

**Characteristics of Teacher Candidates Who  
Repeat Practica or Withdraw  
from the Bachelor of Education Program**

**Kim Calder Stegemann**

**Thompson Rivers University**

**Author's Note:**

**School of Education, Faculty of Human, Social, and Educational Development, Thompson  
Rivers University.**

**The author acknowledges the work of Ashley Reiling, Research Assistant, in the  
analysis of the qualitative data for this paper.**

**TRU, 900 McGill Road, Kamloops, BC, V2C 0N3, kcalder@tru.ca**

### Abstract

Teacher education programs have the responsibility to graduate the most qualified and committed teachers possible and to be gatekeepers for the teaching profession (Caskey, Peterson, and Temple, 2001). Through an admission review process, the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) is attempting to create a profile of students who are unsuccessful in some aspect of their field experiences, so that we can more effectively screen out during the admission process those applicants who are unsuitable for the teaching profession. We examine intake variables, including demographic data, and performance on field experience. Findings indicate that males, older applicants, individuals with learning disabilities, those of Aboriginal ancestry, and those with Fine Arts subject majors are most at risk for difficulty and/or withdrawal from the program. Dispositions such as relationship building and seeking / accepting feedback were associated with those in the 'repeat' and 'withdraw' categories. Personal and family factors were also significant for many who withdrew, which could not be predicted with intake procedures. Implications include the need for better pre-counseling of potential applicants and supports for those struggling in the program.

***Keywords:* pre-service teacher education, admission procedures, teacher candidate failure**

### **Characteristics of Teacher Candidates Who Repeat Practica or Withdraw from the Bachelor of Education Program**

It is incumbent upon teacher education programs to graduate the most qualified and committed teachers possible in order to successfully meet the complex needs of children in today's public schools and to be gatekeepers for the teaching profession (Caskey et al., 2001). There has been a concerted effort in the United States to elevate teaching standards and also increase the teaching force, particularly for difficult-to-staff schools (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008; Lemke & Harrison, 2001). In order to meet the demands of state and provincial standards, and to meet or increase the number of well – qualified teacher graduates, it is necessary to continually review and update the intake procedures, program effectiveness, and graduating criteria used by teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). The Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) pre-service teacher education program at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) has undertaken such a review process. Part of the review has been to examine the intake data and practicum reports of teacher candidates who must repeat practica and/or who withdraw from the program. That is, we are attempting to create a profile of students who are unsuccessful in some aspect of their field experiences so that we can more effectively screen out during the admission process those applicants who are unsuitable for the teaching profession and also identify earlier those teacher candidates who require addition assistance in order to be successful.

In this paper we begin by discussing the intake and demographic variables that have been found to be good predictors of student teaching success. We then review the characteristics common among those Teacher Candidates (TCs) who 'fail' the field experience component of

their teacher education program. Next, we examine the pool of TCs from our program who repeated one or more of the four practica and/or those who ultimately withdrew from our program, examining admission and demographic data and also comparing these to performance during field experience. We conclude with suggestions for changes to the B.Ed. program and future research.

### **Literature Review**

We have reviewed the literature in two specific areas to inform our investigation: a) the predictive value of different intake components on practicum experiences, and b) literature related to TC “failure” in teacher education programs.

#### **Predicting Practicum Success**

Various researchers have determined the statistical predictive value of different intake components on classroom teaching. Most large institutions use GPA as the key criteria for admission into a teacher education program (Mikotovics & Crehan, 2002; Riggs & Riggs, 1991) or require a minimum pass on a university entrance exam such as the SAT. However, single factors, such as GPA or academic achievement, have been found by some researchers to be poor predictors of success in the practicum (Lawrence & Crehan, 2001; Salzman, 1991) or future teaching success (Byrnes, Kiger, & Schechtman, 2000). Byrnes et al. (2000), Haberman (1987) and Calder (2010) reported a strong relationship between intake interviews and success on the practicum. Other intake data have also been found to predict practicum success. Caskey et al. (2001) found that reference letters and writing sample were related to overall teaching success ( $r = .40$  and  $.30$ , respectively), and Salzman (1991) found that GPA was significantly related to planning skills ( $r = .22$ ). In many cases, a combination of intake variables, collectively, have been found to predict success in the teacher education program. For example, Caskey et al.

(2001) reported that six different admission criteria accounted for 38% of the variance in TC performance. (See Casey and Childs, 2007 for an extensive review of admission procedures and related effectiveness in predicting success in the teacher education program, practicum, or later teaching performance.)

### **Teacher Candidate “Failure” in Student Teaching**

There are numerous reasons why a TC may have difficulty or be unsuccessful in a teacher education program. Sudzina and Knowles (1993) categorize the difficulties into three areas: Personal characteristics, Professional skills, and Contextual variables. Personal characteristics include age, gender, poor interpersonal skills and difficulty relating to children, low self-concept, being overly or under assertive, lacking enthusiasm, inflexible, unwilling to accept feedback, challenges in one’s personal life, and lack of time or poor resource management. Professional difficulties include inappropriate teaching methods, poor classroom management, poor pacing, difficulty setting criteria and evaluation, and lack of commitment and enthusiasm for teaching and the teaching profession. Contextual circumstances include lack of collegiality and poor/unavailable role models. Further, Harwood, Collins, & Sudzina (2000) found that males, older TCs who have had several career changes, and very young females tended to be those who had difficulty in, or failed, their teacher education program. Clearly, some of the noted issues or difficulties are potentially identifiable during the admissions process (interpersonal skills), while others are not (personal challenges).

In summary, teacher education programs strive to select candidates who are best suited for a career in teaching. Intake procedures must be rigorous and effectively identify those qualities which will lead to attainment of teaching standards. Most large teacher training programs use GPA as the primary criteria for admission but also require a letter of intent or

personal essay, letters of references, and a list of the applicant's experience working with school-aged children. Our previous analysis examined the relationship of scored intake data to practicum scores, but we did not compare the intake data to incidence of repeating practica and/or withdrawal from the program. In addition, there are several characteristics that typify those TCs who have difficulty or withdraw from their teacher education programs (including personal, professional, and contextual issues) which are not measured during the intake process, nor always evident in a quantitative scoring of practicum performance. In this paper we continue to examine our own program admission procedures and the relationship of intake data to difficulty in student teaching.

## **Method**

### **Design and Participants**

The TRU two-year post-degree B.Ed program has an elementary school focus and admits approximately 50 TCs per year. The students of focus in this paper are those who have either repeated one or more of the four practica, and/or withdrew from program at some point ( $n = 69$ ) on record since the inception of our B.Ed. program in 1990. We grouped these TCs into three categories: those who repeat but then complete the program (RC,  $n = 17$ ), those who repeat and then withdraw (RW,  $n = 12$ ), and those who withdraw without repeating (W,  $n = 41$ ). We compare these groups to 240 TCs from the 2006-2010 intake years (2008 - 2012 graduation years), all of whom successfully completed the program without repeating any practica (C). (We chose these graduating classes because they were the most recent for which we had complete data sets.) In subsequent analyses we combined the first three categories (RC, RW, W) and relabeled Other (Oth) to compare to C (now called Able). We also grouped all those who completed the program (C and RC) to form a Completers group (Comp) and a group of all of

those who withdrew (WD). The purpose of the various re-composition of groups was to further tease out differences between those individuals who withdraw and those who may repeat a practica, but still persist to complete the program. Therefore, the research design is a comparative analysis using both descriptive and inferential statistics, analyzing quantitative data and anecdotal reports.

### **Measurements**

#### **Admission and program evaluative features.**

We evaluate applicants and in-program Teacher Candidates at three points (intake, while in the program, and upon graduation), the first two of which are the focus of this investigation.

***Intake.*** Applicants are rated based on undergraduate GPA (for required courses), Letter of Intent (which is graded for content and writing), Spontaneous Writing Sample, and panel Interviews. Applicants must have a teachable major before entry into the program so that they will be eligible for provincial certification upon graduation. The majority of our TCs have Subject Majors in Social Studies (52%) and English (26%). Science and Fine Arts are the next largest groups, approximately 10% and 9% respectively. Reference letters and experience working with school-aged children (minimum 100 hours) are not scored, but must be acceptable in order for the application to be considered further. The university application process requires that gender and date of birth be provided and there is an opportunity to self-identify as a First Nations and/or Special Status student (i.e. learning disabled).

***During the program.*** During each of the four semesters of our program, TCs do a practicum. All practica involve observation and instruction of children (to greater and lesser degrees). Successful completion of the fourth practicum is required for provincial certification.

During each practicum, faculty and teacher mentors must do observations and complete anecdotal evaluation forms, which highlight the lesson taught and itemize areas of strength and those requiring attention. The focus of these reports reflect the provincial teaching standards and those competencies required for ultimate certification. These reports are retained in each TC's practicum file. Special documentation is required when a TC experiences significant difficulties on the field experience. These interim reports also become part of the student file and state the areas which require improvement and deadlines for achievement of these goals.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

This paper (based on a larger study) has utilized both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis, as described above: scored intake data (GPA, Letter of Intent, Spontaneous Writing, Interview) and anecdotal practica performance data in addition to demographic data such as Gender, Age, Subject Major, Previous School Experience, and First Nations (FN) and Special Status (SPS)<sup>1</sup>.

**Quantitative data.** The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Prior to analysis, however, nominal data were grouped and assigned codes for the purposes of this study. For example, applicant's subject major was recorded and grouped according to the most frequent categories - Language Arts (LA), Social Studies (SS), Maths and Sciences (SC), Fine Arts (FA), Physical Education (PE), and others (OTH) (i.e. Modern Languages). Similarly, applicants were categorized based on the hours of experience in school settings (0-25, 26-50, 51-75, 76-100, or over 100 hours). Next, we calculated descriptive statistics for all interval and ratio data (i.e. GPA, Interview scores, Age) and tabulated frequency statistics for nominal data (i.e. Gender, FN status). We then determined correlation between the different TC groups and intake and demographic variables. For interval data we used Kendall's

---

<sup>1</sup> Capitals have been used to distinguish variables in this examination.

tau and for nominal data used Chi Square test to calculate Phi coefficients. Last, we further explored significant relationships using the Pearson Chi-Square test. We calculated standardized residual scores for each cell in order to identify which categories were most responsible for the group differences. The residuals were adjusted to take into account sample sizes and provide a more accurate indication of the impact of the cell (group).

**Qualitative data.** A trained research assistant collected the anecdotal comments from the teacher and faculty mentor feedback forms or on the interim reports for TCs who repeated practica and/or withdrew from the program. She highlighted portions related to difficulties in one or more aspects of the student teaching experience. Next, she used words or phrases to describe comments using the Sudzina and Knowles (1993) framework (personal, professional, or contextual), but also allowed for other factors to emerge that may have contributed to TC failure or withdrawal. Later, themes were distilled down into categories/codes. Anecdotal notes were then reviewed a second time and the category list used to record frequency. For example, if classroom management was an issue for the TC, the research assistant would record a frequency of one under the Classroom Management category, regardless of the number of times that it was coded within the student file. Frequencies for each category were later tallied and percentages calculated. Inter-rater reliability of frequency tallies for a sample portion of anecdotal records was within acceptable limits ( $r = .84$ ).

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all TCs (where available). Skewness and kurtosis were all within acceptable limits, with the exception of Age, which is largely distributed in the younger ranges. Also note the small number of First Nations and Special Status

individuals in the sample. Figure 1 presents the frequency data for Subject Major and hours of experience in a school setting in histograms, and a pie graph to indicate the number of TCs who completed the program and or repeated, and those individuals who withdrew. Of interest is the bi-modal distribution for School Experience - many TCs had either no school experience or in excess of 100 hours. Also of note are the number of TCs who withdrew from the program without repeating one of the practica. Clearly, there must be other reasons for these individuals to leave the program, other than difficulties in student teaching.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Min	Max	Mean (SD)	Skewness (SE)	Kurtosis (SE)
GPA	290	2.45	4.18	3.22 (0.36)	.36 (.14)	-.48 (.29)
Letter of Intent	284	7.15	16.00	12.59(1.72)	-.51(.15)	.09(.29)
Spontaneous Writing	270	1.88	5.00	3.65 (0.65)	-.02 (.15)	-.34(.30)
Interview	268	4.42	10	7.60 (1.11)	-.28 (.15)	.21 (.30)
Age	280	21	56	28.61 (7.00)	1.67 (.15)	2.24 (.29)
Gender						
Female	254					
Male	56					
First Nations						
Non FN	295					
Self-identified FN	15					
Special Status						
Non SPS	257					
Self-identified SPS	8					
Missing	45					

*Note.* Total sample including all subgroups = 310.

Figure 1

*Percentage of Subject Major*

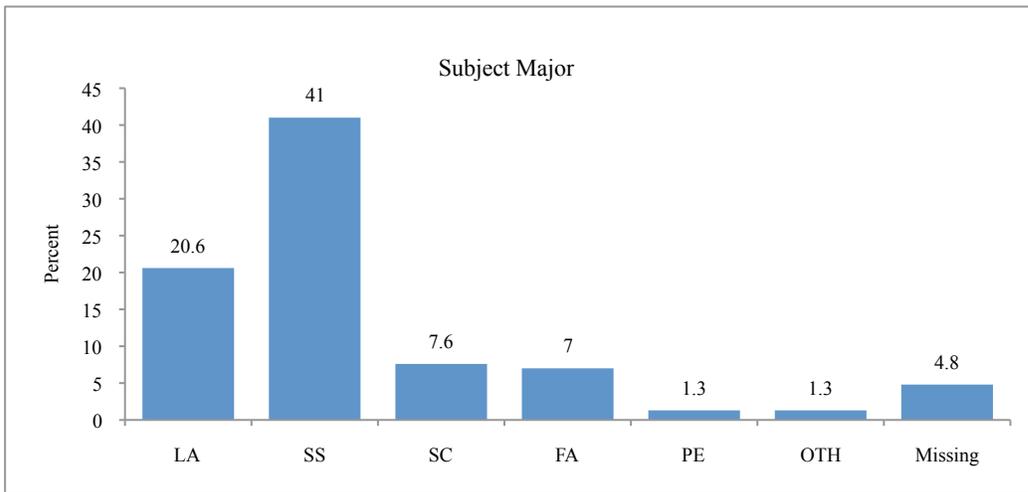


Figure 2

*Percentage of School Experience Hours*

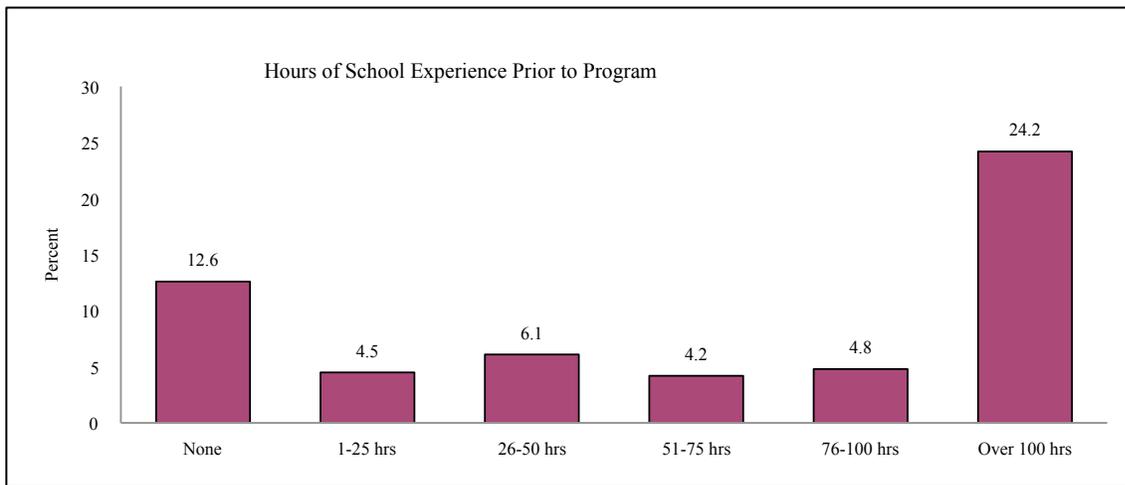


Figure 3

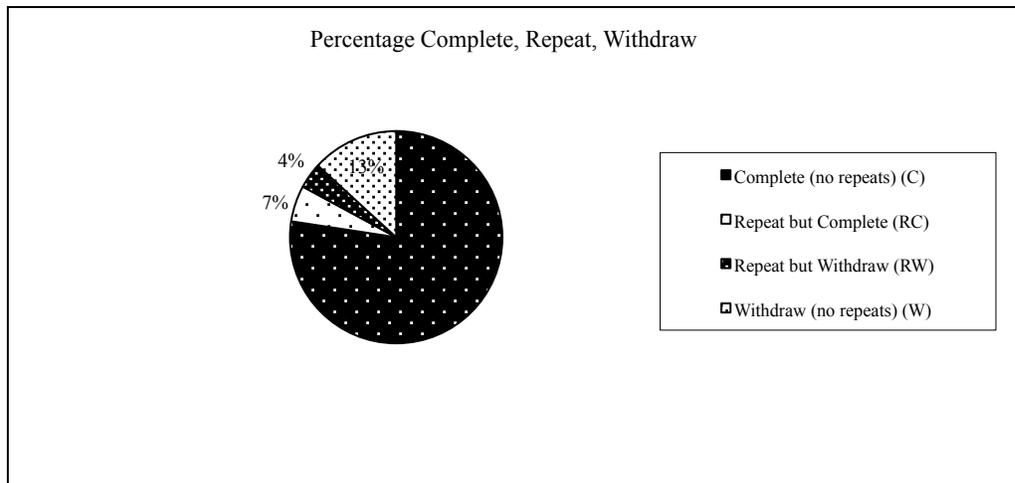
*Percentage of Complete/Repeat/Withdraw*

Table 2 lists the categories as identified through the thematic analysis of anecdotal reports of TCs who repeated and/or withdrew from the program, with total frequencies and percentages. Of all coded items, Classroom Management and Planning appear most often, 16.5 and 19%, respectively. Instructional skills such as pacing and learning strategies are the next most cited skill requiring improvement (14%). Combined, specific skills (Classroom Management, Planning, Instruction, Assessment) account for 54% of all concerns. Grouped as different types of communication skills, Relating to Students, Difficulties with English Language, and Conflict with Mentor account for 13% of concerns. Of particular interest are the more “soft” skills or dispositions. Confidence and Enthusiasm, which also includes motivation and self-awareness, is a significant component of TC difficulty or failure in the field experience (11%). Professionalism, which includes seeking and incorporating mentor advice, appropriate dress, and punctuality, is the next most frequently reported area of concern cited in the practica reports (8.5%). Also of note are the Medical and Personal/Family categories, combined to equal

8.5%. This is important because these two categories, or reasons for repeating and/or withdrawing, cannot be predicted during the admission process.

Table 2

*Areas of Difficulty from TC Practica Reports*

Theme/Code	Tally	Percent
Planning	38	19
Classroom Management	33	16.5
Instructional Skills	28	14
Lack Confidence/Motivation/Enthusiasm	22	11
Professionalism	17	8.5
Medical	11	5.5
Relating to Students	10	5
Assessment	9	4.5
Difficulty with English Language	8	4
Conflict with Teacher or Faculty Mentor	8	4
Personal/Family	5	3
Total	200	100

### **Inferential Statistics**

**Correlational data.** There were a number of significant relationships between the different TC groups and non-scored intake data points (Table 3). There was a statistically significant relationship between Gender and all TC groupings, regardless of how we combined the groups ( $p$ -value ranging from .012 to .002). Age was also strongly related, regardless of group combinations ( $p = .052, .000, .004$ ), for All Groups, Able and Other groupings, and Complete and Withdraw groupings, respectively. Special Status (SPS) was significant when all groups were separated (C, RC, RW, W) ( $p = .000$ ) and grouped Able - Others ( $p = .004$ ). First Nations status (FN) was statistically significant when all groups were separated ( $p = .000$ ). Subject Major was significant, but only when the groupings were separated - C, RC, RW, W - ( $p$

Table 3

*Correlations - Groups by Intake and Demographic Data Points*

	All Groups (C, RC, RW, W)	Able (C), Others (RC, RW, W)	Complete (C, RC), Withdraw (RW, W)
Value (n)			
sign			
GPA <sup>a</sup>	-.006 (290) .905	.003 (290) .955	-.032 (290) .509
Letter of Intent <sup>a</sup>	.008 (284) .864	.038 (284) .445	-.002 (284) .974
Spontaneous Writing <sup>a</sup>	-.025 (270) .614	-.001 (270) .987	-.027(270) .605
Interview <sup>a</sup>	.005 (268) .923	.051 (268) .312	-.008 (268) .873
Subject Major <sup>b</sup>	.301 (295) .030*	.186 (295) .070	.151 (295) .240
School Experience <sup>a</sup>	.273 (175) .600	-.167 (175) .429	-.185 (175) .309
Gender <sup>b</sup>	.189 (310) .012**	-.172 (310) .002**	-.188 (310) .001 **
Age <sup>a</sup>	.096 (280) .052	-.231 (280) .000***	-.154 (280) .002**
First Nations status (FN) <sup>b</sup>	.243 (310) .000***	-.096 (310) .090	-.057 (310) .313
Special Status (SPS) <sup>b</sup>	.271 (265) .000***	-.175 (265) .004**	-.089 (265) .188

<sup>a</sup> Values calculated with Kendall's tau. <sup>b</sup> Values represent Phi coefficient. <sup>c</sup>

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$

= .030) Note that none of the scored intake measures (GPA, Letter of Intent, Spontaneous Writing, or Interview) were related to the various TC groupings.

**Between group differences.** Based on the significant relationships which were identified in the correlation analysis, we then examined the crosstab tables to determine which groups were responsible for the effects. We begin with the variable with the strongest relationship to groupings, Gender, followed by the next strongest variable, Age, then Special Status (SPS), First Nations (FN) status, and Subject Major. For each of these variables, we note the differences based on how we grouped the TCs.

It is clear that there are a significant number of male TCs who withdraw from our program, as evident by the adjusted residual numbers (Table 4). When all groups are separated, the frequency of Male TCs who withdraw without repeating practica (W) is well above the expected frequency ( $z = 2.9$ ), compared to those who had no difficulty (C), and those who repeated practica (RC and RW) ( $\chi^2(3) = 11.021$ ,  $p = .012$ ). Similarly, when grouped as Able vs all Others (Oth), males are over represented ( $z = 3.0$ ) ( $\chi^2(1) = 9.176$ ,  $p = .002$ ), as well as when grouped as Completers (Comp) versus those who withdraw (WD) (some of who may have repeated practica) ( $z = 3.3$ ) ( $\chi^2(1) = 10.916$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

Table 4

*Crosstabulations - Gender*

Group		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
C	Count	205	35	240
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>2.9</b>	<b>-2.9</b>	
RC	Count	14	3	17
	Adj. Std. Residual	.0	.0	
RW	Count	8	4	12
	Adj. Std. Residual	-1.4	1.4	

W	Count	27	14	41
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	
Able	Count	206	35	241
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>3.0</b>	<b>-3.0</b>	
Oth	Count	48	21	69
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	
Comp	Count	219	38	257
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>3.3</b>	<b>-3.3</b>	
WD	Count	35	18	53
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-3.3</b>	<b>3.3</b>	

*Note.* Bold type indicates z score is statistically significant.

Regardless of the TC groupings, there were significant differences between age ranges, generally indicating unexpectedly higher incidence of older TCs who have some difficulty in the B.Ed. program. For example, when comparing those who either had difficulty in the field experience and/or withdrew from the program (Oth) to those TCs who completed with no difficulty (Able), there was a significant over representation of Other TCs in the 35-39 and 45+ age ranges, and a significant under representation of those in the 25-29 range (table not included). Overall significance exceeded .001 level,  $\chi^2(5) = 33.242$ ,  $p = .000$ . In most cases, the younger age categories (21-24, 25-29) were under represented in the groups which experienced some sort of difficulty and/or withdrew, and an over representation in the older age groups ( $\chi^2(15) = 54.562$ ,  $p = .000$  for the C, RC, RW, W group;  $\chi^2(5) = 25.074$ ,  $p = .000$  for the WD and Comp groups). Because the trend was evident, but the residuals were not always statistically significant, we further collapsed the age groups, first into three ranges (21-19, 30-39, and 40+) (Table 5), and then into just two categories (21-19, and 30+) (table not included). With three age ranges, there was a similar pattern of overrepresentation of older age ranges in the W, Oth and WD categories, with  $p < .000$ .

Table 5

*Crosstabulation Table - Compressed Age Ranges*

Group		Age Range			Total
		20-29	30-39	40+	
C	Count	186	35	17	239
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>5.5</b>	<b>-3.5</b>	<b>-4.0</b>	
RC	Count	7	6	4	17
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-2.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>	
RW	Count	5	3	4	12
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-2.3</b>	1.9	1.8	
W	Count	7	9	5	21
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-4.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>	
Able	Count	186	35	18	239
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>5.5</b>	<b>-3.6</b>	<b>-3.5</b>	
Oth	Count	19	18	12	49
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-5.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.5</b>	
Comp	Count	193	41	21	255
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>4.7</b>	<b>-2.8</b>	<b>-3.4</b>	
WD	Count	12	11	9	32
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-4.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.4</b>	

*Note.* Bold type indicates z score is statistically significant.

The pattern of impact of Special Status (SPS) (i.e. individuals with a disability or from a minority group) on group yielded unexpected results (Table 6). There were no TCs with SPS who withdrew from the program (W) who had not repeated one of the practica; however, of the eight TCs with SPS, 50% did have difficulty with the student teaching experience (RC and RW) ( $z = 4.0$  and  $1.8$ , respectively;  $\chi^2(3) = 19.401$ ,  $p = .000$ ). TCs who self-identify as being of First Nations ancestry are also disproportionately represented in the RC and RW groups ( $z = 2.5$  and  $3.3$ , respectively;  $\chi^2(3) = 18.344$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Table 6

*Crosstabulation Table - Special Status and First Nations Status*

Group		SPS			FN		
		No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
C	Count	236	4	240	232	8	240
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>4.0</b>	<b>-4.0</b>		<b>2.3</b>	<b>-2.3</b>	
RC	Count	12	3	15	14	3	17
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-4.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>		<b>-2.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>	
RW	Count	6	1	7	9	3	12
	Adj. Std. Residual	-1.8	1.8		<b>-3.3</b>	<b>3.3</b>	
W	Count	3	0	3	40	1	41
	Adj. Std. Residual	.3	-.3		.8	-.8	
Able	Count	236	5	241	232	9	241
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>2.8</b>	<b>-2.8</b>		1.7	-1.7	
Oth	Count	21	3	24	63	6	69
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-2.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>		-1.7	1.7	
Comp	Count	248	7	255	246	11	257
	Adj. Std. Residual	1.3	-1.3		1.0	-1.0	
WD	Count	8	1	9	49	4	53
	Adj. Std. Residual	-1.3	1.3		-1.0	1.0	

*Note.* Bold type indicates z score is statistically significant.

Last, we examined the differences according to Subject Major. TCs with Fine Arts major (FA) had an unexpectedly high incidence of repeating practica, and then successfully completing the program, while Language Arts (LA) majors were significantly under represented, ( $\chi^2(15) = 26.805, p = .030$ ). Note, however, that in some cases the expected cell count did not meet the minimum number of five.

Table 7

*Crosstabulation Table - Subject Major*

Group		Subject Major						Total
		LA	SS	SC	FA	PE	OTH	
C	Count	61	124	22	16	13	3	239
	Adj. Std. Residual	.9	.5	.1	<b>-2.7</b>	1.2	-1.2	
RC	Count	0	12	0	5	0	0	17
	Adj. Std. Residual	<b>-2.4</b>	1.6	-1.3	<b>3.1</b>	-.9	-.6	
RW	Count	2	5	2	2	0	1	12
	Adj. Std. Residual	-.6	-.7	.9	1.0	-.8	1.8	
W	Count	9	10	3	3	1	1	27
	Adj. Std. Residual	1.1	-1.5	.4	.4	-.3	.8	
Able	Count	61	125	22	16	13	3	240
	Adj. Std. Residual	.8	.6	0	<b>-2.7</b>	1.1	-1.2	
Oth	Count	11	26	5	10	1	2	55
	Adj. Std. Residual	-.8	-.6	0	<b>2.7</b>	-1.1	1.2	
Comp	Count	61	136	22	21	13	3	256
	Adj. Std. Residual	-.6	1.7	-.9	-.9	.7	-1.8	
WD	Count	11	15	5	5	1	2	39
	Adj. Std. Residual	.6	-1.7	.9	.9	-.7	1.8	

*Note.* Bold type indicates z score is statistically significant.

To summarize the group comparison tests, Gender, Age, Special Status and First Nations status, and Subject Major were significant variables associated with individuals who repeat practica and/or withdraw from the program. Male TCs are more at-risk to repeat and/or withdraw, as are individuals in the 30+ age ranges. TCs who have a learning disability or some other Special Status (SPS) are also a very high-risk group with over half experiencing some type of challenge (personal, professional, contextual), although the majority of these individuals do eventually complete the program. TCs of Aboriginal ancestry are over represented in the repeat practica groups (RC and RW), but overall there is no greater incidence of withdraw among FN TCs than

any Lastly, Subject Major has an impact on student teaching. Fine Arts majors are more likely than all others to repeat practica and eventually complete the program, than those with other subject specialties

### **Discussion**

Based on the tests of comparison, it is clear there are certain attributes that are associated with repeating practicum and/or withdrawing from the teacher education program at Thompson Rivers University. TCs in the older age categories and males appear to be most at risk, similar to findings of Harwood et al. (2000) and Kosnik, Brown, and Beck (2005), among others. There may be several explanations for this. First, it is possible that older individuals who enter the B.Ed. program rely on their own educational experiences as reference points. These experiences may be dated, stemming from paradigms that do not match current principles or theories of learning and teaching. Sudzina and Knowles (1993) note that older TCs bring with them ingrained patterns of communication and attitudes which can be resistant to change. Also, older TCs may have children or be caring for aging parents. These demands could create time and energy constraints, thus compromising performance in the program. Further, given the potential for increased responsibilities in the home, older TCs may need to work part time to meet financial obligations.

Like most elementary teacher education programs, we struggle to increase the proportion of males in our student body. This is particularly worrisome given that male TCs are far more likely to withdraw, even without repeating practica. It may be that they sense a mismatch between expectation and reality once they have begun the program. Perhaps some are challenged by working in a female-dominated profession, or they may be changing careers and, therefore, not be as familiar or comfortable with the education system. The latter seems less likely, since all applicants are required to have 100 hours of experience with school-aged children, and our

analysis has indicated that school experience does not have an impact on repeating or withdrawing from the program. We did not examine the impact of age on male TCs and performance in our program, though in future we could explore this possibility.

As with male applicants, our program strives to attract more students from the Sciences and Fine Arts areas. Given the under-representation of Fine Arts majors in our program, it is troubling to know that they are at risk for failure during their field experience. A possible explanation may be that elementary school curricula focuses primarily on language arts and social studies. Students with undergraduate university courses in other areas, such as Fine Arts, may have fewer opportunities within an elementary school classroom to demonstrate their strengths. In addition, this discipline may be less compatible with current classroom structures. The fact that they persist to completion is encouraging however. It will be worth exploring in future research, why some subject majors have more difficulty than others.

Special Status TCs with learning disabilities undoubtedly struggle in both course and fieldwork, particularly if they are weak in oral or written expression. It may be that these disabilities are too significant to overcome or to compensate for during the rigors of the B.Ed. program, thus increasing the risk of withdrawal. Given that our university intends to be an institution of choice for First Nations students, it is concerning that so many struggle in our program. At an institutional level we continue to develop support mechanisms to increase retention and success of students of Aboriginal ancestry.

Analysis of the anecdotal data further illuminate attributes of TCs who repeat practicum or withdraw from the program. Three specific skills are identified as particularly problematic: Classroom Management, Planning, and Instructional Skills. These skills are fundamental to effective teaching. Previous studies have found that TCs who major in Science or Fine Arts are

more likely to experience difficulties with Classroom Management and Planning (Calder Stegemann , 2011); therefore these subject major groups are of particular concern. Anecdotal data also reveals that TC dispositions, such as professionalism or confidence, are other areas of frequent concern during the practicum, which has been reported by others (Rickman & Hollowell, 1981; Sudzina & Knowles, 1993). There appear to be other factors which are not related to skills or dispositions, but which may interfere with performance during the field experience. For example, a number of TCs who repeat or withdraw from the program cite medical issues or personal and family challenges, which cannot be predicted in the admission process (Harwood et al., 2000). It is possible that male or SPS TCs have such challenges, which would further explain their particular repeat or withdraw status.

### **Summary**

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, TCs who repeat practicum and/or withdraw from the TRU B.Ed. program share a number of characteristics, some of which may be identified during the intake process. Males and older applicants are particularly at risk, as are TCs with Special Status and First Nations status. Fine Arts majors are also at-risk, though most who have difficulty during student teaching, do ultimately complete the program. Planning and Classroom Management are key skills which are most frequently identified as problem areas during student teaching. Aside from skills, however, personal and professional dispositions also account for a large percentage of TC difficulty. Last, there appears to be a group of students who withdraw because of personal/family or medical reasons, not specifically attributable to skills or dispositions.

Three questions now remain. This first is how we encourage diversity in our TC population, and the wider teaching profession, while acknowledging the challenges that some

minority groups face. It would appear that many of the TCs who struggle or withdraw from the program are the very ones who would add rich diversity to our program. This will become the focus of our next examination. The second question relates to ways that we can identify and support skill development for those TCs who struggle with Planning and Classroom Management. Rinaldo and colleagues (Rinaldo, Denig, Sheeran, Vermette, & Smith, 2009; Rinaldo & Slepko, 2012) have developed a system of accountability where TCs sign a contract agreeing to the program expectations of skills and dispositions. Then, every term, each TC is evaluated by the education faculty to ensure that the expectations are being met. If a TC is experiencing difficulty with skills or dispositions, a remediation plan is implemented. The advantage of this type of monitoring is that problems can be resolved early in the program. Our program is now attempting to develop such a tracking system. The third question relates to how we can better screen those individuals for strong communication skills and appropriate dispositions (particularly related to motivation and conflict resolution). We may be able to tap these by refining our current interview process, which is a future project which we will be undertaking in the coming academic year.

### **Limitations**

There are limitations to this study which should be noted. There are two groups of individuals who withdraw from the program – those who experience difficulties with the program, courses, etc., and those who have personal reasons. In this study, we have not separated the group, thus potentially impacting the validity and reliability of the findings. We have also not tracked the point in the program when individuals withdraw which may prove useful. A larger sample of each sub-group would be necessary to further tease out differences. The sample size is also an issue for the other groups which we compared – those who completed without repeating and those who

completed but did repeat. Further, while we have taken steps to heighten reliability of the various measures through training and established rubrics, these evaluations still include subjectivity.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper has been to identify characteristics of Teacher Candidates who experience difficulty during the field experience component of the B. Ed. program and/or withdraw from the program. A number of attributes or variables appear to be associated with TC failure. These findings have implications for both admission procedures and program support. Future examinations will explore ways to attract and support minority students in order to diversify our student body. As well, we will be pursuing monitoring systems to more quickly identify, remediate, and monitor skill and dispositional challenges faced by TCs. Last, we will further refine our intake interview process to tap the communication skills and dispositions which are required for successful teaching. By examining and refining our admission process, we can more effectively screen applications and select only the most appropriate individuals for the program. We can then carefully monitor and enact support measures for those TCs who are most at risk of failure or withdrawal.

### **References**

- Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2008). How changes in entry requirements alter the teacher workforce and affect student achievement. *Education Finance and Policy, 1*(2), 176-216.
- Byrnes, D.A., Kiger, G., & Shechtman, Z. (2003). Evaluating the use of group interviews to select students into teacher-education programs. *Journal of Teacher Education, 54*(2), 163-172.

- Calder, K. J. (2010, May) *Predicting Practicum Success – Identifying Variables Which Contribute to Performance on the Extended Practicum*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CATE), Montreal, Que.
- Calder Stegemann, K. J. (2011, May) *Predicting Practicum Success – Identifying Variables Which Contribute to Performance on the Extended Practicum: A Continued Analysis*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CATE), Fredericton, NB.
- Casey, C.E., & Childs, R.A. (2007). Teacher education program admission criteria and what beginning teachers need to know to be successful teachers. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 67, 1-24.
- Caskey, M., Peterson, K., & Temple, J. (2001). Complex admissions selection procedures for graduate pre-service teacher education program. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 28(4), 7-21.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Baratz-Snowden, J. (2007). A good teacher in every classroom: Preparing the highly qualified teachers our children deserve. *Educational Horizons*, 85(2), 111-132.
- Haberman, M. (1987). Recruiting and selecting teachers for urban schools ED 292 942
- Harwood, Z. M., Collins, L., and Sudzina, M. (2000, April). *Learning from student-teacher failure: implications for program design*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, LA: New Orleans.
- Kosnik, C., Brown, R., & Beck, C. (2005). The pre-service admissions process: what qualities do you care teachers need and how can they be identified and applicants? *New Educator*, 1(2), 101-123.

- Lawrence, A., & Crehan, K. D. (2001, April). *A study on the validity evidence of the Pre-professional Skills Test (PPST) as a screening device for entrance into teacher education programs*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education, Seattle, WA.
- Lemke, J.C., & Harrison, S. (2001, March). "But I have a right to become a teacher!" In *Growing Partnerships for Rural Special Education*. Conference proceedings (160 – 164). CA: San Diego.
- Mikitovics, A., & Crehan, K.D. (2002). Pre-professional Skills Test As College of Education Admission Criteria. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 95, 215-223.
- Rickman, L. W., & Hollowell, J. ( 1981). Some cases of student-teacher failure. *Improving College and University Teaching*, 29(4), 176 – 179.
- Riggs, I.M., & Riggs, M.L. (1990-91). Predictors of student success in a teacher education program: what is valid, or what is not. *Action in Teacher Education*, 12(4), 41 – 46.
- Rinaldo, V., Denig, S., Sheeran, T., Vermette, P., & Smith, R.M. (2009). Validity and reliability assessing teacher candidate dispositions towards teaching. *Teacher Education and Practice*, 22(2), 165 -- 179.
- Rinaldo, V., & Slepko, H. (2012, May). Measuring teacher dispositional performance in a three-semester program. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education. Waterloo, Ont.
- Salzman, S. (1991, Feb.). *Selecting the qualified: predictors of student teacher performance*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators, New Orleans, LA.

Sudzina, M.R., & Knowles, J.G. (1993). Personal, professional and contextual circumstances of student teachers who “Fail”: setting a course for understanding failure in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(45), 254-262.