that came to, ‘how should that be taught?’, and that made sense to me. I think maybe the difference was before and after, having a sense of how people learned, and if you grasp the concept of how people learn you start to adjust how you teach, and you start to teach maybe to the different learning styles that are out there… you try to assess in a fashion that maybe creates a better opportunity for the students who learn in a different fashion.

Another graduate said:

Now I know that for me as a learner, and I learned in the process of getting the degree the kind of leaner I am, … I [can] now state what my learning preferences are [and] how that influences me
as a teacher, and how when I am under stress as a teacher, I revert back to my own learning style and that…doesn’t match anything they [the learners] are doing.

In several cases (five) the lessons about diverse learning styles were acquired firsthand. It became apparent in the interviews that the modeling provided by the CMU professors was keenly appraised by the participants and impacted them significantly. Negative teaching models provided intense leaning experiences. “I learned a great deal from that person, not so much in terms of content…but how he did it [taught] and how I would never want to do it [teach] that way. I was able then to articulate how my learners learn differently.” And along very similar lines another participant said, “…his style, his drone, his starring at us. I got a feel for students that I never wanted to do that to them; to just talk away at them, to put them down….I realized my learning style just tuned that person out.”

The data also indicated an increase in empathy for learners. When entrenched in the teaching role, it is easy to view learners as a singular entity, a class, and to see them first and foremost as learners, forgetting the other multiple and varied roles they shoulder. Aside from professional development workshops and seminars, many participants had not been in a formal sustained learner role for many years. Most were in the 45 to 54 year-old age category, with their last formal learning environment being their undergraduate studies in their early twenties. Half of the participants spoke about how being a learner affected their teaching practice. They perceived themselves to be more empathetic as a result
of their experience. Although teaching and learning go hand in hand and are never really separated, experiencing firsthand the expectations and demands made of learners gave teachers new insights into the behaviour and attitudes of their students and allowed them to see the learning process through a new lens:

    It was really good to go back and have an understanding of what the students were going through. And then…you see a student who’s really promising and you get really ticked off because they are not meeting their potential. Well, I remember the courses where we could contract for marks and the type A personality suddenly saying, ‘B sounds good. I have a life. I have a family. I have work. It’s okay for me to get B’. And so [although] I am probably capable of doing better there is a balance, and I think I could be more accepting of my students making those kinds of choices.

The fact that the teacher is also a student can sometimes provide a new framework for teacher/student interaction. “I was probably much more understanding because I had been there. I had been up until two in the morning…loosing stuff on the computer.” Those shared experiences may allow both students and teachers to see each from new perspectives.

    Another element that played a part in the paradigm shift from teacher-centred practice to leaner-centred practice was how the teachers perceived their roles. Two participants spoke about “letting go” of dated perceptions about the role of the teacher. They raised the idea that teaching practice is shaped by the
practitioner’s perceptions of what teachers should do and therefore practice can be reshaped by new perceptions. Before their CMU studies they were likely to define their role as dispenser of knowledge who held the primary responsibility for the students’ acquisition of skills or knowledge. They saw themselves as relatively content driven. One participant summed it up this way, “I think I am far more flexible….It doesn’t really matter to me nearly as much any more if I don’t get through all three activities.” This letting go appears to have resulted in less rigidity, greater flexibility and a more relaxed learning environment that can move according to the needs of learners. It allowed these teachers to shift their focus from sage to facilitator, from teacher to learner. The following anecdote illustrates this paradigm shift:

I remember pre-CMU that one of the student’s daughters was in hospital with meningitis, so the class wanted to know about meningitis. So we spent about fifteen minutes talking about it and then I wanted to get back to the objectives…whereas now we would just learn, we would get into that and send people off to research. [We would] get at some concepts we had to learn, but get at them in a different way.

Listening to the perceptions of graduates, it appears that they have experienced a significant change in relation to their learners with teachers understanding the learner from a new, more informed position, with a new respect for the diversity of learners and a new confidence in their ability to interact effectively with those learners.
Enhanced Teaching Skill Base

Table 4.3

Perceptions Regarding Enhanced Teaching Skill Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further integration of resources, strategies and techniques</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced ability to develop, assess, revise and implement curriculum</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced ability to plan and implement learner assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of a theoretical base for instinctive practice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Assessment is generally considered an element of curriculum, but because the participants talked about it as a discrete element, it has been treated as such.

Participants also spoke about several specific techniques and strategies they were exposed to through CMU and the impact they had on the delivery of their courses. “Those courses [curriculum development, teaching techniques and strategies and the course on communications] impacted how I think I deliver
the course, how I prepare ahead of time [and] how I lay it out.” Participants were exposed to techniques or strategies including one-minute papers, group projects, learning and evaluation contracts, model papers, frequent informal student feedback, and the integration of learning skills with course content, not only in the form of course content, but also through behaviours modelled by professors and through the incredible informal networking encounters with other learners in their cohorts. In response to a probe about changes to teaching practice, one participant stated, “I would have to say that taking my master’s helped me to be more creative…to see other strategies and techniques that I could use in the classroom and to network with people outside of [my discipline].”

The data on graduates’ perceptions regarding changes in their curriculum development skills is relatively rich and ranges from perceptions that revealed significant changes in skill level to responses that suggested a refinement of existing skills. One of the participants, who has an undergraduate degree in education, stated, “I still got a lot out of that [curriculum development] course. Maybe it was because I was working in that area and so then it was more meaningful to me.” Another suggested that at the beginning of the course, “I didn’t really know how to spell curriculum”. During the first year of the CMU program, the individual was involved in some significant curriculum development and explained that being in that situation “…allowed me to really implement what I did learn at CMU.”

Overall, participants expressed an increased consciousness of curriculum. “I was] more aware of the curriculum and the components of curriculum and
being able to design curriculum so confidently.” Three indicated that they could now “articulate [learning] outcomes better.” Others spoke about a new awareness of the affective elements of curriculum and attempts to develop more holistic curricula. And yet, others focused on a greater confidence in their ability to develop, assess, revise and implement effective units of learning. When asked how students would describe a particular teacher’s practice post-CMU versus pre-CMU, the participant responded, “I think they would say there was more structure to the lessons, more of a beginning and end, and an understanding of what was expected of them.” The confidence others gained in the area of curriculum development allowed them to meet challenges head on:

The on-line course I’m teaching now, I wrote. Never in a million years would I have thought that I [would do that]….I mean, I believed in what I was doing and I was really involved but I wasn’t always able to have all the parts that I needed to complete the steps. So to take it from a print based course and really great face-to-face course and change that to an on-line version…I had to have that belief that I could do it myself.

Other comments about changes in curriculum-related skills included one participant’s ability to consider the role of technology in the classroom and its appropriate place in the curriculum. Another commented about understanding the importance of authoring curriculum rather than attempting to teach using another person’s template.
When discussing assessment the participants believed their skills had improved with respect to designing assessment tools that were more effective, more accurate and more varied. “[What changed was] my questioning technique and the type of assignments I gave. I really thought more carefully about how I word[ed] them so that I could pull those higher level skills, the analysis and so forth.” Assessment strategies were more carefully linked to learning outcomes with greater consideration given to the evaluation framework. One participant said quite clearly:

I am confident now that when I design an assessment tool for a learner, that I am actually assessing what I think I am assessing. Is it perfect? No, but I have more skills and ability and confidence in doing that now, than I did prior to the program.

Two participants, neither of whom had an education focus in their undergraduate studies were pleased to be able to uncover the theoretical foundations of their instinctive or intuitive teaching behaviours. They were reassured that there was a legitimate rationale for their practices:

Before I took it [CMU program]…I went on my gut instinct, and that worked really well, but I didn’t have the rationale about why. So if there was somebody who was challenging me around why we were going to do it, I didn’t really have anything to fall back on and explain why.

Others, often those with an academic background in education, suggested that there had been no significant change in their basic teaching skills as
demonstrated by this participant, “[It was] not that I got any new techniques to use, but it made me feel good about what I was doing.” So, in some cases, the perception was that there was no significant change in behaviour. Perhaps more importantly, however, the program had affirmed for them the strategies and techniques they already engaged (this theme is explored further in this chapter under Teaching-Related Changes).
Awareness of Reflection as a Critical Element of Practice

In today’s educational climate of unrelenting pressure to produce, time to reflect upon teaching practice exists only on a micro level (Laiken, 2002). Just as some people believe that the unexamined life is not worth living, some of the graduates believe that unexamined teaching is not worth practising. Four of the eight participants spoke passionately about the value gained from the opportunity for reflection offered by the program. Many seized this rare chance to think critically about themselves, their learners, the learning process and their interactions with others. Time to reflect was perceived as a gift. “I would never have given myself permission to take the time, because I was too busy doing other things. So the program gave me the permission, it truly did.”

In some cases, CMU provided a structure for that reflection as evidenced in the comments of a student who suggested getting “caught up” in the new process of reflection when invited to keep a journal as part of a CMU course:

I felt myself leaving different classrooms and I would go back to my office and I would start to write and it was about what I was doing in that classroom; what I had noticed about peoples’ reactions, how I was feeling about doing that sort of activity. I had really not spent time thinking, writing down my thoughts about teaching, I don’t think ever.
Time to reflect in less formal ways was also provided and resulted in some new insights - some about themselves and some about their work:

I think what I have come to terms with is that I have no ambitions at this college to go into administration. I realized that through the master’s. I don’t want to do that. My heart is here [teaching] and I think it is a privilege; although sometime I curse the privilege….I do think it is a privilege to work with these kids.

Two participants talked about reflection in broader terms suggesting it was an opportunity to “learn about myself.” Reflection for some appears to have surpassed the professional and entered into the realm of the very personal questions of self:

It’s not just who you are in the classroom, it’s who you are… when you are in higher education and you’re being reflective, it can’t help but impact on your whole life….I can’t even describe in terms of how I feel it has affected me, but it has affected me in everything, in terms of every relationship I have.

Although the participants spoke about the value of reflection, none specifically spoke about integrating it into their teaching practice in terms of inviting learners to engage in reflective thinking. The impact on practice was less direct and referred more often to critical thinking about teaching, learning and the relationship between the two.
Teaching-Related Impact

Perceptions Regarding Enhanced General Skill Set

Table 4.4
Perceptions Regarding Enhanced General Skill Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Participants Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced human relations skills</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced critical thinking, research and writing skills</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced leadership skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is acknowledged that the skills discussed in this section are not newly acquired skills but rather the participants felt that their existing skills had been enhanced by the CMU experience.

Five participants spoke about enhanced skills in human relations or interpersonal interaction. They suggested their confidence and ability to effectively engage in different forms of interaction, including those related to students, faculty team members and administrative representatives, as well as interactions with those outside the college setting, had improved as a result of skills developed during the program. They felt confident in their ability to problem
solve; to turn negative situations into learning situations; to build relationships with individuals resulting in more cohesive work teams; and to gain the support of others for ideas and proposals. As well as identifying indicators of behavioural change, graduates also spoke about attitudinal shifts. A participant who encountered a difficult situation with two students commented:

I thought to myself, how am I going to deal with this? I remember panicking, just sitting at home and crying and thinking I'm not going to get through this semester. I was so terrified of them. And then I thought to myself, okay, I'm going to try to use the skills that I've been learning through CMU, and that really helped.

This person believed that by constructively confronting the students, the situation was resolved and everyone involved learned from it.

Another participant who taught and co-ordinated a program while studying with CMU spoke about the impact of the program on interacting with fellow faculty:

I was coordinating [our course] at the time...so I found it [the Human Relations course] had a really good impact....I learned some techniques that were useful; understanding the team better, approaching people, working with administration and in [other] different areas.

Graduates perceived that the amount of group work undertaken in the course of the program helped develop important behaviours and attitudes. One
commented, “Learning to appreciate others and learning to work together in a
group is a valuable thing to take away.” Another suggested, “That probably
allowed me to go back and be more tolerant in certain ways.” while another
stated, “it helps you be a little more compassionate in what you do. It maybe
gives you a sensitivity to those around you and heightens your awareness.”

Critical and creative thinking, analysing, researching, negotiating and
writing were all identified as enhanced skills. When asked about the impact of
the program on areas other than teaching, one participant replied:

It was that whole cognitive area because you have to write
better, be more critical in you analysis, you needed to do all
those things because you were doing master's level
work…meeting deadlines and all those transferable skills,
communications, team skills…important stuff…it was all there.

For another graduate, these skills were linked to credibility and the way others
perceived them. “I think CMU just helped me articulate a little better, had me
reading again, had me writing again…because you know I could really struggle
just having to write a memo.”

Research skills were also mentioned as having been enhanced by the
demands of the program. One suggested, “I am smarter about how I do research
now, and have gone on to build those skills even further.” Others suggested that
the number of papers prepared during the program could not help but improve a
person’s research skills.
It is worth noting that the concept of leadership was addressed by three of the participants, all of whom took on an administrative role. Also it is worth noting that, although it was not frequently mentioned in isolation many of the other elements raised by the participants linked directly to leadership. In the sample studied, four of the eight individuals accepted a full-time administrative position, two of these four also teach. Of the remaining four whose primary duties are teaching, two have held co-ordinator positions which required leadership skills. So, although graduates did not talk about leadership aspirations as a motive for entering the program, or about the impact of CMU on their leadership skills, many of them have taken on leadership roles in their respective colleges or communities. Of the three who raised leadership as an issue, one made a very direct link between the CMU program and responding positively to an invitation to engage in an innovative leadership experience:

The idea that I was going to entertain partnering with someone, to share my job, which is very unique here, is a product of CMU.

We had to do a lot of group work and it showed me what was possible in terms of leadership when you go at it differently. It has affected me in terms of the leadership roles I have elected to take on or not.

While one graduate spoke about leadership as it pertained to change and an ability to perceive change more positively and to be able to assist others in that endeavour, another realized that leadership was not restricted to the senior levels of the college, but was evident and necessary at all levels, in the
classroom, support services, and governance. This individual also understood the concept that effective leadership must extend beyond the educational institution and into the community.

The enhanced skills reported by graduates were employed in different ways but they accomplished the same goal. Whether graduates chose to remain in the classroom or move to other positions in the institution, their students benefited.
Enhanced Awareness and Understanding of the College System and Related Issues

Table 4.5

Perceptions Regarding Enhanced Awareness and Understanding of the College System and Related Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Participants Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of departmental and college issues</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of internal college network</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of external forces impacting the system</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of external resource network</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This statement seems to typify the perspectives of many graduates, “I was teaching in [discipline] and I didn’t know about ACAATO. I didn’t know about the community college system. I had no idea about the history of the community colleges. I just had my learning objectives and went into class and did it.” Those sentiments were not uncommon. Others, university educated, mentioned entering teaching at the community college level with very little concept of the difference between colleges and universities. Four of the participants specifically identified CMU’s community college focus as a motivating factor in their decision
to enter the program. One participant wanted to “…understand our place within
the college community.” And another said, “I wanted to see a bigger fit, a more
holistic approach to how it all worked.”

Six of the participants related an increased awareness and understanding
of the workings of internal college systems. There was a general sense that
teaching practice is enhanced by the ability to manoeuvre within the system and
that ability is impaired if the institutions culture is not understood.

That awareness of the system was sometimes expressed in an ability to
appreciate some of the administrative challenges colleges face. Participants
expressed the change in their perspective as follows: “When I hear about
initiatives here at the college I have a better understanding. I appreciate more
now the pressures that the college has to deal with.” Some of that knowledge
was gained firsthand. As one graduate reported, “…having a better
understanding of the college and how things run and what the administrators
were grappling with because they were in the course too.”

In some cases, the impact of the knowledge was that individuals felt more
inclined to participate in peripheral activities:

Early on when I started the CMU degree I decided …that I
needed a better understanding of how this institution worked so I
joined the College Council which is the advisory board to the
president [and ] I joined the advisory boards of a couple of
programs.

Another example of the same phenomenon is reflected in this comment:
I also am better able to defend, support, [and] agitate for my courses within the college environment. I also understand … the budget dollars and now they come through better than I did before. I understand…how leaders get where they are and how the system works. And I understand that in a community college sense. I think I understand now how that works in almost any college, but more specifically I understand the culture here.

Another graduate referred to the notion of culture and identified the advantages that arise when an individual understands the culture and speaks its language. There was also recognition of the impact that the CMU program can have on a particular institution when a number of individuals from one institution take the program together or as the number of graduates in one institution accumulates over the years:

It changes the culture because they are all speaking the same language that is common to them in terms of the merits of adult education or the standards that should be met by it, or the opportunities that are available. It changes the culture completely and that is a huge plus.

Perhaps the clearest way to appreciate the impact of the broadening of graduates’ knowledge of the community college system is to consider the numbers of graduates who have entered administrative positions.

One of the most commonly addressed and most frequently mentioned perceptions of graduates is the positive impact related to networks established
during the program internally, with colleagues at the same college, and externally with classmates and professors from other workplace settings. “A graduate program is partly about courses, but for me, given the way it was structured here [cohort groups] it was more about the dynamic of the group, the interaction and sharing.”

Several participants suggested that the workload related to teaching and other professional commitments made it difficult to know and appreciate their broader college culture. They reported being relatively isolated in their program groups due to workload or because they were physically isolated. “Because we are a profession and it is so difficult to just keep up with the profession… that you are very insular and that you can’t get beyond or you can’t see beyond your own area, and this [CMU] forced me to do that.” The participants indicated that studying as a cohort, especially when several members from one institution and from a variety of disciplines and positions at that institution go through the program together it helps remove some of those barriers. For instance, one person commented, “It started to break down some of those departmental lines.”, while another offered, “If it hadn’t been for CMU there wouldn’t have been a piece that pulled those folks together.” Yet another remarked, “Prior to the cohort model there just would never have been a situation…were I would have gone to someone. There just wasn’t the network. We were spread out amongst campuses and that sort of thing.”

One graduate suggested that these networks may have had an impact on productivity.
It gave me the opportunity to meet people from other areas of the college that I didn’t know, and that was wonderful....[and] just as important, because I think and I truly believe that workplace relationships are key to productivity. If you are not happy, [if] you don’t have people that you see as a support in your workplace, then it is very difficult to be a happy productive person at work.

So on that level, I think CMU was helpful.

The value of the networking is evident in that many of the connections forged during the program remain in place today, which in some cases means 15 years after the fact. Participants speak of the network in terms of excellent resources, support systems and friendships.

Besides an increased awareness of internal college systems, some participants identified an increased awareness of external forces that impact the college and the education systems in general, provincially and nationally. The factors identified include the politics of education, college/government relations, funding and educational policy. As one graduate indicated:

It [CMU] also helped me with my understanding of government....so I have a good understanding of how the pieces fit together, of how policy influences types of programs, how finances influence the type of programming….everything from physical plant deterioration and how that is funded.

For some participants, the program broadened their scope of understanding beyond their own colleges: “This gave me a provincial and even [a] national
picture that I just didn’t have before.” Participants commented that understanding issues at a provincial level helped them appreciate provincial programs such as the general education initiative. Given the diverse workplace backgrounds of the students in the program, there were opportunities for peer learning. One participant learned from cohort peers about “teaching adults outside of the college. Just the sense that there are hospitals doing this kind of work, that there are community based trainers [and] school boards [involved].”

Networking was not only seen as a benefit in terms of internal connections but was also raised in relation to external linkages: “I knew I would be networking with people from different colleges and from different departments and even some people from outside the system. So there was always a lot to be learned from those different client groups.” As one participant summarized, “There was just a certain understanding with people that are CMU graduates. I mean [there] is just a connection there even though we are all from different programs, different study areas [and] different colleges; there is just a synchronicity or something.”

One final set of data moved beyond the impact on teaching practice. As is typical with qualitative research, questions not necessarily part of the initial plan can find their way into the interviews. To appreciate how deeply teaching practice impacts on the expenditure of time, effort and money, participants were asked about their perceptions of the value of the program in terms of “return on investment” or worth.
Without exception, participants indicated that the program was "worthwhile," “absolutely worthwhile” or “I was so pleased with it…one of those bid goals with a big checkmark beside it.” Comments revealed that even those with an undergraduate degree in education were “really glad” they did the program. Another responded, “my personal measure was how well it prepared me for the doctoral program.”

Several respondents referred to the challenges of the program, “It was painful…painful….I’d never do it again. I don't think I could.” It is worth noting however, that this same participant, when asked if the return on investment was worth it, immediately responded, “Personally yeah, absolutely.” Another participant said, “It was intense.” And a final word on the subject from one of the graduates:

I would probably say that the whole CMU experience had unexpected outcomes that you can never predict when you are going in, so it is one of those transformative moments, right? You go in expecting that ‘I’m going to get my master’s so I can keep my job, teach in the program’, but you come out with a whole lot more.
Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this summary is to compare the findings of this study to the findings reported in the literature review.

The first theme identified by the graduates is their perception that the CMU program had led them to a shift from a relatively teacher-focused approach to a more learner-centred approach. Given the focus of the CMU program as articulated in The Cohort Notebook, the graduates’ perceptions suggested that participants expected outcomes were actually met. CMU notes that the program focuses on “increasing the knowledge of educators and trainers who want to develop their understanding of current educational learning styles, instructional techniques, integration of technology into the classroom and successful development of meaningful curriculums” (CMU, 2001). Study participants identified each of these skills as having been enhanced by the program with an emphasis on instructional techniques, learning styles and curriculum development.

Considering the results of research (Achilles, 1998) on the impact of graduate studies on the effectiveness of school administrators, it is appropriate to expect little in the way of responses that linked the CMU program to enhanced teaching practice. Achilles concluded that practitioners in education and other professions placed little value on formal preparation and more value on in-service
training, conferences and workshops. His critique of the preparation of school administrators is damning, citing poor program quality, and outdated and unchallenging content resulting in weak research and scholarship. Although the graduate’s perceptions of his or her program challenged Achilles’ findings, it must be noted that the findings of this study are the descriptive and subjective responses of graduates. This study describes perceptions; it does not claim to measure the effectiveness of the CMU program.

The perceptions identified by graduates in this study are predictable based on the arguments of Schneider (1998). He notes that many individuals enter graduate programs in educational administration happy to receive the credential and the possible future earnings it will generate, even if they fail to learn how to be effective instructional leaders. He cites convenience, cost and comfort as primary motivators for enrolment. While convenience was identified by the CMU graduates as a consideration, the desire to enhance teaching and personal goal achievement were considered as important.

The research of Rigsby and DeMulder (1998), based on an exploration of the transformation process of secondary and elementary teachers experienced as a result of participation in a graduate program built around teaching and learning in teams, reported findings similar to this study. There are several direct links between the studies. Although the changes and transformations identified in each study are expressed in somewhat different terms, the general concepts are quite similar. Rigsby and DeMulder’s theme, expressed as “…the ability to see children and classroom through new lenses or perspectives“ (1998,
p.9) contains parallel concepts expressed in the theme referred to in this study as enhanced learner focus. Other themes identified by Rigsby and DeMulder - the development of stronger professional voices, a greater knowledge and sense of self, an improved understanding of the writing process, improved teaching practice, changed education philosophy, and improved personal and professional relations - are also represented in the perceptions of the CMU graduates. In the areas of increased technological proficiency and broader mentoring and modeling for others, the findings appear to differ in terms of focus and depth. Although these elements were identified by the CMU graduates, the scope or intensity of the elements appeared less significant. Despite minor differences, the findings of the two studies show remarkably similar results.

This study also shares similarities with the work of Barlas (2001), whose research explored the perceptions of adult learners in a cohort-based doctoral program focusing on transformative learning. While the focus of the CMU program and the program in Barlas’ study are very different, participants in both studies identified the value of studying in an experiential team environment. The self-reported transformation experienced by participants in Barlas’ study, in line with the emphasis of the program, led to changes in attitudes and behaviours related to the social and political world. In contrast the self-reported transformation experienced by participants in this study, in line with the emphasis of the CMU program, led to changes in attitudes and behaviours primarily in the world of education.
Graduates' Perceptions

Research from the University of Lethbridge also parallels the perceptions of CMU graduates. Although the purpose of the study by Green and Purvis (1995) was to examine the challenges faced by experienced public and secondary teachers attempting to return to the school system following completion of graduate studies, it also explored students’ perceptions of various elements of their program. The study concluded that the Lethbridge program “…had a positive impact on the way teachers think about their teaching” (1995, p. 213), but also noted that the new knowledge gained in the program was often resented by their colleagues. Although CMU graduates supported the first conclusion of the Lethbridge study, the element addressing resentment by colleagues simply did not enter into the dialogue with CMU participants. The Lethbridge study explored differences in attitudes between full-time students and those attending part time while continuing to teach. They concluded that part-time students appeared less dissatisfied, in part because they had the opportunity to immediately blend theory and practice. The benefits of the relatively immediate opportunity to put into practise concepts studied in the classroom was echoed by CMU graduates and are supported by several studies (Gaff & Pruitt-Logan, 1998, Imel, 2000, & Perone, 1997).

Further literature explores the difficulties some graduates experience when attempting to reintegrate into the school system following graduate school. These problems often stem from a difference in culture between the learning and teaching institutions (Gaff & Pruitt-Logan, 1998, & Green & Purvis, 1995). Similarly, several CMU students identified a difference between teaching
practices of a few professors and the teaching practices generally espoused by the program and contemporary thinking. There may be other barriers embedded in the process; given the focus of this study, it is unlikely that they surfaced.

The final issue explored in the literature is transformative learning. Given the discussion of the definition of transformative learning, Imel’s conclusion that “no single mode of transformative learning exists” (1998, p. 4), and the nature of this study, it was impossible to determine if transformational learning had occurred. However, if Mezirow’s concept that “transformational learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their world” (Imel, 1998, p.3) is applied, some responses of some of the participants suggested that on some level transformative learning may have occurred. The issues can be viewed from multiple perspectives, but the primary purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of CMU program graduates, not to determine the extent of transformative learning.
Conclusions

This study examined a small sample of graduates from Ontario-based CMU Master of Arts in Community College Education program cohorts regarding their perceptions of the impact this program had on their teaching practice. The data revealed an impact in teaching-specific and teaching-related areas of practice. The most significant impact graduates identified was a substantial increase in professional and personal confidence including an enhanced confidence in teaching practice; an increased willingness take risks; and a sense of personal achievement, personal development and personal renewal. The data revealed an enhanced learner focus, meaning participants experienced an increased awareness of diverse learning styles, an increased awareness of their personal learning style and its impact in the classroom, an increased empathy for learners, and a redefinition of the teacher’s role. Teaching skill sets were also enhanced, with participants identifying an increased ability to integrate resources, strategies and techniques, and to develop and implement curricula. Some participant’s skills were enhanced as a result of being able to ground instinctual teaching behaviour in a theoretical framework. Reflection was seen to play a critical role in teaching practice.

Graduates’ perceptions included a belief that skill sets involving human relations, critical thinking, research and writing had been enhanced, as had leadership skills. As well, the graduates felt they had a better understanding of the broader issues related to the provincial and national community college
system. They also clearly indicated an appreciation of the valuable networks established as a result of the cohort model.

Paulo Freire wrote that “… to change is difficult but possible” (1998, p. 78). Participants who made a personal and financial commitment to this program indicated that the program, although painful at times, led to substantial changes in their personal and professional lives, and an appreciable return on their investment.
Recommendations

This study attempts to give clear voice to the perceptions of the participants. On one level the findings are predictable. No one would expect a Mater of Arts in Community College Education to have a negative impact on teaching practice. While this provides the institution with some insight into students’ perceptions of how the program impacts on teaching-specific and teaching-related practice, it is a small and specific study. Considering that there are probably 800 to 1,000 CMU graduates in Ontario, there is an opportunity to confirm or refute the graduates’ perceptions through triangulations. Along the same lines, this study does not look at program omissions. Although it is worth noting that the program significantly impacts on teaching and other practices, there may be other areas of study that should be added or restructured.

Given the results of this study, it appears that the curriculum presented by CMU for this program has found an appropriate balance between teaching-specific and teaching-related content. This could be confirmed or refuted by further studies, but until that happens the recommendation would be to attempt to maintain the balance.

The next recommendation derives directly from the data collected. This study focuses on the impact of the program on teaching practice. The data reveals that half the participants indicated that they had at least one CMU experience with a professor who did not model appropriate adult learning principles in the classroom. Even though participants suggested that there were
valuable lessons to be learned from the negative modeling, a program with education as its very foundation must provide excellent modelling. It is acknowledged that this is a very fine line. Teachers who take risks in the classroom and truly challenge the learner often create, at least initially, a sense of disequilibrium for the learner. The challenge for CMU is to employ professors capable of providing excellence in both content and process.

While attempting to find participants for this study, it became obvious that there is no central, formal tracking of graduates from Canada. While an informal network of graduates exists, a more formal system would provide greater research opportunities and extend networking options.

When completing this study, the researcher began to develop an appreciation of the CMU programs impact on the Ontario community college system. In the next few years, CMU may have 1,000 graduates in Ontario, an extraordinary number of whom work at senior levels in this system. It would be worthwhile attempting to capture the impact these graduates have had on shaping this entity.
References


Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Question 1:
What motivated you to enrol in the CMU Master of Arts in Education program?

- Probe to determine if they were motivated by a desire to change/improve their teaching practice.

Question 2:
Please tell me a little about your teaching practices prior the CMU program?

- Identify working definition of teaching practice.
- Probe to identify specific practices.
- Probe level of confidence in practice.

Question 3:
Were your teaching practices altered or influenced as a result of taking the CMU program?

- Probe for specific examples.
- Probe to determine level of alteration or influence.
- Probe perceptions of the graduate’s ability to apply course theories and concepts.
Question 4:
Are you a more effective teacher because of your involvement with the CMU program?
- Probe both positive and negative answers and encourage specific examples.
- Probe areas such as student achievement, student behaviour, student development.

Question 5:
As a teaching practitioner, what expectation did you have of the program in terms of learning about teaching techniques and practices?
- Probe whether their expectations were met.
- Probe for specifics.

Question 6
Are there areas other than teaching where you feel the content of the course had significant impact on your professional career?
Appendix B

Demographic Information Card

Interview # _____

Gender: □ Male □ Female

Age: □ 25-34
    □ 35-44
    □ 45-54
    □ 55+

Graduated CMU in (year): _____

Years of college teaching experience prior to entering CMU program: ___

Years of college teaching experience following completion of CMU program: ___

Current employer: ___________________________

Types of courses taught:

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________
Appendix C

Participant Cover Letter

Dear Participant

My name is Karen Hodgins and I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Education program at Central Michigan University (CMU). I am doing research to explore the impact this program has had on the teaching practice of its graduates.

You are invited to participate because you meet the following criteria: you have graduated from CMU’s Master of Arts in Education program as a member of an Ontario-based cohort, you taught in an Ontario community college for at least one year prior to undertaking the program, and you continued to teach in the Ontario community college system for at least one year following completion of your Master’s degree. If you decide to participate in this research project, I will review with you a consent form, ask your permission to tape the interview, and then go through a series of interview questions concerning your teaching experiences.

The interview will be completed within an hour. The research study itself should be completed within a six-month timeframe from November 2003 until May 2004. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. The interview is completely confidential, and you will not be identified in any way. The sample is very small with only nine respondents, so precautions will be taken to ensure that no individual respondent will be identified. Generalizations may be made concerning the group sample, but no individual interview will be discussed on its own.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavours. This study may help rationalize the significant investment made by institutions or organizations that financially assist or sponsor students as well as the considerable investment made by individuals in the pursuit of advanced credentials. It may also help provide information for future research into course content or course offerings. If you have any questions at any time, please call me at ***-***-****, or contact me at karen.hodgins@*******.*.

Sincerely,

Karen Hodgins
Appendix D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Graduates’ Perceptions of the Impact of CMU’s Master of Arts in Education Program on Teaching Practice.

Name of Investigator: Karen Hodgins   Phone: ***-***-****

Email: karen.hodgins@******.***
The researcher is a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Education program at Central Michigan University. This research is being conducted in fulfillment of degree requirements at Central Michigan University.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of graduates of Central Michigan University’s Master of Arts in Education program with respect to the impact the program has had on their teaching practice.

Subjects: Eligible subjects will have graduated from an Ontario based cohort of CMU’s Master of Arts in Education program, will have taught in Ontario’s community college system for at least one year prior to entering the CMU program and will have continued to teach in the same system for at least one year following graduation.

Procedures: If you decide to participate in this research project, I will review the consent form with you, ask you to complete a brief demographic questionnaire, ask your permission to audiotape the interview, and then go through a series of questions concerning your perceptions of the impact of the CMU program on your teaching practice. If you give your permission for the interview to be audiotaped, please sign here:______________________________________.

Alternatives: If you do not wish to have the interview audiotaped, please sign here.
__________________________________________________.

Timetable: The interview should be completed within one hour. The research study itself should be completed in about a six-month timeframe from November 2003 until May 2004.

Risks: Because you are not identified in any way as the interview is completely confidential, there is basically no risk involved. The sample is very small with only eight respondents, precautions will be taken to make sure that no individual respondent will be identified. Generalizations may be made concerning the group sample, but no individual interview will be discussed on its own.

Benefits: This study may help rationalize both personal and organizational investment in higher-level educational pursuits. It may also provide information for future research into course direction or program offerings. Although this study is not being conducted for any particular organization, it will be made public. It also has the potential for publication and its findings may be of benefit to universities offering graduate-level studies in education.

Initial here__________
Compensation: There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The information may possibly be published in educational journals or presented at educational meetings, but your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Consent forms will be maintained separately from interview notes and from audiotapes. Audiotapes will not be labelled and the investigator will transcribe the audiotapes personally. Audiotapes will be destroyed following transcription.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw: You may refuse to participate. You may change your mind about being involved in the study and can quit after the study has started. If the study design or use of data is changed, you will be so informed and your consent obtained for the revised research study.

Questions: If you have any questions at any time please call me at ***-***-**** or e-mail me at karen.hodgins@******.***. I will be happy to discuss any concerns you may have.

You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep.

My signature below indicates that I have voluntarily decided to participate in this research project as a subject and that I have read and understand the information provided above.

Subject’s Signature __________________________ Date __________
Subject’s Printed Name __________________________

In my judgment, the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate in this research study.

Student’s Signature __________________________ Date __________
Student’s Printed Name __________________________ Program Centre
## Appendix E

Data Summary Chart

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Element</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Enhanced confidence in teaching practice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased willingness to take risks</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of personal achievement, development and renewal</td>
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<td>Enhanced Learner Focus</td>
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<td>Enhanced awareness of diverse learning styles and diverse learner needs</td>
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<td>Enhanced awareness of personal learning style and its impact on teaching</td>
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<td>Enhanced empathy for learners and their circumstances</td>
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<td>Re-formed perceptions of the role of the teacher</td>
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<td>Enhanced Teaching Skill Set</td>
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<td>Further integration of resources, strategies and techniques</td>
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<td>Enhanced ability to develop, assess revise and implement curriculum</td>
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<td>Enhanced ability to plan and implement learner assessment</td>
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<td>Provision of theoretical base for Instinctive practice</td>
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Awareness of Reflection as a Critical Element of Practice
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<td>Enhanced critical thinking, research and writing skills</td>
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<td>Enhanced leadership skills</td>
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<td>Enhanced Awareness and Understanding of the</td>
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<td>Development of internal college network</td>
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<td>Understanding of external forces impacting the system</td>
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