Innovative Practicum Models in Teacher Education: The Benefits, Challenges and Implementation Implications of Peer Mentorship, Service Learning and International Practicum Experiences

Maria Cantalini-Williams[1], Lesley Cooper[2], Arlene Grierson[1], Nancy Maynes[1], Sharon Rich[1], Mary Lynn Tessaro[3], Courtney Anne Brewer[1], Stephen Tedesco[1], Taunya Wideman-Johnston[1]

[1] Nipissing University, [2] University of Wollongong, [3] Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto

Cite this publication in the following format:

Cantalini-Williams, M., Cooper, L., Grierson, A., Maynes, N., Rich, S., Tessaro, M. L., Brewer, C. A., Tedesco, S., & Wideman-Johnston, T. (2014). *Innovative Practicum Models in Teacher Education: The Benefits, Challenges and Implementation Implications of Peer Mentorship, Service Learning and International Practicum Experiences.* Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Introduction

In a project funded by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), a team of researchers completed three related studies exploring and assessing innovative practicum models included in a pre-service concurrent teacher education program across two campuses of an Ontario university. These models are integrated into the field experience component of the Bachelor of Education degree and are intended to provide collaborative and diverse learning opportunities for teacher candidates in various practicum settings. Traditionally, teacher candidates in faculties of education complete their practicum in a school classroom for determined periods of time. In recognizing the need for teacher candidates to become contributing members of varied learning communities (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), the innovative practices studied in this project extend beyond the norm of placing a single teacher candidate with an associate teacher in a publicly funded school to include such models as peer mentorship, alternative service learning and international practicum placements.[1]

Each of the three studies examined one of these innovative practicum models. Overall findings across the three studies are summarized and synthesized in the present report.

> Model 1: Peer mentorship pairings of novice (first-year) and mentor (second- or third-year) teacher candidates are created, with each mentorship dyad most often placed in the same practicum setting in order to scaffold the learning of the novice teacher candidate and to develop the collaborative teaching skills of both teacher candidates (Grierson, Wideman-Johnston, Tedesco, Brewer & Cantalini-Williams, 2014).

> Model 2: Alternative service learning placements in community agencies and non-traditional learning environments are arranged by the teacher candidates for the purpose of applying their teaching skills to diverse settings and engaging with community and cultural partners in education (Maynes, Cantalini-Williams & Tedesco, 2014).

> Model 3: International practicum placements in Kenya and Italy, with faculty facilitation, are provided to create global awareness and provide opportunities for the development of pedagogical and second-language teaching skills (Tessaro, Brewer & Cantalini-Williams, 2014).

The purpose of implementing the innovative practicum models in the concurrent teacher education program was to provide candidates with experiences that had potential to develop knowledgeable, culturally aware, collaborative, resilient and resourceful professionals. These skills and dispositions were believed to support graduates in becoming increasingly competent and employable in education-related career settings.

The three innovative practicum models had been in place for at least one year before the present studies were conducted and preliminary data had been collected by faculty researchers involved in initially reviewing the effectiveness of each model. Three articles had also previously been published on the preliminary results (Cantalini-Williams & Tessaro, 2011; Grierson, Cantalini-Williams, Wideman-Johnston & Tedesco, 2011; Maynes, Hatt & Wideman, 2013). The intent of this HEQCO-funded project was to extend the initial findings by examining the continued efficacy of the practicum models based on the perceptions of participating teacher candidates.

These studies are aligned with HEQCO's interest in high-impact educational practices and innovative teaching and learning practices that support student success. The models implemented in the concurrent

---

[1] Definitions are included in Appendix A: Glossary of Terms, available separately.

teacher education program expand the literature by creatively applying the concepts of reciprocal and collaborative learning to diverse practicum environments. In addition to traditional school-based placements, an increasing number of teacher education programs are recognizing the value of collaborative and community field experiences as a component of preparation (Clift & Brady, 2005; Woloshyn, Chalmers & Bosacki, 2005). This report provides an overview of the three studies and examines their findings within a framework for work-integrated learning (Cooper, Orrell & Bowden, 2010) to determine common and persistent themes emerging from the data provided by participating teacher candidates. An analysis of the findings across the three studies contributes significantly to the literature on field experiences in teacher education and suggests implications for further research, as well as directions for future policy.

The overall research questions of this project are:
1. What are teacher candidates' perceptions of the benefits of participating in each practicum model?
2. What are teacher candidates' perceptions of the challenges of participating in each practicum model?
3. What are implications for further implementation of each practicum model?

Literature Review

The development of a teacher is a complex process (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) and research affirms that the practicum component is an integral part of teacher education (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Schulz, 2005). Practicum placements are essential for promoting cohesion between theory and practice in teacher education programs (Falkenberg & Smits, 2010; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). According to Schulz (2005), effective teacher education incorporates knowledge of a range of educational systems, families and agencies within the community, and teacher candidates need to have opportunities to engage and interact with these diverse partners. Practicum placements, in both traditional and non-traditional settings, foster the opportunity for students to work to learn as well as learn to work (Cooper et al., 2010).

While the value of traditional practicum field experiences is well established, the complex issue of providing candidates with support throughout the practicum is identified as a persistent challenge in teacher education (Falkenberg & Smits, 2010; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008, Loughran, 2006). The literature on peer mentorship between candidates who are at different junctures of their teacher education program as a way of providing this support is still emerging (Grierson, Cantalini-Williams, Wideman-Johnston & Tedesco, 2011). Although research has documented that paired practicum experiences are effective in providing increased support for teacher candidates (Bullough, Young, Erickson, Birrell, Clark & Egan, 2002; Bullough et al., 2003; Gardiner & Robinson, 2009), these studies have focused on the experiences of small sample populations in pilot programs rather than on the experiences of all candidates in a teacher education program. Grierson et al. (2011) studied the initial implementation of a peer mentorship model with all candidates in a teacher education program (the first year of the study described herein) and concluded that further exploration is required to examine the perceptions of teacher candidates participating over an extended period of time.

When considering research related to community-based alternative service learning, Eyler and Giles (1999) note the need to balance the objectives of the organization, the institution and the participating student. Furthermore, they recognize that alternative service learning in teacher education can aid teacher candidates in achieving a deeper understanding of the necessary program learning outcomes (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda & Yee, 2000). There remains a need for more research on the benefits of service learning community-based practicum components in teacher education (Chambers, 2009; Maynes, Hatt & Wideman, 2013).

With regard to international practicum placements, there is widespread evidence of resulting benefits for teacher candidates (Bryan & Sprague, 1997; Clement & Otlaw, 2002; Cushner, 2007; Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Stachowski & Chleb, 1998; Stachowski, Richardson & Henderson, 2003; Stachowski & Visconti, 1997),

attesting to such benefits as increased global awareness and a greater sensitivity to the needs of second-language learners. Yet there is little research investigating a model whereby teams of teacher candidates and faculty advisors engage in teaching and professional activities together in international settings (Cantalini-Williams & Tessaro, 2011; Quezada, 2004).

To address these gaps in the literature and to assess the effectiveness of the innovative practicum models, the present project examines teacher candidates' perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with participation in a peer mentorship practicum, an alternative service learning practicum placement and an international teaching practicum within a concurrent teacher education program of an Ontario university. In order to examine long-term findings, the mentorship study was conducted over a period of time during which some participants assumed both the roles of novice and mentor over three years. The alternative service learning study contributes to the literature in that it explored differing structures in a concurrent teacher education program across two campus sites and the international study also investigated the practicum model including faculty facilitation in dissimilar locations. The findings of these three inter-related studies provide a unique opportunity to synthesize the perceived benefits and challenges of practicum experiences in light of a conceptual framework describing the dimensions of work-integrated learning models.

A Conceptual Framework for Work-Integrated Learning

The three studies constituting the present project can be analyzed within a conceptual framework of work-integrated learning (Cooper, Orrell & Bowden, 2010). This framework includes seven key dimensions that align with the practicum component of a teacher education program. Cooper et al. (2010) proposed that successful implementation of any work-integrated learning model needs to include all seven dimensions of the framework. It is important to note that the seven dimensions are not deemed to be hierarchical or mutually exclusive. These dimensions are described below and in Table 1.

1. The first dimension, *purpose*, defines the intended outcomes of the experience for all stakeholder groups. The goals and expectations for all participants need to be articulated in the *purpose* of the work-related experience.

2. The second dimension is *context: the workplace*. This *context* includes the varied settings in which work-integrated learning can occur. This dimension is centred on a community of practice that involves the learners moving from a position of not-knowing, located outside of the practice, towards full immersion into a given experience in a workplace site. In the site, learners are exposed to a variety of strategies that can include guided mentoring and coaching.

3. The third dimension of *integration* represents the connection between theory and practice. *Integration* is a process promoted through dialogue, critical reflection, tutorials and accessible work in both the workplace and the learning institution. Within *integration*, connectivity and transformation occur between the individual level, the organizational level and the system level. Connectivity is grounded in relationships, whereas transformations are the changes that occur as a result of these relationships.

4. The fourth dimension is *curriculum*, which involves learning in the workplace and the need to embed learning throughout the institutional and work-based curriculum. It is the acknowledgement that both the declarative knowledge (course theory) and the functional knowledge (workplace practice) are integrated into the experience.

5. The fifth dimension is *learning* and is guided by the overall learning outcomes and assessment that are aligned to outcomes and related activities. *Learning* involves a transformative process that leads

to changes in comprehension, interpretation of theory with practice and growth of personal dispositions. *Learning* includes opportunities for observation, review and reflection for the learner, followed by making connections to experiences. The learner is also engaged in a community of practitioners who can enhance overall *learning.*

6. The sixth dimension is *partnerships* and involves the integration of multiple stakeholders at different levels in varying contexts, all with shared goals. Strong *partnerships* and mutual goals result in more effective practicum processes.

7. The seventh dimension, *support,* is ongoing throughout the program. This *support* is provided to the students, organizations and mentors such as associate teachers, advisors and site supervisors. *Support* accounts for and accommodates diverse needs and includes practical, administrative, educational and emotional components.

Table 1: Seven Dimensions of Work-Integrated Learning

Dimension	Description
Purpose	• Intended outcome for all stakeholders • Expectations and goals
Context: The workplace	• Diverse settings • Within a community of practice
Integration	• A learning process through dialogue, reflection, tutorials and accessible work • A two-way application of theory and practice
Curriculum	• Functional knowledge integrated with declarative knowledge • Alignment of learning objectives with assessment • Workplace curriculum is valued
Learning	• Experiential and situated learning • Transformative process that leads to growth in understanding of theory and personal/professional identity • Opportunities for observation, review and reflection
Partnerships	• Multiple stakeholders at various levels in numerous contexts • Support for partnerships on an institutional level
Support	• Ongoing assistance and guidance for interns, supervisors and organizations • Practical, administrative, educational and emotional components

(Cooper et al., 2010)

Teacher Education in Ontario

Teacher education in Ontario includes two different program structures: concurrent and consecutive (Ontario College of Teachers Act 347/02, 1996). In the consecutive teacher education program structure, teacher candidates usually complete a bachelor's degree before registering in a teacher education degree program. In a concurrent teacher education program structure, teacher candidates usually complete their undergraduate bachelor's degree while completing their Bachelor of Education degree. The consecutive teacher education program presently extends for approximately eight months and the concurrent education program is usually five years in duration. Both programs are presently legislated to include a variety of courses related to education in Ontario, as well as a minimum of eight weeks (40 days) of practice teaching practicum placements in school settings.

> *A consecutive program is usually a one-year program leading to a Bachelor of Education pursued by a teacher candidate after they have completed an undergraduate degree. Teacher candidates in a concurrent program complete a program leading to a Bachelor of Education while also completing an additional undergraduate degree in a discipline other than education.* (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014)

Concurrent programs can be based on a partnership between two faculties within one university or a partnership between the faculty of education of one university and an undergraduate faculty at a partner university. The courses and the practicum experiences are sometimes integrated throughout the five years of a concurrent teacher education program. The core courses offered and minimum length of practicum placements in both consecutive and concurrent programs must adhere to basic legislated guidelines, but the timing and structure of these programs vary greatly across faculties of education in Ontario.

The Concurrent Teacher Education Program

The concurrent teacher education program to which this project refers is offered at two campuses of the same university. In the concurrent teacher education program being studied, teacher candidates pursue their Honours Bachelor of Arts or Honours Bachelor of Science courses throughout the five years of the program. During this time and in conjunction with these undergraduate courses, teacher candidates also take courses and complete credit-based practicum placements from the faculty of education that is accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers. Teacher candidates at both campuses can choose to be certified to teach either in the primary/junior (kindergarten to grade 6) or junior/intermediate (grades 4 to 10) division. Both campuses also offer optional courses related to special topics in education, such as international teaching, which are not mandatory for teacher candidates.

In addition to completing undergraduate and education courses, as previously described, Ontario law requires teacher candidates to participate in at least eight weeks of practicum (Ontario College of Teachers Act 347/02, 1996). The concurrent teacher education program studied in this project includes an average of 18 weeks of practicum in schools, in addition to the equivalent of four weeks of alternative service learning/international placements as part of the Observation and Practice Teaching credit course. A practicum office arranges the traditional school teaching practicum placement based on teacher candidates' choices of teaching division, the availability of partnering schools and geographic preferences while teacher candidates arrange their own alternative placements. In each progressive year of the concurrent teacher education program, teacher candidates are expected to increase their amount of teaching time and responsibilities during the practicum. Teacher candidates are supervised and assisted by the classroom teacher, termed an associate teacher within the program. Associate teachers receive information about the concurrent teacher education program including the peer mentorship model, through various print materials and electronic communications; they are also responsible for submitting evaluations of the teacher candidates' growth and

performance. As well, faculty advisors are usually assigned to teacher candidates based on the geographic location of the practicum. They are typically responsible for completing a teaching evaluation based on their observations of and interactions with the teacher candidate in a practicum setting. Within the concurrent teacher education program of this university, there are three innovative practicum models included in addition to the traditional school placements. An examination of these models was thought to yield relevant implications for further implementation. The following sections will provide an overview of the three models by describing the context, methodology and findings of each individual study: peer mentorship, alternative service learning and international practicum placements.

Peer Mentorship Practicum Model

Context

Teacher candidates in years one, two and three of the concurrent teacher education program at one campus participate in a peer mentorship experience as a component of their practicum placements. First-year teacher candidates participating in peer mentorship are referred to as novices or mentees and are paired with an experienced second- or third-year teacher candidate, known as a mentor. The peer mentorship practicum occurs in the second term of the novices' first academic year and the mentorship pair is placed most often in the same classroom setting for the purpose of enhancing support, collaboration and cooperative teaching skills.

Methodology

The peer mentorship study was a longitudinal exploration spanning three years (2009 to 2011). Teacher candidates were invited by email to participate in the study by completing two electronic surveys (pre- and post-practicum) during each year in which they took part in the mentorship model. Participants in this study were either novice or mentor teacher candidates. Depending on when they first enrolled in the concurrent teacher education program, they may have experienced both roles. The potential participant population eligible for this study included approximately 200 mentor candidates and 200 novice candidates each year. Over one-third of potential mentor participants and over one-third of potential novice participants responded to each of the surveys each year, with a total of 986 pre- and post-responses over all three years.

Both pre- and post-practicum surveys included five-point Likert-type questions and open-ended response questions to generate quantitative and qualitative data that centred on identifying teacher candidates' perceptions of participation in the peer mentorship model. Likert-type questions asked candidates to rate the effectiveness of their preparation for this model, their frequency of engagement in the intended peer mentorship experiences and how beneficial they perceived the experiences to be for themselves and their peer. Four open-ended response questions solicited candidates' perceptions of the benefits, challenges and suggestions for refinement of the peer mentorship practicum model.

Quantitative analysis focused on the 523 post-practicum survey responses. The variance in participants' Likert-type ratings within groups (i.e., novice, mentors) over years of implementation (i.e., 2009, 2010, 2011) and between different groups of participants (e.g., participants placed in the same versus a different classroom than their novice/mentor partner; mentors with versus without the novice experience) were explored using analysis of variance (ANOVA). Additionally, Pearson's bivariate correlation coefficients were determined to measure the linear relation between variables (e.g., perceptions of the benefits for self and for novice/mentor partner). The data gathered through the open-ended response questions were analyzed using coding and categorization of recurring themes.

Findings

In all three years of the study, the quantitative and open-ended response results revealed that the peer mentorship model fostered collaborative practice between teacher candidates and provided support that was perceived to be very beneficial to novice candidates and moderately beneficial to mentor candidates. While there were statistically significant increases between 2009 and subsequent years of the study in mentors' ratings of the effectiveness of their preparation for the peer mentorship model, mentor candidates rated their preparation as at or below moderately effective each year. Additionally, there was a significant increase after the first year in mentors' perceptions of the benefits of the mentorship model for both novices and mentors. Mentors who did not first have the novice experience in this model were less positive than those who had the novice experience. Mentor challenges, such as the need for clarity of roles, that became apparent in the first year of implementation of the model were followed by an increase in positive perceptions over subsequent implementation years. A persistent challenge was evident if the peer mentorship pair was not placed in the same classroom context.

Collaboration in lesson planning, assessment, team teaching, teaching-related inquiries and professional development was perceived to provide beneficial support to both novices and mentors. In each year, the Likert-type responses of mentors and novices were not impacted by whether the mentor role was assumed by a candidate in their second year or in their third year of the concurrent teacher education program. There were no significant differences in novices' Likert-type rating responses across all three years, which shows a consistency in responses and overall results. Each year novices rated the methods intended to prepare them for this model as moderately effective, their frequency of collaboration as above moderate, engaging in this collaboration as approaching very beneficial for novices and as above moderately beneficial for their mentor partners. Across all three years, mentors also rated their frequency of collaboration as above moderate, this collaboration as approaching very beneficial for novices and as moderately beneficial or above for mentors. Between 2009 and 2011, there was a significant increase in mentors' perceptions of the benefits they obtained from engaging in collaboration. It is important to note that significant differences were found between the ratings of novices and mentors who worked in different classrooms than their peer mentorship partner and those who were placed in the same classroom as their mentorship peer, with those placed in the same classroom having more positive perceptions of preparation, collaboration and benefits.

Pearson's bivariate correlation coefficient (r) revealed strong positive relationships between novices' and mentors' perceptions of the benefits of collaborating during the peer mentorship practicum, with those who rated their own mentorship experiences as beneficial also perceiving that their novice/mentor partner derived benefits from these experiences. Importantly, correlation coefficients further demonstrated strong positive relationships between participants' frequency of engagement in the recommended peer mentorship activities and perceptions that these experiences were beneficial for both novices and mentors.

Analysis of the open-ended responses to the pre-and post-program survey questions revealed the benefits, challenges and suggested implications for implementation of the peer mentorship model. Open-ended responses in all three years of the study indicated that additional support through collaboration was beneficial to both partners in the dyad. Other key benefits included both candidates' willingness to adopt an inquiry stance and ask one another questions about teaching and mentors' consolidation of learning and development of professional identities. Novice and mentor teacher candidates identified the need for further clarification of roles and responsibilities within the peer mentorship model and more clear communication with partnering schools/educators. One of the most significant challenges in this model arose from demographic constraints that necessitated placing a small number (5-8%) of mentors and novices in different locations than their peer mentorship partner, which was perceived to reduce or eliminate the benefits of this model.

Furthermore, candidates' understanding of teaching as an independent practice reduced the initial perceived benefits of participation in the peer mentorship model. Although less frequent than other themes, issues and challenges related to teacher candidates' compatibility with their peer was an evident theme in this model.

Participation in the peer mentorship dyad provided additional support for both mentors and novices that contributed to the development of their professional skills and identities and enhanced their self-confidence as educators.

> *It takes some of the pressure off to have someone at almost the same level of experience to discuss and plan with. When the mentorship program is working well lesson plans are easier to come up with, and lessons are less stressful to deliver. Team teaching is really a pleasure and I believe that the students really benefit from the partnership between the two teacher candidates and the associate.* (Year 1 Novice, April 2010)

Furthermore, participants revealed that having a novice/mentor partner provided the opportunity to develop an inquiry stance and ask their peer partner pertinent questions about teaching and assisted mentors to consolidate their learning.

> *This year I have grown so much because of my mentor! She was always there for me when I had questions that needed to be answer[ed], and supported me 110% every day* (Year 1 Novice, April 2010)

> *Enables both students to ask questions without feeling silly or stupid.* (Year 3 Mentor, April 2009)

> *As a mentor it got me to think more about what I was doing because I had to explain some of the strategies I used. Commenting on my novice's strategies also got me to think critically.* (Year 3 Mentor, April 2009)

The model also provided teacher candidates with the opportunity to support each other and to extend their learning by collaborating as they refined their teaching skills.

> *The mentorship program was absolutely wonderful! I was placed in a classroom with my mentor and I cannot begin to list the many benefits of the program. I was able to see my mentor teach and understand what teaching is all about, and I had all the help I needed then it came to planning lessons and group activities.* (Year 1 Novice, April 2010)

> *It gives mentors the chance to engage in teaching leadership roles and explain things to assist someone younger [less experienced] than them in teaching…Mentors also learn new things from their novices, and the partnerships encourage cooperation and teamwork.* (Year 2 Mentor, April 2011)

The challenges involved in the peer mentorship model are related to implications for implementation. Participants identified challenges such as the need for clarification of the roles and responsibilities of both the novice and mentor for participating candidates and their associate teachers.

> *More guidance is needed: I don't think anyone really understood the roles of the two candidates in the same classroom.* (Year 2 Mentor, January 2009)

Structure and context were important to derive the benefits of peer mentorship. This challenge was especially apparent when dyads were placed in different teaching locations.

> *My mentor was at a different school…so it was of no benefit to me whatsoever. Mentors and novices*

need to at least be in the same school so they can meet during breaks. The mentorship program was a big letdown for me this year. (Year 1 Novice, April 2011)

Furthermore, some teacher candidates persistently perceived teaching as an independent rather than a collaborative practice, which limited their openness to deriving benefits from the peer mentorship model.

For 2nd and 3rd year students it is often incredibly difficult to get the teaching time we need to be assessed appropriately if [we are] constantly being grouped with a novice…I don't think team teaching should be so required. I think it should be insisted to associate teachers that 2nd and 3rd year students need teaching time away from the novice. I realize the novice needs to practice teach but I think their participation needs to be lessened. (Year 2 Mentor, April 2011)

Finally, an additional challenge each year was that a few teacher candidates had difficulty managing candidate compatibility.

It was difficult to co-teach because my mentor and I did not always want to teach the lesson the same way; we have different teaching styles. (Year 1 Novice, April 2011)

Alternative Service Learning Practicum Model

Context

In the concurrent teacher education program of both campuses, teacher candidates are required to select and arrange an alternative service learning placement. Teacher candidates must have their desired placement approved by a practicum office staff member. A representative of the partnering agency (site supervisor) is responsible for completing the necessary paperwork and evaluations related to the teacher candidate's performance. Both programs include a common requirement of 120 hours of service, but the structure of the alternative service learning practicum differs in that one campus requires a four-week block in the fifth year and the other campus allows for the 120-hour requirement to be fulfilled more flexibly within the fourth year of the program.

Methodology

In the study of the alternative service learning practicum, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to gain an understanding of the personal growth of teacher candidates and their perceptions of the value of various aspects of the service learning experience. A confidential online survey invitation was emailed to all teacher candidates on both campuses who had participated in an alternative service learning practicum placement. Since each campus offered a very different timing and structure for the alternative service learning practicum placements, this allowed for a comparison of the two models. The survey was comprised of six questions related to demographic information, five overarching sets of questions with a total of 42 sub-questions rated using a Likert-type scale, and three open-ended questions that focused on the benefits, challenges and implications for implementation of the alternative service learning program. Ninety-one participants took part in this study (43 from one campus and 48 from the other campus), for a combined response rate of 37.2%. The number of positive responses (agree and mostly agree) was determined for each question and for each campus cohort to allow for comparisons across clusters of items and across program structures. All responses to open-ended questions were grouped and clustered to reveal themes related to the benefits and challenges of the alternative service learning model.

Findings

The alternative service learning model study assessed teacher candidates' perceptions of the value of the

service learning practicum placements and of their related challenges. The findings were determined through an analysis of survey responses, which revealed a number of benefits including opportunities for: connecting theory to practice, improving critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, developing in-depth exposure to resources available in the community, engaging with diverse community agencies, developing social values, and preparing for various life challenges. Results from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the ability of service learning to promote professional growth and development was dependent on the nature of the practicum placement, with those candidates who utilized teaching skills in their alternative career settings reporting the most pronounced benefits.

Given that the program assumed a different structure at each of the two campuses, comparisons were made between each group of participants. No significant differences were found between the two campuses for all but three of the areas of impact: links between theory and practice; challenges to think more deeply about day-to-day resource distribution and acquisition, the environment, fairness and justice: and preparing pre-service teachers to develop social values, knowledge, and the skills to live in a diverse democracy. The program structure that allowed the practicum to be carried out over an extended period of time showed higher impact in these areas.

The common areas of positive benefits for both campuses were opportunities for: increased critical thinking and problem solving capacities; engagement in distinctively different communities; and ongoing development of understanding and tolerance to prepare for a lifetime of informed and participatory citizenship, including various personal and educational challenges. Analysis of qualitative findings indicated that teacher candidates found the placement experience to be beneficial to their professional growth and development. Furthermore, the experience helped teacher candidates realize that teaching could occur outside of a traditional classroom.

> *I became aware of all of the services that child/family services offer for individuals under the age of 18. As a practicing teacher this is imperative knowledge that I will now be aware of and know of these programs that are out there in the community. Prior to this placement I had no idea*. (Alternative Service Learning)

> *It allows you to experience other job opportunities that you can do when we have graduated. Seeing how you can work somewhere else other than in a classroom with a teaching degree.* (Alternative Service Learning)

A significant benefit noted in the alternative service learning model was teacher candidates' development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, along with an awareness of the importance of informed citizenship.

> *This program enabled me to develop new skills and enhance the ones I already had… to apply in-class knowledge in real life situations, which resulted in me gaining a better understanding of the taught materials. We have the skill set that many organizations require (planning, organization, responsibility, public speaking skills, collaboration, and the like) and it is nice to feel like we are providing these services to an organization that really needs it… [this] will allow them [new concurrent students] to continue with studies in the program, rather than quitting or switching programs.* (Alternative Service Learning)

Participants perceived that they were exposed to more ways in which they could utilize their teaching and communication skills, and that this exposure could assist in potentially pursuing further career options and diverse employment opportunities.

> *You realize there are so many options other than the classroom setting.* (Alternative Service Learning)

> *I wish this was offered before year 4, because now I have been exposed to a completely different career setting which I really enjoyed!* (Alternative Service Learning)

> *I would never have had the opportunity to experience this role if I had not had this placement. It has changed my career scope and direction.* (Alternative Service Learning)

Participants reported the following challenges related to alternative service learning: the perceived limited value of an alternative service learning practicum in non-teaching contexts and the timing, context and structure of the alternative service learning practicum. With regard to the issue of timing, participants noted the challenges related to the year of the program in which the alternative service learning practicum placement was offered, and some teacher candidates reported a desire to experience this type of alternative placement earlier in their program. There was a need for further institutional support to help candidates obtain a suitable placement within a given timeframe, especially for block practicums. Furthermore, some participants indicated that their time would have been better spent in a traditional classroom setting, especially if the placement was not directly related to the field of education. Teacher candidates sometimes questioned the value of roles not related to teaching.

> *I would say the one drawback would be the year in which the placement occurs. Possibly doing it in third year would be better, as fourth year being in the classroom would be beneficial before graduating the year after.* (Alternative Service Learning)

> *I strongly feel that alternative practicum should be an option, not a requirement for students. I personally have been set on becoming a teacher since before university. Thus, I took concurrent education to increase the amount of classroom time I had. I feel that by having this placement, I did learn and have experiences. However, I would have preferred making yet another connection by being in a classroom. Also, I know that many people have said they feel like they are thrown into the placement, and although it is a good learning opportunity, it is hard to be delegated responsibility when we are here for such a short time.* (Alternative Service Learning)

International Practicum Model

Context

The present study addresses the practicum model whereby teacher candidates in the concurrent teacher education program of one campus may apply for an international teaching practicum placement, to be taken in lieu of an alternative service learning practicum in the fourth year of the program. Choices for destination countries are Kenya and Italy, with each international practicum placement being facilitated by two faculty members. The international placements on this campus have been implemented for eight years, with approximately 30% of eligible teacher candidates participating each year.

Methodology

Teacher candidates who had completed international practicum placements in either Italy or Kenya participated in a qualitative study based on a triangulation of data sources to determine their perceptions of the model. Participants in the study were asked to complete three different elements: to submit a summary of the reflection journal they completed while on the practicum; to participate in a focus group interview; and to complete a one-on-one interview with one of the researchers.

Of the 36 teacher candidates who participated in the international placements in 2011, 15 volunteered for the study. Of those, 11 completed one-on-one interviews, 8 completed focus group interviews and 11 submitted journal summaries. The total response rate of those who completed at least one element was 41.67%.

An identification code was used to track the participation of each teacher candidate. Research assistants gathered and analyzed data to reduce bias and conflict of interest. Prior to coding, one-on-one and focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed and verified. Open coding techniques were used to analyze data from all three sources with the intent to identify overarching themes related to the perceived benefits, challenges and implications for implementation of this international practicum placement.

Findings

Qualitative analyses in the international practicum placement study were based on three data sources: journal summaries, focus group sessions and one-on-one interviews. The analyses revealed benefits and challenges and suggested implications for implementation related to four overarching themes: professional growth, cultural and community connectedness, awareness of opportunities and practical considerations.
One benefit of the international practicum placement was derived from the preparation that teacher candidates received for the international experience. Teacher candidates were prepared to experience changes in the placement and thus became more ready and flexible when faced with uncertainty within the school and cultural contexts.

> *In Kenya I learned a lot about flexibility. We were told before we went to the placement to be flexible but I didn't realize how flexible we had to be and, for example we would go into the classroom in the morning expecting to have certain things to teach throughout the day and generally throughout the day we would have at least one of those things change and we would have to shift our lessons around to accommodate that, so definitely for me it was learning how to be flexible with the teaching.* (Kenya, focus group)

Teacher candidates also shared how their interactions within peer relationships and in a professional community with faculty support were valued.

> *You build relationships and you get to know people, who they really are, so fast in such a short time. Especially with people in con ed.[concurrent education], your classes change every single year so for the most part you recognize the people that, like in being in Italy you really got to know them in a different way, like time that you didn't necessarily have when you were here*. (Italy, focus group)

Importantly, the above findings also refer to teacher candidates' professional growth in resilience, flexibility and communication skills resulting from the international practicum placement model.

The experience enhanced candidates' awareness of non-traditional opportunities related to teaching abroad and within Canada. Participants commented on the opportunity to live in the moment, on their future desire to teach abroad and, in some cases, on a realization that the international experience allowed them to reinforce their desire to teach in Canada.

I think that for me, living here, this is where my life is, and I want to still help in Kenya but I feel the best way for me to do that is teaching here full time and then using my experience to help. (Kenya, interview)

I wanted to see the education – how theirs was compared to ours – just because maybe that would be an opportunity for me once I graduate; to go overseas. To see what it was like, it was a lot different than our education system, that's for sure. (Italy, interview)

A further benefit of the international practicum placement model related to teacher candidates' sense of connection to culture and community, both at home and abroad. Teacher candidates noted their immersion into the local community where they taught, the value of different cultural experiences, the post-practicum impact of the experience and the importance of sharing community-building experiences with peers and faculty.

They definitely made you feel like you were part of the community. Every day we would drive by to practicum and you wouldn't pass a single person that wouldn't say 'hi' to you, so it definitely made you feel at home and a part of their community. (Kenya, interview)

Additionally, teacher candidates described an awareness of the teaching and learning strategies used in other cultures.

I think when you go into another culture you can't impose your own cultural standards into their structures; you just kind of have to be flexible and learn and adopt their ways. (Italy, interview)

Challenges associated with the international practicum placement model included dissonance between expectations and practice, as well as potential timing and costs involved.

I think that, and I understand with all trips, it's hard to be extremely organized since we're entering into a different country so I know that we didn't find out our placements until the day, well probably until like a week into, once we had arrived, so that aspect was difficult and I think that sometimes we went in with such notions that we were going to be teaching certain lessons and developed ideas on such broad concepts that we thought they would want to know, but in reality, when we got there, nothing that I had prepared was used, once I actually arrived. (Italy, interview)

Participants also noted that the preparation for the teaching assignment was very helpful but could be enhanced.

A lot of [preparation] was the meetings with the groups. They were really helpful. [Faculty Facilitator] and [Faculty Facilitator] prepared us as much as they could . . . . just, sort of explaining what would be expected of us, what some of the trip would entail, some of the experiences we would have and, even afterwards, they made sure they had a meeting with us to deal with coming home and they prepared us even with the teaching aspects of what would be expected of us and then also with the culture shock and all of that. (Kenya, interview)

Overall Findings

From the description of each study, it can be ascertained that the assessment plan for this research project was complex and multi-dimensional. The intent of the present project was to determine the effectiveness of the three innovative practicum models in promoting the professional growth and dispositions of participating teacher candidates based on their perceptions. As described, each study had a different methodology, yet similar research questions, examining the benefits, challenges and implications for implementation of the respective models. All three studies used responses provided by participating teacher candidates as the data sets for analyses. The peer mentorship model study included a longitudinal analysis of quantitative Likert-type responses and qualitative responses to pre- and post-practicum surveys administered over three years to teacher candidates in the concurrent teacher education program on one campus of this university. The alternative service learning study used a survey tool to collect the perceptions of teacher candidates across both campuses. The international practicum placement study used a qualitative methodology, including focus groups, interviews and analyses of journal entries to ascertain the perceptions of teacher candidates from one campus who participated in two separate international placements.

In order to examine the overall findings across the three studies, teacher candidates' experiences and perceptions were compared and contrasted to determine overarching themes and patterns (Creswell, 2012). The research team members of this project carefully reviewed the findings of each study and categorized them according to the three main areas of investigation relating to benefits, challenges and implications for implementation. A summary of the findings across the various practicum models was developed and is presented in Table 2. The implications for implementation were then further analyzed in the *Discussion* section and aligned to the seven dimensions of a work-integrated learning framework (Cooper et al., 2010), resulting in recommendations for further development of innovative teacher education practicum models.

From Table 2, clear parallels can be drawn across the three practicum models regarding the benefits, challenges and implications for implementation from each model. It is evident that some benefits and challenges were consistent across the three studies, while some findings were only prevalent in one or two practicum models. For example, the preparatory activities, such as workshops and orientation sessions, were only somewhat beneficial in the case of mentorship and international practicum models; the alternative service learning participants did not comment on the provision of such strategies to prepare them for the community-based practicum placements. Similarly, the teacher candidates in the peer mentorship and international practicum placements reported on the benefits of increased collaboration and support through partnerships with peers and faculty facilitators, respectively. The alternative service learning participants, on the other hand, usually worked independently during their community placements.

Benefits

Professional growth and the reinforcement of pedagogical skills sets were consistent benefits across all three practicum models, with teacher candidates reporting increased awareness of their professional identities. An area that was inconsistent across the three studies was the benefit of increased awareness of employment opportunities. The alternative service learning practicum placements and the international practicum placements increased teacher candidates' awareness of employment opportunities in community agencies and abroad. Understandably, the peer mentorship model did not seem to affect teacher candidates' perceptions of employment options since the setting was a traditional classroom.

An additional benefit of participation in each of the innovative practicum experiences was that teacher candidates engaged in opportunities that included diverse perspectives and contexts within the field of education, such as exposure to team teaching and cultural differences. Teacher candidates also had further access to opportunities to refine and consolidate their teaching skills in these diverse contexts. They were

able to assume an inquiry stance, to develop resilience and problem-solving skills and to increase their awareness of teaching strategies in school systems of different countries and in community agencies.

Challenges

The challenges across the three models included role clarification, timing and structure issues, the need for additional support from the institution, and the need for a paradigm shift in regard to traditional teaching practice. It was evident that peer mentorship, alternative service learning and international practicum placements were perceived to be positive experiences for participants; however, teacher candidates reported that they could have benefitted from increased clarification of their respective roles. Teacher candidates indicated that the host schools and agencies desired clearer outlines of the expectations of each participant. In the case of mentorship and community practicum placements, communication between the university and participating partner schools and organizations was perceived as a challenge by teacher candidates.

When considering time and structure, all three studies faced minor challenges. The peer mentorship practicum was perceived to be less beneficial when the members of a mentorship pair were not together in the same classroom. In the case of alternative service learning placements at one campus, teacher candidates questioned the timing of these placements in the fourth year of the concurrent teacher education program. Within the international practicum placement, challenges with timing and incurred costs were also mentioned. Another challenge that was present across all three models related to preparation and support. Teacher candidates reported that they and their field-based practicum partners expressed a desire for increased institutional support. In all models, the challenges of the innovative practicum were related to teacher candidates' prior perceptions of teaching as specifically the preparation of lessons for classroom instruction. Most teacher candidates embraced the opportunity to apply their teaching skills in diverse settings, yet they especially appreciated those experiences that created explicit opportunities for their growth as professional educators.

Implications for Implementation

The challenges reported in the findings provided further considerations to enhance the future implementation of the three innovative practicum models. The implications for implementation across all three studies include: an appropriate delivery model for structure and timing of each practicum model, further clarification of participant roles, sufficient preparation enabling support for teacher candidates, need for changing perceptions and paradigms by articulating the benefits and values of diverse practicum models, and improved communication and support for a range of practicum partners.

Table 2: Findings of Benefits, Challenges and Implications for Implementation across Models

	Peer Mentorship Model	Alternative Service Learning Model	International Practicum Model	Similar Findings across Models
BENEFITS				
Preparation	Preparatory activities, such as workshops and previous experience in this model, were beneficial.		Preparatory activities including group meetings for international experience were beneficial.	Preparatory activities were deemed to be applicable and useful.
Collaboration and Support	Collaboration and support increased when peer mentorship pairs were placed in same class.		Interactions within peer relationships and in a professional community with faculty support were valued.	Collaboration among peers and/or with faculty advisors increased support of teacher candidates.
Professional Growth	Professional identity and self-confidence as an educator were enhanced.	Professional growth and development were promoted within specific settings.	Professional growth in resilience, flexibility and communication skills were reported.	Professional skills sets of teacher candidates were reinforced.
Employment Opportunities		Awareness of employment options were increased.	Non-traditional opportunities related to teaching abroad and within Canada were valued.	Diverse opportunities beyond the traditional teaching model in a classroom were identified.
Awareness of Diverse Perspectives	An inquiry stance was developed.	Critical thinking, problem-solving and informed citizenship were developed.	Cultural and community connectedness both at home and abroad improved.	Reflective practice, resourcefulness and/or global awareness were enhanced.
Consolidation of Teaching Skills	Consolidation of learning and such skills as co-planning and team teaching were identified.	Opportunities to utilize teaching and communication skills became evident.	Awareness of teaching and learning strategies of other cultures was heightened.	Opportunities to utilize and refine teaching skills in varying contexts were identified.

	Peer Mentorship Model	Alternative Service Learning Model	International Practicum Model	Similar Findings across Models
CHALLENGES				
Role Clarification	Role clarification for the novices, mentors and associate teachers was needed.	The value of roles that did not utilize teaching skills was questioned.	Teacher candidates experienced dissonance between expectations and practice.	Roles needed to be clarified.
Time and Structure	Structure was important, in that mentors and novices placed in different classrooms encountered reduced benefits.	Perceived benefits were dependent on context, structure and timing of the practicum.	Timing in year four was questioned due to costs and benefits but was well-accepted.	Timing and structure posed some challenges in each of the practicum models.
Preparation and Support	More specific preparation and support for teacher candidates and associate teachers was needed.	Institutional support was needed for teacher candidates in a block practicum placement.	Preparation for teaching assignment needed to be clarified.	Support from the institution needed to be increased for both teacher candidates and practicum partners.
Paradigm Shift	Perception of teaching as an independent practice persisted, with a focus on having individual teaching time.	Some teacher candidates who selected alternative service learning in non-teaching contexts questioned benefits.		Teacher candidates needed reinforcement regarding the value of the practicum model in some contexts.
Compatibility Issues	Peer teacher candidate compatibility issues were sometimes evident.			

	Peer Mentorship Model	Alternative Service Learning Model	International Practicum Model	Similar Findings across Models
IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION				
Appropriate Delivery Model Structure and Timing	Consistent delivery of program implementation with dyads placed in the same classroom is beneficial.	Timing, structure and context were perceived to affect immersion and value of practicum placements.	Continued offering of international practicum in present model was recommended.	Structure, timing and context of the practicum need to be considered in planning and implementation.
Provision and Clarity of Roles	Further development of role clarity for novices, mentors and associate teachers is needed.	A positive relationship with the practicum placement supervisor is valued.	The role of the faculty advisor/program facilitator is valued.	Role descriptions for participants in each practicum model need to be provided and clarified.
Sufficient Preparation and Support for Teacher Candidates	Program support for peer mentorship through coursework or seminars is beneficial.	Adequate support provided at the institutional level is necessary.	There is benefit from a high level of preparation and faculty support in the practicum abroad.	Additional preparation and support for teacher candidates and practicum partners are integral.
Articulation of Benefits and Value of Practicum	There is need for collaboration with participants and practicum partners to develop the peer mentorship model while highlighting benefits for participants.	Further clarification of the value of alternative service learning as a means to expose students to contexts beyond the traditional classroom teaching experience is necessary.	Connections with and applications in coursework are needed with international teaching experiences.	Teacher candidates' perceptions of the value of teaching beyond the traditional classroom setting should be broadened and their awareness of the importance of collaboration in the field enhanced. Potential employment opportunities in diverse settings should be emphasized.

	Peer Mentorship Model	Alternative Service Learning Model	International Practicum Model	Similar Findings across Models
Communication with Practicum Partners	There is a need to increase and vary modes of communication with practicum partners, such as school boards/ associate teachers.	Community agencies should have increased and varied communication with the faculty of education.	Increased and varied communication with the host international school would enhance preparation.	Clear and consistent communication with practicum partners is important.

Discussion

Teacher education is an intricate and dynamic process and the practicum component remains a critical experience within it (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Cohen & Ball, 1999; Schulz, 2005). In response to the importance of diverse practicum placements, the three innovative practicum models were designed and implemented to address current complexities in teacher education such as the need to develop graduates as collaborative colleagues and global citizens. The findings across the three studies included in the present report (Grierson et al., 2014; Maynes et al., 2014; Tessaro et al., 2014) substantiate and extend the literature related to the pertinent practicum components of teacher education (Falkenberg & Smits, 2010; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). As evident in Table 2, this project identifies various benefits and challenges that occurred across all three practicum models, and others that were evident only in one or two of the models, reflecting the specific characteristics of each context and differing implementation processes.

Importantly, practicum placements in teacher education programs are considered work-integrated learning experiences. Consequently, the work-integrated learning framework (Cooper et al., 2010) and its seven dimensions align well with the overall implications for further implementation of the three practicum models explored in this project. Specifically, this framework provides a vehicle for categorizing and understanding the seven dimensions that need to be considered in implementing innovative practicum models. The findings of this synthesis may provide timely and pertinent direction to faculty, administrators and policy makers in pre-service teacher education programs. In addition, generalizations to similar work-integrated experiences in other professional programs may be made from the present analysis.

Benefits

The overall benefits of each of the innovative practicum models were evident in each study. Participants reported that preparation for the mentorship and international experiences was important in establishing the purpose and roles for the innovative practicums; this preparation was not explicitly provided in the alternative service learning model through related coursework. Stachowski and Sparks (2007) identify preparedness as an essential component of the international teaching practicum. Similarly, Hoban, Ashby, Malderez and Tomlinson (2009) indicate the necessity of establishing preparation for the requirements of mentorship experiences and the findings of the present peer mentorship study affirm this assertion.

Collaboration and support were perceived benefits of the peer mentorship and international practicum models, as participants appreciated the opportunities to work with their peers in mentorship and also with faculty facilitators in international placements. Hoban et al.'s (2009) findings identify collaboration as an added

benefit to participation in a mentorship model. The findings reported here reinforce that participation in collaborative opportunities is essential to teacher candidates' experiences during diverse practicum opportunities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Falkenberg & Smits, 2010; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). The strong preparation and support received by the faculty facilitators in the international experience may have contributed to the high student participation rate over many years in this campus program.

The benefit that was prevalent across all three models was the opportunity for professional growth and the enhancement of the participants' professional identity. It is accepted widely that diverse practicum experiences contribute to professional growth among teacher candidates (Kelly, 2004; Kissock & Richardson, 2010). The innovative models studied here are not traditional practice teaching placements and thus contributed to a paradigm shift for the teacher candidates, expanding their notions of the role of a teacher.

New avenues for employment became evident through the alternative service learning and international practicum placements due to the range of contexts experienced; thereby, the candidates' perceptions of potential employment options were broadened. Arguably, over the long term, participants in the peer mentorship model may benefit from their prior experiences with cooperative teaching opportunities when they are employed in school/workplace teams, but they did not foresee this benefit in the present study.

The awareness of diverse perspectives was an additional strong benefit across all three models. This ability to assume the perspective of others is a valuable skill for educators and was fostered by the various interactions embedded in the innovative practicum placements. In the peer mentorship model, teacher candidates developed an inquiry stance, due to the comfort level that they experienced when working with a peer in a low-risk relationship. In alternative service learning settings, teacher candidates had the opportunity to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving experiences with community partners. The international practicum placement further developed these skills and understandings through cultural and community connections. These cultural experiences are valued in teacher education, as schools include learners of different backgrounds, and having the exposure to many diverse experiences fosters teacher candidates' further awareness and understanding of a community and global context (Dantas, 2007).

Teacher candidates valued the opportunity to consolidate their teaching skills as a core benefit of participation in the practicum models. By doing so, teacher candidates felt more prepared and aware of new applications of teaching strategies. Teacher candidates across the three practicum models strongly believed that the most beneficial practicum experiences were those that included direct opportunities to develop teaching skills. These findings demonstrate that teacher candidates who have chosen teaching as a career value the opportunity to develop their teaching strategies and that innovative practicum experiences allow teacher candidates to expand their awareness of potential applications of their teaching practices to a range of diverse settings.

Challenges

The challenges faced by teacher candidates in each practicum model showed certain similarities across the varied experiences. Consistent with previous research (Falkenberg & Smits, 2010; Grierson et al., 2011), role clarification was a challenge across all three models. There was an overall perception that the roles of teacher candidates needed to be further described and understood by all practicum partners. The participants in all three models indicated that they, and their practicum partners, would have benefitted from further clarification of roles and responsibilities. Time and structure were mentioned as challenges across all three studies in varying degrees. Within the peer mentorship practicum, the most problematic challenge was peers who were paired but taught in different locations, supporting a previous finding (Grierson et al., 2011). In the alternative service learning practicum, challenges were centred on understanding the perceived benefits of the practicum and the organization/institutional support of the placement, as was also noted by Maynes et al. (2013). In the

international practicum placement, a minor challenge was aligning the timing of the practicum with the personal schedules of teacher candidates, confirming a finding by Cantalini-Williams and Tessaro (2011).

Across all three studies, there was a perceived need for further preparation and support from the institution for teacher candidates. In the peer mentorship model, preparation became less of an issue as candidates who had been novices became experienced mentors; nonetheless, preparation was a challenge across all three years. While the international practicum placement offered considerable preparation for the trips themselves, participants sometimes reported that more information was desired about the expectations and grade placement of the host international schools. Preparation and support were perceived to be needed not only for the teacher candidates but also for the practicum partners, such as associate teachers, community agency supervisors and international school teachers.

A persistent challenge is the paradigm shift that is necessary for full participation in the peer mentorship and alternative service learning models. It seemed that teacher candidates continued to view teaching as an independent practice and an experience that mainly occurs in a traditional classroom. Additionally, within the peer mentorship model, some teacher candidates identified compatibility issues as a challenge since a small number of pairings were not perceived to be mutually beneficial. In summary, the challenges were associated with role clarification, timing, structure, preparation and views of teaching.

Implications for Implementation

The findings provided some considerations for more effective implementation of each model. These implications can be further aligned to the work-integrated learning framework, which includes seven dimensions relevant to field experiences (Cooper et al., 2010). The alignment and elaboration of these implications is outlined in Table 3. It is important to note that the dimensions are neither mutually exclusive nor hierarchical and that implications may therefore apply to multiple dimensions of the framework.
In terms of the *purpose* dimension, the broadening of teacher candidates' perceptions of teaching beyond the traditional classroom is needed, with further value placed on work-integrated learning in diverse contexts. Within this *purpose* dimension, there is an identified need to develop and articulate the intended outcomes with involvement and input from all of the practicum partners. It is also imperative to clarify the roles of all participants within each model. Additionally, the findings indicate the importance of providing teacher candidates with an awareness of potential employment opportunities that may not be evident in alternative practicum placements. For effective implementation and the realization of purposeful outcomes, there is also a need for preparatory activities and appropriate supporting materials before/during involvement and upon completion of a practicum. These purposes and outcomes of the practicum models should ideally be co-created with stakeholder groups and communicated, on an ongoing/interactive basis, with practicum partners in a variety of modes and venues.

The *context* dimension of work-integrated learning in an education practicum refers to the diverse workplace settings that allow for the direct application of teaching and pedagogical skills. According to the findings, further consideration is needed with regard to the context, structure and timing of practicum placements for effective implementation within a teacher education program. There is a strong perceived need to ensure that the context allows for collaboration and reflection among teacher candidates and with advisors/supervisors, especially in the peer mentorship model. It is also recommended that workplace contexts, such as schools, community agencies and international schools, be provided with ongoing support and engaged in ongoing communication.

Within the *integration* dimension, teacher candidates reported that the innovative practicum experiences assisted them in having further opportunities for meaningful and integrated learning. It is recommended that the integration between theory and practice be fully developed through dialogue, reflection and tutorials focused on the applicable work experiences. Teacher candidates indicated that they appreciated most those

practicum experiences that allowed for the direct application and integration of their teaching skills. Participation in the diverse practicum models contributed to the fostering of an inquiry stance, possibly due to the non-traditional nature of the placements.

The findings related to the *curriculum* dimension of work-integrated learning indicate that the program coursework should address the value associated with the practicum and include content on such topics as effective strategies for mentoring and information related to international teaching and service learning as mandatory elements of the core curriculum. It is also important to plan practicum experiences that align with the curriculum of the teacher education program and the interests/expertise of the participants, with the inclusion of both theoretical knowledge (what) and practical knowledge (how) in the curriculum. Additionally, in planning the teacher education program, it is necessary to ensure that assessment practices align with the learning outcomes of the practicum. Lastly, the value of the culture of the practicum setting needs to be understood by teacher candidates. The curriculum of teacher education programs could include specialized courses or seminars intended to address the specific outcomes and culture of the practicum setting to be experienced.

Within the dimension of *learning*, teacher educators need to articulate explicitly the value of experiential learning from the practicum and encourage implicit learning through related work experiences. It is also important to provide opportunities for a transformative process that leads to growth in understandings of personal and professional identities. The authentic learnings reported by teacher candidates, such as increased resilience, global awareness and collaborative teaching skills were a direct result of immersion in the diverse practicum settings. Finally, both faculty and practitioners in the field need to work together to develop purposeful strategies for observation, review, reflection and refinement within the various practicum models for optimal learning.

When considering the *partnerships* dimension of work-integrated learning in an innovative practicum model, the findings show that it is important for faculties of education to plan the practicum model collaboratively with multiple partners from diverse contexts. It is also necessary to provide specific support for partnerships on an institutional level and to emphasize the importance of these partnerships and of professionalism for all participants. In all three practicum models, teacher candidates indicated that it was necessary to provide more clarification and support to the practicum partners in the field.

In the *support* dimension of the work-integrated learning framework, findings across each study refer to the need to ensure ongoing assistance and guidance for candidates, supervisors/advisors and each organization that is involved in the practicum model. It is also recommended that teacher education faculty and practitioners plan collaboratively for practical, administrative, educational and affective support components such as peer mentoring, informative materials, faculty involvement and appropriate resources.

Table 3 provides a synthesis of the findings according to the seven dimensions of work-integrated learning (Cooper et al., 2010), listing a range of implications/recommendations for the implementation of innovative practicum models in teacher education programs.

Table 3: Seven Dimensions of Work-Integrated Learning: Implications for the Implementation of Innovative Practicum Models in Teacher Education

Dimension	Implications for Innovative Teacher Education Practicum Models
Purpose	• Broaden participants' perceptions beyond traditional expectations, with more value placed on work-integrated learning in diverse contexts • Develop and articulate intended outcomes with input from all practicum partners • Clarify the roles of various participant groups • Provide effective preparatory activities and materials • Communicate purpose and outcomes in a variety of modes and venues • Include potential employment options as a purpose of the practicum
Context: the workplace	• Offer diverse settings to apply teaching/pedagogical skills and address varied interests/expertise of candidates • Consider the structure and timing of the practicum within the program for optimal learning • Ensure that the context allows for collaboration and reflection • Provide ongoing support and communication to the practicum setting
Integration	• Develop opportunities for integrated learning through dialogue, reflection, tutorials and authentic work experiences • Provide strategies for integration between theory and practice • Foster an inquiry stance for all participants
Curriculum	• Ensure that the curriculum of program coursework addresses the value and content associated with the practicum (e.g., topics related to mentoring, international teaching and service learning) • Plan practicum experiences that align with the curriculum and learning outcomes of the teacher education program • Include theoretical knowledge (what) integrated with practical knowledge (how) in the curriculum • Ensure assessment strategies of the practicum align with related learning outcomes • Recognize the curriculum/culture of the practicum setting
Learning	• Make explicit the value of experiential learning from the practicum setting and allow for implicit learning through related work experiences • Provide opportunities for a transformative process that leads to growth in understandings of personal/professional identities • Develop purposeful strategies for observation, review, reflection and refinement of learning
Partnerships	• Plan the practicum with multiple partners at various levels of diverse contexts/settings

Dimension	Implications for Innovative Teacher Education Practicum Models
	• Provide specific support for partnerships on an institutional level with clear multimodal communications • Emphasize the importance of partnerships and professionalism through related policies and practices
Support	• Ensure ongoing assistance and guidance for candidates from associate teachers/supervisors/advisors and the faculty/organizations involved • Integrate support with practical, administrative, educational and affective components such as peer mentoring, informative materials, faculty facilitation and appropriate resources

Limitations

There are various limitations to be acknowledged across the three studies. The peer mentorship model examined teacher candidates' perceptions over an extended period of three years of implementation, whereas the other two studies used responses for only one year of implementation and thus did not provide evidence of changes in perceptions over time. Each study had a response rate of less than half of the possible participants; a higher response rate from teacher candidates would have been beneficial and may have yielded different results, as some teacher candidates may have considered participation in the studies only as a vehicle for program feedback. There is also little information regarding the demographic characteristics of participants. More information on gender, past employment experiences and ethnicity may have informed the interpretation of the findings. Similarly, more detail about the practicum context, such as the type of school, service learning location or international site, might have shed new light on the experiences of participants. Finally, all data for these three studies were self-reported by teacher candidates. If data had been collected from other groups aligned with these placements, such as host associate teachers/supervisors, faculty advisors or faculty facilitators, these stakeholders may have provided different perspectives.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present project, which included three related studies, could be replicated with more attention given to consistent methodologies across the three studies in order to facilitate comparisons and analyses of common benefits and challenges. Teacher candidates could be encouraged further to participate in the studies, with more incentives offered to yield higher response rates, which may result in differing findings. Furthermore, future research should examine the implementation of each model over a period of time to note changes in perceptions after the initial implementation period. Further research would ideally also access the perceptions of practicum partners, such as associate teachers, faculty advisors and site supervisors, to determine the perceived benefits and challenges of each model. Lastly, future research on practicum models could use the framework presented as a basis to develop a survey and interview questions in order to further assess the suitability of this framework for analysis of teacher education field experiences.

Conclusion

In summary, the studies of three innovative practicum models in teacher education each revealed benefits and challenges as perceived by participating teacher candidates, indicating important implications for further implementation. The findings pertinent to each model have been analyzed to determine similarities and differences across the models and have been related to the seven dimensions of a work-integrated learning framework to provide a synthesis of significant recommendations for future policy and practice.

Teacher candidates perceived each of the three models very positively. Benefits were related to the development of professional identities, diverse perspectives, an inquiry/problem-solving stance, and pedagogical teaching skills applied in non-traditional settings. The benefits that were most related to the mentorship and international practicum placements were increased collaboration, support and co-teaching skills through peer mentoring opportunities in both settings; interactions with faculty facilitators were deemed beneficial in international placements. The alternative service learning practicum and the international practicum model provided an opportunity for enhanced global awareness, informed citizenship and familiarization with a range of employment options. The benefits of preparatory activities were reported for the mentorship and international practicum placement models, with the request for further support and preparation noted by participants across the three models.

The challenges perceived by teacher candidates were related to the desire for additional preparation, role clarification, considerations in the timing, structure and context of the practicum placement, and a desire for ongoing involvement and communication with respective practicum partners. A challenge reported for each of the models was the need for a paradigm shift for teacher candidates from the traditional role and context of teaching independently in a school classroom to the learning opportunities possible in an alternative practicum.

The implications for the future implementation of innovative practicum models in teacher education have been outlined according to the seven dimensions of a framework for work-integrated learning (Cooper et al., 2010) as described in Table 3. These recommendations can be used by program planners and policy makers to ensure that practicum models include the following: a clear *purpose* with specific learning outcomes, defined roles, preparatory activities, and an articulation of future employment options; a diverse *context* with considerations regarding the setting, timing and structure of the practicum for optimal benefits; embedded opportunities for the *integration* of theory and practice through reflection, dialogue and a culture of inquiry; course *curriculum* that relates to the practicum experience, values the curriculum of the workplace and aligns assessment with practicum learning outcomes; opportunities for both theoretical and experiential *learning* with the expectation that workplace learning can be enhanced through reflection to foster growth in professional identities; solid *partnerships* with a range of community agencies, education-related facilities and international settings with ongoing communication and collaboration among partners and participants; and purposeful strategies to *support* all stakeholder groups, especially teacher candidates, associates/advisors/supervisors and host organizations.

A recent publication and media attention demonstrate that the area of work-integrated learning, including practicum placements, co-operative education, internships and voluntary field experiences, is of great interest to postsecondary institutions and the public (MacDonald, 2013). The present summary of the three studies provides clear direction for future policy and practice in a range of professional pre-service programs in addition to education, including nursing, engineering and business. These recommendations may become especially important as Ontario continues to experience a renewal in teacher education, with the onset of a new extended program legislated to begin in 2015 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). In this future program, the required practicum will be doubled in length and could offer the opportunity for more creative and diverse practicum experiences in both concurrent and consecutive models. For example, in a new two-

year consecutive program, as is presently possible in the concurrent education structure, there may be the option of placing a second-year mentor and a first-year novice teacher candidate in the same practicum setting for the development of co-teaching skills supported by the mentorship study (Grierson et al., 2014). In addition, alternative practicum experiences, in community settings and international schools, could be 'em*BEd*ded' in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program, as was found to be beneficial in the present studies (Maynes et al., 2014; Tessaro et al., 2014).

The findings of the present project are timely and significant for the effective implementation of authentic and relevant practicum models such as peer mentorship, alternative service learning and international placements in post-secondary programs. These innovative models have been reported to promote the development of collaborative, reflective, resourceful, committed, culturally aware and enlightened participants who form a spectrum of pedagogical skills, professional aptitudes and community-building dispositions. The potential outcomes, as evident from a thorough analysis of over one thousand responses from teacher candidates, are enhanced attitudes, competencies and employability options for future generations of Ontario graduates.

References

Astin, A. W., Vogelgesang, L., Ikeda, E., & Yee, J. (2000). *How service learning affects students* (Executive Summary). Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Higher Education Research Institute.

Bullough, R. V., Young, J., Birrell, J. R., Clark, D. C., Egan, M. W., Erickson, L., Frankovich, M., Brunetti, J., & Welling, M. (2003). Teaching with a peer: A comparison of two models of student teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 19*(1)*,* 57-73*.*

Bullough, R. V., Young, J., Erickson, L., Birrell, J. R., Clark, D. C., & Egan, M. W. (2002). Rethinking field experience: Partnership teaching versus single-placement teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *53*(1), 68-80*.*

Bryan, S. L., & Sprague, M. M. (1997). The effect of overseas internships on early teaching experiences. *The Clearing House, 70*(4), 199-201.

Cantalini-Williams, M., & Tessaro, M. L. (2011). Teacher candidates' perceptions of an international practicum experience in Italian schools: Benefits of a short-term placement with faculty support. *Canadian and International Education/Education canadienne et internationale*, *40*(3), 45-60. Retrieved from http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cie-eci/vol40/iss3/5

Chambers, T. (2009). A continuum of approaches to service-learning within Canadian post-secondary education. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 39*(2), 77-100.

Clement, C. M., & Otlaw, E. M. (2002). Student teaching abroad: Learning about teaching, culture, and self. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 38*(4), 180-183.

Clift, R. T., & Brady, P. (2005). Research on methods courses and field experiences*.* In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 309-424). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., Publishers.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning communities. *Review of Research in Education, 24*, 249-305.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Cohen, D. K., & Ball, D. L. (1999). *Instruction, capacity, and improvement*. Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) Research Report Series. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania.

Cooper, L., Orrell, J., & Bowden, M. (2010). *Work-integrated learning: A guide to effective practice*. New York: Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Fourth edition. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Cushner, K. (2007). The role of experience in the making of internationally-minded teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *34*(1), 27-39.

Dantas, M. (2007). Building teacher competency to work with diverse learners in the context of international education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *34*(1), 75-94.

Eyler, J. S., & Giles, D. E. Jr. (1999). *Where's the learning in service-learning?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Falkenberg, T., & Smits, H. (eds.). (2010). *Field experiences in the context of reform of Canadian teacher education programs*. Volume 1. Winnipeg, Canada: Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Feimen-Nemser, S. (2001). From preparation to practice: Designing a continuum to strengthen and sustain teaching. *Teachers College Record, 130*(6), 1013-1055. Retrieved from http://www.brandeis.edu/mandel/questcase/Documents/Readings/Feiman_Nemser.pdf

Gardiner, W., & Robinson, K. S. (2009). Paired field placements: A means for collaboration. *The New Educator, 5*, 81-94.

Grierson, A., Cantalini-Williams, M., Wideman-Johnston, T., & Tedesco, S. (2011). Building scaffolds in the field: The benefits and challenges of teacher candidate peer mentorship. *Brock Education, 20*(2), 85-103.

Grierson, A., Wideman-Johnston, T., Tedesco, S., Brewer, C., & Cantalini-Williams, M. (2014). *Teacher candidates' perceptions of participating in a peer mentorship practicum model*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

Hoban, A. J., Ashby, P., Malderez, A., & Tomlinson, P. D. (2009). Mentoring beginning teachers: What we know and what we don't. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*, 207-216.

Kelly, J. A. (2004). Teaching the world: A new requirement for teacher preparation. *Phi Delta Kappan, 86*(3), 219-221.

Kissock, C., & Richardson, P. (2010). Calling for action within the teaching profession: it is time to internationalize teacher education. *Teaching Education, 21*(1), 89-101.

Le Cornu, R., & Ewing, R. (2008). Reconceptualizing professional experiences in pre-service teacher education: Reconstructing the past to embrace the future. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *24*, 1799-1812.

Loughran, J. (2006). *Developing a pedagogy of teacher education: Understanding teaching and learning about teaching*. New York: Routledge.

MacDonald, M. (2013, September 11). The plight of the unpaid intern. *University Affairs, 54*(8). Retrieved from http://www.universityaffairs.ca/plight-of-the-unpaid-intern.aspx

Mahon, J., & Cushner, K. (2002). The overseas student teaching experience: Creating optimal cultural learning. *Multicultural Perspectives, 4*(3), 3-8.

Maynes, N., Cantalini-Williams, M., & Tedesco, S. (2014). *Alternative service learning placements for teacher candidates.* Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

Maynes, N., Hatt, B., & Wideman, R. (2013). Service learning as an alternative practicum experience in a pre-service education program. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 43*(1), 80-99.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2014). *Initial teacher education: teacher education programs*. Retrieved from http://www.oct.ca/public/the-public-interest/how-teachers-are-certified/initial-teacher-education

Ontario College of Teachers Act, 347/02. (1996). Retrieved from http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_020347_e.htm

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013, June 5). News release: Giving new teachers the tools for success: Ontario enhancing teacher education, supporting greater student achievement. Retrieved from http://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2013/06/giving-new-teachers-the-tools-for-success.html

Quezada, R. L. (2004). Beyond educational tourism: Lessons learned while student teaching abroad. *International Education Journal, 5*(4), 458-465.

Schulz, R. (2005). The practicum: More than practice. *Canadian Journal of Education, 28*(1/2), 147-167.

Stachowski, L., & Chleb, J. (1998). Foreign educators provide feedback for the improvement of international student teaching experiences. *Action in Teacher Education, 19*(4), 119-130.

Stachowski, L., Richardson, J., & Henderson, M. (2003). Student teachers report on the influence of cultural values on classroom practice and community involvement: Perspectives from the Navajo reservation and from abroad. *The Teacher Educator, 39*(1), 52-63.

Stachowski, L., & Sparks, T. (2007). Thirty years and 2,000 student teachers later: An overseas student teaching project that is popular, successful, and replicable. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 34*(1), 115-132.

Stachowski, L., & Visconti, V. (1997). Adaptations for success: U.S. student teachers living and teaching abroad. *International Education, 26*, 5-20.

Tessaro, M. L., Brewer, C. A., & Cantalini-Williams, M. (2014). *Teacher candidates' perceptions of international practicum experiences.* Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council for Ontario.

Woloshyn, V., Chalmers, H., & Bosacki, S. (2005). Creating community-university partnerships in a teacher education program: A case study. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 51*(3), 246-260.