

**THE GOOD TEACHER: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CORE-COMPETENCIES
AND ATTRIBUTES OF AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATOR.**

By

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A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements For the degree of Master of Teaching Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge and thank, first and foremost, my mother and father for putting up with me all these years. Your eternal generosity and everlasting faith in me is the reason I am where I am today. Secondly, I would like to thank my three older siblings Michael, Rosemary, and Jennifer. All three of you becoming teachers has played a huge role in inspiring me to pursue a career in the field of education. Plus mom always said that I would make the “best” teacher.

I would like to also thank my research supervisor Rob Simon and my colleague Michele Ferraro for editing my work.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge and thank the most important person in my life, my fiancé Anna. Together “we can do anything!”

Abstract

Research studies show that effective teachers, those who are able to maintain and consistently improve the learning of their students, possess a set of core-competencies and attributes. These core-competencies and attributes are what make them effective educators, and it is imperative that teachers demonstrate these core-competencies and attributes in the classroom from the onset of their educational careers. Understanding what these core-competencies and attributes are is vital in order to structure approaches to obtain them and to determine whether or not an educator possesses the knowledge and traits of an effective teacher. This study aims to identify the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator. A secondary focus of this study is to isolate some of the issues facing teacher education programs that may impede teacher candidates from acquiring the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator. For this study I interviewed two teachers who exhibited many of the core-competencies and attributes outlined by the literature. Findings suggest that effective educators often reflect on their practice and experiences, making them the ideal candidates for participating in this study.

Keywords: Good teaching practices, effective teaching, effective educator, core teacher competencies, teacher attributes, good teachers, successful teachers, successful educators.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction to the Research Study

Every year thousands of students enter teacher education programs across North America with the hopes of acquiring the competencies needed to succeed as future practitioners. Approaches to teacher education vary from university to university, program to program, but the general goal amongst the institutions remains the same - to develop competent and effective educators. When new graduates enter the teaching profession they are expected to both understand and possess the core-competencies and attributes that make for an effective educator, however, there are many educators entering the profession who do not possess such knowledge and traits. Many students are graduating from teacher education programs ill prepared to assume the role of full-time teacher (Darling-Hammond and Joan Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Therefore, somewhere along the journey of teacher education some students may have failed to identify and obtain the competencies and attributes of an effective educator. Teacher education programs have been criticized for the issues present in their programs such as, practicum placements being too brief, irrelevant activities during course work, and the lack of variety in educational settings during placement, just to name a few (Levine, 2006).

This raises some important questions when thinking about the effective educator, 1) What are the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator? 2) What are some of the issues facing teacher education programs? 3) How might they impede their ability to develop the core competencies and attributes of an effective educator? This research study attempts to address these questions with the belief in mind that preparing competent and effective teachers is the

most important initiative in the field of education, because an effective teacher equals an effective education.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to isolate the core-competencies and attributes of an effective teacher, as well as identify some of the major issues facing teacher education programs on their quest to develop the former. In order to achieve this, I will investigate the current literature on the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator, report the issues facing teacher education programs in their attempt to create such an educator, and report on interviews with practicing teachers regarding this matter.

1.3. Research Questions

The overarching questions guiding this study are as follows:

- What are the core competencies and attributes of an effective educator?
- What are some of the issues teacher education programs face when developing effective educators?

The sub-question influencing the research is:

- How do these core-competencies and attributes translate into effective practices in the classroom?

1.4. Overview

The first chapter of this paper presents an introduction to the research study, the purpose of the study, an outline of the main and sub research questions, an overview, and some background of what inspired me to choose this topic. The second chapter focuses on the current literature surrounding the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator, as well as related literature regarding some of the issues facing teacher education programs. The third chapter describes the methodology of the research study, detailing the gathering of data, the participants, and the interview structure. The fourth chapter details the findings from each research participant's interview. The fifth and final chapter discusses the possible significance of the findings, the limitations encountered, and future directions.

1.5. Background of The Researcher

I come from a family of educators. Two grandparents, an aunt and uncle, and my three older siblings are all teachers. Even with so many current and future educators around I was still one of the more challenging students in my class when I was growing up. I was often disengaged in the learning and found myself getting in trouble a lot when I was in school. The combination of having good parents, that were supportive and set high expectations for me, coming from a good family and encountering effective educators helped to set me on the right course in life. When it came time for me to decide which career path to take, I knew one thing, I wanted to become like the people who helped me growing up, and effect positive change in young people. I decided to become a teacher, but I didn't want to become just any teacher, I wanted to become a good teacher. I will never forget when I asked a seasoned teacher the question "do you feel that teacher's college properly prepared you for taking on your own classroom?" she responded "No! No way! In fact most teachers are not prepared to take over their own classrooms after teacher's

college, I learned by trial and error". This same seasoned teacher went on to say that in her opinion there are a lot of bad teachers in the profession. She attributed this to two things; the first was that people were possibly getting into the profession for the wrong reasons, and the second was that people were possibly not getting the right education in their respective teacher education programs. After speaking to this seasoned teacher, a few questions came to my mind. What makes a good teacher? What core-competencies and attributes do effective educators have? And what challenges are teacher education programs facing when attempting to create effective educators? My background and experiences have fuelled my desire to define and understand what makes a good teacher. It is the catalyst behind this research study.

My academic background is in the area of the humanities. I received my Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in history and history of religion from the University of Toronto, and I am currently pursuing my Masters of Teacher degree also at the University of Toronto.

1.6. Terms

For the purpose of this study the terms good teacher and effective educator are being used interchangeably to mean the same thing, which is a teacher who is able to maintain and consistently improve the learning of their students, thus has acquired the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. What Does the Good Teacher Look Like?

It must have been a bittersweet day on June 6th 2012 for the faculty and graduates of Occidental College in Los Angeles California, as they held their last new teacher graduation ceremony. The program was closing likely due to monetary reasons, and this would be the last time a notable figure would give new teacher graduates at OCLA advice before officially entering the profession. The importance of teachers, good teaching and teacher education, would be the topic of Associate Professor Lynn Melby Gordon's speech, as she gave the keynote address. The following excerpt has been taken from Gordon's (2012) speech entitled Good Teaching Matters, Teachers Matter, and Teacher Education Matters:

Teacher effectiveness studies show that:

- a) Highly effective teachers are smart. They have deep content area knowledge and excellent verbal skills (elaborate vocabularies). Together these seem to lead to lesson clarity.
- b) Highly effective teachers are well-prepared. They know about lesson design and plan well-structured daily lessons. They have effective time management skills, are masters of student motivation, and know to meet the needs of students with special needs, English learners, struggling readers, other students at risk, as well as high-achievers.
- c) Highly effective teachers possess certain positive background qualifications, sometimes called dispositions, personality attributes, or attitudes. They possess something called high teacher efficacy, a belief in their ability to cause change with students. More effective teachers are also caring, enthusiastic, energetic, have positive

attitudes, and high- expectations.

d) Highly effective teachers have excellent classroom management skills. Although all teachers encounter students with issues and discipline challenges, highly effective teachers know how to get the students on their side, earn their respect, and minimize disruptive behavior. Good classroom management is largely the *result* of the first three factors identified—being smart, well-prepared, and possessing those itemized positive dispositions/attitudes/expectations. (p. 2)

Other academics point to similar traits when defining the effective educator. The master teacher, one who has acquired the competencies and attributes required to succeed as an educator, has been described as being a person who can communicate and develop relationships with children, who understands how to teach the curriculum while also teaching to the child, and who genuinely loves the process of learning, and enjoys sharing their passion for teaching (Harding, 2011). It has been said that the effective teacher has a variety of instructional strategies to refer to when teaching students, as well as, the knowledge of how to properly assess student learning. Good teachers are able to identify the crucial learning goals and are able to set success criteria that demonstrates the obtainment of such learning goals. They are well informed when it comes to teaching resources, and have experience in accessing and utilizing such resources (Harding, 2011). Furthermore, on the topic of the competencies of good teachers Kelly Harding (2011) has said:

They learn a variety of pedagogical practices to engage learners. They know how to mediate, negotiate, and invite students to actively participate in their own learning. They hone their philosophies of teaching, come to value formative assessment, and learn to

make research informed interventions. They understand the importance of relationships, collaboration, community, and the influence they can have with the children they teach. They learn that content is merely a vehicle; knowing how to learn and how to think critically are essential outcomes of education (p. 52).

There is a great deal of literature that corroborates Harding's points in the above excerpt. Generally speaking, research suggests that successful teachers exhibit knowledge of pedagogical practices or techniques, they get to know their students both on a personal and academic level, that are continuously monitoring and evaluating their students learning and progress, they are involved in the school community, reflect a healthy relationship with society, they are greatly familiar with curriculum and subject content, they practice and exhibit the behaviors and skills that they teach to their students such as collaboration, problem solving, and communication (Zhu, 2013). Furthermore, successful teachers often exhibit an understanding of the social and cultural contexts of the schools they teach in, they demonstrate emotional competency, such as being empathetic and understanding, and are therefore in tune with their students needs, moods and circumstances, they are typically life-long learners and are continually familiarizing themselves with new technologies that can enhance their lessons (Zhu, 2013).

Effective educators are aware of cultural and ethnic diversity, and are able to adjust their teaching methods and approaches to meet the needs of a diverse student population. They are constantly striving towards equity among their students, and are able to teach for both at risk students and the high achievers. They understand that it is their duty to help students make meaning of things, recognizing that each students meaning is attached to their socio-cultural experience. They are aware that it is their job to facilitate learning, rather than give the answer, they teach students how to find the answer and will then extend their lesson in order to achieve

deeper learning. They recognize the importance of teaching skills that will assist students in everyday tasks, helping to ready students to one day navigate life successfully as an independents. They also have a strong sense of both personal and professional ethics, and are able to successfully collaborate with others to improve the learning of students (Collins, 2004).

Furthermore, scholar Robert J. Walker (2008) in his study on the 12 characteristics of an effective educator recorded the statements of students who described their favorite teachers as the following:

- “She was always prepared.” (p. 63)
- “He was very positive.” (p. 63)
- “She had high expectations for me!” (p. 63)
- “She was the most creative teacher I have ever had!” (p. 63)
- “He was so fair!” (p. 63)
- “I liked her personal touch!” (p. 63)
- “I felt that I was a part of the class.” (p. 63)
- “She showed me compassion when my mother died.” (p. 63)
- “He was so funny!”... “She taught her class in a fun way.” (p. 63)
- “I was never bored in his class.” (p. 63)
- “He gave all the students respect and never embarrassed me in front of the class.” (p. 63)
- “She did not hold what I did against me!” (p. 63)
- “He was the first teacher I had who admitted that he had made a mistake” (p. 64)
- “She apologized to me” (p. 64)

Walker (2008) then took these comments, along with other data such as essays and in class discussions from college students majoring in education, and isolated 12 characteristics of an effective educator, which are that teachers come to class having prepared lessons and materials, they exhibit positive attitudes, maintain high expectations for their students, are creative in their development and or delivery of lessons, they practice equity in their classrooms and the greater school community, they find ways to put their own personal spin on lessons, they practice inclusion strategies, they are compassionate towards their students, they are seen as having a sense of humor, they are respectful towards their students, they are able and willing to practice forgiveness, and they admit when they have made a mistake.

Lastly, Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2003) describes the importance for teachers, in order to be effective educators in today's diverse classrooms, to be both culturally competent and demonstrate an understanding of social equity. When speaking of multicultural education Cochran-Smith (2003) argues that "...placing knowledge about culture and racism front and center, including teaching for social justice as a major outcome" is a vital part of today's teacher education programs. (p. 20)

After reviewing the literature, there seems to be consensus around the qualities of an effective educator, however, teacher education programs face some tough challenges in their attempt to support the learning of such educators. The next section of this paper explores some of these issues in order to gain a better understanding of such challenges.

2.2. What are some of the challenges facing teacher education programs as they attempt to develop effective educators?

Most scholars would likely agree that the formulation of effective educators begins in teacher education programs. This is where future teachers learn the vital competencies required to succeed as practitioners in the classroom. Teacher education programs are commissioned with the complicated task of bridging theoretical and practical knowledge, and providing an education for their teacher candidates that will allow them to confidently take on their own classroom after graduation. It is in teacher education programs that students are exposed to knowledge and practices that will inform, develop and improve their own practice, a place where the information studied, as well as the activities and exercises should be relevant to developing good practices in the classroom. According to the research on the practices of teacher education programs, this is not always the case. The most common criticisms of teacher education programs surround the notion of practice and are mainly concentrated around the following issues as author Arthur Levine (2006) states:

“Inadequate Preparation: Many students seem to be graduating from teacher education programs without the skills and knowledge they need to be effective teachers. . . or to address the needs of students with disabilities (30 percent). A shockingly low percentage of principals said that their teachers were very or moderately well prepared to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (28 percent); to work with parents (21 percent); and to help students with limited English proficiency (16 percent).

A Curriculum in Disarray: Unlike law and medicine, in education there is no standard approach to preparing teachers.

Disconnected Faculty: While almost nine out of ten (88 percent) education school

professors have taught in a school at some point in their careers, alumni and students complain that too often the experiences of faculty members were not recent or long enough. . . In addition to being disconnected from schools, faculty members remain disconnected from the rest of the university because their research is considered lacking in academic rigor by their faculty peers.

Low Admissions Standards: Universities use their teacher education programs as “cash cows,” requiring them to generate revenue to fund more prestigious departments. This forces them to increase their enrollments and lower their admissions standards. Schools with low admissions standards also tend to have low graduation requirements.” (p. 3 & 4)

Frances O’Connell Rust in her piece “Shaping New Models for Teacher Education”, cites other critiques of teacher education that state:

- “• The activities engaged in by preservice teachers in college/university settings are rarely relevant to their subsequent professional practice
- Student teaching placements are often too brief
- Sites are chosen to accommodate faculty and students’ comforts rather than to challenge tacit images of good schools and good teaching
- In fieldwork, there is often little supervision; it is often of poor quality; and it is rarely in genuine synchrony with the teacher education program
- In high needs urban schools, teachers from alternative certification programs have higher retention rates than either conditionally- or regularly-certified teachers for each of their first five years of teaching” (p. 7)

The above points are examples of some of the challenges and criticisms facing teacher education programs in their attempts to develop effective educators. To be fair to teacher education programs, however, many of these issues are large-scale systemic issues facing the field of education as a whole, with teacher education programs not being the only and or sole cause. Currently Ontario elementary school teachers are often expected, and even at times required by their principal, to teach multiple subjects rather than one single subject. This means that teacher education programs, in order to prepare teacher candidates for the realities of employment, must educate teacher candidates in a variety of subjects such as math, science, music, art, and physical education, along with their teachable subject. The realities of the practice in schools, places pressures on teacher education programs to operate in such a way to meet the demands of the school boards. In summing up this issue, teacher education practices often reflect the current practices of school boards and schools, and not always the other way around. Regardless, recently there has been much effort made by teacher education programs to address some of the issues described by Levine and O'Connell Rust, as teacher education programs recognize the negative impact that these issues have, and attempt to develop both short and long-term goals to rectify the problems. For example, teacher education programs in the province of Ontario will, as of September 2015, require students to complete 2 years of teacher education, resulting in more class time in university, and time spent in practicum. This does not however address the issue of program practices being relevant to subsequent professional practices or, for example, the reality that teacher candidates are not overwhelmingly being placed in challenging educational settings (O'Connell Rust, 2010). All of this contributes to one overarching issue which is summed up in an excerpt from The National Academy of Education Committee on Teacher Education edited by Linda Darling-Hammond and Joan Baratz-Snowden (2007), which

states: "...too many of those who have gone through a teacher education program have not received rigorous education in some of the essential knowledge and clinical training that would prepare them for success in the classroom" (p. 111).

As Goodman (2008) notes, another prominent issue facing teacher education programs is the fact that there is very little presence of teacher educators of color. Since these educators are the people teaching future teachers, concerns arise when there is little perspective from educators of color present in teacher education programs. Furthermore, since an understanding of cultural diversity plays such a large role in creating effective educators in today's schools, it is important that future teachers are learning from a culturally diverse population of educators who can speak from experience on the issues facing minorities in the educational system. A. Lin Goodwin (2008) reports on this issue:

Demographic data reveal that the percentage of teacher educators of color is equally as dismal as the percentage of teachers of color. The teacher education professoriate is dominated by European American men and women, specifically, 88% are White and 81% of these are between 45 and 60 years old (p. 8).

Goodwin (2008) also points to the fact that many of these European American teachers likely do not have any first hand experiences teaching students of color, especially in inner-city schools (Goodwin, 2008, p. 8). Teacher education programs often espouse the idea that teacher candidates should be connected to real classroom experiences, often granted through their time spent in practicum or via their coursework/professors experiences. Yet as a result of the lack of minority teacher educators, there is a possibility that teacher education programs are disconnected from the experiences of ethnically and racially diverse teachers and students.

There are many challenges facing teaching education programs in their attempt to develop effective educators. After reviewing the literature on prominent issues facing teacher education programs in their quest to develop effective teachers, the following issues rise to the surface:

- Practicum lengths are too short (O'Connell Rust, 2010)
- Students are often placed in non-challenging schools (O'Connell Rust, 2010)
- Little and or poor supervision during practicum placements (O'Connell Rust, 2010)
- The activities that teacher candidates participate in during their time spent in the university are often not relevant to actual practice as an educator in a school. (O'Connell Rust, 2010)
- In high needs schools (often recognized as more challenging teaching environments) there are higher retention rates among non-certified educators than certified teachers. (O'Connell Rust, 2010)
- No standard curriculum (Levine, 2006)
- The faculty is often too removed from recent in class experiences (Levine, 2006)
- Low admission standards (Levine, 2006)
- There is a lack of a culturally diverse faculty (Goodwin, 2004)

Teacher candidates attend their respective programs in the hopes of becoming effective educators, however they along with the program faculty are faced with a variety of challenges during this quest. These challenges are multifaceted and have an array of factors influencing them such as political, logistical, economic, and cultural, just to name a few. This study explores

some of the issues but does not delve into the political or economic influences. The reported issues however, according to the literature, are some of the common challenges facing teacher education programs, but it should be stated that not all of these issues exist at every teacher education program, and that these issues are evolving, as many teacher education programs may recognize these challenges and seek ways to rectify them in order to improve the education of future teachers.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Procedure

This research study was conducted in accordance with the standards outlined by the Master of Teaching program at the University of Toronto. This research study was established for the purposes of generating quality research on a topic related to the profession of teaching. In order to achieve this, students in the program were asked to interview active teachers with the hopes that their knowledge and experience will inform our research in a practical matter. The interviews conducted are the primary method of data collection for this study. The data was analyzed in order to find divergences and or convergences with the literature researched on the chosen topic.

3.2. Participants

Since the purpose of this study is to identify the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator, as well as to explore the challenges facing teacher education programs when developing effective educators, participants were chosen based on 3 major criteria. 1) The participant demonstrated many of the core-competencies and attributes that make for an effective educator as outline by the literature; 2) The participant was familiar with the practices of at least one teacher education program; 3) The participant has at least 5 years of experience as an educator and remembers their early days or months starting out as a teacher in the field.

3.3. Limitations

This project was meant to be a qualitative study involving 2 interview participants, which by default led to a small pool of data being collected. The interviewees chosen for this study are educators from the primary and junior/intermediate grade levels, a factor that may lead to a narrowing of the perspectives. As a result of the qualitative nature of this project, a fair amount of interpretation is required when approaching the data. I classify the participant responses into greater themes in the field of education. It should be stated that this interpretation is limited to

that of the researcher. There were no faculty members from teacher education programs interviewed for this study, therefore the perspectives of the interviewees are limited to that of active teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience in the junior/intermediate division.

3.4. Ethical Review Procedures

In accordance with the ethical review procedures outlines in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Education Studies each participant received a consent form prior to the interview. I found the participants for my study through networking at my practicum placement schools. Once interviewees had verbally agreed to participate in my study, I met with them again in person where they were asked to review and sign the consent form (See Appendix B). Before beginning the interview, participants were given a brief explanation regarding the topic and purpose of the study, as well as an explanation of the distinction between a competency and an attribute of an effective educator. The interviews were carried out at a time and place chosen by the participants. All interviews were computer audio recorded (as outlined in the consent form) so that the interviews could be later transcribed. The interviewees were informed that only my supervisor and myself would have knowledge of their identities, and that in the study their identities would remain anonymous. Lastly, interviewees were informed that the interviews was completely voluntary, that they could limit their responses or not answer any individual question, or stop the interview without consequence.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction and overview

The two participants chosen for this study come from very different backgrounds and educational experiences. The first participant Anne-Marie has been a special education teacher for 15 years primarily in high-needs low SES schools. Anne-Marie is Black and has mainly taught in schools where the student body is primarily of African descent. The second participant, Sophia, has been an educator for 27 years primarily teaching grades 4-7. Sophia is of white European descent and has typically taught at schools in middle to middle-upper class neighbourhoods, whereby the student body is primarily white. The two participants in this study were specifically chosen because of their differing experiences and because they exhibit qualities of an effective educator. In this section of the study the themes from the findings are summarized and then explained in further detail.

4.2. Definitions

In order to make sure the participants understood the nature of the questions being posed to them there needed to be a clarification of the definition of, and distinction between, competencies and attributes. Competencies were defined as the knowledge and skills that effective educators should have, while attributes were defined as the personal characteristics of an effective educator.

4.3. The Findings and Themes

When asked, “In your years of experience, what core competencies do you feel an effective educator should have?” Sophia responded,

I think all the competencies are important but the ones that I think are absolutely necessary are that teachers treat all pupils equitably and with respect. Teachers provide an environment for learning that encourages pupils to be problem solvers, decision makers, lifelong learners, and contributing members of a changing society. Teachers communicate effectively with pupils, parents, and colleagues. Teachers adapt and refine their teaching practices through continuous learning and reflection, using a variety of sources and resources. Teachers know a variety of effective classroom management strategies.

Sophia’s response highlights the core-competency themes of using problem solving approaches, adaptive teaching practices, reflective teaching practices, knowledge of teaching resources, and effective classroom management strategies. In regards to attributes, Sophia’s response emphasizes the themes of believing in equity, respect for students, believing in good citizenship, and being a strong communicator.

When asked the same question Anne Marie responded, “Effective communicator, relationship builder and accountable,” which she defined as follows:

Effective Communicators communicate lessons that are differentiated to students. They should also, communicate with colleagues, parents and other stakeholders, the vision of their classroom, the school, the board and their vision of the world for their students.

A relationship builder encourages colleagues to reflect on their practice and what they are trying to achieve with students and how they are doing it. They should also suggest new

ideas for staff learning. They should also be highly visible in the school. They should be role models, modelling responsibility, integrity and thoroughness in carrying out tasks.

Accountable, educators should be accountable by regularly engaging in analysis on data from, their class, their school, board and ministry for better student achievement. They should assess their own contributions to the school achievements and the school community, and take into account feedback from others on their performance.

In regards to core-competencies, from Anne-Marie's responses emerged the themes of using adaptive teaching practices, and having knowledge and understanding of assessment. When addressing attributes the themes that arose from Anne-Marie's response were having a collegial personality, contributing to the school community, commitment to modelling, responding well to feedback, and being a strong communicator.

When asked, "what attributes do you feel an effective educator should have?" Sophia responded,

The most important thing an educator needs is the ability to be flexible. It's also important to be a lifelong learner, not only to model for the students but to consistently strive to improve one's teaching practice, and to have a genuine love of children and joy for teaching. As well effective communication skills are necessary. Everything else can be learned but without these attributes a teacher cannot be successful.

Sophia's response highlights the attribute themes of being flexible, being a life-long learner, demonstrating a commitment to modeling, refining teaching practices, showing a genuine care for students, being a strong communicator, and having a love for teaching.

When asked the same question Anne-Marie responded,

Empathy, every parent sends you their best child, and understanding where each child and family are in their education I believe are important to moving a child along the educational continuum.

An educator who is optimistic is a believer that every child can achieve and become a productive citizen. This educator will also create effective lesson plans that will reach the learning needs of each child they teach, because they are optimistic about their future and the future of the society.

Educators who are problem solvers are resilient in meeting the needs and demands of the students, parents, stakeholder, administrators and even their colleagues.

In regards to core-competencies Anne-Marie's response highlights the theme of using problem solving approaches. Her responses also emphasize the personal attribute themes of being optimistic, demonstrating a genuine care for students, believing in good citizenship, and a belief in the goodness in society.

When asked, "By the time you had graduated from your teacher education program, did you feel you had acquired the core-competencies of an effective educator?" Sophia responded,

No. I think I had the attributes required because they led me to become a teacher in the first place, but in terms of what I was taught at university and what I needed to be an effective teacher I was not thoroughly prepared. Effective discipline strategies are crucial to being an effective teacher and I don't recall being taught any strategies. I was fortunate enough to be in the concurrent program and so I was able to be in a school teaching for

four months as part of my teacher education. This experience was invaluable and I learned a lot more there than I did at university. I did enjoy the subject classes at school, such as math and art, but the theory classes were useless because I did not have any practice until the university part was finished.

When addressing core-competencies Sophia's response focused on the theme of effective classroom management strategies. When addressing the issues facing teacher education programs Sophia's response focuses on the themes of inadequate preparation, inequality between university and practicum experience and the issue of irrelevant activities in teacher education programs.

When asked the same question Anne-Marie responded,

Yes, I had acquired these competencies, but were they fully developed that's the other question. The teacher I was in year one of my teaching, is not the teacher I am today. I have honed the competencies and I am better at them, however, there is still room to improve these competencies.

Anne-Marie's response focused on attributes and highlights the theme of being a life-long learner.

When asked, "What factors do you think contribute to a person acquiring these competencies and attributes?" Sophia responded,

I think the best way for a teacher candidate to acquire these practices is by being in a classroom. I think the teacher education program should be like an apprenticeship type program where the candidate is in a classroom for an entire year and has an opportunity to partner with a successful teacher and experience all parts of what being a teacher

means. It's difficult to learn to be a teacher from listening to an instructor talk – is that the type of learning we want our students to have? We encourage our students to take risks, try new things, experience failure and learn from it. Why don't we do the same for our teacher candidates?

Sophia's response to this question surrounded the notion of recommending ways to improve teacher education programs. She brought up the points of increasing the length of practicums, teacher candidates being partnered with effective educators, and the practices taught also being the practices followed.

When asked the same question Anne-Marie responded, "Experience, the more you practice them the better you become at doing them. Also, being a lifelong learner, and using feedback to improve." (Anne-Marie)

Anne-Marie's response highlights the attribute themes of being a life-long learner, and responding well to feedback.

When asked, "When you are mentoring a teacher candidate, what are your primary areas of focus?" Sophia responded,

My main focus is to allow the teacher candidate to feel free to try new things and to take risks. I usually look for areas that I feel need some improvement and I will work with the student on these things. I look for how the student connects with the children and the relationship he or she creates.

Sophia's response reflects the core-competency theme of understanding ways to connect with students.

When asked the same question Anne-Marie responded, “I like to focus on the mentioned core competencies and attributes. I think that the sooner a teacher candidate knows what competencies are important, the sooner they can begin to put them into practice.”

Anne-Marie’s response reflects all of the core-competencies and attribute theme related to her previous responses during the interview.

When asked, “How might teacher education programs improve in order to better foster the core-competencies and attributes that make up an effective educator?” Sophia responded, “As I mentioned earlier, I believe that teacher education programs need to include much more classroom practice. We learn from doing, not from listening to someone tell us how to do something.”

In relation to recommendations for improvement of teacher education programs, Sophia’s response highlight’s the theme of increasing the length of practicums.

When asked the same question Anne-Marie responded,

In my opinion I think the teacher education programs can improve and foster the core-competencies and attributes that make an effective educator, by giving them as much exposure to as many different educational settings such as marginalized communities, special education classes, parent centered schools, large ESL communities, affluent school communities, reintegration program classes and have them reflect on what they have learned.

In regards to core-competencies Anne-Marie’s response represents the theme of reflective teaching practices. When addressing ways to improve teacher education programs her response focuses on the theme of teacher candidates obtaining experience in different educational settings.

When asked, “What do you think is the best way to challenge teacher candidates in order to make them better, more effective teachers?” Sophia responded,

Teacher candidates need to have the opportunity to make mistakes in order to learn and grow, just like our students. PLCs are effective in schools and should be part of the teacher education program. Opportunities to try something, then talk and share, and then try it again is an effective instructional strategy.

Sophia’s response focuses on recommendations for improvement, and highlights the theme of professional learning communities.

When asked the same question Anne-Marie responded, “My opinion is this, seek experiences that are non-traditional. Reflect on your learning and experiences.”

Anne-Marie’s response addresses the core-competency theme of reflective teaching practices. Her response also suggests the recommendations for improvement theme of teacher candidates obtaining experience in different educational settings.

When asked, “Once a teacher is working full-time in the profession, how can he/she continue to improve on their competencies and attributes?” Sophia responded, “Mentorship are a great way to be connected to a more experienced teacher. PD is important, as is professional reading. Teachers need to set professional goals and to continue to try new things.” Sophia’s response highlights the attribute theme of being a life-long learner.

When asked the same question Anne-Marie responded, “Reflect, reflect and reflect some more on your practice.”

Anne-Marie's response highlights the core-competency theme of reflective teaching practices.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

5.1. Convergences Between the Literature and Participant Responses

The table below outlines the convergences between the literature review and the participant's responses.

Table 1	
The Literature Review	The Participant Responses
<p>Core-competencies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "...Know to meet the needs of students with special needs, English learners, struggling readers, other students at risk, as well as high-achievers" (Gordon, 2012, p. 2) 2. "...Excellent verbal skills (large vocabularies)" (Gordon, 2012, p. 2) 3. "...Excellent classroom management skills" (Gordon, 2012, p. 2) 4. "...Monitoring and evaluation of learning and development" (Zhu, 2013, p. 10) 5. "They know how to communicate and build relationships with children." (Hardin, 2011, p. 52) 6. "They learn a variety of pedagogical practices to engaging learners" (Harding, 2011, p. 52) 7. "They take advantage of resources..." (Harding, 2011, p. 52) 	<p>Core-competencies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Experience in different educational settings (Anne-Marie) 2. Strong communicator (Sophia, Anne-Marie) 3. Effective classroom management strategies (Sophia) 4. Knowledge and understanding of assessment (Anne-Marie) 5. Understanding ways to connect with students (Sophia) 6. Adaptive teaching practices (Sophia, Anne-Marie) 7. Knowledge of teaching resources (Sophia)

<p>Table 1 continued</p> <p>Attributes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "...A positive attitude" (Gordon, 2012, p. 2) 2. "Compassionate" (Walker, 2012, p. 66) 3. "...School-Family and Society Relationships" (Zhu, 2013, p. 10) 4. "...Lifelong learning competence" (Zhu, 2013, p. 10) 5. "They understand the importance of relationships, collaboration, community..." (Harding, 2011, p. 52) 6. "They love learning and share that love in their teaching" (Harding, 2011, p. 52) 7. "Fair" (Walker, 2008, p. 65) 8. "Respect students" (Walker, 2008, p. 66) <p>Issues Facing Teacher Education Programs in Their Attempt to Create Effective Educators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicum lengths are too short (O'Connell Rust, 2010) 2. Students are often placed in non-challenging schools (O'Connell Rust, 2010) 3. The activities that teacher candidates participate in during their time spent in the university are often not relevant to actual practice as an educator in a school. (O'Connell Rust, 2010) 	<p>Attributes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being optimistic (Anne-Marie) 2. Genuine care for students (Sophia, Anne-Marie) 3. Contributing to the school community (Anne-Marie) 4. Being a life-long learner (Sophia, Anne-Marie) 5. Collegial personality (Anne-Marie) 6. Having a love for teaching (Anne-Marie) 7. Believing in equity (Sophia) 8. Respect for students (Sophia) <p>Issues Facing Teacher Education Programs in Their Attempt to Create Effective Educators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing the length of practicums (Sophia) 2. Experience in different educational settings (Anne-Marie) 3. Irrelevant activities in teacher education programs (Sophia)
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5.2. Implications

After reviewing the literature and the findings one is able to see the convergences and gaps between the former and the latter. There are many correlations between the data obtained from the participants and the scholarly literature, which implies that many of the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator are both established and apparent amongst educators in the field. Likewise, one of the participants, Sophia, was able to identify many major themes found in the literature regarding the issues facing teacher education programs as they attempt to develop effective educators. This then begs the questions, how widespread are such issues in the current teacher educational system? And what sort of impact are such issues in teacher education programs having on the practice of educators in the classroom? When asked the question “By the time you had graduated from your teacher education program, did you feel you had acquired the core-competencies of an effective educator?” Sophia responded “No. I think I had the attributes required because they led me to become a teacher in the first place, but in terms of what I was taught at university and what I needed to be an effective teacher I was not thoroughly prepared.” This response could imply that there is an issue when it comes to teacher education programs developing effective educators. When asked the same question Anne-Marie responded “Yes, I had acquired these competencies, but were they fully developed that’s the other question.” Still there is an equal possibility that new teachers are entering the profession unprepared.

One alarming discovery is that the participants failed to identify some of the key core-competencies and attributes of effective educators stated in the literature such as, thorough content knowledge (Gordon, 2012), deep knowledge of lesson plan design (Gordon, 2012), the ability to manage one’s time effectively (Gordon, 2012), being an expert in student motivational

strategies (Gordon, 2012), knowledge and understanding of how to build an inclusive learning environment (Walker, 2008), setting high expectations for students (Gordon, 2012), believing in ones ability to effect change in one's students (Gordon, 2012), believing in teacher efficacy (Gordon, 2012), maintaining a sense of humour (Walker, 2008), practicing forgiveness with students (Walker, 2008). This could indicate many possibilities such as, the participants do not recognize these areas are being the most important, the participants simply forgot to mention such areas when being interviewed, there has not been a great focus on these areas in the participant's past or current professional practice/environment, or the participants may believe such areas are natural ways of being or assumed knowledge.

5.3. Recommendations

After completing this research study I have established the following recommendations for teacher education programs in regards to developing the core-competencies and attributes an of effective educator:

- Teacher education programs should explicitly communicate to their students the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator.
- Teacher education programs should consider expanding practicum lengths in order to increase the chance that teacher candidates will acquire the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator.
- Teacher education programs should consider standardizing their curricula, similar to law schools and med schools, in order to better ensure that the core-competencies and attributes are being developed.
- Teacher education programs should consider evaluating the quality of associate teachers in order to ensure that teacher candidates are partnered with effective educators.

- Teacher education programs should consider placing candidates in a variety of educational settings in order to broaden their understandings and help develop effective educators.
- Teacher education programs should also consider evaluating practicum supervisors in order to better ensure their practices are in line with the goals of the program, and developing effective educators.
- Teacher education programs should consider establishing a wide set of activities that are relevant to the actual practices in schools.
- Teacher education programs should seek a mix faculty of young, old, various ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic backgrounds, experiences, and different orientations, in order to make sure their faculty represent the students in the classrooms that teacher candidates will be entering.
- Teacher education programs should establish courses specifically to develop classroom management skills, since it plays such a vital role in creating the optimal learning environment.

5.4. Limitations

One significant limitation of this research study is my own personal bias. I am of the belief that the foundational establishment of the core-competencies of an effective educator begins in teacher education programs, whereas the establishment of the attributes of an effective educator takes place during one's adolescence and carries forward into adulthood. Therefore the analyses and interpretation of both the literature and data is influenced by my own personal bias.

Another limitation to this study was the small number of participants. As a result of time restrictions there were only 2 participants interviewed for this study. In reflection of the limited number of participants it must be stated that the data in this research study is not necessarily reflective of the greater population, since only 2 Ontario elementary school teachers were interviewed.

5.5. Further study

This research study explores the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator, as well as some of the issues facing teacher education programs as they attempt to develop such an educator. What this research study does not explore however, are the political and economic influences effecting teacher education programs in their quest to develop effective educators. This study also does not deeply explore all of the practices of teacher education programs, but rather focuses on a few prominent issues. Further study in these area may be beneficial in creating a deeper understanding of the various factors influencing the quality of teacher education programs, and whether or not teacher candidates are learning and developing the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator.

5.6. Conclusion

The results of this research study are beneficial in that they contribute to the greater body of research conducted on the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator, as well as the challenges facing teacher education programs as they try to develop such an educator. This research study furthers knowledge of teacher effectiveness, a topic of such incredible importance in the field of education. The result of this research study indicates the possibility of teacher candidates not acquiring the core-competencies of an effective educator upon graduation.

Considering such a possibility, this study may also act as a call for scholars to conduct further research in this area.

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Appendix A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. In your years of experience, what core-competencies do you feel an effective educator should have?
3. What attributes do you feel an effective educator should have?
4. By the time you had graduated from your teacher education program, did you feel you had acquired the core-competencies and attributes of an effective educator?
 - If, yes: Can you please explain why?
 - If, no: Can you please explain why not?
5. What factors do you think contribute to a person acquiring these competencies and attributes?
6. When you are mentoring a teacher candidate, what are your primary areas of focus?
7. How might teacher education programs improve in order to foster the core-competencies and attributes that make up an effective educator?
8. What do you think is the best way to challenge teacher candidates in order to make them better, more effective teachers?
9. Once a teacher is working full-time in the profession, how can he/she continue to improve on their competencies and attributes?

APPENDIX B: Research Participant Letter of Consent

Dear _____,

I am a graduate student at the University of Toronto currently enrolled in the Master of Teaching program. For my major research project I am studying the core-competencies and attributes that make for an effective teacher, and the challenges facing teacher education programs in their attempt to develop such an educator. I believe your experience and knowledge will provide valuable insights into this area of research. I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Arlo Kempf. My research supervisor is Dr. Robert Simon. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research.

My data collection consists of a 45 minute interview that will be digitally audio recorded on computer. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer. The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the digital audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the consent form below, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours Sincerely,

Researcher: Martin Bernard, Jr. _____

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Research Supervisor: Dr. Robert Simon

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I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty. I have read the letter provided to me by Martin Bernard, Jr. (name of researcher) and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: _____ Name (printed): _____

Date: _____