

Public Abstract

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A NARRATIVE INQUIRY ABOUT TEACHER IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION:
PRESERVICE TEACHERS SHARE THEIR STORIES

This yearlong study considers how five preservice teachers were constructing their teacher identities. The study began the end of their junior year in a teacher education program and concluded after the preservice teachers completed their [OSSYP] On Site Senior Year Program. I examined the narratives the teachers shared in terms of what their stories revealed about the influences on their teaching identities. In addition, a purpose of the study was to determine important questions about teaching identities that might be considered by teacher educators and by teachers themselves.

I used a narrative inquiry approach to this study. The study included six interviews with each of the five preservice teachers over a one year time period. The preservice teachers responded to open-ended questions and often determined their own agendas during the interview process. I read the transcripts of the interviews numerous times using both horizontal and vertical readings. For example, I first read all six interviews from each preservice teacher. Then I read all five of the transcripts according to the sequence of the interviews beginning with the Pilot Study, then the transcripts from the first interview, and so forth. During the readings of the transcripts, I recorded notes in the margins of the transcripts and I documented summary notes in a notebook. As I identified themes in the stories, I completed a grid of the themes as a way of providing a visual overview of the findings for each individual participant. The themes in the stories suggested the influences on how the preservice teachers were constructing their teaching identities. Later in the study, I considered the themes common among the five participants' stories. Despite similarities in the themes, the stories suggesting these themes varied in their content and in what stage of the study the teacher shared their stories.

The findings indicate the importance of the OSSYP program in providing the context for the social construction of teaching identities. The preservice teachers were constructing their teaching identities through interactions with peers, with supervisors, and with students. Since many aspects of the stories were not in response to an interview prompt, the content of the stories was often intuitive and determined by the preservice teacher. For example, they initiated stories of reflective thinking, the importance of building relationships with their students, and recognition of the teacher knowledge they were constructing.

An implication of this study is the critical importance of engaging preservice teachers in discussions that support them in constructing their teaching identities. Teacher education programs, especially those similar to the OSSYP experience, play a vital role in this identity construction process. An additional implication of this research is the knowledge and understanding of the identity construction process that came from the narratives of the teachers during a time when they were engaged in the construction of their teaching identities.