

EARLY CAREER TRANSITION AMONG EDUCATION GRADUATES

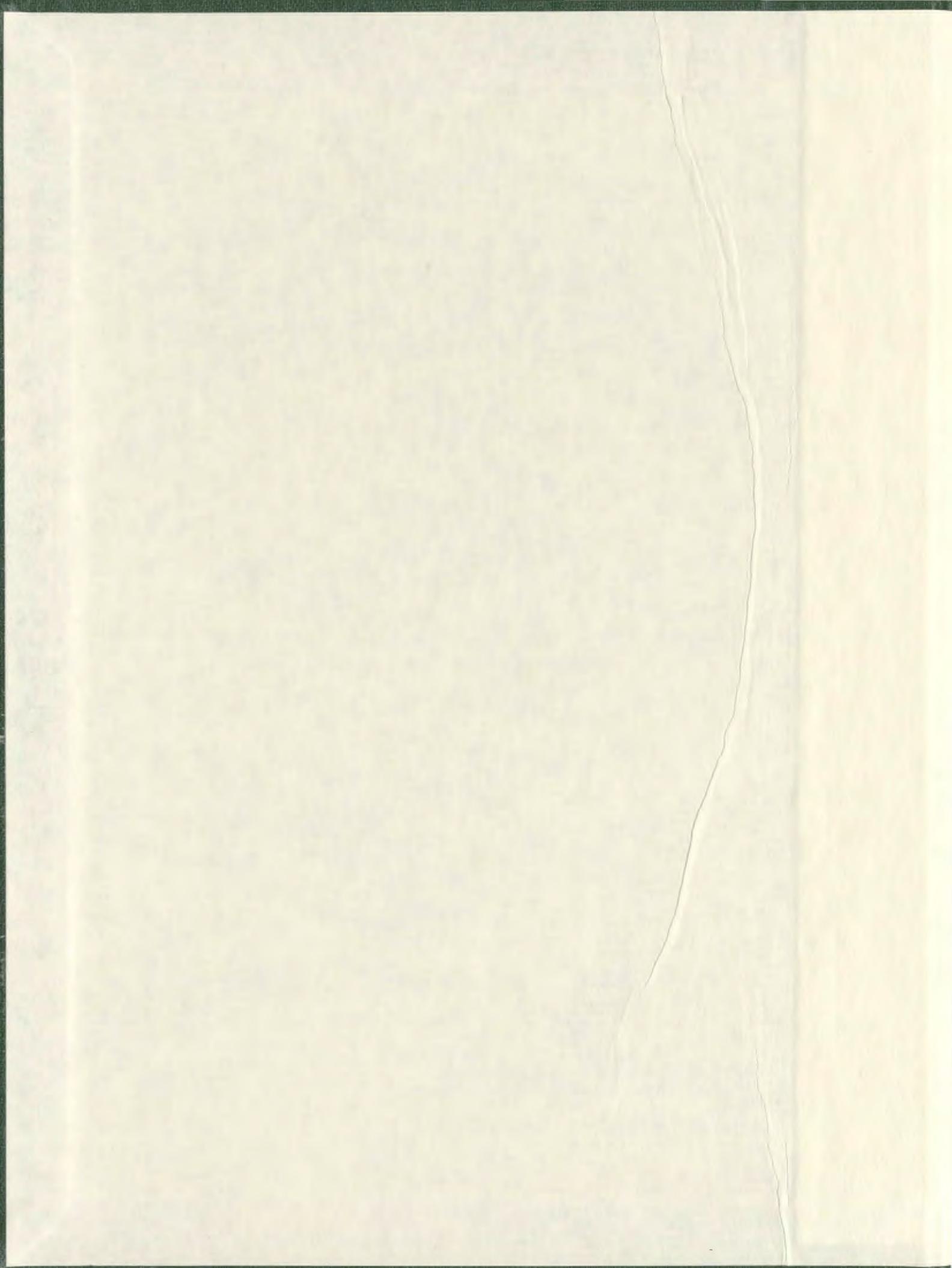
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**EARLY CAREER TRANSITION AMONG EDUCATION GRADUATES**

**BY**

**LISA BROWNE PETERS, BA, BEd**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF EDUCATION**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND**

**2001**

**ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND**

**Early Career Transition among Education Graduates: By Lisa Browne Peters, Master of Education, 2001, Memorial University of Newfoundland.**

**ABSTRACT**

The intent of this study was to identify the main issues related to early teacher career transition among Education graduates from Memorial University of Newfoundland, to highlight the alternate career choices of some graduates who have left teaching to enter into other employment sectors and to determine how their Education backgrounds helped to prepare them for work in other fields. The five research questions that guided this study included: What factors contributed to the career transition of Education graduates? What employment sectors now offer career opportunities for education professionals? What kind of satisfaction are former teachers experiencing in new careers? What skills, knowledge, and abilities acquired through Education programs are teachers using in other work settings? What new skills, knowledge, and abilities had to be learned for successful performance in new work settings?

This study was conducted through three phases of research. The first phase involved a cohort analysis of the class of 1995 Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Music Education graduates, to determine whether they were teaching. The data collected in this phase led to the creation of a class employment profile.

The second phase of the research involved the identification of eleven 1995 Education graduates who had left the teaching profession to work in other fields. These participants provided information pertaining to their reasons for leaving the teaching profession, the fields in which they were employed and their perceptions of how well their teacher preparation has contributed to their employment success.

The third and final phase of the study involved the identification of work associates of the Education graduates. These associates provided their views on the knowledge, skills and performance of the Education graduates in their new place of employment.

The data analysis revealed that 67.5% of the contacted Education graduates were teaching in a public school system. An additional 4% were also teaching in other educational settings, (i.e. private collages, universities etc.). I was also able to identify the employment status of the graduates who were not teaching and discovered that the two most commonly occurring alternatives to teaching were returning to school for further educational opportunities and working in technology-based industries. The most common reason for seeking work in other sectors was the inability to find a secure, full-time teaching position. This was followed by financial concerns, (i.e. could not afford to wait for a full-time position), and an interest in finding employment opportunities offering better pay.

The findings of the research conducted in this study support the notion that career transitions have become very commonplace occurrences in today's society. Motivated by a variety of factors ranging from an inability to find initial work in a chosen field, to displeasure with a current position, many people are searching for new employment opportunities. It is clear that career changes are being viewed as natural and anticipated processes, which can ultimately lead to professional fulfillment and personal happiness. The information provided by both the graduates and their work associates supports the claim that teachers are very likely candidates for such career transitions and it also demonstrates that teachers are suitable candidates for employment in areas outside of education.

The findings of this study create implications for many educational organizations, (i.e. the NLTA, school boards, the Department of Education and Memorial University of Newfoundland), as well as for Education students and graduates. The information collected over the course of the research is not intended to be representative of the larger general population of Education graduates, but rather it represents the views of a small sample. It is reasonable to assume that these views may be consistent with those of others in similar situations. In order to gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the factors related to teacher career transitions and teacher employment in other fields, further exploration of the issues examined in this study is required. This thesis is intended to serve as a starting point for further research.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Returning to university to work on a Master of Education degree has been an incredibly rewarding and fulfilling experience. While the completion of this thesis brings with it feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment, I do hope that the future will also hold many opportunities for continued learning.

Sincere gratitude is extended to my thesis advisor, Dr. David Dibbon, for guiding me through this endeavor. Being involved with his research on human resource issues in the education sector provided me with the opportunity to access a wealth of knowledge, information and expertise that was of enormous benefit to my own study. Thank you Dave for your direction, encouragement and constructive criticism. Your professionalism and commitment to seeing me through this project exemplify the ideals of partnerships within education to which you are so firmly dedicated.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **The Problem**

The recent debate as to whether Canada is about to face a shortage of teachers in the near future has sparked a great deal of interest by educators and educational organizations from coast to coast. Record high teacher retirement rates, especially in the province of Ontario where the numbers are the highest, account for a great deal of the concern. Organizations like the Canadian Teachers' Federation are estimating that over the coming decade we will need between 10 000 to 14 000 new teachers and the Ontario College of Teachers estimates that Ontario will need at least 5,000 new teachers over the next five years (McIntyre, 1998). In addition to high retirement rates, a strong economy that demands highly educated workers is compounding human resource issues in the education sector as many teachers are now forsaking a career in the K-12 system to enter careers in the private and public sectors.

This study examines a cohort of teachers graduating from Memorial University's Faculty of Education in 1995 to see how many of them went teaching and were still employed as teachers during the 1999-2000 school year. During the course of the research, I identified graduates who had either left the teaching profession to pursue a career in another area or did not enter into teaching. The second part of the study was aimed at determining why these teachers left the profession, what they were doing and how their Education degrees prepared them for alternate careers.

### **Research Questions**

To determine what factors are associated with the career transitions of Education graduates and also the extent to which the skills and expertise of the teachers were transferable to other sectors, the following research questions were explored:

1. What factors contributed to the career transition of Education graduates?
2. What employment sectors now offer career opportunities for education professionals?
3. What kind of satisfaction are former teachers experiencing in new careers?

4. What skills, knowledge, and abilities acquired through Education programs are teachers using in other work settings?
5. What new skills, knowledge, and abilities had to be learned for successful performance in new work settings?

### **Background to the Problem**

#### **Teaching in Canada**

The general public has long regarded teaching as a "good" career. In fact, a survey conducted by *The Vector Poll on Public Opinion in Canada* in March of 1999, revealed that 79.3% of Canadians surveyed feel that teaching is indeed "a good long-term career choice" (CTF, October 1999, p.1). The view from the outside depicts a good salary, reasonable work hours, generous holiday time and many welfare benefits that are protected by a strong union.

It can be argued that this view of teaching is incomplete and idealistic. It does not consider many of the problems, stresses and challenges encountered by teachers on a daily basis (Alschuler, 1980; Dunham, 1992; Farber, 1991; Swick, 1989; Tiff, 1988; Cooper and Traverse, 1996).

Over the past decade, society has placed many new demands on the teaching profession ranging from a restructured system of governance to increased calls for accountability. This constant pressure to innovate and change has resulted in many educators feeling chronically over-pressured and under-thanked as they are asked to do more with less, to do it differently and better, and to do it quickly. The role of the teacher is now extended far beyond the boundaries of textbooks and lesson plans. Today's teachers are responsible for many of the social capital issues that at one time were dealt with in the home. In short, they are responsible for charting the development and transition of children into capable citizens for tomorrow – not an easy task.

As with many other careers, the responsibilities and job descriptions of teachers deviate quite significantly from one situation to another. Variances in demographics, economic conditions,

levels of public support (i.e. community/parental), effectiveness of school administrators and teaching workload, are all factors that place unique demands and expectations upon teachers. The combined influences of such factors affect job satisfaction and can ultimately persuade a teacher to either stay with the profession or to choose an alternate career path. Such issues will be explored in greater depth in this study.

Public opinions aside, one thing that can be said with certainty about teaching in Canada is that from a national perspective, the current prospects for employment appear to be exceptionally good. *Statistics Canada* has provided figures to reveal that unemployment rates for Canadian elementary and secondary teachers are presently on the decline, dropping from 3.0% in 1997 to 2.7% in 1998. This is the lowest recorded level since the examination of such rates began in 1982. It is interesting to note that the teacher unemployment rate is significantly lower than that of the general labor force which dropped from 9.2% in 1997 to 8.3% in 1998 (CTF, October 1999, p 4)

There are many factors that could account for such low rates of teacher unemployment in Canada, the most obvious perhaps being an increase in teacher retirements. The current data provided by the Canadian Teachers' Federation suggest that between the years 1999 and 2010, there will be between 11 000 and 14 000 retirements among "public elementary-secondary school teachers" (CTF, 1999, p. 18). These large numbers would undoubtedly produce significant effects on the teacher unemployment rate. Other contributing factors could include teachers who decide to give up work for personal reasons such as staying at home to raise a family, or for health concerns. Still others may decide to move to other parts of the world, therefore resigning from the teaching force in Canada. Of most interest to this study however, is the group of teachers who leave teaching in search of other employment opportunities outside of the education sector.

Job dissatisfaction, inadequate administrative support and recognition, increasing responsibilities, insufficient time allotments, intensifying job stresses, government-imposed cutbacks and downsizing are some of the common factors that have been linked to career changes amongst

teachers (Bastress, 1984; Greco, 1975; Wright, 1991). Negative forces however, drive not all who stray from teaching. Many choose to leave the profession for more positive reasons such as the pursuit of other interests, a general need for change, the opportunity to earn more money, or simply to fulfill a need to continue learning and growing both personally and professionally (Bastress, 1984).

### **Teacher Supply and Demand Issues in Newfoundland and Labrador**

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (1999) claims that from a national perspective, teacher shortages are becoming increasingly evident. While it appears that there are shortages in some parts of the country, more research is required to determine the scope of the problem. Here in Newfoundland, there is evidence of shortages in some areas of the Province and in some subject areas. but to say at this point that there is an overall teacher shortage would be irresponsible (Dibbon and Sheppard, 2001).

A recent study conducted by Dr. Robert Crocker that was sponsored by The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association and Memorial University's Faculty of Education, (Crocker, 1998), has provided some interesting projections for the future state of teacher supply and demand in the Province. The following extraction from a recent Canadian Teachers' Federation publication provides a succinct and comprehensive overview of his findings:

- Newfoundland and Labrador teaching force projected to decline by about one-third from approximately 6,900 in 1997-98 to 4,400 in 2010-11.
- Over two-thirds of the current teaching force in the Province will have retired by the end of 2010-11.
- Relatively few teachers now remain beyond the minimum time required for retirement eligibility.
- Teachers are in large supply in the areas of English, social studies and religion; and in moderate supply in mathematics, French, music and physical education. In

contrast, a shortage exists in the areas of science (other than biology) and in some new areas such as technology.

- Demand for teachers is projected to increase from the current level of about 400 per year to 500 per year in 2002 or 2003, before declining to about 250 per year by the end of 2010 school year.
- Demand for new graduates relative to experienced teachers has declined in recent years, as most available jobs are being filled from a pool of experienced teachers made up of substitutes and those displaced due to continuing reductions in the Province's total teaching force.
- New teachers are expected to benefit slightly more than experienced teachers do from increased demand anticipated over the next few years, as the pool of experienced teachers is expected to remain relatively constant.
- Downward trend in school enrolments projected to continue falling from just over 100,000 students in 1997-98 to about 63,000 by 2010-11. (CTF, October 1999, p. 20).

Despite the expected decline of approximately one-third of the Province's teaching population by the year 2010-11 and the projected retirement of more than two-thirds of present teachers, an overall teacher shortage in Newfoundland and Labrador is not anticipated. However, recent studies, (Dibbon & Sheppard, 2001; Crocker, 1998), indicate that there are shortages of teachers in the areas of mathematics, physics, chemistry, music, French, guidance and special education. These shortages are particularly acute in rural and isolated areas of the province.

### **Significance of the Study**

This investigation into the career transition of Education graduates is part of a study in the education sector that is investigating issues surrounding the supply and demand of teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador. By conducting a cohort analysis of Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Music Education graduates from Memorial University's Faculty of Education, I have

identified a group of individuals who have left the teaching profession. Through a series of face-to-face interviews and electronic questionnaires, data were collected to help identify reasons as to why they left the profession, what type of work they were doing and how they felt their Education background and teaching experience contributed to their success. With the consent of participants, another series of interviews/questionnaires was conducted with workplace supervisors/associates to provide feedback relating to the subjects' work performance and capabilities.

In this study, I attempted to determine if the skills and knowledge gained through the teacher-education program were transferable to other job market sectors. This study was also intended to yield useful information relating to human resources in the provincial education sector. There are implications for educational institutions and affiliates, (i.e. School Boards, Department of Education and the NLTA), the Faculty of Education, Education students, and employers in sectors outside of education.

### **Limitations**

The grounded-theory research used in this study was not intended to yield results that can be transferred to a larger general population. The findings of the study are therefore limited to the samples used herein.

The sample of Education graduates in this study included individuals who have left the teaching profession for work in other sectors. It did not include individuals who have shifted from traditional teaching positions to work in other areas of education.

Age and gender were not considered in this study. Further research needs to be conducted to determine the role that these factors play in the career transition of Education graduates.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Methodology**

#### **Data Sources**

A cohort analysis was conducted on Memorial University's Education graduates from 1995. (This sample included Bachelor of Education graduates in primary, elementary and secondary, and Bachelor of Music Education graduates.) *The Graduate Follow-Up Survey* published by the Department of Education was used to access a comprehensive list of graduates from this class, as well as information pertaining to the type of work that these graduates were doing when the survey was conducted. A second list of 1995 Education graduates was provided by Banner Requests (Memorial University of Newfoundland), and a third from the Office of Alumni Affairs (Memorial University of Newfoundland). The use of three separate lists provided useful cross-references and reduced the possibility of overlooking graduates whose names may have been omitted in error from a single data source.

#### **Sample Selection**

From this group of 1995 Education graduates, I attempted to contact every individual by telephone so that I could gather relevant data on the entire group and create an employment profile. As the telephone interviews were being conducted, graduates who indicated that they were employed in fields outside of education were invited to participate in the study. This recruitment process continued until a sample of eleven graduates, employed in other sectors, agreed to become involved. All participants either took part in an interview or completed an electronic questionnaire and in so doing, answered questions that addressed their reasons for leaving the teaching profession, the fields in which they were employed and their perceptions of how well their teacher-preparation had contributed to their employment success. Education graduates who had made career transitions into school administration, the NLTA, the Department of Education, School Boards and/or the Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards' Association were not considered as candidates for this part of the study.

In the final phase of the research, the scope of the study broadened to include the thoughts and opinions of associates within the new field. All participants were asked to identify a colleague or associate within their organization and also to provide informed, written consent for interviews, (or questionnaires), to be conducted with these individuals. These interviews/questionnaires helped determine the types of contributions that the Education graduates made to their organizations and the degree to which they utilized skills that were acquired through their teacher-education programs.

In light of the small sample size, it is important to note that the observations and trends that emerged from the data were not intended to be the basis to make broad generalizations for the larger population. They were instead used to identify important issues for further consideration.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Grounded theory was deemed to be the most suitable methodology to employ in this portion of the research. Grounded theory involves the systematic accumulation of social data that ultimately leads to the creation of theory. "Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 6). The focus of the research is therefore centered on analyzing information, forming generalizations and generating theory. There is no expectancy of theory verification. Since this research involved making comparisons between the responses provided by the subjects, the constant comparative method was the most appropriate grounded theory method to use. "The aim of this method is the generation of theoretical constructs which, along with substantive codes and categories and their properties, form a theory that encompasses as much behavioral variation as possible" (Hutchinson, 1988, p. 135) The data provided by the subjects were therefore compared to facilitate the generation of theories and the explanation of observed patterns. In essence then, the questions posed in the interviews and questionnaires served as a tentative framework and acted as a point of departure for the research.

The original intent of this study was to use face-to-face and telephone interviews as the primary methods for gathering data. It became evident however, that for many individuals, donating a specific block of time to participate in the study was not always an easy task. Time constraints and hectic work and personal schedules complicated the issue. As a result, the employment of electronic questionnaires became an attractive alternative. Sixteen out of nineteen participants in the two samples opted to complete an electronic questionnaire instead of participating in a face-to-face interview. This mode of communication allowed individuals to participate at their own convenience. It also provided them with as much time as they needed to reflect on their answers, an option that may have improved the depth and accuracy of their responses.

One of the most obvious drawbacks in using electronic interviewing is that it provides limited opportunity for personal exchange between the interviewer and interviewee (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In this particular instance however, some rapport had already been established through telephone conversations that had occurred in the earlier phases of the study. Follow-up questions were also posed to clarify issues or to request additional information when needed. This helped to minimize any shortfalls that could be related to the lack of personal exchange.

From my perspective as researcher, the electronic questionnaires were time-efficient and easy to organize and analyze. The feedback provided by the participants was in most instances, quite substantial. The thick, rich description that is desired in qualitative research did in fact emerge in many of the questionnaires. This choice of data collection therefore, did not jeopardize the quality of the data collected. It appears that providing the option to participate in the study via an electronic method enticed more individuals to participate in the study than perhaps would have done so if data collection had been restricted to the traditional interview sessions. The electronic method of data collection used in this study was therefore quite viable and effective.

The first phase of this research involved conducting a cohort analysis of the 1995 Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Music Education graduates from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Through a series of telephone calls to graduates and professional contacts,

efforts were made to determine the teaching and/or employment status of as many graduates as possible. Table 1 provides an overview of the first phase of research, the cohort analysis.

**Table 1: Cohort Analysis of Education Graduates from the Class of 1995**

Phase	Objective	Sample	Data Sources	Data Collection	Data Preparation	Data Analysis
Phase 1 Cohort analysis	To create an employment profile of 1995 Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Music Education graduates from Memorial University of Newfoundland	Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Music Education graduates from 1995	Memorial University of Newfoundland graduate records for target years  Department of Education follow-up surveys	Professional contacts  Telephone interviews	Graduates were classified as teachers or non-teachers	Descriptive statistics  Cohort Analysis

When an individual indicated that s/he had left the teaching profession, an invitation was extended to participate in the second phase of the study. Through a series of face-to-face interviews and electronic questionnaires, these individuals explained why they were not working as teachers in the K-12 system, what type of work they were doing, and how they felt their Education degree and teaching experience contributed to their success in alternate careers. Table 2 outlines the second phase of the research that explores the factors related to the career transitions of the Education graduates.

**Table 2: Factors Related to Career Transition of Education Graduates**

Phase	Objective	Sample	Data Sources	Data Collection	Data Preparation	Data Analysis
Phase 2: Factors related to career transitions of Education graduates	To identify the types of work being done by Education graduates who were employed outside of the education sector.  To investigate what factors contribute to teacher career transitions	Quota selection of 1995 Education graduates who were working outside of the education sector	Former teachers employed in areas outside of education  Graduate Follow-up Survey (Dept. of Education)	Face-to-face interviews  Electronic Questionnaires  Telephone interviews	All interviews were recorded and transcribed  Confidentiality strictly upheld	Constant comparative method (Grounded Theory)

The graduates who participated in the second phase of the study were asked if they would consent to an interview/questionnaire being conducted with one of their work associates. These interviews/questionnaires were designed to obtain information pertaining to how the graduates' knowledge, skills and performance were viewed in their place of employment, as well as to indicate how Education degrees helped to prepare graduates for work in sectors outside of teaching. Table 3 provides a description of this third and final phase of research.

**Table 3: Workplace Performance**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>Data Preparation</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
Phase 3: Workplace Performance	To identify the skills, knowledge and abilities that Education graduates bring to other work settings:  To identify skills that had to be learned	Employers or workplace associates of Education graduates (as identified by the graduates)	Information provided by the associates	Face-to-face interviews  Electronic questionnaires  Telephone interviews	All interviews were recorded and transcribed  Confidentiality strictly upheld	Constant comparative method

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Career Transitions**

##### **Introduction**

Career transitions are very common occurrences in today's society. Driven by a number of factors, many individuals, at some point in their lives, find themselves contemplating whether to stay in one career or to pursue another. This phenomenon has created interest in issues such as why career changes occur and what implications such trends place upon society at large. Some researchers, such as Levinson (1978) and Lynch (1980), have highlighted observable patterns and have even proposed theories that may shed some light on how and why career transitions occur.

##### **Contributing Factors**

Often, dramatic societal changes can lead to the restructuring of job markets. This typically fosters the development of new or increased career opportunities in one particular area to compensate for diminishment in another. From a local perspective, Newfoundland's economy and job markets have been subject to extreme diversification in recent years. This has brought an end to many of the traditional industries in the Province such as the cod fishery, and has given way to newer, more global industries such as ICT, (an emerging information and computer technology sector), offshore exploration and tourism.

In other instances, career changes are more humanistic in nature, evolving from issues related to age and stages of professional growth. Lynch (1980) investigated career transitions by dividing a typical life-span into separate categories that she called decades. Her investigation tended to focus on people in managerial positions. It is however, reasonable to assume that many of the issues, desires, and needs of the 125 participants in her research would be relevant to people in other work sectors.

The first identified decade, the twenties, was described as a time when young people were finding their path. Eager and educated, most of the participants in her research were in search of jobs that would allow them to utilize their talents and express their creativity. They expressed a need to be recognized for a job well done, identified a great desire to develop their expertise, and wanted a chance to prove themselves professionally. As for factors that would influence their desire to seek a career change, this group cited better financial compensation, increased responsibility and the opportunity to advance quickly within their careers as being very significant.

The second decade, the thirties, was described as the searching years. Lynch characterized this group as risk takers, who commonly made two to three career changes. Still exhibiting many of the same traits that emerged during their twenties, these individuals also thirsted for the opportunity to be creative and to demonstrate their competence and initiative. Among the factors contributing to job dissatisfaction, this group identified problems with support, understanding and guidance.

The forties, the third decade, was labeled by Lynch as the restless years. Many of the individuals in this group feared that the opportunities for upward change were diminishing at a rapid pace. Increasing family demands during this time typically led to a desire for better pay and more responsibility. Lynch referred to the forties as a time of soul-searching when people question whether their current careers will satisfy them for the rest of their lives.

The fifties were described as years of panic, distress and survival. The individuals in this group were typically burdened with outside financial commitments, such as children in college, which contributed to a decreasing willingness to take career risks.

Lynch described the sixties as the time of adjustment. Time management concerns, increasing age, lack of support and appreciation from those higher up and simple fatigue were reported as being significant issues for this group. Many of these individuals did not experience the same drive to make career advancements, but rather focused on helping younger employees get ahead.

Lynch's work echoes many similar views of Levinson (1978), who referred to the significant impact that the *seasons*, (or separate eras), of an individual's lifetime can exude upon important decisions and events.

The life structure evolves through a sequence of alternating periods. A relatively stable, structure-building period is followed by a transitional, structure-changing period. The major developmental tasks of a structure-building period are to make crucial choices, to create a structure around them, to enrich the structure and pursue one's goals within it...In the course of a transitional period a man may choose to involve himself in new persons and places, or he may retain his marriage, job and social network but establish different relationships and live out different aspects of the self (Levinson, 1978, p. 317).

Levinson attempted to explain career changes by referring to the natural progressions of events that unfold during an individual's lifetime. Both Lynch and Levinson therefore, view career transitions as predictable, reasonable and regular occurrences.

It is difficult to determine whether the career transitions investigated in this study reflect their theories. The individuals who participated in this research graduated with Education degrees in 1995. Five years is not enough time for many of the issues presented by Lynch and Levinson to emerge. This is not to say that the participants are not representative of their views. However, given this short time frame and the fact that age was not a variable identified in the study, it would be unreasonable to attempt to draw any correlation. For the purpose of this study, Lynch's and Levinson's work is valuable because it creates an awareness of the multitude of factors that may affect people's lives and decisions to make career changes. Whether driven by personal goals, health concerns, family matters or professional issues, people consider career transitions at many points in their lives.

### **Research Results on Career Changes amongst Teachers**

People in all professions question the direction of their future career paths from time to time. Teachers are no exception. What is strikingly different about teachers however, is that in contrast

to most professions where questions concerning whether or not to stay in the profession typically arise at mid-career, research has shown that for teachers, this crossroad is generally faced much earlier (Huberman, 1993, p. 138).

Using data provided in the *1994 General Social Survey of the Canadian Labour Force*, Guppy and Davies examined the claims of a sub-sample of 643 people who said that:

(i) their major field of study in university was education; (ii) their first job after completing their highest level of schooling was in teaching; or (iii) their current (or most recent) job was in elementary or secondary school teaching – university and college teachers were excluded (p. 42).

Based on the accumulated data, they stated that “about one-third of all individuals who trained to be teachers, and who are still in the labour force are not in teaching” (p. 42).

A 1992 national study conducted by the Canadian Teachers' Federation provided a profile of the views of Canadian teachers (King and Peart, 1992). By involving individuals from all grade levels and from every province and territory, representative samples of teachers were formed so that data could be collected. The following excerpt addressed the level of career commitment of teachers:

We asked teachers if they would change their career if they could, if they had seriously considered an alternate career or actively looked for another career during the past two years. Nineteen percent indicated they would change if they could. One third of the teachers had seriously considered an alternative; twenty-seven percent of this group, nine percent of all teachers surveyed, had actively looked for a career change (King and Peart, 1992, p. 40).

This interest in career changes was also seen in a local study conducted by Cluett et al. (1991), in which one-quarter of the new Education graduates in the sample who were employed within

the education sector, indicated that they would like to work in a setting that was not related to education. (Among their sample, only 2% were employed outside of the education field.)

A follow-up study of 1989–1990 Alberta Education graduates, (Alberta Education, 1993), indicated that almost one-fifth of the group was not teaching. Similarly, another follow-up study of 1982 Education graduates, (Akeyampong, 1990), revealed that over one-quarter of these individuals did not enter into full-time positions within the public schooling system.

Decore's study of Education graduates from the University of Alberta (1992) which analyzed 386 questionnaires, indicated that almost 82% of the recent graduates were working in some sort of teaching position, while in contrast, almost 13% had assumed positions outside of teaching.

Such relevant studies cite a wide variety of factors as contributing to teachers' decisions to seek work in other fields. Among them, the more common reasons include difficulty finding a position, wanting to pursue further studies, family responsibilities, financial incentives and a simple desire to pursue other career opportunities.

The importance placed upon these factors varies from study to study. For example, a study of Education graduates in Ontario conducted by Smith et al. (1994) revealed that lack of work was the most important factor. Among the graduates in this study who had not sought a teaching position, almost one-quarter of them indicated that pursuing further studies was their main reason, followed by domestic responsibilities and maternity. In contrast to this, Masland and Williams (1983) found that 90% of the Education graduates in their study who were not employed in the profession, were just not interested in teaching (p.6).

Ingersoll (1999, p. 5) claimed that teacher career transition is closely linked to "the individual characteristics of teachers". Included amongst his most significant findings was the apparent relationship between academic subject area and career transition. He stated that "although the data have been inconsistent at times, special education, mathematics and science are typically found to be the fields of highest attrition." Age was deemed to be another important factor with very young teachers and those close to retirement experiencing the highest "rates of departure."

The relationship between teachers' age (or experience, in some analyses) and their departure has been found to follow a U-shaped curve. Younger teachers have very high rates of departure; these rates decline through the mid-career period and then rise again in the retirement years... Moreover because the distribution of age in the teaching force is skewed upward – older teachers significantly outnumbering younger teachers – many analysts have concluded that retirement due to a rapidly 'graying' teaching workforce is the most significant factor behind teacher attrition, teacher shortages, and school staffing problems... (Ingersoll, 1999, p. 5).

Some of the other principal causes of career transition identified in his study include personal reasons (45%), educational reorganization and its consequences (i.e. redundancies, lay-offs and school closures) (12%), and "either job dissatisfaction or the desire to pursue a better job, another career or to improve career opportunities in or out of education" (42%). In the latter instance, job dissatisfaction was most often reported to stem from poor salaries, poor student attitudes, behavioural/discipline problems and problems with the administration.

The results of the numerous studies mentioned in this section indicate that many teachers contemplate career changes. This in turn suggests that there are many issues related to teacher career transitions that need to be explored.

### **Teacher Stress and Career Transitions**

Current literature commonly cites job stress as one of the contributing factors to teachers' decisions to leave the profession (Cooper and Travers 1996, Dunham 1992, Truch 1980). In referencing the work of Milstein and Golaszewski, Cooper and Travers stated, "Based on findings of international studies and public displays by teachers and unions, teaching has become characterized as among the league of traditionally viewed high-stress occupations" (Cooper and Travers, 1996, p. 3).

Esteve identified five societal changes that have increased the amount of pressure placed on teachers (Cooper and Travers, 1996). These changes include the role of the teacher, job descriptions, negative public attitudes towards education, diversifying views of "educational relevance" and respect and appreciation of teachers. These changes, which he labeled secondary factors, have far-reaching consequences.

Esteve began by identifying how the traditional role of the teacher has changed. He felt that the family and the community have gradually withdrawn their responsibility in the education process, thereby making teachers ultimately accountable for the entire process. Much to the disadvantage of all involved, educational facilities and professional development opportunities have not been modified to reflect these evolving demands.

Esteve also addressed the confusing and contradictory job descriptors that accompany teaching positions. He stated that not only are teachers expected to be "evaluators, selectors and disciplinarians", as they have traditionally been, but they are now also expected to be "friend, colleague and helper". Esteve felt that these roles were incompatible with one another.

Societal attitudes have also been impacting teaching in recent years. It would seem that whatever society at large deems to be appropriate (or inappropriate) in schools, determines how teachers must teach, evaluate and discipline their students. This often strips teachers of control in their own classrooms.

Esteve also pinpointed the surmounting challenge for teachers to keep abreast of what is educationally relevant and to make modifications to already existing curriculum objectives. He stated, "Many teachers are facing the difficulty of aiming to work towards objectives that no longer correspond to existing societal circumstances" (Cooper and Travers, 1996, p. 10).

The general lack of respect and appreciation for teachers today has also proven to be offensive and destructive to teacher morale. Esteve emphasized that teachers are often blamed for shortfalls within the education system and are commonly misrepresented by the media. This can add to the abundance of pressures already being dealt with by teachers.

Bell (1995) presented many of the aforementioned arguments and added some additional thoughts as well. Making reference to the surmounting stress that can accompany increasing responsibilities, she said, "What makes the profession so demanding is the burden of administration and paperwork required, coupled with frequent criticism in the media by politicians and other interest groups" (Bell, 1995, p. 61). As well, she referred to the common tendency among teachers to "blame themselves when things do not go right" (Bell, 1995, p. 52).

In essence there are a multitude of factors that can lead to stress in the teaching profession. Poor school administration, relationships with colleagues and parents, student behavior, job security, and personal circumstances can all contribute to the way a teacher feels in his/her work environment. Although the stressors can be quite varied, the effects of job related stresses are usually the same. Teachers who experience too much stress can experience job dissatisfaction, develop physical and mental health problems and suffer from the effects of poor morale. In certain instances, this stress may contribute to an individual's decision to leave the teaching profession.

### **Case Studies of Career Changes amongst Teachers**

Bastress (1984) presented the experiences of twenty-one teachers who all chose to leave their profession in favour of work in other fields. Participants' accounts of their experiences provided a great deal of insight into why they chose to pursue other careers.

The most predominantly cited reasons for leaving teaching were linked to frustrations with various aspects of the profession. Participants' accounts ranged from feelings of helplessness due to severe behavioral and emotional problems in students, to a lack of fulfillment because of an inability to exercise sufficient control in determining what they could do in their profession. Other frustrations resulted from a perceived lack of appreciation and respect for teachers. Administrators, parents and bureaucrats were all identified as contributors to this problem.

Another commonly cited issue in Bastress' study was the desire, on the part of the teacher, to try something new. Some individuals indicated that they had become tired of working with children

while others felt the need for a career change. Also, many participants noted that there were limited opportunities for growth and advancement within the teaching profession.

### **Life-Long Learning and its Link to Career Transitions**

In recent years, North American society has undergone tremendous transformations. Changes in the economy and job markets have redefined the types of knowledge and skills that the workforce must possess. New lifestyle trends have reshaped the roles and responsibilities of families, often placing higher expectations and increased stresses upon their members. Technological advances have led to paradigm shifts in the way society functions, creating a demand for technological literacy.

Newfoundland and Labrador is an excellent example of a region that has been subject to such changes. The Province that was once known as Canada's poorest and witnessed a mass exodus of its youth in the early 1990's, is now leading the country in economic growth (Brooke, August 17, 2000, p. 4). The development of the Hibernia oilfield has been, and continues to be a tremendous boost to the economy, and now the promise of the Terra Nova, White Rose and Hebron oilfields bring the potential for even more wealth and growth to the province (Brooke, Sept. 07, 2000, p. 1).

In consideration of such issues and changes, now, perhaps more than ever, people need to assume an aggressive role in carving out their own place in society. Maximizing one's potential is becoming increasingly important and necessary. Life-long learning is a necessity for those who wish to pursue career changes. A diversifying economy coupled with daily technological advances, necessitate regular upgrading of workplace skills and a continual expansion of practical knowledge. Career transitions are therefore more likely to occur when efforts have been made to make life-long learning a priority.

Life-long learners are typically self-directed. In other words, they take control of all aspects of their own learning. Self-directed learning is a strategic learning design aimed at encouraging learners to accept more responsibility for their own learning. Malcolm Knowles was one of the first

to identify the concept of self-directed learning. Lowry (1989, para. 2) cites Knowle's description of self-directed learning as a process in which "individuals take the initiative with or without the help of others in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes".

Upon initial consideration, it may appear that self-directed learning is complex and best suited for adult use. Lowry (1989) speaks of "degrees of self-directedness" (para. 5) in adult learning. Although it is commonly used among adults, self-directed learning does have many useful implications for individuals of any age. It is in fact important for self-directed learning to begin early in life so that individuals will be adequately equipped with the life-long learning skills that are of such importance today. Waiting until the adult years may be too late. Lowry refers to a "lack of independence, confidence and resources" (para. 10) as common factors contributing to the failure of adults to engage in self-directed learning.

The life-long learning phenomenon is receiving widespread attention. In April of 1993, the Conference Board of Canada issued a vision statement in which it revealed the results of heated debates over the quality and relevance of education in Canada.

Canadians are beginning to agree: Canada needs a new system of lifelong learning, one that starts children in school prepared to learn, establishes clear objectives for student performance, is held accountable for its accomplishment, and promotes continued learning through the working years and adult life (National Council on Education, 1993).

Life-long learning advocates the philosophy that learning is not restricted to school settings. It should instead be developed and used throughout the entire course of a lifetime.

In this age when sudden, unexpected change is becoming the norm, we search constantly for educational tools that can help people learn how to adjust to the changes in their lives, to acquire knowledge and skills to cope with such changes, and to fully

develop their human potential and creative talents (Areglado, Bradley and Lane, 1996, p. ix).

Chapman and Aspin make reference to Bagnall's identification of four functions of life-long learning. These include, "the preparation of individuals for the management of their adult lives...the distribution of education throughout an individual's life-span...the educative function of the whole of one's life experience... the identification of education with the whole of life" (Bagnall, 1990. p. 35).

Bagnall's description of lifelong learning emphasizes that learning has a powerful role outside of school settings. It also emphasizes the strong link between lifelong learning and the successful management of general life experiences, reinforcing that this type of learning is essential to all individuals.

### **Summary of Review of Literature**

The review of literature conducted for this study has shown that career changes commonly occur across all occupations and are affected by many different factors. Extraneous forces (i.e. societal changes, and economic and industrial diversification), as well as intrinsic factors (i.e. age and the desire for professional growth), can both play a role in influencing career transitions.

In examining the results of several studies that specifically investigated career changes and transitions among teachers and Education graduates, it is evident that a wide variety of factors influence these groups of professionals to seek occupational changes. With reasons ranging from job stress and heavy workload to the desire for better financial compensation, large numbers of teachers are now seeking alternate careers.

Regardless of the reasons underlying decisions to make career changes, current literature stresses that individuals who attempt to make such transitions are more likely to be successful if they are proponents of lifelong learning. The diversification of North American economies and job markets, combined with the expanding use of technology in all areas of employment, have

together placed heavy demands upon members of the workforce to upgrade their skills and expand their knowledge base. It is now essential for people in search of new careers to assume an aggressive role in preparing themselves for employment. As such, lifelong learning is essential to this endeavor.

The research carried out in this study, investigated reasons why Education graduates pursued areas of employment outside the traditional K-12 system. A review of the analysis indicated that there are significant similarities between the participants' views and the information presented in the current literature. These ideas are explored in great depth in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Career Transitions of Education Graduates

#### Cohort Analysis: 1995 Graduates

The Department of Education's *Follow-Up Survey*, and two documents generated from Banner Requests and Office of Alumni Affairs at Memorial University of Newfoundland, confirmed that there were 393 Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Music Education graduates from the class of 1995. Extensive attempts were made to establish telephone contact with each of these graduates. In many instances, such efforts were successful; however, the addresses and telephone numbers linked to many others were outdated, necessitating further research into their whereabouts. When first-hand contact was not possible, information provided by family members, friends and colleagues was accepted and assumed to be accurate. Therefore the amount of information collected for each graduate varies depending upon the data source.

The first-hand and second-hand sources of information enabled data to be collected on 320 of the 393 graduates, which represents 81% of the entire class population. The descriptive statistics that are presented in this section of the study therefore apply only to the graduates that were contacted.

The employment status of 317 of the graduates who were contacted is provided in Table 4. Individuals were classified as teaching if they were engaged in substitute, part-time, or full-time teaching positions. (Individuals who held teaching positions, but were on a leave during the 1999–2000 school year were also classified as teaching.) While 229 graduates, 72% of those contacted, indicated that they were teaching, 88 graduates, (28%), indicated that they were not. Four percent indicated they were teaching but in a setting outside the K-12 system.

**Table 4: Teaching Status of Contacted Graduates**

Status of Graduates	Number of Citations N=320	Percentage
Currently teaching in a public school system	217	67.5%
Currently teaching in other educational settings (i.e. private colleges, universities etc.)	12	4%
Not teaching	88	27.5%
Unknown	3	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Some of the 1995 Education graduates no longer reside in Newfoundland and Labrador. The information collected indicated that 74 graduates were living outside of the Province. (Among these 74 individuals, 49 were confirmed to be teaching.) While these numbers include graduates who originated from out of the Province and decided to return to their former place of residence, I was unable to determine the exact numbers. Table 5 presents this information and indicates where these graduates now reside. Most (70%) have relocated to other parts of Canada, but some have emigrated to the United States and other parts of the world.

**Table 5: Regions of Residence**

Regions of Residence	Number of Citations N=74	Percentage
Other provinces in Canada: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberta (19)</li> <li>• British Columbia (3)</li> <li>• Manitoba (4)</li> <li>• New Brunswick (1)</li> <li>• North West Territories (4)</li> <li>• Nova Scotia (2)</li> <li>• Ontario (13)</li> <li>• Prince Edward Island (1)</li> <li>• Quebec (3)</li> <li>• Saskatchewan (2)</li> </ul>	52	70%
United States: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Florida (2)</li> <li>• Ohio (1)</li> <li>• Philadelphia (1)</li> <li>• Seattle (1)</li> <li>• Unknown state (3)</li> </ul>	8	11%
Asia	5	6.8%
Europe	4	5 %
New Zealand	1	1.4%
Out of province (unknown region)	4	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>

As Table 4 indicated, over 1/4 of the graduates who were contacted in this study were not teaching in the K-12 system. Many of them were working in different fields, while others were unemployed. Table 6 provides a detailed picture of 78 of the graduates who were working outside of the education sector. These individuals represent a very diverse group of graduates, who are engaged in a variety of interesting activities ranging from bartending to health care.

**Table 6: Current Employment Status of Education Graduates who were not Teaching**

<b>Current Employment Status</b>	<b>Number of Citations N=78</b>
Returned to school for further education: • unknown fields (4) • IT (2) • Law (1) • Special Education (1) • Graduate student (1) • Ph.D. (1)	10
Technology-based industries	10
Telecommunications	7
Manager: • Student services (1) • Retail (2) • Restaurant (1) • Golf course/restaurant (1) • Daycare owner/operator (1) • Freight Forwarding Manager (1)	7
Financial advisor	3
Homemaker/Parenting	3
On leave to start up a new business	2
Employment counselor	3
R.C.M.P. Officer	2
Ministry	2
Private college (non-teaching duties)	3
Construction / Trades	3
Youth corrections officer	2
Park interpreter	2
Lawyer	1
Fisher-person	1
Therapist (Speech, occupational and physio)	3
Craftsperson	1
Political secretary	1
Laboratory technician in a refinery	1
Health care worker	1
Psychologist/graphic artist	1
Journalist	1
Security Department	1
Human resource officer	1
Bartender	1
Research assistant	1
Director of an Indian Band	1
Tourism Liaison	1
Pharmaceutical Assistant	1
Fast-food industry worker	1

The information displayed in Table 6 represents 89% of the graduates that were contacted, and were not teaching. There were a wide variety of career choices represented, but the most

frequently occurring alternatives to teaching were working in the technology/telecommunications industry and returning to school for further education. Twenty-three percent of the group was involved in technology related industries, fourteen percent had returned to school to pursue advanced studies, and another ten percent found themselves in managerial positions. These choices are not surprising since technology is providing many new career opportunities and it is also common for young graduates to return to school if they are not successful in finding work in their vocational area.

This general description provides a very broad profile of the 1995 Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Music Education graduates. The next phase of the study examines issues related to the career transition of Education graduates in greater depth.

### **Factors Associated with Career Transitions**

#### **Introduction**

Eleven Education graduates from the class of 1995, who were employed in fields other than teaching, consented to participate in this portion of the study. Nine of the participants were living in the Province, and two others were living in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

Each individual either participated in a face-to-face interview or completed an electronic questionnaire. The questions that were posed were designed to generate information pertaining to their reasons for leaving the teaching profession, the fields in which they were employed and their perceptions of how their teacher education had contributed to their employment success.

The research conducted in this part of the study investigated several different issues. The graduates provided detailed information regarding employment history, work responsibilities, and knowledge and skills required in the new career. They also expressed their views on the importance of ongoing learning, the value of teacher-education programs in preparing graduates for work outside of the education sector, their career transitions and their overall perceptions of Education degrees.

In-depth questions related to all of these categories were posed to the participants and the collective results are reported in this chapter. The graduates shared many interesting and insightful thoughts and experiences such as their reasons for wanting to pursue teaching careers as well as the factors that drove them to seek work in other fields. Candid views about the quality of their teacher-training programs, first-hand accounts of classroom experiences and revelations of their own personal interests and desires helped to create a framework for understanding their career changes.

As a component of the research, each graduate was asked to nominate a work associate who could speak about his/her skills, performance, and suitability for employment within the organization. Eight participants complied with this request and subsequent interviews/questionnaires were completed with their associates.

Two of the participating graduates did not nominate an associate. (One stated that he was new to his position and would not be able to do so. The other participant indicated that he worked alone.) A third graduate nominated a work associate who agreed to participate in the study; however, he later withdrew due to inconvenient timing.

As with the Education graduates, by either engaging in an interview, or by completing an electronic questionnaire, a series of in-depth questions guided the associates in their reflection of how the Education graduates contributed to their organizations. (See Appendix G.) They addressed the caliber of the graduates' performance, the types of skills and knowledge that they used in their work, and also shared their perceptions of the quality and value of their work. This reflection process also encouraged the associates to identify any skills or abilities that the Education graduates needed to develop in order to improve their work performance. The results of this investigation are presented later in the chapter.

## **Teaching Background**

The participating graduates were asked to respond to a series of questions related to their teaching history. (See Appendix F.) The purpose of these questions was to provide insight into

each individual's teaching background, and to collect data that would be useful in describing the group as a whole. The information that the graduates provided has been organized and presented in Tables 7 and 8. Table 7 displays the amount of time the graduates spent teaching, grade levels taught and regions of employment.

**Table 7: Time Spent Teaching, Grade Levels Taught, and Regions of Employment**

<b>Time Spent Teaching*</b>	<b>Number of Citations</b>	<b>Grade Levels Taught*</b>	<b>Number of Citations**</b>	<b>Region of Employment</b>	<b>Number of Citations</b>
> 1 Week	2	Primary	3	Urban Area	5
4 - 6 Months	3	Elementary	3	Rural Area	3
2 - 3 Years	3	Junior High	8	Urban and Rural Areas	3
4 - 6 Years	3	High School	6		

*\*These timeframes are approximated by the participants and may represent a total of intermittent teaching positions. They do not reflect teaching internships. \*\*Some participants reported experience in more than one grade level, therefore the total number of citations exceeds the number of participants.*

There was a wide range of teaching experience represented by this sample. With accounts extending from just two days to six years, this group of teachers represented both novice and experienced educators. The group also represented each grade level from kindergarten to grade 12 and one participant also reported teaching adults at the post-secondary level. Both rural and urban areas were well represented with some individuals having the opportunity to teach in both.

Table 8 provides an overview of the subject areas that were taught by the participants showing, once again, a great diversity of experience among the participants. Many of them indicated that they had taught in the areas of mathematics, science, and technology, thereby demonstrating competency in skills that are highly sought after in the private sector. (Interestingly, there is also a current shortage of teachers in these areas.)

**Table 8: Subject Areas Taught by Participants**

<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Number of Citations**</b>
Adolescence	1
Computer Education	3
English Literature and Language Arts	5
Mathematics	3
Music	1
Physical Education	1
Religion	2
Sciences	3
Special Education	1
Social Studies	3
All Subjects <sup>†</sup>	1

*<sup>†</sup>All subjects refers to the general classroom curriculum in Primary and Elementary levels. <sup>\*\*</sup>Some participants reported experience in more than one subject area, therefore the total number of citations exceeds the number of participants.*

## **Work Responsibilities and Duties**

The Education graduates who participated in this study were involved in careers other than teaching. (A few however, did report that some of their work duties were related to teaching. Such instances included training other employees, presenting information to others, and teaching by non-traditional methods such as via the Internet.) There was no duplication of careers among the graduates.

Each participant provided information that painted a unique picture of his/her career. There were however, many common trends that were identifiable within the descriptions of their work responsibilities and duties. In order to facilitate the identification of these similarities, broad classifications of the type of work carried out by each individual were created. There was a total of six different work categories. (Depending upon the nature of the career, it was possible for one individual to perform work duties from more than one category. For example, the graduate who provided music instruction via the Internet had to be proficient in computer and Internet technology. She also needed a solid knowledge base of business-related issues, and had to be able to interact well with people in order to attract new clients and satisfy her existing customer base. Therefore she was simultaneously performing duties from three separate work categories.)

The six work categories are:

**Business-Based** - Work duties and responsibilities that are traditionally found in business industries are classified as business-based. These include marketing, accounting, consulting, investing, lending, budgeting, etc.

**People-Oriented** - Careers that involve a great deal of interaction with people are classified as people-oriented. Tasks associated with public relations, customer service, supervision of employees, counseling and instructing are included in this category.

**Labour-Oriented** – Labour intensive work such as manual labour, maintenance and utility work is classified as labour-oriented.

**Technology-Based** – Industries that make extensive use of technology are classified as technology-based industries. Configuring, repairing, and designing servers, developing and maintaining websites, and regular use of the Internet to carry out daily routines are included among the typical tasks in this category.

**Artistically-Oriented** – Careers that require artistic skills and knowledge fall into the artistically-oriented group. Graphic art and photography are examples of this type of work.

**Communication-Centered** - Industries that are centered on various communication skills are classified as communication-centered. Journalism, reporting, and writing are among the job responsibilities included in this group.

Table 9 provides a brief description of the work responsibilities and duties as provided by the graduates and also presents their corresponding job classifications.

**Table 9: Current Work Responsibilities and Duties**

<b>Identified Professions</b>	<b>Work Duties and Responsibilities (as Described by Education Graduates)</b>	<b>Broad Classification of Responsibilities and Duties</b>
Operations Manager International Freight Forwarding Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• handle budgetary concerns</li> <li>• customer service</li> <li>• marketing and sales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business-based</li> <li>• People-oriented</li> </ul>
Youth Care Counselor (Closed Custody Setting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement programs; teach programs to residents</li> <li>• supervise and direct daily living routines of residents</li> <li>• counseling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People-oriented</li> </ul>
Maintenance/ Utility Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintenance and utility work</li> <li>• use of cleaning machinery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour-oriented</li> </ul>
Graphic Artist and Web Developer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• graphic artist</li> <li>• web developer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology-based</li> <li>• Artistically-oriented</li> </ul>
Journalist/Reporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• writing (news stories, features, editorials)</li> <li>• photography</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication-centered (written)</li> </ul>
Golf Club/Restaurant Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oversee the business aspects of running a golf club and restaurant</li> <li>• supervise employees</li> <li>• service clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business-based</li> <li>• People-oriented</li> </ul>
Financial Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investing and financial advising (loans/mortgages etc.)</li> <li>• customer service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business-based</li> <li>• People-oriented</li> </ul>
Computer Network Technician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintenance of servers</li> <li>• trouble-shooting problems</li> <li>• creating new accounts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology-based</li> <li>• Business-based</li> </ul>
Music Instruction via the Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teaching piano lessons via the Internet</li> <li>• administration</li> <li>• finance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology-based</li> <li>• Business-based</li> <li>• People-oriented</li> </ul>
Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• research</li> <li>• website design, development and maintenance</li> <li>• editing/organizing/writing reports</li> <li>• maintaining an office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology-based</li> <li>• People-oriented</li> <li>• Communication-centered (written)</li> </ul>
Laboratory Technician in a Refinery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• testing and analysis of materials</li> <li>• quality control of product as it goes to market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology-based (extensive industry knowledge required)</li> </ul>

Four types of work reoccurred continuously among the career descriptions provided by the participants: business-based, people-oriented, communication-centered and technology-based.

Table 10 presents an overview of the occurrences of these common types of work. It is evident that 36% of the graduates reported that business-based skills were essential to their careers. Whether it was marketing, sales, accounting, investing or advising, a significant amount of business savvy was required to carry out their day to day routines.

**Table 10: Overview of Common Types of Work**

<b>Types of Work</b>	<b>Number of Citations by Participants*</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants*</b>
Communication-centered	2	18%
Business-based	4	36%
People-oriented	5	45%
Technology-dependent	5	45%

*\*As some participants were included in more than one type of work, the number of citations exceeds 11 and the percentages exceed 100.*

Similarly, five out of eleven participants, or 45%, reported that their jobs involved a substantial amount of interaction with people. Although customer service, marketing, sales, teaching, and supervising are different in nature, they all involve interaction with people and are therefore linked in this way. Teaching is an extremely interactive, people-based profession, in which teachers interact with students and their colleagues during most of their workday. It is therefore not surprising to see that 45% of the graduates in the sample became involved in other people-oriented careers.

Technology is also linked to five of the reported occupations. Website design and maintenance, research, and Internet use are just some of the tasks carried out on a regular basis by at least four of the eleven graduates. One of the striking observations about the information provided by the graduates is that most of the graduates performed a variety of different tasks in their jobs. Four graduates, (36%), indicated that some aspects of their work were more important than others; however, seven of the eleven participants, (64%), indicated that there were in fact no components of their work that they would consider to be significantly more important than others. Since the majority did not identify critical aspects of their work, this strengthens the assumption that many jobs outside of the teaching profession require a broad knowledge base and a wide variety of practical skills. For example, the graduate involved in research included not only knowledge and competence in research skills as part of her work responsibilities, but also

identified website construction, development and maintenance, writing and editing skills, organizational skills, and general office duties as being other integral parts of her work as well.

In summary, the majority of work descriptions reported by the participants fell into one or more of the four principal groups - business-based, people-oriented, communication-centered and technology based careers. Many jobs entailed a wide range of roles and responsibilities and most of the graduates viewed all of their work tasks as being significant. Also, the graduates' jobs were multi-faceted in nature. These observations support the claim that a wide variety of skills and abilities are required in today's job market. Employees were expected to perform many different tasks such as communicating effectively with others, servicing the needs of clients, solving problems and applying their expertise in order to do their jobs well.

### **Skills and Knowledge**

Career descriptions provided by each of the participants created some insight into the types of duties and responsibilities that these Education graduates performed in their careers. To develop a deeper understanding of the nature of their work, the specific types of skills and knowledge that were utilized in their careers were also identified and explored.

This set of data was analyzed according to the framework used by the Conference Board of Canada in developing their Employability Skills Profile (Conference Board of Canada, 1998). This profile was designed to reflect the skills, abilities and knowledge that Canadian employers seek in their employees. It classifies workplace skills into three categories: academic skills, personal management skills and teamwork skills. These same categories were judged to be suitable for this study. Table 11 presents this profile. As this table shows, despite the diversity between their careers, the skills used by the graduates in their work did reflect some common ground.

**Table 11: Employability Skills Profile from  
The Conference Board of Canada**

Types of Skills	Definition	Specific Examples
<p><b>Academic Skills</b></p>	<p>"Those skills which provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Communication Skills</u></li> <li>• Good listening, speaking, reading and writing skills</li> <li>• Ability to understand and learn</li> <li>• <u>Thinking Skills</u></li> <li>• Critical thinking, logical responses, problem solving, decision-making, evaluation</li> <li>• Good understanding and use of mathematics</li> <li>• Ability to use technology, instruments, tools and information systems</li> <li>• Access and apply specialized knowledge from a variety of fields</li> <li>• <u>Learn</u></li> <li>• Continue to learn for life</li> </ul>
<p><b>Personal Management Skills</b></p>	<p>"The combination of skills, attitudes and behaviors required to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Positive Attitudes and Behaviors</u></li> <li>• Self-esteem/confidence</li> <li>• Honesty, integrity, personal ethics</li> <li>• Positive attitude toward learning, growth and personal health</li> <li>• Initiative, energy, and persistence to get the job done</li> <li>• <u>Responsibility</u></li> <li>• Ability to set goals and priorities in work and personal life</li> <li>• Ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals</li> <li>• Accountability for actions taken</li> <li>• <u>Adaptability</u></li> <li>• Positive attitude toward change</li> <li>• Recognition of and respect for people's diversity and differences</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teamwork Skills</b></p>	<p>"Those skills needed to work with others on a job and to achieve the best results."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Work with Others</u></li> <li>• Understand/contribute to organization's goals</li> <li>• Understand and work within culture of the group</li> <li>• Plan and make decisions with others and support outcomes</li> <li>• Respect thoughts and opinions of others in the group</li> <li>• Exercise "give and take" to achieve group results</li> <li>• Seek a team approach as appropriate</li> <li>• Lead when appropriate, mobilizing the group for high performance</li> </ul>

Source: Conference Board of Canada 1998

The specific skills that the graduates identified are presented in Table 12. The number of citations by participants is provided in parentheses next to each skill.

**Table 12: Graduates' Skills Profile-  
Specific Skills Used by Education Graduates in their Careers**

Academic Skills	Personal Management Skills	Teamwork Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strong communication skills (oral and written) (8)</li> <li>• computer knowledge (software, applications and the Internet) (5)</li> <li>• people skills (public relations) (3)</li> <li>• knowledge of global commerce and trade (1)</li> <li>• counseling skills (1)</li> <li>• specialized knowledge in the operation of machinery (1)</li> <li>• artistic ability (1)</li> <li>• general knowledge of public affairs and issues (1)</li> <li>• ability to write quickly (1)</li> <li>• ability to think creatively (2)</li> <li>• knowledge of golf (1)</li> <li>• knowledge of the restaurant business (1)</li> <li>• knowledge of banking products and services (1)</li> <li>• knowledge of music (piano) (1)</li> <li>• marketing skills (1)</li> <li>• accounting skills (1)</li> <li>• knowledge of Chemistry (1)</li> <li>• bookkeeping skills (1)</li> <li>• research skills (1)</li> <li>• business savvy (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognizing and meeting the needs of clients (1)</li> <li>• ability and desire to learn quickly (1)</li> <li>• ability to accentuate the positive (1)</li> <li>• ability to prioritize (1)</li> <li>• ability to multi-task (1)</li> <li>• management skills (1)</li> <li>• scheduling skills (2)</li> <li>• organizational skills (2)</li> <li>• good servicing skills (2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consulting with others in the organization (1)</li> <li>• seeking advice when needed (1)</li> <li>• co-authoring (1)</li> <li>• developing and planning with a team (1)</li> <li>• joining forces to make something successful (1)</li> <li>• reporting results to others in the organization (1)</li> <li>• ensuring that the organization as a whole can meet the many needs of clients (1)</li> </ul>

All of the graduates reported using academic skills in their current careers. This response is not surprising since academic skills provide the solid foundation needed to perform most jobs. The most commonly cited academic skills included communication skills (8 citations), technology skills (5 citations), and public relation skills (3 citations).

Nine out of eleven graduates, (82%), indicated that personal management skills were needed to perform their jobs well and that good attitudes and behaviours also played an important role in the workplace. The ability to work independently was also highlighted as a critical skill, as many of the graduates worked by themselves or had very little supervision. Personal management skills were subsequently critical to satisfactory performance.

Seven out of eleven participants, (64%), indicated that teamwork skills were important in their professions. The ability to work well with others, both inside and outside the organization, was a necessary skill required in their workplace. Four participants, (36%), did not indicate teamwork

skills as being important in their professions. In this context, a high percentage is understandable as the sample included one graduate in a predominantly labor-based field, and three others whose jobs required them to work independently. It is therefore evident that academic skills, personal management skills and teamwork skills are all important, useful and essential for success in today's job markets.

One of the most interesting observations to emerge from this set of data was that seven participants, (64%), used all three types of skills in their current careers. Three participants indicated the use of academic and personal management skills, while only one graduate who was involved in utility work, indicated academic skills only as being predominant in the performance of his job. These results are summarized in Table 13.

**Table 13: Occurrence of Skills Groups Utilized by Participants**

Skills Groups Used by Participants	Number of Citations by Participants
Academic Skills Only	1
Academic and Personal Management Skills	3
Academic, Personal Management and Teamwork Skills	7

The Education graduates shared their views on whether particular skills or types of knowledge used in their work were significantly more important than others. Five participants, (45%), indicated that all of the skills they reported using were important and they would not rank some as being more important than others. Another 27% felt that the academic skills were the most important skills used in their jobs. Three participants did not respond. (See Table 14.)

**Table 14: Most Important Work Skills Identified by Participants**

Skills	Number of Citations by Participants	Percentage of Participants
All are Equally Important	5	45.5%
Academic Skills are Most Important	3	27.25%
No Response	3	27.25%

There is no evidence that the Faculty of Education focuses on the development of employability skills as outlined by the Conference Board of Canada in their Employability Skills Profile. When questioned as to how they acquired these skills, the graduates indicated a wide variety of methods. These are summarized in Table 15.

**Table 15: Acquisition of Required Skills and Abilities**

<b>How Skills/Abilities were Acquired</b>	<b>Number of Citations by Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants*</b>
Work experience	6	55%
Other courses/educational programs	6	55%
Background in Education	3	27%
Self-taught	3	27%
On-the-job training	2	18%
Volunteer Work	2	18%
Teaching Experience	1	9%

*\*The total percentages do not add up to 100 as graduates can fall into more than one category.*

An analysis of these results indicates that the graduates relied upon work experience and knowledge gained from other courses and educational programs to acquire essential skills and abilities. Five of the participants, (45%), had upgraded their qualifications by getting involved in extra training or education in order to make themselves more appealing candidates for their positions. Each of these five individuals indicated that by pursuing relevant courses offered by educational institutions, they became better prepared for their jobs. The other graduates (6) indicated that they did not undertake any extra training or education.

One graduate cited work and volunteer experience as being important factors in preparing him to run a golf club. The account he provided revealed that his practical experience served as a sort of apprenticeship for his future career.

My Dad owned a small [business] and I worked in that with him. A lot of skills I had built up through working with him. I didn't have any practical...experience other than the business principles that I have learned in my past life...and the golf side of it came from being a volunteer before I worked there.

The youth care counselor credited his Education degree, past work experience, and on-the-job training with preparing him for his current position: "My Education background and work experience allowed me to go right into it. After being employed, there is not a week that goes by that there is not some form of training [offered]."

Similarly, another graduate working as a researcher credited a combination of factors related to experience and education to her ability to perform her job well:

Extensive teaching experience and experience in an office environment, and the completion of over seventy university courses...I returned to university in fall 1996, taking courses full-time while substitute teaching. As of April 1999, I had completed an additional twenty-six courses since obtaining my Education degree and as a result, received a Diploma in Adult Education, Certificate in Library Studies, and Certificate in Public Administration.

Regardless of the types of efforts undertaken by the graduates to prepare for their positions, positive results were obtained. The associates who worked with these graduates corroborated this finding as they indicated that the Education graduates with whom they worked were very competent, capable and proficient in their work. This will be explained in greater detail later in the chapter.

### **Ongoing Education and Training**

One objective of this study was to investigate whether the graduates had been involved in ongoing education and training since starting their present jobs and if so, what was the nature of this training. Table 16 displays information related to the graduates' involvement in ongoing education and training.

**Table 16: Levels of Participation in Ongoing Education and Training**

<b>Type of Education/Training</b>	<b>Number of Citations</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
On-the job training	4	36%
Self-teaching	3	27%
Courses	3	27%
None	2	18%

Nine out of eleven participants, (82%), have been involved in some sort of continued learning. One graduate employed with an international freight forwarding company referred to his ongoing on-the-job-training as being quite helpful.

[I received] on-the-job-training by my manager from Toronto, intensive one-week training session, to give me the skills and knowledge required to operate the office...by myself. I continue to receive information and advice from head office as required and this training and experience has been quite valuable.

Another graduate working as a graphic artist and web developer confronted many of the challenges associated with his work, such as rapidly changing technology and the need to be proficient in using a variety of software and programs, by relying on self-teaching to enhance his knowledge and skills. In his own words, "Every day I have to figure out something new, usually from the web."

Most of the graduates held favorable views towards continuing education, with 36% rating it ahead of the type of learning they experienced in their teacher education degree. Five graduates did not offer a comparison.

Another graduate employed in the banking industry also expressed positive feelings towards continuing education programs:

The training initially was very intense and challenging as it was completed in a short period of time. Daily training occurred in an office with an experienced banking officer where I observed, was taught, and was then given the opportunity to practice. Eventually [I was] taking over the whole process of client interviews and applications. Nightly at-home studying was done from manuals and modules...This type of learning is far more effective as you are immersed in it and that is the best way to learn.

One participant who had the opportunity to teach adults at the university level said: "The ongoing learning I have taken is much more technical than theoretical. I found the Education curriculum very impractical to the practice of teaching. It was abstract and not applicable to what really occurs in the classroom."

This same graduate was working for a computer consulting company and indicated that upon the completion of his Education degree, he became extensively involved in other educational pursuits: "I retrained after doing my [Bachelor of Education degree] by doing the nine month Applied Information Technology program...to acquire my technical skills. I also did my MSc, that has helped me gain soft skills [along with] work ethic and research skills."

These participants have placed a high value on continuous learning and they have found it to be both rewarding and beneficial. They indicated that this type of learning allowed them to focus on their individual learning needs within a context that enabled them to learn. They perceived the experience as being more relevant, as well as more effective.

Self-teaching is a professional development technique that was referred to by three participants. Self-teaching is an aggressive learning approach that is a strand of self-directed learning. Those who subscribe to the self-directed philosophy assume responsibility for finding ways to independently increase their knowledge, acquire new skills and refine existing ones. Self-teaching techniques can be quite diverse, ranging from reading relevant material such as training manuals, to participating in practical activities such as speaking with experts in a particular field or acquiring knowledge and experience through volunteering. The effectiveness of chosen techniques varies from one individual to another, depending upon how well the technique corresponds with an individual's personal learning style.

One graduate who worked with a computer consulting company indicated that for his personal circumstances, self-teaching was a useful and effective learning strategy. He was involved in both formal course work and self-teaching: "I have also been taking courses or doing self-study

[in the Microsoft curriculum] since I've been in my current position to become qualified as a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer."

Another graduate who was still hoping to find a teaching position but had been unsuccessful to date, was a strong proponent of independent learning. He felt that this type of learning was advantageous because it was tailor-made to suit his own needs:

My current learning, although it is entirely informal and unaffiliated with any institution, is perfectly suited to my needs. I know exactly what I need to learn, and I undertake to master it. Essentially, I am learning by doing. It will lead to no degree or diploma. My teacher training, on the other hand, did not give nearly as much attention to what I felt I needed to learn. Rather the institution (specifically, Memorial University's Faculty of Education) determined what I needed to learn to qualify for a BEd and a Teacher's Certificate. Sometimes their estimation of what a potential teacher needs is justified and accurate, and sometimes the courses were far from what I thought was necessary.

Self-teaching then can be an effective method of learning. The participants who indicated that they availed of such techniques expressed positive views towards the results of such endeavors.

The data analysis in this section of the interviews/questionnaires confirms earlier observations that indicated that diverse skills and knowledge are both required and utilized in today's workplace. This in turn supports the widely held belief that many jobs require well-rounded, life-long learners.

The importance of continued learning was strongly emphasized in this section of data analysis. There was also evidence that there are a variety of methods that are employed to enhance and develop essential skills and knowledge required for work in today's job markets. For example, on-the-job training, self-teaching and formal course work, were among those identified by graduates.

## Graduates' Perceptions of their Career Transitions

### **Reasons for Pursuing an Education Degree**

The inspiration and motivation underlying each graduate's decision to pursue an Education degree is unique in its own right. Most of the graduates expressed positive reasons for entering into the program citing factors such as a love of children, the desire to help others and a personal interest in teaching. Two participants indicated that their decisions to pursue their degrees were influenced by less desirable motivators. One such individual indicated that he was drawn to education partially because he perceived the program as being relatively short and easy while another was quite candid in indicating that the prospect of having his summers off was the major attraction. He stated, "To get summers off. It's awful but it's the truth. At that point in my life it seemed important. And the existing teachers that I knew pushed that as the main advantage."

Table 17 provides an overview of all of the graduates' viewpoints.

**Table 17: Reasons Cited for Pursuing an Education Degree**

<b>Reasons Cited for Pursuing Education Degrees</b>	<b>Number of Citations</b>
wanted to teach	5
loved working with children	2
felt teaching would be rewarding/challenging	2
enjoyed helping others	1
felt it would be good career choice/could lead to other careers	2
inspired by friends in the profession	1
inspired by high school teachers	1
wanted to be in a career that could "make a difference"	1
felt he/she had something to offer to the profession	1
perceived the program as being short and relatively easy	1
wanted to be off every summer	1

As Table 17 shows, most of the graduates indicated altruistic reasons for wanting to enter into the teaching profession. A great deal of enthusiasm and genuine interest was evident in the comments of one individual who said, "I have always wanted to be an educator and work with students. I also loved working with children so it only seemed natural at the time to become a primary teacher."

Another graduate expressed, "I guess I figured I could make a difference as well. If I could make a difference like the way some of the teachers I had in high school impacted my life..." The sincerity in this graduate's intentions has been carried over into his current career as a youth counselor. When describing his work he said:

Though I don't have a formal classroom setting, I have had kids come up to me after leaving our facility who have said they never got into trouble after conversations that we had...It impacts you as well...It's pretty rewarding you know. I don't have the four walls around me. It's similar but different I guess.

### **Career Expectations upon Graduation**

Eight participants, 73%, indicated that their positions did not reflect the career path that they had anticipated for themselves. Two participants, (18%), felt that their careers were somewhat like what they had anticipated. Only one graduate felt that his current position clearly reflected his expectations. (See Table 18.)

**Table 18: Extent to Which the Current Career Reflected the Type of Career Expected upon Graduation**

<b>Degree of Expectancy</b>	<b>Number of Citations by Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
Unrelated to what was expected	8	73%
Somewhat like what was expected	2	18%
Met the expectations	1	9%

One graduate currently working in the financial services sector indicated that although she was not teaching, there were still aspects to her work that were somewhat related to the teaching profession:

I still have the daily contact with people- just of a different age- and I am still passing on information – just of a different kind. Every day I take pride that I am able to inform my clients in an effective manner about financial services and how I can help them meet their financial needs. In a manner of speaking, my classroom is an office where I do one on one consulting.

Another graduate teaching music lessons over the Internet indicated that her work involved teaching, but not in the traditional sense of the profession: "I am still teaching music now, but I am running my own business at the same time. Therefore, this does not reflect upon the fact that I thought I would be teaching in a classroom for the majority of my working life."

The graduate who was still hoping to find work in the teaching profession revealed:

My current position does not in any way resemble the kind of job I expected to have after earning my BEd. My current job represents a severe step backward in my career progression. I am essentially doing the same kind of job that I did twelve years ago when I was working on my first job [in this industry].

As with the reasons for deciding to pursue an Education degree, each graduate provided a unique perspective on why s/he found work in another sector to be appealing. Most of their reasons tended to focus on unsuccessful career searches, working conditions and extrinsic rewards.

One graduate explained his interest in working in another field by referring to a financial reward structure that compensates individuals for superior performance and exemplary efforts, "Better rewards. Generally, excellent teachers get paid the same as those who don't try, or don't care. If you have a modicum of ambition, this reward structure doesn't promote maximum performance."

Table 19 provides an overview of all of the graduates' views pertaining to why work in another sector was appealing. As this table shows, the most commonly cited factor was the possibility of better financial compensation.

**Table 19: Reasons Why Work in Another Sector Was Appealing**

<b>Reasons Cited to Explain Why Work in Another Sector Was Appealing</b>	
•	the pay was equal or better than teaching (4)
•	already had experience and a position with the organization (2)
•	needed full-time, consistent work (2)
•	experience and education were assets in the other field (1)
•	the internship was a very negative experience (1)
•	better rewards and great benefits (1)
•	was unable to find a teaching position (1)
•	did not have a strong preference for either, however in private industry hard work led to better pay (1)
•	could run a business and teach at the same time (1)
•	wanted to work independently without extra pressures and increased workload from government (1)
•	wouldn't have to deal with parents or administration (1)
•	more opportunity(1)
•	more diversity(1)
•	more appreciation for your skills (1)

To identify factors that may contribute to teachers' decisions to seek work in other sectors, the 1995 graduates were asked to specify why they decided to leave the teaching profession. Their responses are presented in Table 20.

**Table 20: Reasons for Leaving Teaching**

<b>Reasons for Leaving Teaching</b>	<b>Number of Citations by Participants</b>	<b>Number of Citations as the Primary Reason for Leaving</b>
Unable to find a secure teaching position	7	4
Financial concerns (couldn't afford to wait for a full-time position)	3	1
Sought better pay	3	1
Was already happy in another job	2	2
The internship was a bad experience	1	0
Didn't enjoy it	1	1
Wanted to be "own boss"	1	1
Lack of appreciation	1	1
Was unable to find the "right" position	1	0
Too many demands for too little remuneration	1	0

The most predominant reason cited for choosing to pursue careers in other professions was poor job prospects. Seven participants, (64%), indicated that this was one of the reasons that steered them into other careers, and four, (36%), selected it as the most influential factor in making their decision.

One of the participants was not happy in his position, but remained in his other field because of

financial necessity. He had not given up on the hope of finding a teaching position, but was very frustrated in his quest to find one.

I am somewhat amazed that not a single principal in St. John's has ever looked at my qualifications and considered me worthy of an interview. I have fifteen years experience as a working professional, I have two university degrees, I have attended three universities, I have lived in four of the country's six regions, I have traveled extensively. I received a grade of 90% on my BEd teaching internship...but no one at a St. John's school or within the Avalon East Board thinks I am capable of teaching English or social studies... How can you possibly have a situation where experienced professionals are, as in my case, knocking on the door and offering substantial amounts of expertise to the Province's pupils, but the educational officials simply say no thanks?

...I am appalled and disgusted with the unwritten, unofficial policy of the Avalon East School Board that says – due to NLTA pressure – substitute teachers will be given hiring preference. There should be one rule and one rule only for hiring teachers: who will do the best job?

Another commonly cited reason for pursuing other careers was financial concerns. Three participants were unable to wait to find a full-time teaching position because they had to deal with surmounting financial responsibilities such as student loan debts and the cost of living. Three others indicated that they left teaching because the pay was too low. All individuals who cited financial reasons for pursuing other careers were in essence affected by poor job prospects as well.

Another graduate who was self-employed revealed that a combination of factors led to his decision to pursue another career: "Lack of jobs. Also I owed so much in student loans that a teacher's salary simply meant poverty. One doesn't spend six years in university to live in poverty. Finally, I like the fact that I am my own boss, and that effort equals prosperity."

Another self-employed graduate revealed a great deal of frustration towards the teaching profession and the government.

"I am working on my own without the extra workload from the government. A government that expects you to work and not get paid for half of your services which end up being twice the hours in your workweek. A government that traps you into this profession because of your love for the children and education. I still work as hard but the benefits are much more appealing."

Factors such as these have led to the loss of many qualified, enthusiastic teachers who could not afford to wait around for a chance at a teaching position. One graduate summed up his thoughts on such issues this way:

I feel government must provide more funding to school boards to enable them to interest recent graduates to stay in Newfoundland. I feel school boards for their part in gaining more funding, must take an interest in recent graduates. They must nurture the abilities gained over the course of the program by perhaps providing more guidance through mentoring and further evaluations. To accomplish this, the school boards must get rid of the old system of calling in substitute teachers on a limited basis. Why? Because I feel there is little incentive for new teachers to stay in the profession given the limited classroom time they receive as well as the feeling of being isolated when going into a new environment on a daily basis.

Another graduate suggested that it is the students of the Province who stand to lose a great deal when the future educators are abandoning their professions of choice due to factors that are beyond their control. He stated: "The Minister of Education needs to consider the loss of teachers to the private sector as a threat and deal with it in order to maintain the best possible system for our children."

In Chapter 3 of this study, (see page 19), reference was made to a similar study by Frances Bastress, (1984). She investigated the career changes of twenty-one teachers in the United States. The results from this study closely mirror the results from Bastress' work. With only one obvious exception, (that being that "the internship was a very negative experience"), every other reason cited by the 1995 Education graduates in this study can be linked with reasons provided by Bastress' participants.

The quantity and variety of responses provided by participants in the local study were obviously not as diverse due to the fact that the number of participants was reduced by almost one half. The similarity observed between the two groups of participants may indicate that teacher graduates in 1995 faced many of the same professional issues, problems and concerns as graduates in 1984. In particular, issues related to unsuccessful career searches, work conditions and extrinsic rewards were present in both studies. Such similarities unite the two samples and reinforce the strength and validity of their claims.

### **Contributions Made to the New Organizations**

The graduates who have left teaching are making significant contributions to their current organizations. Every individual was able to identify several of their own strengths and qualities, indicating that all of the participants viewed themselves as positive assets to their organizations. Table 21 organizes the strengths and qualities as reported by the graduates into the skills groups defined by the Conference Board of Canada. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of graduates who mentioned each particular skill.

As presented in Table 11, the Conference Board of Canada defines academic skills as "those skills which provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results". Personal management skills are defined as "the combination of skills, attitudes and behaviours required to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results".

**Table 21: Strengths and Qualities Identified by the Graduates**

Academic Skills	Personal Management Skills	Teamwork Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specialized knowledge (2)</li> <li>• skilled (2)</li> <li>• creative (1)</li> <li>• highly experienced (4)</li> <li>• educated (5)</li> <li>• excellent communication skills (3)</li> <li>• lots of volunteer experience(1)</li> <li>• diverse background and educational experiences (1)</li> <li>• intellectual ability (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reliable (1)</li> <li>• professional (1)</li> <li>• loyal (1)</li> <li>• dedicated (5)</li> <li>• adaptable (1)</li> <li>• determined (1)</li> <li>• visionary (1)</li> <li>• strong work ethic (6)</li> <li>• great personality (1)</li> <li>• trustworthy (1)</li> <li>• eager (1)</li> <li>• prudent (1)</li> <li>• proven record of performance (1)</li> <li>• quick learner (1)</li> <li>• competent (1)</li> <li>• strives to do the best job (2)</li> <li>• motivated (1)</li> <li>• personable (2)</li> <li>• positive (1)</li> <li>• eager to improve skills (2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• team player (1)</li> </ul>

The most striking feature in this table is the minimal emphasis placed upon teamwork skills. In providing descriptions of their work responsibilities and duties, most of the graduates have at least alluded to the need for teamwork skills. Table 12, (see page 36), indicated that seven of the graduates, 64%, acknowledged that teamwork skills played a role in their careers. It is therefore peculiar that teamwork skills were not identified as being among the graduates' strengths. One plausible explanation could lie in the assumption that teamwork skills may be taken for granted as being everyday life skills and were under emphasized.

### **Long-term Employment Plans**

The participants also indicated their long-term employment plans. Seven were hoping to advance within their organizations. One of these seven participants hoped to advance, but also indicated the desire to return to teaching at a later time. One person indicated that opportunity for advancement was minimal; however he was quite content with his current employment status within the organization. Two graduates indicated that they were not planning to stay with their positions. (In fact, one had already left at the time of his interview.) Table 22 presents an overview of the employees' long-term career plans.

**Table 22: Long-term Plans within the Organization**

<b>Future Aspirations within the Organization</b>	<b>Number of Citations by Participants</b>
Hoping to advance within the organization	6
Hoping to advance, but also planning to return to teaching at a later date	1
Opportunity for advancement is minimal; happy to stay in current position	1
Hoping to leave the current profession for a teaching position	1
Not sure	1
Had already left the profession	1

One graduate indicated that there could be future opportunity to lecture at the university level. This opportunity would be welcomed; however the intention at the time of the study was to remain in the current position.

Another participant, who was relatively new in his position, revealed that he enjoyed the rewards associated with his position and he was interested in staying with it for quite some time.

If they take care of me then I may be here for a long time. This business is very competitive and if an impressive offer develops, it would be hard not to change organizations. To date, my company has rewarded me with an increase in responsibility, with a promotion and an increase in remuneration.

Another individual who had several years of experience within his organization identified other factors that could play a role in enhancing job satisfaction. He indicated that although there was not a great deal of opportunity for upward movement within the organization, working under the direction of competent leaders coupled with a strong sense of teamwork positively affected his job satisfaction.

Well, I am quite content with the role I am playing in the organization. We have a young management team there now, so room for advancement is minimal, but I am quite content to work with the management team that we have. They are competent

individuals, around the same age. We have our mission statement and know where we want to go.

The statements provided by the graduates clearly indicate that many different factors could affect career plans. Monetary rewards, increasing responsibility, strong leadership, and effective teamwork are just some of the particular examples mentioned by the graduates.

### **Summary of Perceptions of Career Transitions**

Using the descriptions of career transitions provided by the participants, four distinct trends were identified. First, a genuine interest in teaching was the incentive that attracted most of the graduates in the sample to Education. Second, the majority of participants felt that they were well suited to the teaching profession and simply wanted to teach and hoped that they could make a positive contribution to the education sector. Third, most of the graduates were not considering careers in other professions when they were completing their Education degrees, but due to factors beyond their control, (i.e. lack of jobs, financial insecurity), they were forced to look elsewhere. Fourth, once graduates were settled in their new profession, they were content to stay in their new careers. Only one graduate expressed a desire to leave his career in favor of a teaching position.

### **Work Associates' Perceptions of the Education Graduates' Roles in their Organizations**

Earlier in the chapter, Table 9 provided us with the graduates' descriptions of their work duties and responsibilities. To gain a little more insight into how they are performing in their careers, the views of their work associates were solicited.

Eight associates were subsequently nominated and agreed to participate in the study. They represented many different fields including an international freight forwarding company, a media publication firm, a golf club, a financial services institution, a computer consulting company, an Internet music school, a research institution, and a refinery. The professional relationships of the

associates and graduates were quite varied ranging from supervisors to support staff. Table 23 provides an overview of the work comparisons between the work duties and responsibilities as described by the graduates and those described by the work associates.

**Table 23: Work Duties and Responsibilities of the Education Graduates**

Identified Professions	Work Duties and Responsibilities (as Described by Education Graduates)	Work Duties and Responsibilities Performed by the Education Graduates and Work Associates (as Described by the Work Associates)
Operations Manager for an International Freight Forwarding Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• handle budgetary concerns</li> <li>• customer service</li> <li>• marketing and sales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• business research and marketing</li> <li>• air-cargo development</li> <li>• proposal presentations</li> </ul>
Youth Care Counselor (Closed Custody Setting for Young Offenders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement programs: teach programs to residents</li> <li>• supervise and direct daily living routines of residents</li> <li>• counseling</li> </ul>	No work associate available
Maintenance and Utility Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintenance and utility work</li> <li>• use of cleaning machinery</li> </ul>	No work associate available
Graphic Artist and Web Developer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• graphic artist</li> <li>• web developer</li> </ul>	No work associate available
Journalist/Reporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• writing (news stories, features, editorials)</li> <li>• photography</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work associate ensures smooth media production, directs content, ensures deadlines are met</li> <li>• Education graduate works as a reporter, photographer, researcher, writer etc.</li> </ul>
Golf Club/Restaurant Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oversee the business aspects of running a golf club and restaurant</li> <li>• supervise employees</li> <li>• service clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education graduate oversees all employees</li> <li>• work associate involved in construction, clean-up, maintenance</li> </ul>
Financial Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investing and financial advising (loans/mortgages etc.)</li> <li>• customer service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lending</li> <li>• investing</li> <li>• financial counseling</li> </ul>
Network Technician for a Computer Consulting Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintenance of servers</li> <li>• trouble-shooting problems</li> <li>• creating new accounts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• administer and troubleshoot clients' network infrastructure</li> <li>• configure, repair and design servers</li> <li>• consult, advise, plan changes</li> </ul>
Music Instruction via the Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teaching piano lessons via the Internet</li> <li>• administration</li> <li>• finance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education graduate responsible for accounting, scheduling, teaching, recruiting and hiring</li> <li>• work associate responsible for teaching, marketing, student recruitment and support, and educational service offerings</li> </ul>
Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• research</li> <li>• website design, development and maintenance</li> <li>• editing</li> <li>• organizing/writing reports</li> <li>• maintaining an office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop website</li> <li>• find/catalogue resources</li> <li>• publish contents of website into resource inventory</li> <li>• publish reports</li> <li>• oversee the running of an office</li> <li>• train/supervise students</li> </ul>
Laboratory Technician in a Refinery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• testing and analysis of materials</li> <li>• quality control of product as it goes to market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality control and testing of petroleum products</li> </ul>

There was a close match between the skills that both the graduates and the associates identified as being important. The associates provided information about the kinds of work duties and responsibilities that the graduates performed, as well as the types of tasks that they did together. In some instances, the work graduates' and associates' responses were almost identical. For example one pair of individuals involved in the financial services sector as well as another in the refinery industry provided descriptions that were very closely matched. (See Table 23.)

Others, such as the pair involved with the computer consulting company, displayed some minor differences, but still provided concordant descriptions of work duties and responsibilities. (See Table 23.) The consistency between the graduates' and associates' descriptions strengthens the validity and authenticity of the information that they provided.

Generally, the associates had high expectations for new people that they were bringing into their organizations. They were adamant that new employees must possess the necessary academic, personal management and teamwork skills to do the job the way it needs to be done. Table 24 provides an overview of the work associates' perceptions of the types of skills and knowledge used by the graduates in their current careers categorized using the Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills Profile.

**Table 24: Work Associates' Perceptions of the Types of Skills and Knowledge Used by the Graduates in Their Current Careers**

Academic Skills	Personal Management Skills	Teamwork Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analytical skills</li> <li>• good writing skills</li> <li>• good communication skills</li> <li>• broad knowledge of culture and history</li> <li>• accounting skills</li> <li>• knowledge of all bank products and services</li> <li>• high level technical skills</li> <li>• ability to play piano</li> <li>• ability to teach effectively</li> <li>• business knowledge</li> <li>• Internet/Internet marketing knowledge, HTML knowledge</li> <li>• library/research skills</li> <li>• knowledge of educational resources and how they are organized</li> <li>• training skills</li> <li>• knowledge of Chemistry, petroleum processing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interpersonal and organizational skills</li> <li>• inquisitive nature</li> <li>• love of the written word</li> <li>• good soft skills</li> <li>• good work ethic</li> <li>• management skills</li> <li>• ability to work under minimal supervision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ability to be a team player</li> </ul>

The information presented in Table 24 shows that each of the eight professional associates identified academic skills and personal management skills as being among those used in the graduates' line of work. This finding corresponds with the information presented in Table 21, in which the graduates identified these same skills as being among their strengths. (See page 50). The most noticeable difference between the graduates' and work associates' perceptions was the lack of emphasis placed upon teamwork skills. Seven of the eleven graduates reported that teamwork skills were an integral part of their work; however only one work associate specified that teamwork skills were required on the job.

Among the eight work associates involved in the study, four were involved in the hiring process within their organizations. Only two of these four were directly involved in the hiring of their respective Education graduate. Even though just half of the associates assumed an active role in the hiring, all eight individuals were able to provide some indication of the typical background that they perceived to be desirable in new employees.

Three associates, (38%), indicated that a university degree or post-secondary education was a desirable asset in a new employee. Another 38% identified a university degree or post-secondary diploma in a specified area as an important attribute for new employees to possess. One individual highlighted the importance of demonstrating competency in several areas including strong literacy skills, good communication skills, a willingness to learn new skills and a desire to enhance existing ones. Another associate referred to managerial experience as a key asset for prospective employees.

Only three organizations targeted particular areas of specialization. The other five sought candidates who had a broad liberal arts background. The majority of associates in this study indicated that a liberal arts education was more important than expertise. This is a widely held view in some industries. (i.e. high technology, universities).

A recent Globe and Mail article about political stances on education (Partridge, 2000), revealed that Ontario Premier Mike Harris "warned" the local post-secondary educational institutions that

they had to ensure that the Province would have a sufficient pool of highly trained individuals to meet the demand for high-technology positions. The premier contributed \$660-million to these institutions, with the intention that the money would be directed into technology education. In opposition to his strong words and actions, chief executive officers from 30 high-technology companies joined forces with university leaders to voice their concerns over the Premier's stance. They argued in support of a liberal arts education.

" 'Funding of higher education in this country needn't be an either-or proposition between technology or liberal arts and sciences,' the CEOs say, adding that it is 'critical that all universities in Canada receive sufficient funding to ensure a well-educated workforce and a new generation of leadership.' ...

Although agreeing that Canada needs more technology graduates, the CEOs said it is impossible to operate an effective corporation by employing these people alone."  
(Partridge, 2000, p. A5)

The chief executive officers stressed that the technology industry requires individuals who can work along with the technology specialists to "create and manage the corporate environment". Their views, along with those of the university leaders, support the ideas expressed by the work associates in this study.

The work associates also indicated that a great deal of emphasis is placed on finding an organizational fit. Five such associates stressed that organizational fit was an important consideration when selecting new employees. One individual who was directly involved in the hiring process in his organization indicated that the ability to do the job well was important, but consideration was also given to whether a candidate would be a good "corporate fit":

I wouldn't necessarily equate "organizational fit" with "professional ability". While both are important, organizational fit is more internal, an ability to see and agree with the corporate direction and the ability to get along with coworkers. Professional ability has

more to do with how one performs one's job. Both are very important. We've had people who excelled at their job, were very efficient workers, but who could not get along with coworkers or other associates. The ability to fit, and get along, becomes increasingly important as they move into positions of management.

A second associate who was also involved in the hiring process indicated: "We want to feel comfortable a prospective employee will gel with the team we already have in place."

A third associate claimed that his organization placed more emphasis on personality rather than on professional ability: "A potential associate has to write both an intelligence and personality test to see if [s/he] would be a good fit for the company. This test is written before an interview is granted."

One other associate whose work involves international business relations also emphasized the importance of organizational fit: "The person must be able to work and communicate with a variety of individuals from very different backgrounds and cultures." Another individual involved in the financing industry claimed that in her opinion, organizational fit was the most important factor considered when hiring new employees.

Two work associates held slightly different views. Organizational fit was seen as an asset, but was not strongly emphasized in their organizations. One associate highlighted the importance of ensuring that employees were made to see that their work was valuable and that they contributed to the organization:

The person needs to be able to work well with the people on the project, but they are free to have their own opinions, work at their own pace and schedule, agree or disagree to do specific tasks, offer suggestions for other ways of doing things. The person needs to be able to communicate, relate and contribute to achieving the project goals. The person needs to be able to work across disciplines. In other words, the person needs to be able

to take their skills and knowledge and apply it to a different domain and orientation. I think professional ability is very important. However I do feel that people develop this over time while investing more of themselves in completing the project. Organizational fit is enhanced when the employee sees the product of his/her work. When the employee gets recognition either through financial remuneration, publications, and general recognition that they did the work and were an important part of it happening, then I think the person gains a sense of ownership and respect for the work and the way it happens.

The second associate who worked with an Internet-based company felt that professional ability was more important than organizational fit in her line of work.

Our employees will work from their own homes and will be located all over the world. Therefore it is not as important that they "fit in". They must, however, match our philosophy of teaching...piano lessons must be high quality, but relaxed and enjoyable for the student. In talking about "professional ability", I think it is extremely important that our teachers are trained, highly qualified professionals who offer only top-notch music lessons.

In summary, the views of the work associates were consistent with those of the Education graduates. The job descriptions provided by both parties were very similar. In terms of the skills that were identified, both groups indicated that academic and personal management skills were among those most commonly used in the graduates' work. One significant difference in their views of skills pertains to the perceptions of teamwork skills. Seven out of eleven graduates, 64%, indicated that teamwork skills were used in their jobs while only one associate identified the use of this skill. The associates regarded liberal arts degrees as being quite valuable in the workplace. In their view, well-rounded knowledge and a broad skill base render candidates desirable for employment. The work associates also indicated that having a specific skill set and being able to fit in with the current team, were both important qualities.

## Chapter Five

### Perceptions of the Value of Education Degrees

#### Education Graduates' Views of Education Degrees

Each of the participants had completed a Bachelor of Education degree and was involved in a career other than teaching. This portion of the study is focused on trying to determine the extent to which the skills and/or abilities used in the new careers were developed during the completion of the Education degree.

The graduates provided extensive feedback that highlighted both the positive aspects of the Education degree program, as well as some valid concerns. They reflected on a wide variety of personal experiences encountered throughout the duration of their program with topics of consideration ranging from the quality of the courses offered to the development of employability skills.

Most of the graduates' viewpoints of the Education degree program have been categorized into two groups: merits and concerns. (See Table 25.) This categorization is only intended to represent the feedback provided by the eleven participants in this study. There is no indication that these views are widespread.

**Table 25: Merits and Concerns of the Bachelor of Education Degree Program  
(As Identified by 1995 Education Graduates)**

<b>Merits of the Bachelor of Education Degree Program</b>	<b>Concerns Expressed over the Bachelor of Education Degree Program</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fostered the development of employability skills</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internship needs to take place earlier in the program</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internship regarded as extremely valuable and important</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More emphasis needed on the practical side of teaching/ lack of preparation for the reality of the profession</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solid link between course work and internship</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited development of skills needed for work outside of the education sector</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provided good preparation for careers outside of education</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professional Year deemed to be inadequate</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relevant and practical coursework</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overlap between different programs (i.e. Arts and Education)</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not enough emphasis placed on development of technological skills</li></ul>

## **Positive Aspects**

As Table 25 shows, the graduates identified many positive outcomes of the Education degree program. For example, several felt that they developed many useful skills while enrolled in the program. In particular, communication skills and personal management skills were identified by 55% of the graduates as being the types of skills that were acquired or developed in their teacher-preparation program. They also indicated that these skills were used regularly in their careers outside of teaching. One graduate involved in international business expressed this view of the skills he acquired through the Education program: "I use them every day to conduct business around the world."

Another individual employed in a labor-based position focused on the practical side of Education degrees:

Well, most of these are life skills really. For example, take problem solving. I find I can verbalize my misgivings in a certain situation without making my difference of opinion seem like a personal attack on an individual with a different view. In other words, I feel a need to educate them on my opinion in a non-threatening way. Hopefully my message is heard and not interpreted as criticism.

Another graduate echoed similar sentiments by explaining how he used the skills he acquired through the Education program in his current career:

You had to take several things that were being constantly reinforced in university, on how you treat kids. So especially in the practical courses that I did, there was constant feedback in the four thousand level courses about dealing with kids, reinforcement, how to handle them in difficult situations, that sort of stuff. So whether it is a classroom or a business environment, it didn't make a difference.

The internship was another positive component of the program that was identified by the graduates. One individual stated, "It is one of the most edifying and beneficial parts of any

teacher's career." Similarly, many whose programs incorporated professional year opportunities indicated that they too were valuable experiences. This idea was clearly stated by one graduate who said, "The professional year was the one year I can truly say made the difference for me. It was concentrated with the skills needed to teach."

Many graduates felt that relevant and practical course work was offered throughout the program. A strong majority of the graduates, (73%), indicated that they regarded coursework as being an important component of a teacher-preparation program. When asked to comment on whether there was a perceived link between course work and internship/professional year opportunities, nine graduates, (82%), felt that there was indeed a vinculum between the two. One individual expressed his view by saying, "I guess the internship is extremely important because there is no substitute for hands on experience. But course work is obviously the foundation to get you to the internship. You can't have one without the other."

Since the graduates in the study were working in fields outside of education, they were able to evaluate to what degree the completion of an Education degree had prepared them for work in other sectors. Six of the eleven participants, (55%), indicated that they would consider an Education degree to be a good preparation for careers outside of the sector. Their reasons for this claim varied, with identified advantages ranging from broadened communication skills to a well rounded, liberal arts type of education. For example, one graduate said:

I (use) a lot of stuff that I learned while in the faculty of Education, like media relation courses and what not. When [I] do presentations...I feel I certainly communicate the message effectively by using various media tools like overheads, flipcharts to catch a person's attention and maintain it much better. I certainly attribute that to the fact that I did do a lot of the courses, and I apply a lot of that in my daily work...There's many an employer who would be eager to hire an Education graduate. I'm not the only person who has an Education degree who is employed [here]. There are probably another ten.

Another graduate also highlighted the value of being a good communicator:

It (an Education degree) instills the value of being adaptable, [provides] well-rounded knowledge, but mostly [provides] the ability to be effective communicators. Also as educators we have the ability to accept the differences in individuals and that enhances our ability to interact with others.

Positive outcomes of the Education degree program that were identified by the graduates indicate that the program provides graduates with skills and knowledge that are useful and necessary for employment opportunities both within the education sector and in other fields. These merits deserve to be highlighted because they are positive indicators that the program is meeting important objectives and goals. It must also be noted however, that the information presented in Table 25 also revealed many valid concerns.

### **Concerns with the Education Degree Program**

Many of the concerns identified by the graduates conflict with some of the previously identified merits, revealing that the graduates held differing views of the quality of education that they received. One such inconsistency in these views is the degree to which Education degrees prepare graduates for work in sectors outside of education. One graduate expressed his view in this way:

I can't identify one professional skill/ability/knowledge that I acquired in my education program. I would summarize it as a general waste of time. I don't want to seem harsh, but I don't remember a lot of the material we covered that I have referenced in the last five years.

Another graduate echoed these sentiments by saying, "It was a waste of time."

Feeling that an Education degree provides graduates with very few skills that can be used outside of teaching, one graduate highlighted the lack of emphasis on technology. He decided that it was in his best interest to upgrade his skills and qualifications in order to improve his chances of finding employment in another field.

Overall, I feel that Education degrees do not adequately prepare graduates for work opportunities outside of the education sector. The main skills that I gained, other than teaching skills, were communication skills. As most of the program consists only of Education courses, you are really not prepared to do anything else. I was able to graduate with my Education degree while possessing limited knowledge of computer technology. One year as a substitute teacher convinced me I needed more education. I was able to find employment in another field, but only after obtaining higher qualifications.

Another graduate reiterated these views, and argued that if an Education degree could not help him secure a teaching position, then it surely would not help him obtain work in other fields.

In my experience, my BEd has not made any difference regarding work opportunities. To be somewhat cynical about it, my BEd doesn't even make any difference to the various Newfoundland school boards I have applied to, so why would it make any difference to an employer in a sector outside of the education field? It's no secret that Education degrees do not engender much respect amongst the public. Again, this isn't necessarily the fault of the faculty or the university. In many regards, teaching isn't a very respected profession either, so the related degrees suffer the same fate.

Another participant expressed a favorable view of the Education degree, but also added that many other degrees also provide similar opportunities to develop the same sorts of skills and knowledge:

There is a lot of overlap regardless of the program. If you do an Arts degree, or an Education degree, you do a lot of the same program. I don't think you are meant to come out with an abundance of specific knowledge. I think you are meant to come out with universal learning. I think university prepares you for anything that awaits you.

Similarly, another graduate indicated that Education degrees prepare graduates for work outside of the education sector to almost the same level as Arts degrees.

I would rate them (Education degrees), about the same for an Arts degree. But I feel an Arts degree will challenge your mind more so than an Education degree. When you study for an Education degree, it is pretty much focused on that particular area. I feel an Arts degree makes you aware of many other aspects of society. As a result you gain a much broader and a much more in-depth knowledge base of society as a whole.

Some of the graduates not only felt that the Education degree offered little preparation for alternate careers, but also felt that they were poorly prepared to assume employment as teachers. This view emerged from their dissatisfaction with the coursework that was offered as they identified a need for more emphasis on the practical side of the profession. One graduate stated:

I was not very happy about the quality of BEd courses I took at Memorial. I already had a BA, as well as experience in the working world, so I felt that I didn't need any more instruction regarding what I would be teaching to pupils. What I needed was instruction on how to teach – what to actually do and say in a classroom so that pupils would be interested, motivated, involved, ambitious, hard-working, well-behaved etc. Too much of the Education faculty's curriculum concentrated on "educating" the future teachers about their chosen subject. I already had expertise in my subject. This, I think, is a major flaw of the faculty of Education. In fact, I would go further and say it is a major flaw in the

entire institutional approach to educating teachers. Education students should have expertise in their chosen subject – i.e. a prior university degree – before they even enroll in an Education faculty.

(To clarify an issue related to this graduate's views, Education students enrolled in the high school program are in fact required to complete a prior degree before being accepted into the Faculty of Education. Those in the primary and elementary programs are not.)

Another graduate said, "Course work is very important. It is my opinion that not enough relevant, practical course work is done. More fieldwork is necessary to develop teachers' confidence and knowledge."

Other graduates also expressed critical views of the coursework they had completed in their programs. One of these graduates reflected upon his own teaching experience when he said,

When I look at what I did in grade 7, 8, and 9 math, there was absolutely nothing that I did in university that made me better prepared than if I had never seen university in terms of the knowledge that I needed. In other words, to teach someone that the angles of a triangle add up to 180 degrees, how to dissect an angle or how to solve an algebra problem, the university did not help me in terms of teaching grades 7, 8 and 9.

Similarly, another individual echoed the same sentiments, "Original thought was not rewarded. I realized that half way through my program and simply coasted through the last half."

Although all of the graduates indicated that the internship was or should be a very important part of the teacher training program, many of them identified concerns with certain aspects of the internship component. For example, some expressed the need for internships to occur earlier in the program. One graduate said:

Students in the Faculty of Education should begin with a semester in school. I am assuming...that they will already hold a university degree, and thus pupils would not be in danger of being "damaged" by someone who is utterly incompetent. The students should spend the second term of their one-year education program in the university classroom. Education courses would then have far more meaning for and effect on students, because they could relate everything to actual experience.

A similar view was provided by another graduate who pointed out that the internship should be offered earlier in the program because it gives the Education student an idea of what the teaching profession entails. He said:

I don't think an internship should wait until you've got one stair to climb and then you're up there. What if you find out that you made a blunder and you say 'Wow!'?... The only thing with the internship is people should be given a period to go out and see it before they get into their fourth or fifth year, even from an observational standpoint.

Although suggestions for improvement were not provided, another graduate made reference to problems with the way in which students are graded on their internships: "The experience itself was very, very important; however, there was a problem with the way we were graded." He did not elaborate upon this comment, making it impossible to know exactly which components of the evaluation he was considering.

Another individual stressed the need for more emphasis on the practical component of the program:

You are going along doing English, math, sociology, history, whatever the case may be. All of it is very nice. Universal learning, you can't beat it, but the practical side of anything...if I were learning to be a mechanic, I would want to spend more time doing

mechanical work than I would about history. I think there should be more time set aside for the practical side.

Another graduate expressed a similar view:

The internship is far more important than the course work. Emphasizing the importance of the internship, and placing a higher priority on it, would at the same time make the course work more important and meaningful as well. Education students would gain far more from their courses, and learn a lot more, if those courses came after their internship and were directly related to their class work in the schools.

Closely related to the internship, one graduate offered a comment regarding the Professional Year component of some programs:

Professional Year is ridiculous. It's inadequate. It doesn't prepare you to go out one day. I don't think it prepares you for what is going on. I think you can observe for a week, or three months. It doesn't serve a lot of purpose. The internship is excellent the way it is set up.

### **Graduates' Suggestions for Improvement to the Teacher-Preparation Program at Memorial University of Newfoundland**

Memorial University's Faculty of Education strives to prepare its students to be leaders in education. Its mission statement specifies its goals and philosophies:

The Faculty of Education of Memorial University of Newfoundland, under the terms of The Memorial University Act, accepts as its primary responsibility the professional preparation of those who will give leadership in education. The responsibility includes the professional preparation of teachers, administrators and specialists who will work in elementary, and secondary schools and post-secondary institutions. The work of the Faculty incorporates undergraduate and graduate studies and continuing education. The

mandate includes specialized research for the improvement of pedagogical practice, and broadly based research for the advancement of knowledge. The Faculty initiates and responds to change through a wide range of programs and a variety of field services. It seeks to prepare educators who will have a reasoned philosophy of education, an appreciation of what knowledge is of most worth, a genuine love of learning, and the ability to think critically. It strives to prepare educators, who have an understanding of the past, a plan for the present, and a vision for the future (Faculty of Education Website, [http://www.mun.ca/educ/fac\\_web/council.html](http://www.mun.ca/educ/fac_web/council.html)).

Even though seventy-three percent of the participants were satisfied with the outcome of their degrees, most participants put forth several recommendations for improvements to the program. The most commonly occurring suggestions included more focus on the development of technology skills, more emphasis on the practical side of the program, more time for the internships and the provision of opportunity to develop business knowledge. A complete listing of the graduates' recommendations is provided in Table 26.

**Table 26: Recommendations for Improvements to the Education Program**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Number of Citations by Participants</b>
More emphasis on technology training	3
More emphasis on the development of practical skills	3
Offer longer internships/offer more than one	3
Development of business knowledge	2
Offer the internship earlier in the program	2
More diverse courses included in the program	1
Instructors should change approach from "academics" to "mentors"	1
More emphasis on the development of presentation skills	1
Compulsory volunteer work in a variety of organizations to develop useful skills and build on experience	1
Make the program longer and more challenging	1
Provide exposure to more than one advisor for internships	1
More emphasis on writing skills	1
Require students to volunteer in a school prior to being accepted into the faculty of Education	1
Provide financial compensation for internships to compensate students and to entice bright individuals into the program	1

One graduate indicated that student teachers should be exposed to the profession much earlier in the program. This, he suggested, could be accomplished by requiring the Education students to volunteer in schools:

I think that a person should have to volunteer at a school before being accepted into the Education program. This would allow him/her to get a feel for whether or not they like it as a profession. I know of several teachers, (that graduated when I did,) [who] simply threw it down after the internship, and never taught again. They, as I do, felt that no amount of money was worth the aggravation. I suggest that this reflects a poor career choice, with low intrinsic value/reward...the actual teaching experience for me was a rude awakening.

Others identified specific gaps in the program that need attention. One graduate specified the need for the development of technology skills in the program: " I know from my graduating class if you didn't take it upon yourself to do a computer course, you left this place pretty computer illiterate...Every office, every business, every organization avails of computers."

The need for the development of business skills was also suggested as a way to improve the program:

Regardless of where you go and what you do in this world, you need some business knowledge, some business sense. I think there is room in the Education faculty in particular because when your students look at you in grade 6 or 7, they think you are the end of the world. You've been to the mountain, you've seen the guru and had coffee with him. They expect you to know anything and everything. So I think there is room for a wider program.

Two participants felt that the teaching approaches utilized by some of their Education professors were not always appropriate. One of these individuals said:

While I respected the knowledge and the expertise of the people who taught the Education courses I took, I think they lacked an approach that could fully benefit Education students...Professors in that faculty should first and foremost think of themselves as teachers teaching future teachers. I think a wealth of wisdom, information and experience never gets transferred from Education professors to their students... A change such as this would probably require the Faculty of Education to think of itself less as teaching an 'academic discipline' than as a group of professionals training the next generation of professionals.

The second graduate expressed a similar perspective:

Many Education students need to learn to write in a conscious fashion that expresses original thought, and not the thoughts of others. (This applies to college students in general.) After all, in the business world, innovation and innovative thought are what make you a success. I find that this quality, (at least in my case anyway), was disregarded and even frowned upon by most of my Education instructors. For example, 'You wrote an excellent paper, lots of ideas, but you didn't follow my outline exactly... B+...' is a comment that was all too common in the Education department.

This same graduate elaborated on these views later when he highlighted the problem that many instructors were too far removed from the real classroom and were therefore unable to teach at optimum levels of effectiveness.

I think that in general, the education system in Newfoundland is terribly complacent. This starts at the Education Department, right up to the Department of Education. How can we expect our Education graduates to perform in the real world if they are being taught by a bunch of dinosaurs that haven't had a real job in twenty years? I have taught at the University as well so I know how artificial it all is. A simple solution to the problem would be for these guys to step back in the classroom a few times a year, and teach a few

lessons. I'm sure that this experience would give them a tough lesson in classroom management, and lesson implementation. They would quickly learn that the article that they read on classroom management didn't work that well.

A final recommendation from another participant addressed several different issues but also echoed some of the sentiments expressed by the previous graduate:

The first item would be to make it somewhat challenging. The curriculum that I completed was disturbingly easy. Also, make it practical. The Philosophy and Sociology of Education did not seem to apply to anything...Giving a prospective teacher the opportunity to learn from more than one internship supervisor, would also increase the program. My internship supervisor was older, (27 years of teaching), and soured by the system. He disliked his job and I learned this from him. He was just awaiting retirement.

### **Work Associates' Views of Education Degrees**

Six work associates expressed their views concerning what they thought Education degrees offered their students. Once again, their feedback is organized along the skills profile developed by the Conference Board of Canada. (See Table 11, page 35.)

The work associates' views were somewhat consistent with those of the Education graduates. Academic skills were amongst those skills most frequently identified while teamwork skills were the least emphasized skills group in both incidences. (See Table 27.)

**Table 27: Work Associates' Views of the Skills Attributed to Education Degrees**

Academic Skills	Personal Management Skills	Teamwork Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ability to research, analyze and internalize (1)</li> <li>• thinking through problems (1)</li> <li>• ability to communicate (2)</li> <li>• skills required to teach (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people skills (2)</li> <li>• soft skills (1)</li> </ul>	

Ironically, one of the work associates who participated in this study had also completed an Education degree. She offered this perspective:

Education degrees offer their graduates sufficient skills and theoretical knowledge to get started in the teaching profession. My educational program was very heavy on philosophy and short on real hands-on training. The most important skills I have developed have come from the actual experience of teaching, and working in other professions...not from my degree program.

Another associate felt that Education degrees were very similar to other degrees because they prepare graduates to perform in a variety of different circumstances: “[Education degrees are] much the same as most university degrees, ability to research, analyze, internalize, and communicate. Also, I think the Education program better prepares one for social interaction at a range of levels.”

Only half of the associates offered opinions on how they felt Education degrees helped to prepare the graduates for work in their organization. One associate identified the ability to interact well with others as an asset linked to the completion of an Education degree: “The interaction with people provides a good background, as this is extremely important in our industry.”

Two associates expressed the view that the completion of any degree provides graduates with useful skills. One stated, “It’s not the specific program so much as the skills and abilities that are developed from a good university experience.” Another associate suggested that the completion of an Education degree helped to build up the confidence level of Education graduates: “It develops confidence in individuals in expressing [their] ideas.”

One associate who did not specifically address this issue did directly indicate that in her opinion, innate ability was a significant factor.

[She] is an excellent employee and did extremely well on the job because of who she is, her personality and her determination to do a good job at whatever she does. Therefore, I doubt it would have mattered what degree and professional training she had – she would have been equally successful at this job.

The associates were not specific in identifying ways in which they felt the Education degree had specifically prepared the graduate for work in their industry. One associate who identified “problem solving” and “people skills” as being the biggest assets of an Education degree represented the views of others when he said, “We don’t seek out Education graduates, but we don’t preclude them. We look at the total package when hiring, not specific degrees.”

Other associates expressed similar viewpoints, indicating that a combination of education and experience, and proficiency in specific skills can prepare any candidate for employment in their fields. One associate stated:

Obviously their first choice would be someone with a combination of education and experience in the chosen industry. Beyond that I would think that a demonstration of the skills that one possesses would be more important regardless of the degree. That is to say, if I’m looking for a person to do marketing, and I have a choice of a Fine Arts graduate or an Education graduate, my decision will be based on the interview, not the education.

Another associate expressed a similar view:

I don’t feel that Education graduates have any more or less to offer a prospective employer than other university graduates when the position is not directly teaching related.

One individual suggested that people with an Education degree might even be viewed in a negative light when being considered for a position:

It has been my experience that people in business (those not directly related to education and teaching), have a very negative attitude toward teachers. I believe there are a number of reasons for this. The old phrase 'those who can do...those who can't teach' is widely believed and accepted in the non-teaching world. Very wrong, but very real. Many people believe that teaching is a very easy job, that anyone can do it, and therefore teachers are not necessarily as 'smart' as those in high profile professions [such as] medicine, law, business, etc.

The work associates did not indicate that Education graduates were specifically targeted for employment by other organizations. It was evident however, that the graduates possessed and used many academic and personal management skills that were desirable and useful in other fields. All of the associates were pleased with the performance of the graduates employed within their organizations. This indicates that graduates with Education degrees are suitable for work in other sectors of the economy.

### **Summary of the Perceptions of the Value of Education Degrees**

The examination of the graduates' and work associates' perceptions of Education degrees has provided a great deal of insight into many aspects of the program. The graduates' feedback is of particular interest in relation to the Education program itself because it serves as an indicator of the perceived effectiveness of the program. While many positive aspects were highlighted, weaknesses or areas of need also emerged. In particular, the need for more focus on technology, practical components of the program and the development of other useful knowledge and skills, (i.e. business skills) were most commonly emphasized by the graduates.

The work associates also provided interesting and insightful perceptions of the Education degree program. Although all of the associates indicated that they were pleased or impressed with the performance of the Education graduates within their organizations, there was no indication that Education graduates were specifically targeted for employment. The associates identified

specific skills and knowledge displayed by the graduates; however, it was commonly felt that almost any suitable combination of education and experience would prepare candidates for employment within the organizations.

The perceptions of the graduates and the work associates are limited to the sample in the study and are not intended to represent the views of all Education graduates and related work associates. These views however should be considered because they provide a snapshot of valid, relevant issues that may serve as a springboard for future issues of consideration or research.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Discussion**

In this thesis I have identified many of the issues related to early teacher career transition among graduates of Memorial University of Newfoundland. (See Table 20, page 46.) For example, the inability to find a secure teaching position, not enjoying teaching, a perceived lack of appreciation and previously obtained employment in other sectors were some of the factors cited by the graduates. I also identified the alternate career choices of some graduates who had left teaching to enter into other employment sectors such as information technology, financial services, research and counseling. Finally, I investigated how their Education backgrounds helped to prepare them for work in other fields, (i.e. providing them with a useful combination of academic, personal management and teamwork skills).

This study was conducted through three phases of research. The first phase conducted a cohort analysis on the class of 1995 Education graduates to determine whether they were teaching. The data collected in this phase led to the creation of a class employment profile. (See Tables 4 and 5, page 25.) From the information gathered, I learned that 67.5% of the contacted graduates were teaching in a public school system. An additional 4% were also teaching in other educational settings, (i.e. private collages, universities etc.). I was also able to identify the employment status of the graduates who were not teaching and discovered that the two most commonly occurring alternatives to teaching were returning to school for further educational opportunities and working in technology-based industries.

The second phase of the research involved the identification of eleven 1995 Education graduates who have left the teaching profession to work in other fields. These participants provided information pertaining to the five identified research questions. As such, they provided information pertaining to their reasons for leaving the teaching profession, the fields in which they were employed and their perceptions of how well their teacher training has contributed to their employment success.

Based on their feedback, the most common reason for seeking work in other sectors was the inability to find a secure, full-time teaching position. This was followed by financial concerns, (i.e. could not afford to wait for a full-time position), and an interest in finding employment opportunities offering better pay.

The participants were employed in eleven different fields of work. These were all quite varied in nature, ranging from freight forwarding, maintenance and utility work, to graphic design and journalism. (Complete listing found in Table 9, page 32.)

Despite the fact that all of the graduates were performing very well in their employment positions, I have concluded that the Education graduates did not perceive their teacher-training programs as having provided them with a strong background for employment in other fields. When asked to indicate how they felt they had acquired the skills and abilities that they use in their work, only 27% of the graduates credited their Education background. This figure is low, ranking third below work experience and the completion of other courses and educational programs. (See Table 15, page 38.)

The third and final phase of the research explored the thoughts and opinions of other work associates within the new field. This section yielded information pertaining to the types of contributions that the Education graduates make to their organizations and the degree to which they utilize skills that were acquired through their teacher-education programs.

From this phase of research, I have concluded that Education graduates are suitable candidates for work in other sectors of employment. All of the participating work associates indicated that the graduates performed their jobs very well and they identified many useful academic and personal management skills that they used on a regular basis. There was however, no strong feeling among the work associates that the completion of an Education degree was specifically responsible for the graduates' performance in their new careers. In fact, the work associates indicated that the Education graduates were not specifically targeted as potential employees.

In Chapter three, it was stated that in contrast to most professions where questions concerning whether to stay in the profession typically arise at mid-career, research has shown that for teachers, this crossroad is generally faced much earlier (Huberman, 1993). The results of the research conducted in this study support this claim. Approximately 28%, just over one quarter of the identified 1995 Education graduates were not teaching when the data were collected for this study. The participants were not asked to indicate whether they had *ever* entered the teaching profession, therefore the results are not limited to those who have teaching experience. It is striking however, that after only five years since graduation, over one-quarter of the graduates who were contacted considered themselves to be employed in sectors outside of education. This finding supports the claim that teachers generally contemplate career changes earlier than people in other professions (Huberman, 1993). It is useful and necessary to examine why this is so.

In the next section, I will focus on implications that are related to issues linked with teacher career transition. I will also discuss some implications for Memorial University's Faculty of Education and its students.

### **Implications for Practice**

#### **The Faculty of Education, the NLTA and School Boards**

In consideration of the Education degree program and its effectiveness in preparing graduates for work within the education sector, the eleven graduates provided many recommendations for improvement. The most common of these was the need for more practical training. All of the graduates indicated that the internship and professional year opportunities are very important parts of a teacher-preparation program, with 73% conceding that they are even more important than course work. These results therefore indicate that more emphasis on these components would be well received by Education students because they would help to better prepare new teachers for their chosen profession.

The graduates' feedback also highlights the need to investigate the possibility of somehow bridging the gap between university and the work force. Many of the graduates indicated that they abandoned the prospect of teaching because they were unable to find suitable, full-time employment. The Faculty of Education should therefore take an initiative in preparing its graduates to find work after graduation. Perhaps collaborative efforts between the university, school boards and the NLTA could help to improve this situation.

Only 27% of the Education graduates credited their Education degrees with having provided them with many of the skills and knowledge that they used in their careers. Employment in other industries obviously brings with it the demand for knowledge and skills that may be specialized to a particular organization. This should not however, be viewed as an obstacle to employment. Graduates who were employed in other fields reported that they subscribe to some form of life-long learning. Be it on-the-job training, self-directed learning or formal courses in educational institutions, these graduates place a great deal of emphasis upon life-long learning.

The skills profile prepared by the Conference Board of Canada is an effective tool in identifying the types of skills deemed valuable by today's employers. It would be useful for the Faculty of Education to consider using this profile, or designing one of its own when developing its teacher-preparation program. Considering the argument in support of the development of well-rounded, broad-skilled employees that has been put forth in this study, the use of the skills profile would assist in the creation and implementation of strategies to help students become well prepared to compete in today's job market. This would prove to be beneficial to graduates who find employment in the teaching profession, as well as those who pursue other careers.

One possible change to the program that would enhance the employability skills of Education graduates would be the implementation of a technological component. Approximately 45% of the participants in the sample of graduates employed outside of the education sector indicated that their work is dependent upon technology. The Conference Board of Canada's skills profile identified technological skills as being very important in the workplace. Based on these two

factors, there should be a compulsory technology component in the Education program at Memorial University.

In consideration of the nature of life-long learning and the benefits associated with computer use in education, the integration of technology into the Education curriculum would help to better prepare new teachers to foster life-long learning skills in their students. In educational settings, technology can be integrated into the curriculum to improve learning. There are immediate benefits for teachers who have the opportunity to avail of technology training, especially as it relates to the use of technology in education. In addition to these arguments, it must also be considered that Education graduates who do not enter the teaching profession can transfer the valuable technology skills that could be acquired through the Education program into other professions.

None of the work associates in this study indicated that their organizations specifically targeted Education graduates for employment, yet they were all pleased with their performance. This highlights the need for improved marketing of Education graduates as viable candidates for employment outside of the Education sector. The Faculty of Education, the NLTA and local school boards need to join forces and promote the skills, abilities and knowledge of Education graduates.

## **Students**

Students who pursue Education degrees need to be aware of relevant issues that may affect future employment in their chosen profession. The Conference Board of Canada's skills profile serves as an excellent indicator of employers' expectancies in today's job market. Students enrolled in the Education program should be familiarized with the skills profile so that they are better able to prepare themselves for their own futures. They can also use the profile to help their own students.

If the recent trends of early teacher career transition uncovered in this study remain constant or even increase, then local teachers will continue to leave the education sector for work in other

fields. Education graduates who possess well-rounded, diversified skills will stand a better chance of obtaining meaningful employment in other sectors than those who do not.

Education students need to attempt to compensate for the shortfall by ensuring that they find ways to become technologically functional and literate. They should also recognize the importance of teamwork skills and promote and develop competencies that they may have in this area. Teamwork skills were identified as being very important in the skills profile, yet the Education graduates in the sample did not promote their own teamwork skills as being particularly valuable in their current careers. Steps should be taken to create this awareness and to encourage students to maximize their proficiency in the skills from all three groups.

### **Conclusion**

Career transitions have become very commonplace occurrences in today's society. Motivated by a variety of factors ranging from an inability to find initial work in a chosen field, to displeasure with a current position, many people are searching for new employment opportunities. It is clear that career changes are being viewed as natural and anticipated processes, which can ultimately lead to professional fulfillment and personal happiness.

Given that the role of educating future generations cannot be taken lightly, teaching is a profession that should be concerned with attracting the brightest minds and best students. Instead, in many jurisdictions, a negative public image, lack of societal support, poor job prospects and noncompetitive salaries plague the profession's reputation, driving away many who would serve it well. Teachers are therefore very likely candidates for career transitions.

The information collected over the course of this study is not representative of the general population of Education graduates because it is limited to the views of a small sample. While the views represented within may be consistent with those of other graduates, it is necessary to gain

a deeper appreciation and understanding of the factors related to teacher career transitions and teacher employment in other fields.

Educational organizations, Education students and teachers, all need to become aware of the issues and concerns that have been raised throughout the course of this study. The graduates in the sample identified concerns such as the need for more support for new teachers, the implementation of fairer systems of hiring and the provision of more financial support to School Boards as being among the issues that require immediate attention. The Faculty of Education, the NLTA, local school boards and the Department of Education must address these issues and take steps to work towards the betterment of the entire provincial education system. Further research is required in order to provide valuable information that could expedite such initiatives. The framework developed in this thesis can serve as a springboard for future exploration.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Telephone Survey**

## TELEPHONE SURVEY

My name is Lisa Browne Peters and I am a graduate student at Memorial University. I am involved with a study that is being conducted by the Faculty of Education that is taking a look at supply and demand issues in the education sector. As you are an Education graduate, your name was included on a list of recent graduates provided to me by the Department of Education. Could I take a few moments of your time to ask a few short questions?

Graduate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

1 Our records indicate that you graduated from the Faculty of Education in 1995.

Is this correct?

2. Are you currently teaching?

**If "yes" ...**

3 Could you please indicate if your work is full-time, part-time or part-time?

4 Is your position permanent or temporary?

*Thank the participant for his/her help and end the interview.*

**If "no" ...**

3 Could you please indicate whether you are currently employed in another field?

*Continue with explanation of the study.*

My involvement in this study is focused on teacher career transitions. By conducting a cohort analysis of 1995 Education graduates from Memorial University's Faculty of Education who have left the teaching profession, I am hoping to gather information that will identify reasons as to why they left, what type of work they are presently doing and how they feel their Education background and teaching experience have helped them. I am also interested in speaking with work associates of the participants who can comment on their skills, performance and suitability

for employment within the organization. This will hopefully yield useful information relating to human resources in the provincial education sector.

As you are a graduate of 1995 from Memorial University's Education program and you are currently working outside of the education sector, you would be an ideal candidate as a participant in this research. Would you be interested in being involved in this study either by being interviewed or by completing a questionnaire about your former teaching experience and your work in the private sector?

*Before ending the conversation:*

- Make arrangements to have the letter of invitation and consent form signed and returned.
- Obtain e-mail address of the participant if applicable.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Letter of Invitation to Education Graduates**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a graduate student of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University and I am presently conducting research on teacher career transitions. My work is part of a study in the education sector that is investigating the supply and demand of teachers. By conducting a cohort analysis of Education graduates from Memorial University's Faculty of Education who have left the teaching profession, information will be gathered to help identify reasons as to why they left, what type of work they are presently doing and how they feel their Education background and teaching experience have helped them. I am also interested in speaking with work associates of the participants who can comment on their skills, performance and suitability for employment within the organization. This will hopefully yield useful information relating to human resources in the provincial education sector.

As you are a graduate of Memorial University's Education program and you are currently working in the private sector, you would make an ideal candidate as a subject in this research. If you were interested in participating in this study, I would be very pleased and eager to arrange an interview with you or send you an electronic questionnaire. I would also ask you to consider nominating an individual within your work organization with whom I could meet to discuss your work performance and skills. To ensure your understanding of the nature of this interview, I can provide you with a copy of the questions that would be posed to your work associate. This interview would only occur with your written consent.

There is a risk associated with participation in this study that you will need to consider. Interviews/questionnaires conducted with your work associate will focus on your performance, skills, knowledge and capabilities. It is possible that discussion of such issues could cause your work associate to think about or evaluate some of your personal traits or performance-related behaviors in a negative way. This could subsequently lead to the development of an unfavorable view of your performance. You should therefore contemplate this risk before deciding to participate in the study.

This study has received the approval of the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee and the information gathered on subjects will be completely confidential. All interviews will be tape-recorded, and all tapes and documents related to these interviews/questionnaires with subjects and their employers will be kept in a secure file. Participation is voluntary and you may decide to withdraw at any time. The results of the study will be made available to you upon request.

If you are willing to be a participant in this study, please read and sign the attached forms and return one to me. You may retain the other. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at my home residence, 722-3262. If at any time you wish to speak with a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Clar Doyle, Acting Dean, Faculty of Education, at 737-7556.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Browne Peters

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Letter of Consent for Education Graduates**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the letter of invitation to be a participant in this study. I understand the participant overview outlined in this letter. I also understand the objectives and methods outlined in the proposed research. I understand that the project has been approved by the Ethics Committee at Memorial University of Newfoundland and I am satisfied with the confidentiality safeguards and protections of individual privacy that are in place for this study.

I understand that:

- I am free to refuse participation in this project without fear of consequence;
- if I choose to participate, I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty;
- the interview sessions, (if applicable), will be approximately one hour in duration;
- the interview sessions will be taped, and that at any point in or during the research, a participant may ask for the tape recorder to be turned off;
- the tapes will be heard only by the transcriber(s) and the research team, who will not divulge names;
- the transcripts, tapes and questionnaires will not include individuals' names but will be coded with an identification number (the names and numbers will be kept by the principal investigator in a secure file);
- only the research team will have access to the transcripts, tapes and questionnaires;
- the questionnaires will be seen only by the research team, who will not divulge names;
- names of participants will not be used without written, informed consent;
- all hard copies of the interviews and questionnaires will be kept in a secure file until the end of the project, after the project is completed they will be maintained in a secure archive by the principal investigator;
- the questionnaire/interview that will be conducted with the work associate whom I have nominated will involve discussion of issues related to my work performance, skills, knowledge and capacities;

- by signing this form I am providing informed, written consent for an interview to be held with my work associate. (or a questionnaire administered), however I may decide to withdraw this consent;
- by agreeing to participate in this study, there is a risk that my work associate may evaluate or contemplate components of my work performance, knowledge, skills or capacities that could cause him/her to develop an unfavorable impression.

I understand that all data collected by means of structured or semi-structured interviews are intended to be used strictly for analytical, research and educational purposes. I give my permission for release of these data in the public domain, within the confidentiality guidelines outlined, including use of the written reports and within an educational conference context. I realize that my name will not appear in any of these reports unless I give explicit written permission and have read the report.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time. Upon withdrawal, all of the interview data that pertains to me will be destroyed. Under these conditions, I agree to participate in the Education Sector Study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D**

**Letter of Invitation to Work Associates**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a graduate student of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University and I am presently conducting research on teacher career transitions. My work is part of a study in the education sector that is investigating the supply and demand of teachers. By conducting a cohort analysis of Education graduates from Memorial University's Faculty of Education who have left the teaching profession, information will be gathered to help identify reasons as to why they left, what type of work they are presently doing and how they feel their Education background and teaching experience have helped them. I am also interested in speaking with work associates of the participants who can comment on their skills, performance and suitability for employment within the organization. This will hopefully yield useful information relating to human resources in the provincial education sector.

An employee within your organization, \_\_\_\_\_, is a participant in this study and has indicated that you would be a suitable candidate to speak with about his/her knowledge, skills and performance within your organization. The questions and topics for discussion have already been revealed to him/her and in the event that you decide to participate, he/she has provided written consent for you to speak about these issues. You can be provided with a copy of this consent form if you so desire.

I am therefore extending invitation to you to be involved in this study. Should you agree to participate in an interview or electronic questionnaire, your responses will be kept confidential and will at no time be revealed to your work associate. This study has received the approval of the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee and the information gathered on subjects will be completely confidential. If you decide to partake in an interview, all interviews will be tape-recorded, and all tapes and documents related to these interviews with subjects and their work associates will be kept in a secure file. If you prefer to complete an electronic questionnaire, the same provisions for security will be upheld. Participation is voluntary and you may decide to withdraw at any time. The results of the study will be made available to you upon request.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please read and sign the attached forms and return one to me. You may retain the other. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at my home residence, 722-3262. If at any time you wish to speak with a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Clar Doyle, Acting Dean, Faculty of Education, at 737-7556.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Browne Peters

**APPENDIX E**

**Release Form for Work Associates**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the letter of invitation to be a participant in this study. I understand the participant overview outlined in this letter. I also understand the objectives and methods outlined in the proposed research. I understand that the project has been approved by the Ethics Committee at Memorial University of Newfoundland and I am satisfied with the confidentiality safeguards and protections of individual privacy that are in place for this study.

I understand that:

- I am free to refuse participation in this project without fear of consequence;
- if I choose to participate, I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty;
- the interview sessions, (if applicable), will be approximately one hour in duration;
- the interview sessions will be taped, and that at any point in or during the research, a participant may ask for the tape recorder to be turned off.
- the tapes will be heard only by the transcriber(s) and the research team, who will not divulge names;
- the transcripts, tapes and questionnaires will not include individuals' names but will be coded with an identification number (the names and numbers will be kept by the principal investigator in a secure file);
- only the research team will have access to the transcripts, tapes and questionnaires;
- names of participants will not be used without written, informed consent;
- the tapes, transcripts and questionnaires will be kept in a secure file until the end of the project, after the project is completed they will be maintained in a secure archive by the principal investigator;
- the employee who has nominated me to participate in this study has provided informed, written consent to discuss issues concerning his/her work performance, knowledge, skills and capacities as they relate to their job performance;

I understand that all data collected by means of structured or semi-structured interviews are intended to be used strictly for analytical, research and educational purposes. I give my

permission for release of these data in the public domain, within the confidentiality guidelines outlined, including use of the written reports and within an educational conference context. I realize that my name will not appear in any of these reports unless I give explicit written permission and have read the report.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time. Upon withdrawal, all of the interview data that pertains to me will be destroyed. Under these conditions, I agree to participate in the Education Sector Study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX F**

**Interview Schedule for Education Graduates**

This interview schedule has been modeled after a schedule used in a research study conducted by Beverley Thibault of the Faculty of Education at Queen's University (Thibault, 1999). As the nature of her research is very similar to that being conducted in this study, it appeared reasonable to avail of her work. Permission to do so has been obtained from Ms. Thibault. Modifications and additions were implemented as necessary to ensure the specific goals and purposes of this study are well represented.

### **Purpose**

This interview is designed to generate information pertaining to teachers' reasons for leaving the teaching profession, the fields in which they are currently employed and their perceptions of how well their teacher training has contributed to their employment success.

### **Categories of Exploration**

- Description of teaching history.
- Factors influencing career change.
- Skills and knowledge representative of teachers.
- Description of current career (responsibilities, required skills and knowledge etc.).
- Assessment of satisfaction in current career.
- Identification of additional education/training outside of the teacher training program.
- Perceptions of the value of teacher training programs in preparing graduates for work outside of the education sector.

### **Pre-Interview Questions**

- Name of organization
- Job title and department
- Length of time in current position
- Education background

QUESTIONS	PURPOSE
<p><b>Teaching History</b></p> <p><i>Let's begin by talking a little about your teaching career.</i></p> <p>1. a) How long did you teach?  b) What grades and subjects did you teach?  c) Where did you teach? (city/rural area)</p>	<p>Teaching background</p>
<p><b>Current Career Description</b></p> <p><i>Let's move on to your current career.</i></p> <p>2. a) Describe your typical work duties and responsibilities.  b) Are some parts of your work significantly more important than others?</p>	<p>Perception of responsibilities</p>
<p><b>Skills and Knowledge Required in New Career</b></p> <p>3. a) What kinds of skills and knowledge are required to do your work?  b) Are any particular skills or abilities significantly more important than others?</p> <p>4. a) How did you acquire these skills/abilities?  b) Did you undertake extra education or training in order to make yourself a more appealing/better qualified candidate for your current position?</p>	<p>Description of duties/responsibilities</p> <p>Perceptions of how knowledge/skills were acquired</p>
<p><b>Career Satisfaction/Suitability</b></p> <p>5. a) To what degree have you been involved in ongoing education/training since starting your current position?  b) If you have been involved in ongoing learning, how would you compare this type of learning to that which you experienced in your teacher-training program?</p> <p>6. a) How happy, (well-suited), are you in your new position?</p> <p><b>Perceptions of the Career Transition</b></p> <p><i>Let's talk a little more now about your education background.</i></p> <p>7. Why did you want to complete an education degree?</p>	<p>Perception of life-long learning</p> <p>Perception of job satisfaction/suitability</p>

<p>8. To what extent does your current position reflect the type of career you expected to have after graduation from your teacher-training program?</p> <p>9. Why did work in the private sector appeal to you?</p> <p>10. a) What factors led to your desire to make a career change?</p> <p>b) Which factors were the <b>most</b> influential in your decision?</p> <p>11. What do you think you have to offer the organization with which you are employed?</p> <p>12. What are your long-term plans with this organization? (Do you see opportunity for promotion/advancement?)</p>	
<p><b>Perceptions of Education Degrees</b></p> <p><i>I would be interested in knowing how you feel about your education degree.</i></p> <p>13. a) Can you generalize the kinds of professional skills/abilities/knowledge that education degrees provide?</p> <p>b) How do the skills/abilities/knowledge acquired through the Education program help you in your current position?</p> <p>14. a) To what extent is course work important in teacher education?</p> <p>b) To what extent is an internship or professional year important in teacher education?</p> <p>c) Do you see a link between the two?</p> <p>d) Is one more important than the other?</p> <p>15. a) What do you feel is the overall value of education degrees in preparing graduates for work opportunities outside of the education sector?</p> <p>b) How could the education program be improved to better prepare graduates for better career opportunities?</p>	<p>Perceptions of the value of education degrees in preparing graduates for work outside of the education sector</p> <p>Perception of the efficacy of the education program in educating its graduates</p>
<p>16. Is there anything else you would like to discuss that has not been covered in this interview?</p>	<p>Opportunity to identify other important issues</p>

**APPENDIX G**

**Interview Schedule for Professional Associates**

This interview schedule has been modeled after a schedule used in a research study conducted by Beverley Thibault of the Faculty of Education at Queen's University (Thibault, 1999). As the nature of her research is very similar to that being conducted in this study, it appeared reasonable to avail of her work. Permission to do so has been obtained from Ms.Thibault. Modifications and additions were implemented as necessary to ensure the specific goals and purposes of this study are well represented.

### **Purpose**

This interview schedule is designed to determine the types of contributions that education graduates make to their organizations and the degree to which they utilize skills that were acquired through their teacher education programs.

### **Categories of Exploration**

- Identification of the professional skills/abilities/knowledge demonstrated by education graduates.
- Associates' perceptions of the caliber of professional skills and knowledge demonstrated by education graduates.
- Associates' perceptions of the efficacy and efficiency of the work completed by the education graduates.
- Identification of specific skills/knowledge/abilities of the education graduates that needed to be developed in order to improve work performance.

### **Pre-Interview Information**

- Name of company/organization
- Description of the organization (services/products)
- Job title/department
- Length of time in current position
- Education background

QUESTIONS	PURPOSE
<p><b>Description of Professional Duties and Responsibilities</b></p> <p><i>Let's begin by talking about your work.</i></p> <p>1 a) What is your professional relationship with the subject? b) How long have you worked with him/her?</p> <p>2. a) Please describe the type of work that the two of you are responsible for doing. (duties/responsibilities) b) What specific skills, knowledge and abilities are needed to carry out this kind of work?</p> <p>3 To what degree does the subject demonstrate competency in these areas?</p> <p>4 Could you provide specific examples of instances when the subject performed his/her duties extremely well?</p>	<p>Identification of subject's professional responsibilities</p> <p>Identification of skills/knowledge required to work in the organization</p> <p>Perceptions of the subject's performance/competency</p>
<p><b>Skills and Abilities Targeted by the Organization</b></p> <p><i>Let's talk about the hiring process within this organization.</i></p> <p>5 a) Are you directly involved in the hiring process? b) Were you involved in the hiring of the subject? c) Was employment contingent upon further training or education? If so, what specific areas were targeted for improvement or development?</p> <p>6 What does this organization look for when hiring new employees?</p> <p>7 What is the typical education background considered to be desirable in new employees?</p> <p>8 What emphasis is placed upon a candidate's ability to <i>fit in</i> to the organization?</p> <p>9 How would you rate the importance of organizational fit? (professional ability)</p>	<p>Identification of specific skills/knowledge required to work in the organization</p> <p>Identification of skills/knowledge of the subject that need further development</p> <p>Perceptions of the importance of particular skills and qualities</p>

<p><b>Perceptions of Education Graduates</b></p> <p><i>I am interested in hearing your views on education programs.</i></p> <p>10. What do you think education degrees offer their graduates?</p> <p>11. How do you think teacher-training programs/education degrees prepare graduates for work in this industry?</p> <p>12. Why do you think employers do not put more effort into recruiting education graduates?</p> <p>13. Is there anything else you would like to discuss or add that has not been discussed in this interview?</p>	<p>Associate's perceptions of skills/knowledge possessed by education graduates</p> <p>Associate's perceptions of areas that need more attention in education programs in order to adequately prepare graduates for work in the organization</p>
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**APPENDIX H**

**Record of Contact with Education Graduates**

**Record of Contact with Education Graduates**

<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Month &amp; Year of Initial Contact</b>	<b>Date Consent was Provided</b>	<b>Date of Data Collection</b>	<b>Record of Follow-up Contacts</b>
<b>#1</b>	June, 2000	15-06-00	25-06-00	26-06-00 05-07-00
<b>#2</b>	May, 2000	18-05-00	18-05-00	N/A
<b>#3</b>	May, 2000	31-05-00	31-05-00	N/A
<b>#4</b>	May, 2000	14-06-00	30-06-00	26-05-00 22-06-00 25-06-00 26-06-00 30-06-00 04-07-00
<b>#5</b>	May, 2000	23-05-00	08-06-00	08-06-00 05-07-00 11-07-00 14-07-00 01-08-00
<b>#6</b>	June, 2000	11-06-00	23-06-00	12-06-00 13-06-00 23-06-00 24-06-00
<b>#7</b>	June, 2000	22-06-00	23-06-00	05-07-00 10-07-00 01-08-00 03-08-00
<b>#8</b>	June, 2000	22-06-00	23-06-00	26-06-00 27-06-00 12-07-00 14-07-00 15-07-00
<b>#9</b>	June, 2000	07-07-00	07-07-00	26-06-00 27-06-00 30-06-00 04-07-00
<b>#10</b>	June, 2000	20-06-00	07-07-00	14-06-00 06-07-00 07-07-00 13-07-00 23-07-00 26-07-00 27-08-00
<b>#11</b>	July 11, 2000	11-07-00	24-07-00	06-07-00 07-07-00 10-07-00 17-07-00 19-07-00 24-07-00

**APPENDIX I**

**Record of Contact with Professional Associates**

**Record of Contact with Professional Associates**

<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Month &amp; Year of Initial Contact</b>	<b>Date Consent was Provided</b>	<b>Date of Data Collection</b>	<b>Record of Follow-up Contacts</b>
<b>#1</b>	June, 2000	08-06-00	08-06-00	N/A
<b>#2</b>	June, 2000	27-06-00	04-08-00	30-06-00
<b>#3</b>	June, 2000	05-06-00	14-06-00	14-06-00
<b>#4</b>	June, 2000	28-06-00	28-06-00	28-06-00
<b>#5</b>	June, 2000	26-06-00	04-07-00	04-07-00
<b>#6</b>	June, 2000	27-06-00	30-06-00	30-06-00
<b>#7</b>	June, 2000	10-07-00	10-07-00	07-07-00 10-07-00
<b>#8</b>	July, 2000	11-07-00	11-07-00	11-07-00

