

UNCERTAINTIES AND CONTRADICTORY  
REALITIES: REFLECTION IN ELEMENTARY  
TEACHER EDUCATION

By

SARAH JAYNE RAMSEY

Bachelor of Science  
The University of Tulsa  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
1985

Master of Arts in Education  
Washington University of St. Louis  
St. Louis, Missouri  
1988

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
July, 2004

COPYRIGHT

By

Sarah Jayne Ramsey

July, 2004

UNCERTAINTIES AND CONTRADICTORY  
REALITIES: REFLECTION IN ELEMENTARY  
TEACHER EDUCATION

Thesis Approved:

*Christine Moseley*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Advisor

*Margaret M. Scott*  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Michael H. Gungorhauer*  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Delora J. ...*  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of the Graduate College

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As this journey comes to an end, I have reflected on the rather circuitous route that brought me to this point. Along the way there were many people who offered support and encouragement, and I extend to them my most sincere appreciation. First and foremost, my family has provided the foundation that allowed me to persevere through the difficult times and rejoice in the successes. Although my father did not live to see me complete my doctorate, his encouragement lived on. He and my mother always supported me in all my endeavors and were particularly supportive of my educational pursuits. Thanks, Mom and Dad. My special, special husband always supported me, particularly when I was in meltdown mode. He hugged me, told me I was great, and always, always loved me no matter how cranky I was. To him I give my utmost gratitude. Hank, you are magic. In addition, I am grateful to my brothers and sister and their spouses and kids as well as my in-laws for offering unending support.

I appreciate all my friends and colleagues who have inspired, encouraged, and supported me in my educational pursuits. Writing this dissertation has been a journey that began when I decided to become a teacher in 1988. As I completed my master's degree I was mentored by two very special people, Marilyn Cohn and Vivian Gellman. When I moved to Stillwater, I took one of my first courses at OSU with Pam Bettis. Pam inspired me to complete my doctorate

and showed me what qualitative research could be. I also worked with other wonderful professors who encouraged me and was particularly blessed with a fantastic dissertation committee. Thanks to Mike Gunzenhauser for letting me adopt him after Pam left. Mike, you are insightful and a great mentor. To Deb Norris, thanks for challenging my thinking and having high expectations. Thanks to Margaret Scott for her patience and wisdom. I am so happy that you did not retire before I finished my dissertation. I could not have done it without you. And last, but not least, I am grateful to Chris Moseley. Chris, you have not only been an excellent advisor, mentor and colleague, but a great friend.

I spent a great deal of time in Willard Hall and was lucky to have a superb office mate, Juliana Utley. Juliana and I shared many highs and lows. Together we commiserated, laughed, philosophized, complained, discussed, and questioned. Thanks, Juliana, for being a great friend and putting up with me. To the other wonderful doctoral students, I was challenged in every class by your intelligence and insight.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION .....	1
Introduction to the Study .....	1
Background of the Study .....	3
Definition of Terms .....	5
Rationale for the Study .....	7
Research Questions .....	11
Conclusion.....	11

### CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	13
Introduction.....	13
Reflection.....	13
Reflective Teacher Education.....	14
Historical Perspective .....	15
Reflective Teacher Education: Orientation or Program Goal? .....	19
Research in Reflective Teacher Education .....	22
Conclusion.....	32

### CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY .....	34
Introduction.....	34
Theoretical Perspective .....	34
Research Context.....	37
The Teacher Education Program .....	37
The Participants .....	39
Data Collection .....	41
Data Analysis.....	45
Issues of Rigor.....	47
Researcher Subjectivity .....	47
Trustworthiness.....	48
Limitations.....	49
Conclusion.....	51

### CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS .....	52
Introduction.....	52
The Essence of Reflection.....	53

A New Context for Reflection: Elementary Teacher Education.....	57
Making the Personal Public.....	62
Power, Power, Who's Got the Power? .....	75
The Dance.....	80
Relevant to Whom? .....	82
And in the End... ..	85
Practice What You Preach.....	87
What Counts as Experience? .....	90
When I'm a Teacher .....	95
Uncertainty is a Certainty .....	96
Conclusion.....	99

## CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION .....	101
Introduction.....	101
The Essence of Reflection in Elementary Teacher Education.....	102
Reflections.....	104
Future Research.....	120
Final Thoughts.....	121

REFERENCES.....	123
-----------------	-----

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A TIMELINE.....	133
APPENDIX B INSTRUCTOR PARTICIPANT LETTER OF INVITATION .....	134
APPENDIX C PRESERVICE TEACHER PARTICIPANT INVITATION SCRIPT.....	135
APPENDIX D INFORMATION SHEET .....	136
APPENDIX E INSTRUCTOR INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	138
APPENDIX F PRESERVICE TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT FORM .....	140
APPENDIX G INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	142
APPENDIX H INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL .....	144

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1

Synthesis of Models of Reflectivity in Teacher Education ..... 22

Table 2

Record of Participant Observation..... 44



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction to the Study

In general there are tensions between teacher education faculty and students (Calderhead, 1989; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Stone, 1992; Zeichner, 1994). These tensions exist on many levels but are most prominent in the expectations between the two groups regarding what learning to teach should be like. I recognized this in my own teacher education program and continued to see it as a graduate assistant in my doctoral program. I was particularly intrigued by the friction that existed around reflection in teacher education. It was interesting to me that an idea that was so prevalent in teacher education programs seemed to invoke such differing opinions about its purpose and structure. This curiosity led me to conduct a pilot study that informed the study described in this dissertation.

In this pilot I investigated three participants' (2 instructors and 1 preservice teacher) perceptions of reflection in teacher education. The pilot indicated that there were differences in how teacher educators and preservice teachers viewed the role of emotions in reflection. The participants in the pilot communicated differing opinions regarding the appropriateness of expressing emotions in

reflective assignments. All the participants acknowledged that there is an emotional component to teaching and it is inevitable that emotions will come out. However, the participants did not agree on whether these emotions should be described in reflective assignments. One of the instructor participants described emotions as interfering with objectivity and believed that objectivity is necessary in reflection. Another instructor participant thought that students should connect this emotional response to their backgrounds and then discuss how this response may affect their teaching. The preservice teacher participant approached his reflective assignments more closely aligned with the latter instructor's view.

Although the participants in this dissertation study mentioned emotions as a component of their reflection, it did not emerge as a central theme. The study for this dissertation was more extensive than the pilot and had an increased number of participants. This could explain emotions falling away as a central theme. At the same time, disparity between the preservice teachers' and teacher educators' perceptions is an element that both the pilot and the current study have in common.

Overall, the participants in this study described similar notions of reflection. Reflection for both preservice teachers and teacher educators is a personal endeavor that involves conscious thinking about a relevant experience. However, when brought into the context of elementary teacher education, some aspects of reflection became points of contention. Reflection is a personal venture and moving it to an academic or professional setting means making this

thinking public. Preservice teachers were asked to communicate their reflections to provide evidence of their learning. This evidence was provided to their instructors, who then judged whether their learning was appropriate. This knowledge/power relationship along with making the personal public emerged as central themes in the differing perspectives of teacher educators and preservice teachers. Also central to the data were the dialectics of theory/practice and novice/professional. In developing reflective assignments and teaching courses, there appears to be a break between the practice of teacher educators and the theory to which they ascribe. This is manifested in expectations that preservice teachers simultaneously be students of teaching and teaching professionals.

### Background of the Study

“If young people do not learn to think while in school, it is fair to ask: *How are they to keep on learning?*” (Hullfish & Smith, 1961, p. 3). It is important to note that the thinking referred to is reflective thinking, and according to Dewey (1933), “the better way of thinking” (p. 3). Reflective thinking is “the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration” (Dewey, 1933, p. 3).

This idea of reflective thinking is at the heart of the movement away from viewing the teacher as technician to the teacher as reflective practitioner. A goal of many teacher education programs is that students will leave programs as reflective practitioners (Loughran, 2002). This movement has been supported by teacher education governing bodies such as The Interstate New Teacher

Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), which developed guiding principles for teacher certification. Directly related to teaching as a reflective endeavor is INTASC's (1992) ninth principle, "The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally" (p. 31). This stance is also supported by organizations and agencies interested in teacher education, such as the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) which recommends a reinvention of teacher education that is based on standards with a strong emphasis on reflection and inquiry. In addition, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2002) uses a set of key propositions to guide its certification process. Proposition four states that teachers

must be able to think systematically about their practice and learn from experience. They must be able to critically examine their practice, seek advice from others, and draw on educational research to deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgement, and adapt their teaching to new findings and ideas. (pp. 16-17)

According to Tom (1985), Loughran (2002) and others, many scholars who conduct research and theorize about reflection agree that reflection and reflective practice are widely defined. While this is true, general definitions exist that allow dialogue about reflection. At the same time generalized definitions make dialogue difficult. As with any concept, each person incorporates nuances

of personal preference and experience that make his notion of reflection his own. With this in mind, I am obligated to offer my own broad definition of reflection; it is focused thinking about an experience. This consciousness is what many believe moves teaching from a routine, mindless endeavor to one that INTASC described as teaching as a thoughtful, deliberate act.

### Definition of Terms

In writing this study, I use various terms that could have multiple meanings. To assist the reader in understanding how I am using these terms, I have included the following operational definitions.

Bracketing – to set aside assumptions made in everyday life in order to focus on a phenomenon.

Dialectic – the opposition of two contradictory but interacting forces and their continual compromise.

Discursive practice – the structure through which cultural meanings are produced and understood; competing and contradictory discourses that give meaning to and organize social institutions and processes.

Essence – “what makes a thing what it is (and without which it would not be what it is); that what makes a thing what it is rather than its being something else” (van Manen, 1990, p. 177).

Hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry - study of the lifeworld with the goal of uncovering, describing, and interpreting life experiences; the processes of

hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry are: (a) investigating the experience; (b) reflecting on the obtained sources of experience; and (c) writing.

Human science - often viewed as the alternative to natural science. This distinction was made by Wilhelm Dilthey who constituted human science as the human world.

Lifeworld – the world of lived experience; the world of immediate experience, that which is already there; the primary object of study in human science.

Participants – a term used in qualitative/interpretive research to designate the group of people that have volunteered to be part of the study. In quantitative research, the term subjects is often used.

Phenomenological inquiry – a form of interpretive inquiry used for the purposes of discovering and communicating meaning of a phenomenon; disciplined, rigorous effort to understand the lifeworld of participants from the perspective of the participants.

Preservice teacher – a university student, usually a junior or senior who is taking courses required for teacher certification; teacher education student; student of teaching; student teacher.

Reflect – “to turn back one’s thoughts upon anything” (New Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language, 1975).

Reflective practice – thoughtfully considering one’s own professional experiences in applying knowledge to practice.

Teacher educator – teaches classes along with other duties included in programs designed to educate future teachers. Teacher educators can be full time university employees or part time employees who are classified as instructor, adjunct faculty, or full time faculty (assistant, associate, or full professor).

Theoretical perspective – “the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3) including researcher beliefs regarding truth, knowledge, and the position of the researcher in the study.

### Rationale for the Study

Teacher educators and teacher education researchers are calling for additional research on reflective teacher education. Cruickshank (1990) suggested investigating “what precisely is communicated to and learned by preservice teachers” (p. 138) in reflective teacher education. In their 1991 book, *Issues and Practices in Inquiry-oriented Teacher Education*, Zeichner and Tabachnick explored the various meanings assigned to reflective practice and described reflective teacher education programs in the United States. They concluded that many programs and teacher educators have adopted reflective teacher education as a slogan and claim to prepare reflective practitioners but have not thoroughly analyzed what reflection and reflective practice mean to both teacher educators and preservice teachers. They stated that attention should be focused on what teachers reflect about, the criteria they use to determine what

practices are effective, and to what extent teachers critique the institutional contexts in which they teach. Zeichner (1994) continued this line of thinking and stated that teacher educators must publicly investigate how the structure and content of their programs and courses, along with their own pedagogy, “are implicated in the particular kinds of reflective practice evidenced by their students” (p. 21). Research on reflective teacher education has continued with more attention given to investigating preservice teachers’ process, product and levels of reflection as well as evaluating specific programs and models of reflective teacher education. However, teacher educators’ and preservice teachers’ perceptions of reflection have yet to be thoroughly investigated.

I have been privy to conversations such as the one depicted in the following scenes that led me to believe that teacher educators and teacher education students have varied perceptions specifically related to reflection in teacher education. Ducharme and Ducharme (1996) support my view and contend that research is needed to determine: (a) what value reflective activities such as journal writing have for teacher education students; (b) what prospective teachers gain from journaling; and (c) what are the advantages and disadvantages of reflective assignments and how do cultural and sociological factors affect these.



---

Reflective Teacher Education  
Two Scenes  
By Sarah J. Ramsey

SCENE 1

Dr. Anderson and Dr. Boyd are having lunch at a local restaurant. They are discussing assignments that they have included in their respective teacher education courses.

Dr. Anderson: I want my students to reflect on their experiences, so I give an assignment that requires them to write a reflective paper about their tutoring session.

Dr. Boyd: I do that too! But I'm always disappointed in the quality of their work. They just write about what happened; they don't reflect.

Dr. Anderson: You know what I did? I made a set of guiding questions for them to use. That has helped them get away from just giving a summary.

Dr. Boyd: What questions did you give them?

Dr. Anderson: I asked them to tell what worked, what didn't work, and how their tutee responded to the lesson.

Dr. Boyd: I think I might try that.

SCENE 2

Connie, David, and Felecia are in the computer lab working on assignments for their elementary education program.

Connie: David, have you written your reflection for tutoring?

David: Not yet, I've thought about it, I just don't have time to sit down and do it.

Connie: I know what you mean. All we do is reflect. I'm running out of stuff to say, so I just write whatever and turn it in.

Felecia: Are you guys talking about the reflection for tutoring?

David: Yeah, why do we have to do so much reflecting?

Felecia: Reflecting helps me understand what I'm doing in tutoring, but I don't like answering those questions that Dr. Boyd gives us. What I reflect about is not usually what she wants to know about.

Connie: Yeah, that's why I think a little reflection goes a long way. How many different ways can I say, it went well or it didn't? All my instructors want to know about is if the lesson worked or didn't. I want to talk about what I experienced, not whether the students learned something or not. That makes my learning seem unimportant.

---

The opinions of Dr. Anderson and Dr. Boyd as stated in the previous scenario are supported by Calderhead (1989), who declared that "student teachers' reflection generally remains at a fairly superficial level even in teacher education courses which purport to be encouraging reflective teaching" (p. 46). I did not find any research that supports Connie's, David's or Felecia's perspectives. However, some scholars have theorized that students' perspectives need to be investigated.

As Calderhead (1989) suggests, teacher educators should further consider their own ideas about reflection and determine why they are at odds with their students' perceptions. "Our [teacher educators'] concepts of reflective teaching are at present insufficiently discriminating to take the complexities of students' learning into account" (p. 49). Elementary preservice teachers come to their teacher education with many years of experience with learning through reflection. Further, the institutional structures of elementary teacher education are at odds with the learning preferences of students. My personal experience along with this call for research prompted my investigation into teacher education faculty members' and students' perceptions of reflection.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand what reflection means to teacher education faculty as well as students and to describe its essence. This understanding was gained by listening to the participants describe their experiences with reflection. "It is through the *shared* experience and perspective of engaged participants in the reflective process, that teacher educators learn what reflection means for themselves and for their students" (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991, p. 16).

### Research Questions

The following questions guided this investigation:

- What does it mean to reflect?
- What is reflection in the context of teacher education like for faculty and students?
- How do faculty members' and students' perceptions of reflection converge and diverge?
- What are the implications for teacher education?

In answering these questions, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of reflection in elementary teacher education.

### Conclusion

This study expands the understanding of what reflection means to teacher education faculty and students. Phenomenological inquiry was used to

investigate what the phenomenon is really like. To accomplish this, I grounded the methodology in assumptions associated with my particular theoretical perspective. Additionally, my assumptions, presuppositions, and common sense understandings were bracketed in order to see reflection from a new perspective. Through specific data collection and analysis methods I captured meaning through writing thematic and analytical memos, while reflecting on the data and the emerging meaning. Through this process, this text was created. The findings of the study are presented in the context of discursive practices in teacher education. Specifically, I used the dialectics of the individual and the institution, the personal and the public, student and teacher, the student/novice and the professional, and theory and practice to present the findings. Embedded within these dialectics are converging and diverging perceptions held by both the preservice teachers and the teacher educators.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The following literature review provides the theoretical foundation for this study. I begin with a general discussion of reflection and its relation to reflective teacher education and then describe reflective teacher education in more detail. The literature on reflective teacher education is organized into three sections. The first presents a historical perspective that ties reflective teacher education to John Dewey, Max van Manen, and Donald Schön. The second section includes discussion of an ongoing argument about whether reflective teacher education exists as an orientation or as only one component of a program. The review concludes with a synthesis of research in reflective teacher education.

#### Reflection

In 1933, John Dewey described reflective thought as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 9). It is appropriate to begin with Dewey’s words as he is often credited as a 20<sup>th</sup>

century “originator” of reflective thinking (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Jay & Johnson, 2002), and numerous scholars have cited his work when writing about and researching reflection (e.g. Calderhead, 1989; Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Loughran, 1996; Rodgers, 2002; Rogers, 2001; Schön, 1987; Valli, 1992; van Manen, 1995; Zeichner, 1990). Although Dewey devoted an entire text to his ideas on reflective thinking, the quest continues to understand this elusive concept.

In 2001, Rogers conducted a concept analysis that used “major theoretical approaches . . . that contributed to a broad and ultimately integrated understanding” (p. 38) of reflection and determined that, “all authors clearly stated or at least strongly implied that reflection is a cognitive process or activity” (pp. 40-41). Further, he stated that there is an emotional dimension to reflection. Rogers (2001) concluded by stating, “Perhaps no other concept offers higher education as much potential for engendering lasting and effective change in the lives of students as that of reflection” (p. 55). Rogers based this statement on the notion that education is traditionally deductive and reflection provides the potential to make learning inductive and student driven. Further, including reflection in education, particularly higher education, would provide a context that allows students to “bridge the gulf between ideas and actions and, hence, learn ideas for and in action” (p. 50).

### Reflective Teacher Education

Rogers’ (2001) words resonate with those teacher education faculties who have adopted reflection. Many teacher education programs have as a goal that

students will leave programs as reflective practitioners (Loughran, 2002).

Reflective teacher education resulted from the focus on reflection as a professional growth process, also known as reflective practice, but reflective practice has diverse meanings. Not only is the term variously defined, but there is a multitude of synonyms; in reviewing the literature, as many as 15 different terms were used to refer to reflective practice (e.g. teacher inquiry, self study, teacher research, and action research).

Just as the concepts reflection and reflective practice have been broadly and variously defined, so has reflection in preservice teacher education (Tom, 1985). Some say that reflection simply means thinking about what happened and others describe “a well-defined and crafted practice that carries very specific meaning and associated action. . . . but one element of reflection that is common to many is the notion of a *problem* (a puzzling, curious, or perplexing situation)” (Loughran, 2002, p. 33). However it is defined, there are many teacher educators who have adopted reflective practice as a way to “prepare teachers who are more thoughtful and analytic about their work” (Zeichner, 1994, p. 9).

### *Historical Perspective*

Although John Dewey focused on reflective thinking and its connection to education nearly 50 years prior, contemporary teacher educators more frequently credit Donald Schön (1983, 1987) and Max van Manen (1977) as influencing their work. Scholars argue about the similarities and differences between the ideas that these three theorists present. However, each presents his own

perspective, which contributes to the current conception of reflective thinking in general and reflective teacher education in particular.

John Dewey's (1933) *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* is commonly cited in defining reflective thinking. In this text he defined reflective thinking and discussed why and how it should be taught. In addition, he wrote about the critical connection between experience and reflection in learning to teach. According to Dewey (1933), reflection is a meaning making process, a rigorous way of thinking, a set of attitudes, and collaborative in nature. Moreover, Dewey's notion of reflection can be equated with inquiry; the tackling of questions; systematic, disciplined thinking; and deriving meaning from experience. In his 1938 work, *Experience and Education*, Dewey also made a significant connection between thinking and experience, particularly in relation to prior experience. He stated that prior experience influences reflective thinking as these experiences provide the foundation for how current experiences are interpreted during reflection.

Max van Manen is recognized for identifying levels of reflectivity. van Manen (1977) associated curriculum theory (empirical-analytic, phenomenological-hermeneutic, and critical theory-psychoanalysis) with levels of reflectivity (technical, practical, critical). The first level of reflectivity incorporates "technical application of education knowledge on the basic curriculum principles for the purpose of attaining a given end" (p. 226). Level two involves the analysis of "individual and cultural experiences, meanings, perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, and presuppositions" (p. 226). Central to the final level is the



“constant critique of domination, of institutions, and of repressive forms of authority” (p. 227).

Although van Manen is recognized for his levels of reflectivity, in 1991 he also penned a well known text, *The Tact of Teaching: The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness*, in which he described a morally based reflective practice that is characterized by pedagogical thoughtfulness and tactful action. These notions are complementary and exist together in “good” teachers. As van Manen described, “tact is the practice of otherness” (p. 139), “to be tactful is to ‘touch’ someone” (p. 142), “tact cannot be planned” (p. 144), “tact is governed by insight while relying on feeling” (p. 145), and “tact rules practice” (p. 147). In addition, pedagogical tact manifests itself “as a mindful orientation in our being and acting” (p. 149) with students. He argued for a distinction between reflection on future action (anticipatory), on current or imminent action (active), on past experience (recollective or retroactive) and “thoughtful action in pedagogical situations” (p. 108). He suggested that it is impossible to step away from a situation such as teaching in the moment to problem solve or weigh options, which is what active reflection implies. Teachers “live in the pedagogical moment” (p. 109); they are engaged in mindful action and act on the spot using intuition and perception, or tact. This tactful action differs from reflective action “in that it is thinkingly attentive to what it does without reflectively distancing itself from the situation by considering or experimenting with possible alternatives and consequences of action” (p. 109). He concluded that this type of mindfulness is lacking in most theories of practice.

Many scholars have credited Donald Schön with directing the attention of teacher educators to reflection (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Clarke, 1995; Laursen, 1994; Loughran, 2002; Mackinnon, 1987; Rogers, 2001; Spalding & Wilson, 2002; Zeichner, 1990). Schön popularized the term reflective practice in his 1983 work, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. He explained how professionals in many areas develop their knowledge through a process of framing and reframing problems. A reflective practitioner is engaged in a cycle of thought and action that is based in professional experiences. Central to Schön's (1987) reflective practice are reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action is a spontaneous reflection in the midst of action. It is an implicit process in which a practitioner considers the alternatives connected with the choices at hand. Reflection-on-action is a more explicit type of thinking. It is a reconstructive mental review of one's actions and thoughts after an action is completed. Schön's work built on that of Dewey by constructing a theory specific to developing professional knowledge (Calderhead, 1989; Valli, 1992). Although not acknowledged in *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Schön's (1987) model encompassed all levels of reflectivity described by van Manen (1977) (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

Finally, some theorists have criticized the application of Schön's theory to education (e.g. Gilroy, 1993; Laursen, 1994). Laursen (1994) claimed that the generalized nature of Schön's theory "underestimates the institutionalized and routinized character of teaching and it overestimates the possibilities of relevant feedback" (p. 129). Gilroy (1993) argued that the theory does not take into

account the prior experiences preservice teachers bring to their programs, as it assumes that professionals enter their learning with no knowledge of what it is they are to learn.

### *Reflective Teacher Education: Orientation or Program Goal?*

Zeichner and Tabachnick (1991) contended that teacher educators have not conducted thorough analysis of what reflection in teacher education means. However, some teacher educators profess to having developed research based conceptual models, frameworks, typologies, and hierarchies (e.g. Cruickshank, 1987; LaBoskey, 1993; Loughran, 1996). Further, a conference specifically devoted to conceptualizing reflection in teacher education was held in Great Britain in 1991 (Calderhead & Gates, 1993). These seemingly contradictory views shed light on a larger issue within teacher education, whether reflective teacher education exists as an orientation within itself or as a component or goal within programs of varying orientations.

Zeichner and his colleagues (Zeichner, 1994; Zeichner & Liston, 1990; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991) proposed a framework that described reflective teacher education as an orientation with several variations, each with a different target for attention during reflection. This framework included the following traditions of reflective practice:

1. The academic version underscores subject matter as the focus of reflection.

2. Thoughtful application of what are considered best practices is central to the social efficiency tradition.
3. Central to the developmentalist form is sensitivity to students' ideas, interests and concerns.
4. The social reconstructionist style considers issues of equity and social justice as they are perpetuated within the context of schooling and teacher actions.
5. A lack of focus is indicative of the generic tradition, as there is no specific target for reflection. The goal of this orientation is getting preservice teachers to reflect without regard to what they reflect about.

Feiman-Nemser (1990) proposed a slightly different view. She believed that there are no orientations of reflective teacher education. Rather, there are five generalized orientations to teacher education: academic (transmission of knowledge), personal (constructivist), technological (knowledge and skills), practical (experience-based), and critical/social (social justice). Parallels can be drawn between Zeichner's reflective orientations and those of Feiman-Nemser; however, in the latter, reflection is not the central process of the orientation. Instead, the orientations provide programmatic goals, roles of the teacher, or educational theories. Feiman-Nemser contended that reflective teaching is not a "programmatic emphasis, but rather a generic professional disposition" (p. 221). And she added that programs advocating reflective teaching could fall into any of the 5 conceptual orientations.

Valli (1992) attempted to settle this disagreement and proposed an alternative view. Both of the previously described orientations can be compared to the various levels of reflection as described by van Manen (1977), and Valli argued that Feiman-Nemser made her statements based on a misinterpretation of those levels. Additionally, Valli critiqued Zeichner's conception because it described "overly generic approaches to reflection with little common commitment to a specific conception of good teaching" (p. 213). Valli conceptualized models of teacher education that are divided into two divisions: technical rationality and reflective practice. However, she also noted that technical rationality is "an essential base for reflective practice" (p. 222). Therefore, she expanded the reflective practice branch to include levels of reflective teacher education that corresponded to van Manen's levels of reflectivity and fall along the following "hierarchical taxonomy". In her ideal, preservice teachers progress through six levels of reflection that have a corresponding change in focus. The first level, technical rationality, is behavioral with a prescribed focus on generic instruction and classroom management. The highest level of reflective teacher education, reflective practice, is at the critical level (social constructionist) where there is a self-imposed focus on the social and political aspects of schooling. At the intermediate level are technical decision making, reflection-in-action, deliberative (social efficiency), and personal (developmental). Finally, she stated that "a reflective orientation to teacher preparation should clearly address the content, processes, and attitudes valued in reflective practice" (p. 223), and that each level of the taxonomy may be

necessary in educating preservice teachers. As I interpret Valli, there are parallels between her notions and those presented by Zeichner and his colleagues and Feiman-Nemser, and I have depicted those in Table 1. However, the generic tradition, as described by Zeichner et al. has no specific focus that provides alignment with other conceptions of reflectivity.

Table 1

Synthesis of Models of Reflectivity in Teacher Education

	Valli	Zeichner et al.	Feiman-Nemser
technical rationality	behavioral		
	technical decision making	academic	academic
reflective practice	reflection in action		
	deliberate	social efficiency	technological & practical
	personalistic	developmentalist	personal
	critical reflection	social reconstruction	critical/social

### *Research in Reflective Teacher Education*

Preservice teachers are usually the subjects of reflective teacher education research. Studies have investigated the skills, attitudes, and dispositions associated with reflective preservice teachers. In addition, research has addressed the following questions:

1. How effective are particular models for reflective teacher education?
2. At what levels do preservice teachers reflect, and how can that reflection be enhanced and measured?
3. What do preservice teachers reflect about and when, and what prompts that reflection?

All studies seem to contribute to answering one comprehensive question: How can preservice teachers' reflection be enhanced? Considering this conclusion, it might appear that all research in reflective teacher education is conducted around programs that fall into Zeichner's generic tradition; however, whether reflection is an orientation or a professional disposition, enhancing reflection is a concern for all programs. In the subsequent synthesis of reflective teacher education research, I did not classify programs or program components into an orientation (from either Zeichner's or Feiman-Nemser's perspectives), but assumed that based on Valli's notion, all focused on reflection as something beneficial for preservice teachers.

Many of these studies have led to models for preparing reflective practitioners. Others studied facets of reflection in teacher education programs. At the same time, the studies are multidimensional and many provide insight into various areas of concern for reflective teacher education. Further, as stated previously, the literature contains many terms that I consider synonymous with reflective teacher education; however, in this review I have chosen to avoid the confusion of mixed terminology and use only the term reflective teacher education. In the remainder of this review of literature, I present a synthesis of several models along with specific findings from three model programs. This is followed by a summary of particular components of other programs that were isolated for study.

There are several teacher education programs that have developed models for reflective teacher education. Many of these are in the United States

(e.g. University of New Hampshire, University of Florida, University of Maryland, Kent State University, Trinity University, Mills College, and Michigan State University). Some were chronicled in Linda Valli's (1992) *Reflective Teacher Education: Cases and Critiques*, and in synthesizing the cases in Valli's volume, it seems that all have the same goal related to reflective practice - developing autonomous teachers who make sound decisions through reflective thinking and judgement. To reach this goal, common components are incorporated to form the context of the programs: courses in inquiry/research, internships that are supervised by a collaborative team, faculty commitment to teacher education and modeling reflective practice, and established criteria or competencies which students should meet.

Vicki LaBoskey (1993, 1994) suggested a model based on the idea that preservice teachers should be educated based on their predisposition to reflective thinking. She concluded that ability, attitude, and motivation are necessary for reflection and that "initial reflective abilities and orientations tend to remain stable during preservice teacher education" (p. 56). Through a large study of preservice teachers, LaBoskey categorized teachers according to cognitive ability in relation to reflective thinking (Commonsense Thinkers or Alert Novices). Then she examined each type of thinker based on four aspects in the act of reflection: context, process, attitudes, and content, which aligned with the areas Dewey (1933) suggested as central to teaching reflective thinking. LaBoskey found that preservice teachers' reflection is dependent on cognitive ability, beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotional state. She considered



Commonsense Thinkers unreflective because they appeared unable to cognitively engage in reflection or exhibited beliefs, emotions, values or attitudes that prevented reflection. Alert Novices were the opposite of Commonsense Thinkers in that they had both the perceived cognitive ability and the disposition to engage in reflective thinking. In addition, her analysis revealed differences in the ways the two groups communicated their reflection; however, she was not able to determine if there were differences in the two groups' thinking processes.

Another model was developed by John Loughran. Influenced by Dewey (1933) and Schön (1987), Loughran created a prototype that involved direct modeling of reflection by teacher educators, and his 1996 study suggested a relationship between modeling reflective thinking, teaching experiences and preservice teachers' initial disposition for reflective thinking. This model considered preservice teachers to have individual predispositions for reflection and used modeling to help them progress to a higher level of thinking. To accomplish this goal, teacher educators modeled reflection by thinking aloud during teaching and by keeping journals that were shared with students. In Loughran's model, preservice teachers also kept journals and through analysis of these journals, he determined that preservice teachers reflect at different points in relation to action. He labeled preservice teachers' reflections as anticipatory, retrospective, or contemporaneous which is similar to Schön's (1987) typology (reflection-before-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection-on-action). Freese (1999) used Loughran's framework and maintained that this model helped

develop reflective practitioners with the aim of improving their teaching and their students' learning.

In *The Professional Teacher: The Preparation and Nurturance of the Reflective Practitioner*, Norlander-Case, Reagan, and Case (1999) chronicled the development of a university based teacher education model. A common vision was central in the model. All instructors involved in this program agreed on a general view of reflective practice. In their view, reflective teachers are conscious decision makers who base their decisions on certain assumptions that they bring to teaching. Further, reflective teachers consider the ethical, technical, and educational consequences of their decisions, which in turn influence their actions. To be prepared to make these decisions, teachers must have extensive content knowledge and in-depth understanding of theory (particularly learning theory), pedagogy, and the possible structural and societal constraints in which they will teach. A program was designed around this common vision that included the use of (a) clinical experiences, (b) small seminars in which students were mentored, (c) narrative journals focusing on critical reflection, (d) action research projects, and (e) core curriculum in which the "nature and purposes of reflective teaching" (p. 39) were discussed. Finally, this program was based on the common themes of inquiry, diversity and reflective practice which were embedded within coursework, field experience, and seminars.

A goal of enhancing reflection is to increase the levels at which preservice teachers reflect. This could mean that teacher education students reflect at as many levels as possible or that they strive for critical reflection. Some teacher

educators believe that the development of preservice teachers' reflective thinking is not linear (Pultorak, 1996; Valli, 1992), meaning that they do not progress from van Manen's (1977) technical to critical levels of reflection. Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey (2000) agreed as they defined a reflective/analytic teacher as "one who makes teaching decisions on the basis of a conscious awareness and careful consideration of the assumptions on which the decisions are based, and the technical, educational and ethical consequences of those decisions" (p. 41). However, other scholars have indicated that critical reflection is the goal of all reflection; students should leave reflective teacher education programs with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will enable their progression to the critical level of reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Valli, 1992; Zeichner, 1994). This view is also supported by Bullough & Gitlin (1991) who have this to say about critical reflection:

Teacher education programs can start with what teachers know and through the process of text building and reflection on the text enable them to articulate and enhance that knowledge in ways that expose the political aspects of schooling, challenge individualism, extend the ethic of caring and build community. (p. 52)

This definition takes reflection beyond the scope of the individual teacher and even beyond the students specific to her classroom. When the teacher questions the moral and ethical dimensions of her actions, she is reflecting at a critical level (van Manen, 1977).

Studies have been launched to validate and exemplify van Manen's (1977) conception of reflectivity. Further, there have been attempts to make connections between those levels and various student dispositions as well as the use of particular strategies to enhance reflection. According to Richert (1992), the level of preservice teachers' reflective thinking is dependent on the structures under which they are asked to reflect. Her conclusion is supported in the work of Hatton and Smith (1995) as well as Pultorak (1996) which is described next.

Hatton and Smith (1995) analyzed preservice teachers' writing for evidence of reflection. Their analysis was based on a hierarchy that classified reflection by type of writing: descriptive writing, descriptive reflection, dialogic reflection, and critical reflection. They concluded that these four discrete forms of reflection were seen in connection with when the writing took place (before, during, or after practice) and if a critical friend was involved. Teacher education students often engaged in reflective dialogue with a critical friend.

Pultorak (1996) also conducted a study to classify novice teacher reflectivity. He used van Manen's concept of reflection and concluded that teacher reflectivity is developmental. He also reported that the level at which preservice teachers reflected was dependent on the relevance of the issue that they reflected upon and the type of written format (bidaily and biweekly journals, visitation journals, and reflective interview) they were asked to use.

Although Sumsion (2000) concluded that reflection can be "extremely difficult to facilitate" (p. 210), there is great interest in enhancing preservice teachers' processes of reflection. According to Richert (1992), "facilitating

reflection involves creating conditions” (p. 172) or frames for the reflective process. Consequently, many studies have been designed to test the effectiveness of certain strategies, methods and conditions intended to facilitate reflection. There is no one particular structure that works best for enhancing reflection (Richert, 1992). This statement holds true whether the circular or linear view of development is applied.

Yost et al. (2000) noted that specific strategies such as action research, journals, and dialogue could be used to further develop reflective thinking in preservice teachers. Freese (1999) also reported the effectiveness of using journals, video tape analysis, collaborative planning, and debriefing sessions, as well as modeling to influence preservice teachers’ reflection. Although various formats for facilitating reflection have been studied, journals seem to dominate the research. Journals provide a permanent record of thoughts and experiences, help establish a relationship with the reader (usually an instructor or peer), and aid internal dialogue (Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Perhaps this usefulness is what makes it such an attractive strategy for study.

Spalding and Wilson (2002) gave special attention to various teaching tools used to facilitate reflection through journal writing. They implemented the typology outlined by Valli (1992) as well as exemplary models of reflective writing to aid in providing feedback on students’ written reflections. Structured and unstructured writing, peer sharing, and rewriting were also used. Spalding and Wilson concluded that no strategies worked better than others and the success of a strategy was dependent on the individual student. However, personalized

feedback on journals and the positive relationships with faculty that resulted proved to be particularly important to the preservice teachers in their study.

When reflecting, preservice teachers focused their attention on concerns, issues, and topics that are personal, content specific, or common across content. Richert (1992) determined that preservice teachers focus on different “aspects of their work when they reflect within different structures” (p. 187). In her study, she asked teacher education students to reflect about their teaching under four different conditions or structures. In condition one the individual wrote in a journal. A written portfolio was created under condition two. For condition three the students were interviewed by a peer who had observed their teaching. In the final condition the peer observed and conducted a reflective interview about the written portfolio. Richert concluded that preservice teachers tended to focus on the personal when writing journals. When they constructed portfolios, their reflections tended to be about the content area represented in the portfolio. When the students were interviewed, they focused on general pedagogy without regard to content, and when the portfolio was added to the interview context, they focused on content specific pedagogy.

In his 1995 study, Clarke also concluded that context can influence the reflection of preservice teachers. He used a structure that included videotaped pre and post discussions between teacher education students and their university supervisors about lessons, which were also videotaped. Clarke delineated fifteen themes that characterize the problems or dilemmas that student teachers faced. These problems were the center of attention for their

reflections. The themes related to the personal (autonomy, personal practical theory to practice, interaction with colleagues, and emotions), instruction (lesson plans and planning, strategies and management) along with student learning and behavior. Similar topics were described by Penso and Shoham (2003) as well as Wunder (2003) in their analyses of preservice teachers' reflective writing, but Penso and Shoham noted that teaching methods and strategies received the most attention from students.

The previous review included studies that had a goal of enhancing the reflection of preservice teachers. However, caution is suggested when in engaging in this complicated task. Educators should consider the following: (a) avoid reducing reflection to that of recipe following as well as reflecting for the sake of reflection (Boud & Walker, 1998), (b) provide reflective activities that are in the appropriate learning context as well as match the type of reflection with the purpose and context of the experience (Boud & Walker, 1998), (c) avoid assuming that they can control the topics of student reflection, as reflection can often lead to students revealing information that the teacher is unprepared to address (Boud & Walker, 1998), (d) avoid making reflection strictly an intellectual process, because reflection is a learning process and has an emotional component (Boud & Walker, 1998), (e) allow time for students to define and discuss reflection (Spalding and Wilson, 2002), and (f) take into consideration the student's disposition, personal history, and expectations for teaching, which may differ from their own (Sumsion, 2000). Finally, Sumsion (2000) suggested that Western analytic traditions need to be challenged so that preservice teachers'

attention to the tacit, affective, and intuitive can be considered valuable. She encouraged teacher educators to model reflective practice and challenge “the orthodoxies that may have been engrained in our practices and our institutional and professional contexts” (p. 211).

### Conclusion

There are definite connections between reflection in a general context and reflection in teacher education. Although their works were not originally embedded in the world of teacher education, John Dewey and Donald Schön make these connections possible and reasonable. Preservice teachers enter their programs with dispositions, skills, and attitudes. These allow them to engage in reflective thinking and affect the levels at which they reflect. To a certain extent, these attitudes, skills and disposition can be influenced as the students move forward through their teacher education programs. In addition, preservice teachers reflect at various levels and this is dependent on when they reflect, the format used to communicate that reflection, and the relevance of what prompted their reflection. Further, modeling and mentoring affect the levels at which they reflect. Finally, the content and processes of preservice teachers’ reflective thinking can be influenced by the context in which they learn to teach.

Influence can only be directed toward preservice teachers who are interested in being influenced, and this choice that students exercise in relation to their learning is an area that seems to have been somewhat ignored by the literature on reflective teacher education. Further, although preservice teachers



are the subjects of this body of research, their attitudes and perceptions relevant to reflection in teacher education have not been investigated beyond the passing mention that they do not like to reflect particularly when asked to communicate their reflections in written form. I have completed a study that reduces the vastness of this void. I embarked on a phenomenological inquiry that describes both preservice teachers' and teacher educators' experiences with reflection, what reflection is like in elementary teacher education, and what it means to reflect in learning to teach.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Methodology “refers to the philosophic framework or fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science perspective” (van Manen, 1990, p. 27), and embedded in a particular methodology are specific methods (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, to fully discuss the methodology proposed for this study, the foundational elements inherent in a specific theoretical perspective or philosophic framework and the methods must be communicated. In this chapter, I first position my methodology within a specific research paradigm. Then I describe the research context, and I delineate data sources, collection methods, and analysis. I end with a discussion regarding my position as the researcher and how in this position I have made every effort to ensure a quality study.

#### Theoretical Perspective

As I designed this study, my goal was to understand teacher educators’ and preservice teachers’ experiences with reflection. I was not interested in providing solutions to problems that have already been identified or in evaluating

a particular program. Rather I wanted to communicate the participants' experiences, to bring them to the attention of those involved in elementary teacher education. With this goal in mind, I developed the following research questions: What does it mean to reflect? What is reflection in the context of teacher education like for faculty and students? How do faculty members' and students' perceptions of reflection converge and diverge and what are the implications for teacher education?

I believe that phenomenological inquiry is the most appropriate approach to meet my research goal. Phenomenology is the study of the life-world (Schwandt, 2001; van Manen, 1990). Generally, phenomenological inquiry is classified as a form of interpretive inquiry (Crotty, 1998; Mertens, 1998; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000). Interpretive inquiry is a generalized term used to refer to all types of research with the purpose of discovering and communicating the meaning/perspective of the study participants (Erikson, 1986). However, not all phenomenological researchers believe in the interpretation of experience; rather the essence is described only. van Manen (1990) believed that when using the mediated description of the lifeworld as expressed by the research participants, further description by the researcher seems to lean toward interpretation. Consequently, he used the term hermeneutical phenomenology to label his perspective. Whether the end result is description or interpretation, phenomenology is a disciplined, rigorous effort to understand the life-world of participants from the perspective of the participants (Pinar, et al., 2000; Schwandt, 2001; van Manen, 1990).

In *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, Max van Manen (1990) defined hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry as the study of the life world with the goal of uncovering, describing, and interpreting life experiences. Further, this type of inquiry is “a systematic, explicit, self-critical, and intersubjective study” (p. 11) of lived experience making the experience explicit, seeking universality. It should be noted that universality (detailed, understood by all, the essential) is not synonymous with generality (lacking detail, vague), nor should it be confused with generalization.

Several assumptions must be acknowledged as inherent in this theoretical perspective and methodology. Many center on researcher beliefs regarding truth, knowledge, and the position of the researcher in the study. Phenomenological inquiry is not intended for purposes such as establishing empirical generalizations, producing “law-like statements” or establishing “functional relationships” (van Manen, 1990, p. 22). Any claims of “truth” are always partial and incomplete, which are characteristic of the uniquely specific and individual character of the experience and knowledge (Pinar, et al., 2000). Finally, phenomenological inquiry is rationalistic in the sense that it is based on the assumption “that human life may be made intelligible, we can share this world, we can make things understandable to each other, [and] that experience can be made intelligible” (van Manen, 1990, p. 16). However, the lifeworld cannot be characterized with a solitary description; “there is always an element of the ineffable to life” (p. 16).

## Research Context<sup>1</sup>

I was interested in the perspectives of preservice teachers and teacher educators involved in elementary education programs primarily because this is where the majority of my own experience lies. I was an elementary teacher education student several years ago and more recently have been an instructor in an elementary teacher education program. I also had prior knowledge of the elementary education program that I eventually chose as the context for this study, and I knew that there was a focus on reflection that was particularly prevalent in the methods block.

Prior to beginning this study, I delineated a research design that was approved by my dissertation committee as well as the Institutional Review Board. Included in this design was a timeline for conducting the study and a copy of this can be found in Appendix A.

### *The Teacher Education Program*

The context for this study was an elementary teacher education program at Big State University<sup>2</sup>, a large public institution in the southern portion of the United States. Approximately 150 students graduate from this program each year with certification to teach first through eighth grades. Toward the end of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Description of context is limited to that information that I feel will not compromise the participants' anonymity.

<sup>2</sup> All institution and participant names have been changed to protect anonymity.

sophomore year, students apply for admission into the professional education program.

All professional education programs at Big State University are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and have reflective practice as an underlying theme. In addition, a specific goal of the elementary education program is that students will engage in reflective thinking to explore dialogic relationships among curriculum, instruction, and preservice teachers' prior experiences. Additionally, the program intends that teacher education students will become knowledgeable decision-makers.

Once admitted to this program, students enroll in the final two semesters of the program which include a methods block followed by the student teaching semester. During the semester in which the data for this study were collected there were approximately 55 students enrolled in the methods block. These 55 students formed a cohort in that they all took all the courses in the block. The methods block consisted of six courses. Four of the classes are methods courses (mathematics, science, social studies and literacy) that all include a field component where the preservice teachers have some type of experience teaching children, either on the university campus or in an elementary school. The other two classes are classroom management and a field experience course. For this additional field experience, the students are assigned to elementary classrooms within a radius of 60 miles of Big State University.

## *The Participants*

In June I contacted the department chair to determine which instructors were teaching courses in the methods block. I began to solicit participants for this study in August. I sent letters via email to all the instructors who were scheduled to teach courses in the methods block and asked for their voluntary participation. A copy of this letter can be found in Appendix B. I chose email rather than another form because it was summer and the only contact information I had for these instructors were email addresses and campus phone numbers.

Next, I attended the first class meeting of one of the methods courses in which all 55 students were enrolled and asked for volunteers for the study. I explained the purpose of my study and that if they volunteered I would like for them to complete an information sheet that I would use to narrow my pool of participants. Appendix C contains the script that was used to request volunteers, and Appendix D contains the information sheet. A sample size of approximately six is recommended for phenomenological studies (Mertens, 1998). Therefore, I had planned on having three preservice teachers and three instructors (faculty of all ranks as well as teaching assistants) as participants. I expected to have a large number of students volunteer and to employ a sequence of sampling techniques to arrive at the final sample for this study (Erickson, 1986). In addition, I wanted to make sure that all preservice teacher participants were enrolled in at least one section taught by one of the instructor participants. As it turned out, I had ten elementary education students volunteer. However, when I

contacted them, three did not respond to my attempts; consequently, I was left with seven who were still interested in participating. Three of the six university instructors volunteered to participate. This left ten total participants, and I decided to include them all in the final sample. Prior to participation, I met with each volunteer and explained my study. When the volunteer agreed to participate, she signed the appropriate consent form. Copies of consent forms are included in Appendix E (instructor) and F (student).

All the instructors taught one of the courses in the methods block. In addition, the seven preservice teachers were all in each of the instructor's courses. This ensured that these students were interacting with the same instructor, completing the same assignments, and were exposed to the same experiences in class.

The seven elementary education majors (Andrea, Elsie, Liz, Phoebe, Rhea, Rickie, and Wendy) who participated in this study are all female. Three of the students enrolled at the university as Freshmen; the others transferred from other institutions in the state. Five of the students' ages ranged between 18 and 21 and two were older than 21. One of the students had been married and had children. The other six students were single with no children.

Instructors Luna, Johnston, and Putsey are also female. All of the instructors had prior teaching experience in public schools that related to the subject areas of their respective methods block course. The instructors' university teaching experience ranges from two years to five years. Each of them had previously taught the course they were teaching during this study.



## Data Collection

This study was a journey to uncover the essence of reflection in elementary teacher education. In order to get at this essence, it was necessary to hear the voices involved in teacher education, those of preservice teachers and teacher educators. In listening to these voices, I collected qualitative data through in-depth interviews, observations, and documents.

Individual interviews were used to gather description of the lived experience of reflection. Between September and December, I conducted three semi structured interviews with each participant. The design of qualitative interviewing is “*flexible, iterative, and continuous*” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 43); therefore, a flexible design should not be interpreted as free-form or hap-hazard. I had specific goals in mind for each of the three interviews. Because a goal of phenomenological interviewing is to develop a conversational atmosphere (van Manen, 1990), the first interview was used to set the context for the subsequent interviews. Participants were asked to talk about their motivation for entering the teaching profession and their experiences in teacher education. The second interview focused on gathering specific examples of the participants’ experiences with reflection in teacher education, and the third interview provided the opportunity to ask for clarification or expansion of what had been described in the two previous sessions. In addition, the questions for interviews two and three were influenced by observations of class meetings that took place in the period between the interviews.

Phenomenological interviewing can be challenging. As van Manen (1990) expressed, “it is imperative to stay close to experience as lived” (p. 67) while at the same time maintaining the environment of conversation. With this in mind, I stayed focused through a set of questions developed specifically for each interview and remained conscious of the question of interest. Additionally, this focused process was also recursive. As each interview took place, I analyzed the participants’ descriptions and refined or changed questions based on the analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). An outline of questions can be found in Appendix G.

During the interviews, participants were asked to recall their experiences of reflection. I used reflective writing, the instructor’s description of assignments, and class observations as a way to initiate conversation. Finally, transcribing the audio taped interviews immediately following the event is essential to managing the data as well as taking advantage of those pieces of information in my memory that were not recorded in audio or written form. In most cases I transcribed within one week of interviews and then forwarded the transcript to the interviewee for review. The participants were asked to respond regarding the accuracy of my representation of their experience.

Many university teachers have incorporated group reflective or discussion sessions into courses. Observing these sessions provided an invaluable data source as observation “generates different forms of experiential material” than that of interviewing (van Manen, 1990, p. 69). van Manen (1990) described “close observation” as a type of observation (p. 68) that is focused on seeing

specific experiences related to the phenomenon under study. I used this type of observation to focus on gathering anecdotes that were relevant to describing the experience of reflection. While observing, I took field notes. Just as with interviews, observation also requires a simultaneous analysis. Therefore, following each observation, additional notes were made regarding the observation. Then, field notes were transcribed.

In September, October, and November, I observed nine different class meetings, three in each instructor's class. Each instructor taught multiple course sections; however, because student participants were not enrolled in each section, I observed only the sections with student participants. In addition, the student participants were enrolled in the observed sections in various patterns. Therefore, student participants were observed between four and eight times. Table 2 provides a visual representation of the observations conducted.

Table 2

## Record of Participant Observation

	Observation								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Participants</b>									
S1	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
S2	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
S3	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
S4	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
S5	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
S6				x		x		x	x
S7				x		x		x	x
I1						x		x	x
I2	x	x					x		
I3			x	x	x				

*Note.* "x" indicates the participant was observed.

I arranged visits to these classes when instructors had scheduled discussion. I observed class discussion about field experiences, journal articles and activities students completed in class. I also observed discussion that took place when students were working in small groups. While observing, I paid special attention to my study participants. In order to provide further description and context for the anecdotes, I also made notes regarding other students.

Written documents "may contain reflective accounts of human experiences that are of phenomenological value" (van Manen, 1990, p. 73).

Further, university instructors' perceptions of reflection are often articulated in their explicit expectations for written reflective assignments. These expectations are communicated in course syllabi, texts, and written feedback on student work. In addition, students' actual written reflective assignments communicate their experience of reflection. Finally, these documents can include expressions or phrases that are used to communicate experience. "These persistent etymological references" (van Manen, 1990, p. 60) can provide clues to the meaning of reflection.

I collected artifacts from both teacher educators and preservice teachers. Each instructor's syllabus was acquired as well as any supplementary documents that were distributed in class or on websites that provided further description for reflective assignments. Finally, at the end of the fall semester, the student participants were asked to select one reflective assignment that was written for the methods block. I asked them to select the one that communicated significant learning for them and to bring that to the final interview. I asked the preservice teachers to explain why the assignment was chosen and what the assignment communicated about learning to teach. Additionally, I asked for them to talk about how the format of the assignment fit with their preferences for reflection.

### Data Analysis

The preceding review of literature situated my study within a certain body of literature. In addition, the construction of this review also influenced my

assumptions, perceptions, and conceptions of reflective teacher education, which in turn influenced my analysis.

Data analysis was guided by the work of Max van Manen (1990). During analysis he suggested considering text (data) “in terms of meaning units, structures of meaning, or themes” (van Manen, 1990, p. 78). Themes emerge as the meaning in the text is found; “phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 79). I approached the data from several directions to uncover themes. I read the entire text of all interview transcripts, observations, and documents to glean meaning from the reading. During this *wholistic* reading, notes were made on the text to record themes that appeared in the data. I also read the text another time and highlighted portions that seemed relevant. During this *detailed* reading I looked for meaning in each sentence or cluster of words. The highlighted portions were also labeled to provide a concise statement of the meaning. A third *selective* reading was done to look for specific instances of themes that were prevalent. This reading also helped me to focus themes that seemed vague or disconnected. The themes resulting from these various readings were sorted and rearranged, as I combined and collapsed themes into one another.

From the themes came thematic formulations or thematic analytical statements. I made a written record of these which I returned to as the analysis progressed. The statements were modified to reflect the clarity gained during the evolving analysis. These statements were then captured in more comprehensive notes or memos. At various times during analysis, the developing themes

became the focus of questions in follow-up interviews. This recursive process allowed me to determine whether a theme was essential to the meaning I was seeking or incidental. Adding to this process, I went to peers for a different perspective on my speculative themes. This validation or contradiction was used to expand, modify, reevaluate, or eliminate a theme.

## Issues of Rigor

### *Researcher Subjectivity*

My study was prompted by personal experience in elementary teacher education. From the perspective of both the student and the instructor, I have witnessed the varying notions of reflection. According to van Manen (1990), prior to beginning the inquiry, assumptions and pre-understandings should be acknowledged:

The problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much. . . . our 'common sense' pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of science knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question. (p. 46)

Due to my previous work in the specific context of my study, I know all my respondents as students, instructors, or colleagues. Therefore, I have kept this history in mind throughout my work. "The phenomenologist postulates his or her

lifeworld as central to all that he or she does-including research and teaching- and as a consequence focuses on the *biographic situation* . . . of each individual” (Pinar, et al., 2000, p. 406). With this in mind, I must acknowledge that my position as researcher affected the participants, as theirs affected me. Further, this reflexive position acknowledges that my position as researcher is shaped by my history in teacher education, my own ideas about reflection, and my relationship with the participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I also recognized that at the time of this writing, my primary role is that of a student. Therefore, I remained cognizant of that as I attempted to present the voices of both groups involved in teacher education.

### *Trustworthiness*

Readers of this study may want to judge its quality or trustworthiness. Trustworthiness incorporates several notions: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity (Mertens, 1998). Within the confines of this study, several actions were taken to ensure trustworthiness. Credibility refers to the accuracy with which I portrayed the participants’ perspectives. Member checks, peer debriefing, progressive subjectivity and theoretical triangulation were employed for credibility. In order to provide the reader with adequate detail to make judgements on transferability, substantial description was used to assist the reader in determining the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other contexts. In qualitative research changes in the inquiry process are to be expected. To demonstrate the dependability of this



study, I kept detailed records of the research process and engaged in dependability audits with peers to confirm the appropriateness and quality of the inquiry. Next, confirmability audits were completed during peer debriefing where portions of interview transcripts, codes, themes, analytical statements and memos were shared with a peer in order to test my assertions and determine that the findings were supported by data. In addition, persistent observation, data triangulation, and methodological triangulation were used. Phenomenological inquiry “strives for precision and exactness by aiming for interpretive descriptions that exact fullness and completeness of detail, and that explore to a degree of perfection the fundamental nature of the notion being addressed” (van Manen, 1990, p. 17). To ensure authenticity, I have presented a balanced view of the beliefs, values and perspectives of all involved in the study by incorporating thick description, multiple data sources, and approaching data analysis from multiple perspectives.

### *Limitations*

As it is impossible “to design and conduct the ‘perfect’ research study in education” (Mertens, 1998, p. 345), it is important for me to communicate what I consider shortcomings to this study. I chose to report these in the methodology chapter as it is at this point that the reader may begin to determine how my findings may transfer to another context that the reader deems appropriate.

As indicated in the context section of this chapter and throughout successive chapters, I have chosen to limit the description of the research

context in order to protect the anonymity of the participants. The findings presented in the next chapter may be considered controversial, and I did not want to put my participants at risk by exposing their identities to those who may interpret this work as a critique of any specific individual or program. I feel that including this information would put the participants at risk of being identified. The instructors each teach a course in the methods block connected to a specific content area and I have made specific efforts to mask any data reproduced in my findings that could expose their identities. The same consideration was made when preservice teachers described events in a particular class that connected with the content area associated with that class. This omission may limit the transferability of my findings.

van Manen (1990) described various sources of phenomenological data, including protocol writing and other forms of story, interviewing, observing, and art. Considering the time constraints and my limited research experience, I chose to rely only on those sources that I felt comfortable accessing. As a result, I relied more heavily on interviews for data collection as opposed to other forms of data. At the same time I feel that interviews provided sufficient richness for the study's focus.

Finally, I continually refer to reflection in elementary teacher education; however, I have focused only on the methods block of a program. My study may have been enhanced by including teacher educators and preservice teachers in the student teaching semester. At the same time, the number of participants and

the amount of data necessary to include this aspect would be unmanageable within the scope of this dissertation.

### Conclusion

It is my ethical responsibility as a researcher to do no harm in conducting this study. This includes protecting the confidentiality of the data collected and the anonymity of the study participants. In addition, I am obligated to have a valid research design and ensure that participants are informed of all procedures and expectations. The preceding methodology addresses these issues and has been approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board. A copy of this approval is included in Appendix H.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

Competing and seemingly dichotomous realities exist in the world of elementary teacher education. Britzman (1991) called these “contradictory realities”. Further, she believed that these realities become less polarized as conflicts are explored within their relationships because “they are shaped as they shape each other in the process of coming to know” (Britzman, 1991, p. 2). In addition, teacher education is what Foucault called a discursive field as it is composed of several competing and contradictory discourses that give meaning to social and institutional processes.

In this study I listened to two essential voices in teacher education, preservice teachers and teacher educators, to unearth the discursive practices present in reflective teacher education. The dialectics of the individual and the institution, the personal and the public, student and teacher, the student and the professional, and theory and practice are used to present the findings of this study on reflection in elementary teacher education. I begin by describing the essence of reflection as recounted by the participants. This essence shifts slightly when the participants described their experiences in the context of

teacher education to focus on particular experiences. Reflection is essentially a personal, private process, but when brought into teacher education, the personal becomes public. The contradictory realities of classroom discussion and reflective written assignments are central to the discussion on making the personal public. Next, I concentrate on reflective assignments and the power relationship between the student (preservice teacher) and teacher (teacher educator). I follow this with a theory practice debate, where all the participants described that teacher educators do not practice what they preach. The role of experience, particularly prior experience, in constructivism and its relation to preservice teachers' reflection provides the foundation for this discussion. Finally, I end with a discussion of how uncertainty in teaching contributes to each of the preceding contradictory realities.

### The Essence of Reflection

As Dewey (1933, 1938) described, education must be based in experience and reflection. The participants in this study described an enacted reflection that connects to Dewey's notions. For the participants in this study, learning is a natural cycle of experience and reflection.

You know every time I do something I think about it. You know you're always thinking about things that you do, that you could differently. Especially when you think that you made a mistake or maybe something went well, you still think, well how could I have made that better? (Andrea, interview 3)

Reflection is individually relevant, conscious and deliberate, focused on problem solving and change, and dialogic. Simply stated, reflection is thinking about and engaging in dialogue about an experience. This thinking is not what automatically takes place within our brains throughout the day and night, but is a conscious and deliberate thinking, giving mental attention to something.

Reflection must have a precipitating event, something that evokes a feeling of frustration, excitement, aggravation, confusion, or disequilibrium. According to Rhea, the experience needs to be "worth thinking about", or attention getting. "I really only wrote down things that really caught my attention, that I thought would be worth talking about. I mean some days I would have, you know, two pages written and other days I would only have three things" (interview 1). This relevance allows focused attention to the experience at hand.

When reflecting there is no magic formula to be followed; what works for one, does not work for all. Some participants, like Elsie, preferred to spend time venting to release the emotions that built up from an experience and then move on to an analytical processing of the experience.

I would let all my emotions go and then go back and try to figure out why it made me feel that way. And why I felt that way. I'd just go off on a tangent on how I didn't like things he [the teacher I was observing] did and he didn't let me do anything and that bothered me. But I would just kind of sit down and just kind of let my feelings flow. I'm a very feeling person I guess. I would just say everything that I felt about it and all I remembered

and how things that I liked or didn't like and just anything that popped into mind. (interview 1)

Others, like Rhea, preferred to make notes on the events and then come back to that record later to process the experience.

I had a notebook, and I just wrote the date at the top and anything I saw that seemed interesting or anything that I noticed, I would just write it down. I just jotted down little words that would help me remember what I saw. (interview 1)

Some participants described a process of thinking on their own, then going to others for conversation, then thinking again. They had to decide if what others were saying was relevant. They used comparison as an important analysis tool for their reflecting. Liz described this process in the following way:

I would want to think about it and then discuss it with somebody and then think about it some more. I take what people tell me and what I discuss with other people and then when I have time to think about it, when I'm driving (laughs), is when I go over everything that they said, and compare it to what I thought and make adjustments in my thinking. You know like, if I was thinking something didn't go very well and I had five or six people say, well, you know I really liked that idea, then I would go, hum, I wonder why I didn't like it? And I would try to figure out what it was that I didn't like about it. (interview 3)

The participants compared what they saw and heard with their own views and prior experiences to make decisions about whether there was a connection. No

matter the preferred format, most described the need for the passing of time that will allow them to disconnect from the experience in order to process or analyze it in an organized fashion, taking different perspectives into consideration. As Liz described, disassociation is important in reflecting on experiences.

I think about something else for a while, listen to some music or something like that while my brain processes what happened. And then when I sit down to reflect over what happened, I bring it back, and I'm better able to - I guess, the disassociation for a while enables me to focus more clearly on what happened and how I felt about what happened. (interview 3)

Further, most participants did not describe a process that included writing a detailed analysis of an experience.

I can sit and talk about a situation and then be like, oh I just reflected over it. But sitting down at my computer and actually writing out what I think, it's just kind of not helpful. Because talking to me comes easier than typing. (Rickie, interview 1)

As Rickie described, talking with others or engaging in self talk was also important to the participants, and all preferred talking to writing. Getting opinions, ideas and suggestions from others was essential to this verbal engagement. They also described the need for affirmation along with validation from those they considered more knowledgeable and/or experienced.

Reflection is a personal endeavor that ultimately leads to learning. Each participant described reflection resulting in some type of change, be it cognitive or behavioral. Consequently, this change led to learning. This learning took



place through making decisions, forming opinions, and thinking about future action. Many times this change left uncertainty along with unanswered questions. As Andrea stated,

[Some questions] probably will never get answered. For instance, one of my questions was about how can teachers give children the affection that they need without being overly affectionate. I usually find the answer to them later. I mean I'm sure eventually one day I'll have most of it figured it, but I'll never have it all figured out (laughs). (interview 3)

#### A New Context for Reflection: Elementary Teacher Education

I have previously described the reflection of both preservice teachers and teacher educators as a personal endeavor that involves conscious thinking about a relevant experience. When focusing specifically on the context of elementary teacher education, the essence of reflection shifts slightly to concentrate on particular types of experiences. In this new context, experience was described as "being" in class through active or passive participation, reading written texts such as books and articles, interacting with students, observing teachers and students in schools, and the act of teaching. The participants communicated that reflection is essential to learning from experiences, but learning does not result from every experience. Further, some experiences are more valuable than others. These experiences vary in relevance and fall on a spectrum that ranges from the abstract (theory) to the active (practice).

Reflection is more meaningful when it is associated with direct teaching experience. All participants agreed that actual teaching experience or interaction with children is the most beneficial in learning to teach. Phoebe clearly expressed this opinion:

I mean, you can learn all the book knowledge possible and still not be a good teacher. You just have to experience kids and work with kids and learn from kids, cause they'll probably teach you more than any book could ever. (interview 1)

This judgement of relevance is particularly pertinent and will be explored more fully at another point in this chapter.

The participants described a non-ephemeral reflection, a reflection that is not tied to a specific place in time. When describing reflection, the participants referred to the past using phrases such as, "when I think back", "when I look back", "I need to go back and think", and "I remember when". They also described a connection between the past and the present by saying, "I still think about it", "that stands out in my mind", or "that really sticks with me". Thinking that spans from past to present is communicated through the use of "I'm always thinking about". This non-ephemeral reflection is exemplified by Andrea when she described her thinking about a lesson she taught on the environment.

I kept thinking maybe it would have been better to teach a lesson about vocabulary with things that have to do with the environment because they had a real common misconception in that class that things, bad things, that happen to the environment are like if I called you a bad name. And I

kept having to restate that the environment is things in nature, but your classroom can be an environment, too, like when you have trash on the ground in here [the classroom]. I kept thinking in my mind, well maybe I should have gone over environment more, but they had been doing a nature unit so I thought it would go along well. But, I just had a problem with that, and I kept thinking about that a lot whenever I was teaching.

(interview 3)

This presents a different vision of reflection as compared to what I see as compartmentalized reflection (before, during and after action) that has been described by Schön (1987) and others. Although reflection does take place after action, that reflection is always blended with reflection that took place prior to and during the action. What the participants think about after teaching affects the planning for and implementation of the next lesson. They used their knowledge of content, students, teaching and their own actions to plan for lessons that would be taught in the future. These participants compared students, the teachers they observed, and what they learned in class. Rickie described her thinking when preparing to teach a lesson on butterflies.

[I] knew that we needed a book for a lower reading level, because there are kids that were reading below grade level. I picked students that would be appropriate for the jobs we gave, rather than you know, one, two, three, one, two, three, numbered them off. There were jobs that some students probably couldn't have done and that's just ability, and learning problems....[I] also thought about content, really looked at the P.A.S.S.

skills to deal with the content and integrated literacy and math with the graphing and all that....[My] focus was not to make the activity fun because kids can entertain themselves, they don't need me to get up there and be a clown. They're engaged in learning because they're naturally curious about the world around them. And I really believe that, and that's part of my philosophy of learning. You know kids are already curious; you don't need to bait them. You just need to keep them asking questions; when you ask questions that they know they have more confidence. And then, that way we can get into questions that are maybe a little bit more difficult and something they don't know. (interview 3)

It may sound here as if I am referring only to the preservice teachers, but the teacher educators also compared their students, teachers (both preservice and inservice) they observed, and what they learned in classes that they taught and classes that they took in the past. During teaching, they described thinking on their feet and making changes mid stream based on an assessment of the situation. The decision to make the change was not always based on analytical thinking; often times it was an intuitive feeling that something was not right. As Johnston described, realizations about her teaching come from intuitive feelings.

I think you feel them, I mean you know when you haven't done something the way it could have worked out better. And [I use] what I know about what I've taught before, prior knowledge and comparing the two and the decisiveness of knowing what I want when I make an assignment. It just

comes from, it's an internal feeling of I know this could be better, I know I could make changes. (interview 3)

Like Johnston, all participants talked about thinking about their teaching in terms of success or failure. They talked about whether "it" did or did not work or go well. The determination of success or failure was often based on intuitive feelings as well as students' reactions, student learning, and the effectiveness of planning and preparation for the lesson. Much of the time, the participants focused on the negative aspects of the experience rather than the positive, which Gelter (2003) described as a common behavior. Rickie also communicated this tendency, "I don't really necessarily take the time to do my reflection unless something goes bad, and then it's just like, oh I should probably think about that again, you know?" (interview 2).

Finally, the participants saw continuous reflective practice as a way to become better teachers. All agreed that the goal of reflection is to change practice and that change takes time. Both teacher educators and preservice teachers recognized when change was necessary, but were often at a loss for how to make that change come about. When asked about improving her ability to integrate her lessons, Wendy said,

I think it's just going to take practice; I think the more you do it, the easier it will become. Like writing lesson plans, I don't really know how I would get better at that, I guess just by doing it so many times that you would just - I'll get better at it and would think of things, I think. I think I would really have to brainstorm about how I'm gonna do reading, spelling, and

math all at one time. Where I think whenever you have done that for so many years, I think it would be easier. (interview 1)

This uncertainty may explain why the participants believed that good reflection results in questions and that teachers will never have all the answers.

### *Making the Personal Public*

*Reflection is commonly considered to be a private activity, while reflective teaching, like any kind of teaching, is expected to be a public activity. (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991, p. 10)*

Although there is a shift in the essence of reflection when learning to teach, there is alignment with the original essence connected to the personal reflection described by the participants. There continues to be a focus on problem solving and making changes to thinking and action. Yet, this is where the commonalities end. The subsequent discussion delineates the dialectical relationship between the natural reflection of the participants and the institutionalized reflection of teacher education. Institutionalized reflection manipulates relevance, forces attention in particular directions, and is non-dialogic.

The institutional pressures of accountability and professional competency make it necessary for private reflection to become public. In addition, making reflection public usually takes the form of class discussion and written reflective assignments (Goodman, 1991). While acknowledging this condition, both teacher education students and instructors envisioned similar ideals for reflection in

teacher education - a dialogical cycle between teacher educators and preservice teachers. As Putsey described, her ideal situation was one where she could engage in a dialogic journal with her students; however, "it just would be a crazy cycle of never ending paper....that's not possible with more than four students at a time" (interview 3). As Putsey alluded to, there are various institution, program, and course level features in this particular program that create tensions between the ideal reflection and the real reflection in teacher education. In addition, these institutional constraints were blamed for making this ideal impossible to implement. This rationale was primarily used by teacher educators, but the preservice teachers recognized these constraints as well. However, the preservice teachers were more optimistic about the potential for overcoming these barriers and offered numerous suggestions on making reflection a more valuable aspect of teacher education.

Talking through experiences and ideas is essential to understanding beliefs (Powers, 1999). All participants expressed the need for discussion associated with reflection and were very interested in getting help from others. All like to talk with others on a personal level to get their perspectives, bounce off ideas, hear their opinions, validate their ideas, and confirm their suspicions. As Johnston discussed, they are often faced with uncertainty and look to others for guidance, "I'm more of a person that needs to talk to someone and say, what should I do, this just doesn't feel right and I'm not sure where to go, what would you do?" (interview 1). The participants valued having multiple perspectives and being given suggestions about possible changes. Recognizing these needs,

teacher educators incorporated into their courses class discussion about field experiences, activities, and readings.

Each instructor participant's syllabus included a section describing methods or style of instruction. These sections indicated that "whole group discussion" or "small and large group discussion" would be used. As I observed class sessions where this method was intended, these class discussions were often directed by the instructor. Further, in subsequent conversations with me, the students described feeling that they were not free to express their thoughts. This reality of the class discussion as non-dialogic is exemplified in the following vignette<sup>3</sup>.

*It is 9:00 a.m. The 26 preservice teachers are seated in groups of four and five around six rectangular tables. The room is brightly lit by the overhead florescent lights embedded in the acoustical tile ceiling. There are also large windows that line the west side of the classroom; however, the mini blinds that cover them are closed to reduce glare to the white board that spans the north wall. On the east side of the room, bulletin boards display the preservice teachers' experiments in bulletin board construction. I sit in a chair near the south wall away from the students. It is about mid point in the semester, and these students have been sitting in the same groups since the first day of class.*

---

<sup>3</sup> This observation took place in a methods course, and for confidentiality reasons, I have changed the content area which is the focus of the course.



*For the first hour of class, the students worked in their groups on a task that was given to them so they could experience the curriculum from their students' perspectives. As they work, these future teachers talk about the task as well as other topics, such as their personal lives and other courses in the program. Putsey moves to each group and observes them as they work. She also asks them questions about the task. It is 9:25 a.m. and Putsey has rotated to each of the groups. She moves back to the front of the room to make an announcement, "When you finish this task, I'd like you to jot down two or three things about the article that we need to talk about." At that prompt, some of the students dig into their book bags to retrieve the article. Others have panicked looks on their faces as they ask others in their groups if they have read the article. As I focus on the group nearest me, Farrah tells her group that she read the article and tells the others in her group what it was about. At 9:38 a.m., the instructor redirects the class in order to discuss the task that they have been working on. Putsey asks, "Have you used these types of strategies in your field experience?" Liz responds, "I have tried, but I think they're too difficult for my level of student." Putsey asks a follow up question to Liz about how her student responded then asks for someone else to share her experience. After this student tells what she did, Putsey asks a subsequent question. This cycle is repeated with three additional students. At 10:00 a.m., Putsey says, "Let's talk about the article on*

teaching from a constructivist approach.” She is referring to an article that the students were to have read for class.

*Putsey: Let’s talk about the article, about the constructivist article. (opens her book to the article) What kind of classroom is described?*

*Farrah: Constructivist.*

*Putsey: What does that mean?*

*Farrah: Teacher facilitates.*

*Putsey: What is the role of the teacher?*

*Farrah: Encourage, mediate, facilitate, repeat questions, interject questions.*

*Putsey: To do all that, what does the teacher have to do?*

*Farrah: Listen*

*Putsey: You have to listen to students and ask students questions. You have to listen. I once worked with a teacher who used to say, “I teach by listening, not by telling.” The teacher must also choose good tasks. We have a constructivist classroom presented in this article, what was interesting to you?*

*Farrah: Kids created their own strategies for spelling words. When do you teach them the traditional spelling rules?*

*Putsey: What do you guys think? Are you obligated, as teachers, to tell them the traditional way?*

*Farrah: I don’t think they should be forced to learn a specific strategy.*

*Wendy: If they understand their way, then they’ll probably get the other way as well.*

*Putsey: If I show them another way, what will the kids think? They’ll probably go with the teacher’s way. Kids will defer to the teacher. I think I agree maybe with what Wendy said.*

*10:05 a.m.*

*Putsey: You have to trust that kids can think for themselves. That was good, what else?*

*Jenny: I liked how they introduced things from the simple to complex, started with what kids knew.*

*Putsey: Good, what else? Anything else? (waited 2 seconds) Alright.*

*The instructor continues class with a review for the midterm evaluation that would take place during the next class meeting. She lists the topics that would be on the exam and gave the students suggestions on how they could prepare. She also describes the format for the exam. At 10:15 a.m. the noise level in the room begins to rise. I hear zippers, papers shuffling, and binders closing as students gather their belongings. Putsey continues her review. She tells the students that there will be a couple of questions on the exam about the articles they have read thus far. She ends the class by asking if there are questions, she waits approximately two seconds and dismisses the students. At 10:17 a.m. the students have left the room (field notes, 10/14/03).*

Preservice teachers also contributed to the disconnection between the personal and the institutional. As may be deduced from the previous vignette, students are not always prepared to, willing to, or motivated to engage in discussion. As Rhea described, some instructors made efforts to engage the preservice teachers in discussion, but those efforts were sometimes unsuccessful.

And even she [the instructor] has said that, she's like, "I don't know if it's me or what, but I just think it's really hard to get you guys talking, but once I do, it's great, you know?" And I've noticed it, too. And once we do start talking we keep on talking and it's always, anytime we've had discussion in any of our classes, it's always beneficial, I think. I'm always listening, and I think everyone else is, and we're always getting good ideas from other people. (interview 2)

The preservice teachers also indicated that they liked to hear others talk about their experiences, but did not necessarily want to share their experiences in class because they felt intimidated by other students and by the teacher. This attitude was echoed in Elsie's words:

[There is] no way I'm gonna go up there and somebody go, uh, that's wrong. And then I turn bright red in front of the whole class, and I'd be like, yeah I know this is elementary math, but I got it wrong, and I'm a senior in college. (interview 1)

In addition, these students expressed concerns about sharing personal thoughts in public, which is common among preservice teachers (Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Some of the student participants also felt that confidentiality regarding the elementary students they were working with might be compromised. Furthermore, the preservice teachers brought to class the image of teachers publicly humiliating students (Logsdon, 2002) and did not want to fall victim to this. It might be questioned whether this fear was founded in experience or was merely a myth. Nevertheless, it lived in the hearts of these

future teachers and impeded the open dialogue that teacher educators and preservice teachers envision.

The preservice teachers described engaging in discussion outside of class, but recognized the need for guidance from those they considered more experienced. Many times talking with others was just a “gripe session”, which was not productive because change and learning were not the focus. However, these informal conversations provided the opportunity to talk about the emotional, to vent, which is something teacher education students are often not given the space to do within their classes. Liz commented on this issue.

We [preservice teachers] have tons of long, long breaks. So we all kinda get together and discuss whatever happens to be an issue at the time.

We don't have experienced guidance, and frequently they turn into gripe sessions (laughs) - gripes about the disorganization of the whole semester, the professors changing things at the last minute and not telling us stuff until the last minute and you know, just everything being due the last two weeks of school and the first five weeks we sat there. It's very frustrating and a lot of the professors, you know, we talk a lot about how they don't practice what they preach. And it's really frustrating to us.

(interview 2)

Finally, I do not want to portray all class discussion as insignificant; however, many students did not feel that class discussion was dialogic, even though they did find them beneficial to a certain extent. Beneficial class discussion, as described by Rhea; involved students sharing their experiences.

Everyone talks about what they did in their field experience, and we hear what goes on. And like when I did my tutoring, almost the entire next time [class meeting], was spent talking about what was done, what people did. And I also find that the class is more interesting when we're talking about stuff like that. Everyone seems to stop what they're doing and listen to the students in the class when we're talking about what has happened to us as opposed to listening to how to teach different things. (interview 2).

In addition, the teacher educators expressed frustration about the lack of student engagement during class discussion. If students were not actively involved in discussion, some instructors, like Putsey, felt that that particular class session was not successful. At the same time, they were at a loss for how to make the class discussions more dialogic.

If no one talks then that part of class didn't go well (laughs). And so, you know for me personally [I question] how to facilitate that better, how can you facilitate better discussion? Besides just standing there, you know, using punitive language like, we're not gonna do anything until people start talking (laughs). I am not going to resort to that, so that's part of my reflection. I think that's just constantly, that's an area I need to get better in, and I just am not there yet. (interview 3)

As previously described students often did not want to talk in class. Further, it is difficult to grade or assess class discussion. Therefore, in many programs including this one, reflection in teacher education has become synonymous with written reflective assignments. As Spalding and Wilson (2002)

described it, reflective writing can be a “window into student thinking and learning” (p. 1396). They also argued that when used effectively, reflective assignments can help establish and maintain relationships between teacher educators and their students and can be a dialogic teaching tool.

The preservice teachers and the teacher educators in this study described differing, yet similar, realities regarding these reflective assignments. Reflective assignments were often considered by the preservice teachers as something that forced them to think. “I think that the purpose [of reflective assignments], I think that reflecting makes you think about something more” (Wendy, interview 2). Furthermore, it seems that grading these assignments made the forced thinking even more pronounced. “I knew it was for a grade, so I’d sit down and I’d be like, OK, I got [*sic*] to think about this” (Elsie, interview 1). As Luna confirmed, this forced thinking was the primary motivation for giving these assignments, “The main purpose is to get them to think about what happened and use that to make possible changes in their activity or their lesson” (interview 2). Putsey was of the same mind when she stated, “the writing it down’s just an exercise that’s for the class” (interview 3). She believed that an important aspect of reflective assignments was to get students to think and that writing it down was a formality.

There was agreement regarding one aspect of reflective writing. Reflective assignments are not summaries of what was done or a recounting of events. Elsie described being told this, when she asked an instructor, “well what do you want us to write? And she said, ‘I want you to write down, not a summary of what you did’” (interview 1). This idea is also communicated in course syllabi.

In her syllabus, Putsey stated that reflection is “not a summary”. In Johnston’s syllabus she described a reflective assignment as including a summary of the events and discussion of how the events will inform the preservice teacher’s future role in elementary classrooms. All agreed that reflection was not a summary, but summary is part of reflective writing. In communicating thoughts, the context for those thoughts should be communicated; therefore, a summary is necessary, “you have to say what happened, you can’t just say, well I felt like this, cause you have to say what happened and then how you felt about it” (Andrea, interview 3).

Although the intent was for teacher education students to consciously analyze their experiences, the opposite was often the case. As Liz described, there were times when those assignments were just assignments and due to various reasons, students did not put thought into their writing. “I was quite frankly (laughs) just doing it because it was required for me to do it” (interview 3).

Rhea added to Liz’s view:

I just think that there are times when you want to reflect and things that you’ve really noticed that you want to discuss whether it’s good or bad, but then there are times where it’s like, you’re searching for something to reflect because, you have to, you have to turn in a reflection next Friday, so let’s just think of something we could write about, you know? (laughs). And I, I have a feeling a lot of people probably just make up things (laughs) sometimes if they need something to write about. (interview 2)



Finally, if these assignments were not given, the preservice teachers admit that they probably would not spend as much time thinking about their experiences. Just as with practicing teachers, preservice teachers are very busy managing numerous tasks and are plagued with a perennial lack of time. The preservice teachers also described being on reflection overload; they believed they were asked to write too many reflections in the course of the semester.

Rhea described this situation in the following way:

Some I find I'm writing just because I have to, because I mean, I reflect, I mean I see things and reflect things in my head any way, you know? And I know me, along with everyone else, like I have not heard one person say anything good about them this semester because it's just, it's like we're burnt out, they're like if I have to write one more reflection, I'm gonna kill myself, you know? And, I mean, of course we have to because, we have to every single time we go do anything. (interview 2)

As Rickie described, this overload often caused reflections to become redundant, "All of my classes seem to run together and we're all doing reflections, so it felt that I was saying the same thing over and over and over" (interview 1). Phoebe held the same view:

I mean, if you're sitting there, you're either having a bad day, or you know, you really just didn't get anything out of that class, you've heard it all five times already that day, I don't feel the need to reflect on that, because you've probably already reflected on that, in another class. (interview 1)

The teacher educators also acknowledged that the future teachers were asked to complete too many reflective assignments.

It becomes a drudgery, not something that you are learning from, and I don't know how many reflections, you know over all the courses in the semester that they're having to write, but I feel that it's over used to the point that it's not doing the benefit that we would want. (Luna, interview 2)

The instructors struggled with how to improve the situation and expressed frustration with how the assignments were structured. Some had ideas about how this structure could be revised, others described numerous institutional constraints, such as class size, teaching load, and service expectations that interfered with making changes. Some like Putsey were at a loss for what or how to change. "I think I would like for it to be a lot different, a lot better. I don't know what that better and different means" (interview 2). Students, such as Phoebe, offered what they considered to be reasonable solutions.

I'd be like, OK, you can write a reflection this week, but not next week. I think that options, we had options in one of my classes, I mean we had to have at least five, certain topics or certain ideas or something that we did in class, if you wanted to reflect. And she would give us topics, but we didn't have to write about those....We could basically write about anything we wanted to. Yeah, I like the options, because if you did get something out of the class and you've really learned something, then it's good to reflect on what you've learned. (interview 1)

Although the preservice teachers recognized that they were being forced to think, they also believed that there was a valid purpose and saw reflection as contributing to their learning. Phoebe expanded on her idea that reflection is good.

They are a hassle, but you know that goes with school. It's like, I understand why we have to do 'em, but I hate doing it. It's kinda like kids with the vegetables. It's like you know what's healthy for you, but you just don't wanna do it. I mean reflections are good, they really make you watch, and you can really learn from them (interview 1). I guess I've always kinda done informal reflective thinking, I've just never taken the time to like, write it out, put it on paper and focus on fine tuning what I thought, what I felt about stuff. (interview 3)

Liz's ideas paralleled Phoebe's. "It's still not my favorite thing to do, but it's easier for me to do now, and I can see more clearly the value in it now" (interview 3). Liz stated that the value to her was,

to help become a better teacher. Because if I can sit down and go, OK, that lesson just really didn't work, why didn't it work? And think about it, discuss it with colleagues or whatever and make adjustments to it, then I'll be a better teacher. (interview 3)

### *Power, Power, Who's Got the Power?*

*I see the teacher as the focal point of the classroom and I know there's ways to allow the students to be empowered in your classroom, but I think that as a teacher you will always have a little*

*bit more of the control and more of the power, no matter whether you want it or not. (Rickie, interview 1)*

Another point of contention regarding written reflective assignments is the uncertainty on the part of the preservice teachers regarding how their reflections will be received. Power is inherent in the relationship between the preservice teacher and teacher educator (Tom, 1997), and teachers are given authority to exercise their power both through the structures of the academic institution as well as their students (Jarvis, 1997). The preservice teachers are fully aware of the institutionalized power relationship between teacher and student as they have seen this in action for over 12 years. Therefore, they assumed that what they communicate will be judged by their instructors.

I think it's something that was learned all through school. If it's not what the teacher wanted, then it was wrong. And so we're just in, we're still in that mentality that we have to know what the professor wants and go by that. (Phoebe, interview 2)

The teacher educators acknowledged this knowledge/power relationship and believed that they should offer guidance because the students expected it. Luna offered this explanation.

Part of the problem is the students have been asked to reflect, but have not been given any guidelines. They [the professors] just say, write down what you thought about it. Well, then when you turn something in and you say, I liked it, then the professor gets all bent out of shape because you

didn't write enough. Well, if they didn't explain what they wanted then it's very difficult for you to be able to do that reflection. (Luna, interview 1)

The situation that Luna described sometimes resulted in a lack of trust on the part of the preservice teachers.

There's a lot of distrust because you're always, you're not sure, because you wanna do good, you wanna make the grade. And if you don't have the guidelines for that, then there's always gonna be that little voice in your head saying, (whispers) ooh, you're doing it wrong. You know? You may get counted off for that. (Phoebe, interview 2)

Grades play an important role in most academic institutions. However, grading reflective assignments seemed difficult, because both the teacher educators and preservice teachers believed that if it was turned in and had some level of analysis, then it would get full credit. As one preservice teacher stated,

There's not really a way to grade a reflection. I mean if you turn in a reflection you're gonna get the points. I mean you can't say well this is a bad reflection, you just can't, there's not really a way to do that. (Rickie, interview 2)

Conversely, teacher educators did grade reflective assignments and communicated their expectations through grades and comments. In some instances, students did not receive full credit, which often made the preservice teachers discouraged because they shared Rickie's attitude about grading.

The preservice teachers were frequently disappointed in the feedback on their reflective assignments they received from their instructors. They repeatedly

described getting assignments back where the only feedback was a checkmark or the number of points they had received. Elsie considered this response, “not feedback really, just letting us know that maybe we’re on the right track” (interview 2). When feedback was actually written, it was usually, “good. I see. That’s interesting. You know that kind of thing? Or if she [the instructor] didn’t understand the point, it’s a question, what do you mean by this? Stuff like that” (Liz, interview 2).

However, when an instructor’s feedback was more than described above, that assignment became significant. Rickie described the reflective assignment below as being particularly meaningful. In this assignment, she was asked to write “three things you’ve learned, two ahas or something that you haven’t thought of before and then a question that you had with it” (Rickie, interview 3). The instructor’s feedback is italicized.

---

#### Rickie’s 321

##### 3 Things I have learned

1. One child can change the dynamic of any classroom. *Did a new child join your classroom?*
2. Each child is not motivated by the same reward of activity.
3. Even fourth graders like to be read to for story time. *Even adults, books on tape are popular!*

##### 2 AHAs

1. Expect the best from each student. *Are you seeing this from your teacher?*

2. Learn to listen to a child, and wait for them to finish what they are trying to say.

1 question

1. How long does it take to get to know your students? *It depends. Some students are easier to get to know than others. Some a few weeks, others a full year!*
- 

She felt the feedback made it more meaningful. She also believed that she was able to communicate her learning. Rickie described the significance in this way:

I really enjoyed that, that was my favorite thing, actually having a response to reflection rather than just a check mark or you know handing it back with well what about this? And I don't mind questions, but I also like comments. And then she answered my question, which I really liked. I just liked that she [the instructor] answered and commented. And I feel that this [format] would be better because, you know, it does show that I'm learning something and that I'm understanding what I'm doing. Then, that I have a question about it, so this takes the whole learning cycle or inquiry cycle, you know keeps it going to where, you know, it ends with a question. And there's always something about teaching that you know, you can something else you can master. I don't ever think that anybody is a perfect teacher. (interview 3)

Spalding and Wilson (2002) supported Rickie's conclusion. In a study of reflective journal writing they found that instructor feedback helped preservice teachers become more reflective. They stated, "In the end, we found that what mattered most to the students was the response itself" (p. 1414).

## *The Dance*

*You never know how your professor's going to approach you. Like they want us to be teachers, but they treat us like children, they want us to be professionals, but that isn't communicated at all. I don't feel that a lot of times we're approached as adults in conversation, but then there have been times, when I feel we've been approached too casually. What mixed signal is that? (Rickie, interview 2)*

The existing institutional structure gives teacher educators the power to assign grades, select curriculum and design assignments. However, it looked to the preservice teachers in this study as if their instructors sent signals that they wanted to circumvent the traditional power relationship. Both teacher educators and students know these structures exist, which interrupts any attempt to change the power structure (Klein, 1998). Moreover, attempting to relinquish this power leads to confusion for all involved (Jarvis, 1997; Tom, 1997). This confusion was played out in the power dance that took place between the teacher educators and the preservice teachers.

It seems that preservice teachers were asked to think from three perspectives: themselves as learners, as teachers, and as elementary students. In order to learn to teach, they must constantly be the learner while using the filter of teacher and student to process their experiences. To add to this complex set of perspectives, they must deal with their instructors' expectations that they be both students in a teacher education program and colleagues in the world of



education. Tom (1997) warned against trying to establish this type of student teacher relationship where the student is elevated to colleague or friend.

The type of exploitation that occurs in such “friendships” is usually a meeting of the teacher’s need through denial that they are met at the expense of the student. The teacher’s needs are superimposed on the student’s needs and obliterate them. (Tom, 1997, p. 11)

Furthermore, the teacher educators exercised their power by controlling what role the preservice teachers would have and expected them to move between being teacher education students and being teachers. Preservice teachers are asked to play both roles (student and teacher) as they go through teacher education. In addition, they are often uncertain about what role to play at any given time. Consequently they have difficulty negotiating the dual roles that they are being asked to portray. This confusion was illustrated in Johnston’s class one day as the preservice teachers are hearing about a field experience they will have at a local elementary school.

Johnston: An important part of what you’re doing with these students is developing a relationship. But, remember that you are the teacher, so you need to keep them on task.

Rebecca: What should we wear?

Johnston: I would wear this, I have worn jeans to school. Just be conscious of what you’re wearing, no short skirts, high tops, low cut tops, things like that. (field notes, 10/28/03, p.1)

In this example, the instructor was telling the students that they were the teachers. Yet at the same time, the students demonstrated that they remained in student mode by asking what they should wear. This role confusion makes

reflection a difficult task. As Eleanor Duckworth concluded, teachers must be able to reflect on themselves as *learners* before they can reflect on themselves as *teachers* (Meek, 1991).

### *Relevant to Whom?*

*Reflection becomes, at times, expert driven and impositional in that the problems to be reflected on are determined for rather than with prospective teachers. A somewhat hierarchical relation may thereby develop that actually silences preservice teachers and strengthens their dependence on experts. (Bullough & Gitlin, 1991, p. 39)*

The teacher educators communicated their expectations for reflection through their guidelines for reflective assignments which included guiding questions, grades, and instructor feedback. Luna described a set of guiding questions that she used. "I give them, what worked? What didn't work? What did you like? What do you think the kids liked? What would you do to change this lesson? It's like five questions" (interview 1). The other teacher educators in the study described a similar set of questions, which all focused on changing practice, making improvements, and being effective teachers. The preservice teachers said that the guiding questions implied that they should write about the following: what they learned, what they thought about the experience, how they feel about the experience, what worked, what didn't work, what you got from the experience. The preservice teachers communicated that the purpose of figuring out what did not work was to make changes to their teaching.

The preservice teacher participants believed that there was a clear message that these “guiding” questions were questions to be answered and if they did not answer them, they would not get full credit or a good grade. This message was communicated by Elsie’s experience.

If you don’t answer all the questions they put on the rubric, then, like we did on the very first reflection, then, she’ll write a comment on there like, how do you think you can do better next time? Stuff like that, like, to answer the last guiding question. (interview 2)

Preservice teachers have been conditioned throughout their schooling to please the teacher, so they want to meet the expectations of their teachers. “It [guiding questions] makes it easier to know exactly what the professor’s looking for. [However,] some of the questions are hard because I don’t look at things the same way that professors do” (Liz, interview 3). Because preservice teachers and teacher educators have different perspectives, these guiding questions do not necessarily focus on what is relevant to the preservice teacher. Therefore, reflective assignments present a particular conflict with the personal reflection of the participants. For the preservice teacher, reflective assignments force the relevance of a particular experience and guiding questions manipulate this relevance, forcing students to focus on answering those questions, which may not be at the forefront of their thinking.

After I answer those guiding questions, I’m like, what else is there to talk about, because it totally destroys creativity. But I know that some

students would think the opposite of that, they enjoy the guiding questions and being told exactly what to write. (Elsie, interview 2)

Luna on the other hand believed that guiding questions help expand preservice teacher thinking and analysis of experience through practice:

And, then once they start . . . writing the lesson, teaching it and then answering these five questions, I have found that they start off just answering those five questions in a sentence or two, but after they've done it for a little while, two or three times, then they start expounding on different parts of it that really made an impact on them, and uh, so in doing something like that you've got to give some guidance, some expectations of what you want, and then it starts to grow (interview 1).

In my asking questions, they're gonna think about things that they might not have thought about. (interview 2)

The preservice teachers described that the guiding questions often do not allow them to focus on what is relevant to them, so they censor their reflections to meet the instructor's expectation. Further, Britzman (1998) contended that "reflective practice has been reduced to the utility of correcting practices and devotes itself to propping up the practitioners' control and mastery, [and] critical thinking skills valorize the quest for rationality that can settle the trouble that inaugurates thought. The problem is that thought is not reducible to finding the proper data" (p. 32). As teacher educators force the relevance of experiences, they in turn communicate their expectations regarding control and mastery of designated skills and knowledge.

*And in the End...*

It appears that teacher educators inevitably have the power in the student teacher relationship. However, the students in this study reconciled the issue through varying levels of resistance. Britzman (1991) described power as relational and existing within a “context of resistance” (p. 18). She also noted that the power relationship is rarely one of equality. Goodman (1988) described political tactics of resistance that preservice teachers used to reconcile their beliefs with institutional expectations: a) overt compliance – desire to fit into the institutional expectations, putting their own beliefs on hold and sometimes making adjustments to their own beliefs; b) critical compliance – meeting expectations while at the same time being critical of them; c) accommodative resistance – meeting the expectations, but not letting those expectations define their teacher identities; d) resistant alteration – attempting to alter the expectations of the institutions through expressing personal needs; e) transformative action – completely resisting expectations, giving a sense of autonomy and power.

The preservice teachers in this study demonstrated similar resistance. Andrea began the semester by modifying her ideas about reflection and continued this throughout the semester. When an instructor commented that she was not writing about the appropriate things, Andrea changed her writing.

Then I changed the way I was writing them, cause like I said, it's just so hard to fit everybody's idea of a reflection and you just never know, and then I changed it and when I wrote that in there, she [the instructor] seemed happy (laughs). (interview 3)

At the other end of the spectrum were Rickie and Elsie. Elsie described accommodative resistance as she was concerned about her grade, but also felt that she was still doing her own reflection.

I feel like no matter what I say to them, I'm still reflecting within myself, no matter what I write to them, as long as I get a good grade, that's fine, but I'm gonna benefit from thinking about it if they want to hear it or not.  
(interview 2)

Rickie was working toward transformative action.

I've come to the realization that it's my reflection, you know. If I get it done and I've reflected and I've come to a conclusion, you know it doesn't have to be whether it was a bad time or a good time, just that there's always something that I can improve, then that's gonna do it. And I've started more or less working for myself rather than for my professors. (interview 2)

The original question of who has the power has yet to be answered.

However, it seems that the preservice teachers ultimately have the power to control what they learn, as they demonstrated through their resistance. Putsey supports this notion and questions if it really matters what position the instructor takes in her instruction.

Of course I guess I would purport that if, even if I go in and teach x,y,z very traditionally, the students, just because I think they're gonna learn x,y, and z, doesn't mean that they were. I mean we'd like to think that the traditional model gives us more guarantees that that's gonna happen. Everybody's going to come away with something a little bit different from it, but they're going to anyway, no matter what learning situation we give them. We just like to tell ourselves lies in the traditional method, you know? That I've taught them this and this is what they all know. (Putsey, interview 1)

### *Practice What You Preach*

*I just feel like she's not, she's telling us to teach inquiry, but she's not modeling it. (Elsie, interview 1)*

Every profession has theories on which knowledge is built and action is influenced. However, in professions such as teaching, the environment in which teachers act is intrinsically volatile - volatile in the sense that situations are never predictable and the teaching environment is constantly changing. As Bolan (1980) described, "practices and conceptualizations that differ markedly from orthodox professional theory" (p. 263) emerge within this type of professional context. Therefore, teachers exist in the contradictory realities between theory and practice and develop their own "espoused theories" (Argyris & Schön, 1974). An espoused theory is developed from one's own "perspective, making *individually preferred* selections from the available purposes, knowledge

symbolic codes, and normative outlooks of the official professional organizations and training academies” (Bolan, 1980, p. 264). To accommodate the dynamic world of the classroom, teachers adapt their espoused theories to create what Argyris and Schön (1974) call “theories-in-use”, and this theory actually guides practice. Consequently, an espoused theory is communicated through behavior as opposed to theories-in-use which are explicitly stated (Putnam, 1991). Finally, Britzman (1991) might argue that the terms espoused theory and theory-in-use are unnecessary because the context in which theories exist is practice, not other theories.

Both preservice teachers and teacher educators agree that teacher educators should practice what they preach. Preservice teachers complained that they are not seeing modeled what the teacher educators tell them they should use in their own classrooms. Teacher educators agreed that they are not practicing their teaching in a way that parallels their expectations for future teachers. For Johnston this presented a quandary, “How can you be professing this when you know you didn’t accomplish that yourself?” (interview 1). Teacher educators contradicted their espoused philosophies with what they enacted and used justifications such as institutional pressures, time, and preservice teachers’ prior knowledge and experiences for not changing practice. At the same time, the teacher educators recognized the theory/practice dilemma as reality, while the preservice teachers saw this as a professional weakness.

A primary example of this theory practice dialectic is constructivism. Teacher educators believe in constructivist education and believe that preservice



teachers should be taught using the same strategies and philosophies that they will be expected to use as teachers (Klein, 2001). The teacher educators in this study hold the same beliefs. They wanted to facilitate learning experiences that would help their students develop teacher knowledge.

Further, the teacher educator participants believed that they gave preservice teachers experiences that allowed them to construct their own knowledge. Putsey described wanting preservice teachers to understand that children can learn through exploration: “kids can explore things and figure things out on their own and not have to be told exactly how to do them” (interview 1). This was a shared attitude among all the teacher educators in this study and reflected the constructivist philosophy that the program exudes. However, this confidence in children’s learning did not apply to their adult learners, the preservice teachers. The teacher educators expressed that their students did not have the experiences necessary to understand teaching and believed that those experiences were only gained after leaving teacher education. Further, because preservice teachers do not come to teacher education with the proper experiences, they are not able to determine what experiences are appropriate for reflection. It may be that these teacher educators are guilty of the same omission that Klein (2001) described.

As I attempted to facilitate learning in collaboration with students...I subverted student autonomy and often ignored personally constructed knowledge as I reverted to practices of authoritative “telling” about and policing “correct” knowledge and behaviour. While these may be

recognised as appropriate roles for teachers to play, it is not appropriate to simultaneously assume that the environment for learning is supportive of investigative processes on the part of students. That is, if we are telling and policing the regurgitation of “correct” knowledge, we should recognise this and the power relationships in all interactions with students, and not pretend that we are fostering genuine engagement in conjecture and exploration. (Klein, 2001, p. 260)

This attitude toward experience seems contradictory to the notion that reflection on experience leads to learning and that prior experience provides the context needed to determine relevance of the experience.

#### *What Counts as Experience?*

*If educators are to incorporate reflective practices into their teaching and advising, they first must learn to value students' experience as a primary source of knowledge and then develop techniques to make use of these experiences in the educational process. (Rogers, 2001, p. 52)*

Prior knowledge comes from experiences and becomes relevant when it connects to the present. This was often described by participants when they said, “I finally realized”, “I just realized”, or “It made me realize”. Dewey (1938) also wrote about the importance of prior experience in learning:

We have to understand the *significance* of what we see, hear, and touch. This significance consists of the consequences that will result when what is seen is acted upon....We can be aware of consequences only because of previous experience....We cannot tell just what the consequences of

observed conditions will be unless we go over past experiences in our mind, unless we reflect upon them and by seeing what is similar in them to those now present, go on to form a judgment of what may be expected in the present situation. (p. 68)

Alarcao and Moreira (1993) agreed with Dewey and said that, preservice teachers make inferences, observations, and inquiries to learn about teaching. And they must be “prepared to analyse the data which are presented to them according to the context of its occurrence, comprehend it in its novelty and ecology and respond to it accordingly” (§ 24). Further, they contended that a frame of reference, a knowledge base, and “some degree of technical discourse” (§ 25) is necessary to reflect on this experience.

Teacher education students come with a plethora of experiences, including having various roles as teachers (Gilroy, 1993). They have been Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, Girl Scout leaders, and day care workers. Therefore, teacher education students have a knowledge base and perspectives which are put into question as they learn to teach in university based teacher education programs. The teacher educators in this study commented that the prior experiences on which preservice teachers base their learning are not the correct experiences to allow them to think differently about teaching. These teacher educators are perpetuating the myth of experience that Britzman (1991) described. She said that student teaching is valorized as “the authentic moment in teacher education” (p. 7). The teacher educators in this study tended to take that myth into the realm outside of the teacher education

program, into the world of practicing teachers. When preservice teachers do have teaching experiences, they are not really teachers, because they cannot fully understand the teacher's role until they are invested in that role, until they have an impact on student learning.

Well actually, you know I look at these people and what they're working on, they really don't, the only, the prior knowledge they have is where they came from in school. And so they're looking at what they're doing and they're maybe taking it back to what we did in high school or what we did in the class previous to this one or whatever and they make links with it. Um, but they, but they don't have any links as far as practical application in the classroom. (Johnston, interview 1)

As Johnston described, the major portion of experiences related to teaching for these preservice teachers are as students. Consequently, their understandings about teaching are solely from the student perspective (Tomlinson, 1999). Even though preservice teachers had experiences as teachers, they were not held accountable for what their students learned, so they were not really teaching. The teacher educators believed the lack of prior experience was particularly problematic related to reflective assignments. As Luna described, preservice teachers do not know how to focus their reflections and tend to write a recounting of events without analysis.

They're still in a very early stage, because they don't know what to do with the things that have just occurred, they haven't, they don't have the ability to transfer this new information yet....experience helps with your ability to

be able to look at a situation and decide whether it's a positive or a negative [in terms of successful lessons]. (interview 3)

In Luna's view reflective assignments help preservice teachers to focus on something specific when observing; otherwise they cannot determine what should be a focus and try to attend to everything that is happening, and there may or may not be a relevant event on which to focus. Not only do preservice teachers not have the necessary prior experiences, that lack of experience influences their ability to think about learning to teach. The preservice teachers need the experienced guidance of a teacher educator to help them understand what they are experiencing. Luna explained this in the context of peer teaching:

It's a beginning stage of being aware of how they, how the instructor [the preservice teacher] is doing, but also becoming aware of reactions of the participants [peers as students], which is another piece that they need to start thinking about. (interview 2)

These teacher educators believed that in learning to teach, preservice teachers do not bring the necessary prior experience to fully understand the teacher's role. Yet, they asked preservice teachers to focus not on learning to think like a teacher and understand oneself as a person learning to teach, but to think like a teacher and focus on helping students learn. As Putsey stated, she wants to encourage preservice teachers to:

create the space for kids to learn to develop their own [content], their own way of thinking. We've got to give them space to do that. I mean if I get up in front of the room and tell them...how to do it, then I just ...dampen

the possibility that they can create their own meaning out of it....So we talk to our students about that, but they're not in a place to envision it all yet.

(interview 1)

Further, not all the participants believed that reflection is possible with all experiences. There was disagreement on whether one can reflect on a passive experience, such as reading an article or text, and whether one can reflect about experience with little prior experience related to the current experience. This disagreement connects to Russell and Munby's (1991) idea that professional knowledge is only developed through reflection on action. Luna echoed this notion,

It's hard to reflect on something you haven't done. And if you're just asking them for a reaction, well that's one thing, but if you really want them to reflect and think about what they did and how they can improve it, then it's something they need to have done. If they don't do it themselves it's hard to assimilate that into their thinking and what they would do the next time, so yeah, you can read an article, you can, you know, make predictions and things like that, but I still find it difficult to be reflective on those. (interview 2)

Luna's statement implied that reflection is only associated with the act of teaching. This is another confounding aspect of reflective teacher education that is tied to the teacher educators' ideas about experience.

### *When I'm a Teacher*

*And if you think about something more, you're more likely to remember it, so he [the instructor] wants us to remember it for someday when we have our own classroom, so that's why we do it.*  
(Wendy, interview 2)

It seems that teacher education is looking for the experience of teaching without the knowledge generated from those experiences. Teacher educators believe that the only prior knowledge that is appropriate in learning to teach is teaching knowledge. This attitude connects to the teacher educator participants' focus on the future and seems contradictory to Vygotsky's notion of the role of experience in constructivist learning. As Smagorinsky, Cook, and Johnson (2003) suggested, "Vygotsky (1987) argues that this interplay between formal knowledge of principles and knowledge gained through activity enables people to think about problems beyond their range of experience" (p. 1405).

The teacher educators in this study believed that this knowledge is insufficient to understand the teacher's role and that much of what is done in teacher education programs will be relevant only in the future when their students metamorphose into "real" teachers. Teacher educators want preservice teachers to reflect so they can think about what they will do when they are "real" teachers. Teacher educators focus on thinking about actions in the future, being effective as teachers, and thinking about children's learning. As Luna described, she wanted preservice teachers to have this focus as well. In reflective assignments, she described her expectations as the following:

Putting down the things that would help them in the future and that was where you [the instructor] want them to get to rather than just thinking in the present. You wanna get them thinking in the future tense of how it's gonna help me when I get into the classroom. (interview 1)

Preservice teachers expressed a similar need and thought about what they will do when they have their own classrooms, but that was not their main focus.

They tended to focus in the present on what is happening now in their experiences in learning to teach and having authentic teaching experiences. The preservice teachers learned a large amount about students but did not necessarily focus on what the students learned. The preservice teachers talked about general ideas about how children learn. They described learning about teaching in general and themselves as teachers. Preservice teachers wanted to tell what they learned about children, not what children learned. They wanted to focus on their learning.

### *Uncertainty is a Certainty*

*It is obviously not possible to act thoughtfully and self-confidently while doubting oneself at the same time. (van Manen, 1995, p. 48)*

Van Manen's (1995) words may explain why the goal of many professionals, including teachers, is to "eliminate or minimize ambiguity" (Bolan, 1980, p. 272). Britzman (1991) tracked this obsession with certainty back to the power relationship between student and teacher. She argued that historical views of the teacher out of control meant no learning was taking place; an



effective teacher was a teacher in control. She believed that this view interfered with preservice teachers understanding teaching as complex, uncertain, and full of unexpected disruptions. She called for a new view of the unpredictable in teacher education and Grant (2001) answered this call. He studied preservice teachers involved in a tutoring program and found that the better tutors indicated more confusion and ambiguity in their experiences.

Uncertainty seems central to reflective teacher education. Ben-Peretz, (2001) contended that teacher educators are faced with uncertainty because of “contradictory demands concerning teacher education” (p. 48). The teacher educators in this study expressed these same dilemmas. They were uncertain about how to solve problems, such as making reflective assignments more meaningful. In addition, program structures such as class size and teaching load made it seem impossible for the teacher educators to implement the type of reflection that they envisioned for their students.

Both preservice teachers and teacher educators agreed with van Manen’s statement at the beginning of this section, that a certain level of uncertainty affects self confidence. Luna said, “it’s not until you are able to do something several times to gain confidence, to gain understanding to get to the point where you are then able to take this information and apply it to a new situation” (interview 3). At the same time, even when the understanding is applied, there can still be doubt. Wendy reflected on her uncertainties regarding her ability to affect student learning in a tutoring project. “I shouldn’t say I don’t think he’s learned anything. But I don’t know if it’s from me or if it’s from school, maybe

he's learning it there or I don't know if I'm really helping him. I hope I am. I want to think I am but sometimes I don't know" (interview 3). Preservice teachers also communicated that meaningful feedback from instructors increased their confidence and lessened uncertainty. To Phoebe, meaningful feedback was affirmation, "I was kinda thinking about doing that [lesson idea] and so hearing somebody actually say you can do that. I think it just enforced that my ideas, I can do" (interview 1).

Uncertainty also contributed to some of the preservice teachers' most meaningful learning, because those things that were unexpected or unintended were most significant; they were referred to as aha moments. Reflecting on these experiences made the uncertainty prominent in their thinking. However, they were also resigned to never being the expert. They believed that they cannot be prepared for every situation, because each situation will be unique. However, the more experienced they get, the better prepared they will be. Rhea described her experience with the unexpected when she had a student divulge personal information that she was not prepared to hear:

I'll have a better idea of what to do the next time. But - I think it's gonna take more of seeing things like that before it becomes something that I feel confident dealing with. So I don't know. I think teaching's gotta be one of the hardest things on this planet, seriously. (interview 2)

While Rickie believed that she could never know it all, she continued to be frustrated by the gray areas of learning to teach:

It seemed that every class that I've been in, there's always a continuum of something and there's not really a clear cut, definite, you know, white or black. There's always a lot of gray areas to where there's not, and I'm a person that it's either this way or this way. You can't be in the middle because, you're not effective if you're in the middle. (interview 1)

As Rickie described, the uncertainty regarding her role made it difficult to establish her identity as a teacher:

Trying to make that mold of teacher and student at the same time is not an easy thing. And it's hard, you know to address your professors as peers, in a way, you know teaching peers, but then at the same time still be treated like a student. (interview 3)

## Conclusion

There are inherent tensions when the personal, private process of reflection is brought into a public realm such as teacher education. Classroom discussion and written reflective assignments have been used as a vehicle to put reflection into a public venue. However, these strategies come with conflict between preservice teachers and teacher educators as they attempt to negotiate their relationships which are founded in power issues, which influence the structure and content of class discussion and reflective assignments. Further, the power associated with knowledge and experience presents conflict in that the value of preservice teachers' prior experiences is questioned. Finally, these

tensions contribute to the existing uncertainty associated with teaching and learning to teach.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

When I designed this study, my goal was to understand teacher educators' and preservice teachers' experiences with reflection. I was not interested in providing solutions to problems that have already been identified or in evaluating a particular program. Rather, I wanted to communicate the participants' experiences and to bring them to the attention of those involved in elementary teacher education. Therefore, this study was designed to further the understanding of reflection in elementary teacher education by uncovering (a) what it means to reflect in learning to teach, (b) preservice teachers' and teacher educators' perceptions of reflection in elementary teacher education, and (c) how these perceptions are similar and different. The preceding findings suggest that there is little difference between individual conceptions of reflection; however, when brought into the context of elementary teacher education, conceptions change significantly. Further, not only do individual conceptions change, but differences between preservice teachers and teacher educators can be profound. At the same time, there is a certain element of agreement, which provides the foundation for these different, yet alike, ideas to interact.

## The Essence of Reflection in Elementary Teacher Education

*And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time*  
-T.S. Eliot  
from "Little Gidding" (No. 4 of the *Four Quartets*)

In my findings I described the essence of reflection. This description depicted my evolved understanding of the participants' lived experiences with reflection. I did this to provide a place for comparison between the essence of reflection and the essence of reflection in elementary teacher education, which I found to be fairly different. The themes presented in the previous chapter provided the critical elements that I synthesized to communicate the essence of reflection in elementary teacher education included here.

Reflection in elementary teacher education is essentially ambiguous. Ambiguity "arises because there exists a multiplicity of contexts and levels of human interaction, often in contrary or dialectical relationship" (Bolan, 1980, p. 272). Further, uncertainty makes conflict inevitable. Therefore, it should not be surprising that contradictory realities exist when reflection, a private and personal act, has been thrust into the public realm by professional education.

On a personal level, the participants communicated that reflection is essential to learning from experience, but every experience does not result in learning. The experience needs to be worth thinking about or attention getting. This relevance allows focused attention to the experience at hand. Each

participant described reflection resulting in some type of change, be it cognitive or behavioral. Consequently, this change led to learning. This learning took place through making decisions, forming opinions, and thinking about future action. Further, most participants described the need for the passing of time that allowed them to disconnect from the experience in order to process or analyze it in an organized fashion, taking different perspectives into consideration. Many times this change led to uncertainty along with unanswered questions. Talking with others or engaging in self talk was also important to the participants, and all preferred talking to writing. Getting opinions, ideas and suggestions from others was essential to this verbal engagement. They also described the need for affirmation along with validation from those they considered more knowledgeable or experienced.

This natural reflection as described by the participants was similar to the reflection they experienced in elementary teacher education. There continued to be a focus on problem solving, learning from experience, and making changes to thinking and action. However, there was disagreement among the participants about what experiences on which to reflect and who decides whether those experiences are relevant. On the other hand, all participants agreed that reflection is most meaningful when it is associated with direct teaching experience. Further, all participants described thinking about their teaching in terms of success or failure and believed that reflection was valuable in their learning to teach.

Finally they described a dialogic component to reflection in elementary teacher education. The preservice teacher is usually communicating her reflection through writing a reflective assignment or verbally sharing in class. This dialogue is one way; it is not interactive, which is the expectation in natural reflection. In addition, the purpose of these assignments was to force thinking or create artificial relevance. In this communication, the personal reflection is made public, and in making their reflections public, the preservice teachers felt they were being judged based on their instructors' expectations. Therefore, they often modified their communications to meet the expectations of others. Consequently, a pseudo-reflection resulted that contradicted natural reflection. This pseudo-reflection created in this elementary teacher education context is non-dialogic, artificially relevant and semi-conscious.

### Reflections

*The contradiction here is that while learning to teach is individually experienced and hence may be viewed as individually determined, in actuality it is socially negotiated. (Britzman, 1991, p. 8)*

These findings may leave the reader with questions about how to fix what may have been perceived as problems or to address concerns related to those common topics addressed in prior research on reflection in teacher education. However, as I stated previously, it was not my intent to solve problems or provide suggestions for making reflection in teacher education less problematic. However, throughout this study, especially in writing this text, I have considered



my own pedagogical response to the findings. In stating this a word of caution is in order. As is the nature of reflection, I present a response that may be considered paradoxical as I consider multiple perspectives and do not present unequivocal recommendations or solutions.

As I interviewed the participants in this study, I asked them to reflect on their experiences, and as our conversations progressed, they began to consciously visualize reflective teacher education as they thought it could be. I have done the same as I have reflected in order to write this text. I, however, had an advantage over the teacher educators because I was hearing directly the lived experience of the preservice teachers. I believe that the student voice is what is missing from this social negotiation that Britzman (1991) described. Teacher educators often fool themselves into thinking that they know what is best for their students by using the colloquialism, “they don’t know what they don’t know.” This phrase may hold true. Nevertheless, preservice teachers’ voices should never be silenced or ignored, as they are the reason teacher education exists.

As Cruickshank (1990), Zeichner (1994) and others suggested, I have investigated preservice teachers’ experiences with reflection. At the most basic level, this study may prompt teacher educators, as it did me, to pause and consider how their actions are received by their students. This act would not only begin the reflective process for teacher educators, but it would prompt consideration of change to individual practices as well as program structures – change to the professional culture of teacher education. It is this culture change

that I consider in my response by addressing the perils of educational change as related to theory and practice and institutional structures, the challenges of creating space for dialogue, the dilemmas of written reflective assignments, the interaction between traditional teacher education and reflective teacher education, and the conflicting purposes of reflection (reflecting on experience versus reflecting on practice).

As this study shows, it is difficult to put ideals into practice. Educational change is a slow, nonlinear process and does not happen without problems (Fullan, 1996). Teacher education is fraught with contradiction, uncertainty and ambiguity, and it appears that any attempts to change it result in the same. Reflective teacher education finds itself in a similar position to constructivism in common schooling. There is broad theoretical support that education is about teachers facilitating experiences that allow students to construct meaning and understanding. However, the evidence that this theory is put into practice is lacking (Kivinen & Ristelä, 2003). Perhaps this evidence is missing because what is sought is a cause and effect relationship between theory and practice, but the connection between theory and practice is not linear. Theory and practice are not independent domains that mysteriously merge in unproblematic ways (Russell, Munby, Spafford, & Johnston, 1988). The evidence is there, as this study shows, that teacher educators are working within the existing structures to construct reflective teacher education that provides the best possible experiences for their students. They are merging theory and practice

and the result is viewed by some as problematically tenuous and by others as naturally tenuous.

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, (1996), traditional teacher education programs prepare teachers for the schools as they exist today, rather than what they should be like in the future and are characterized by coursework that is isolated from practice and too focused on content specific methods. As the teacher educators in this study strongly communicated, they are preparing their teachers for a different world:

I mean you have to be able to try to do something, you have to even be able to dream that it can happen, differently...or envision some different possibility so they have a place to sort of put some of these things we're talking to them about. (Putsey, interview 1)

They believe that the aim of reflective teacher education is professional autonomy, and a focus on autonomy represents significant change from traditional teacher education models. As a teacher educator I recognize that if educating autonomous, thoughtful teachers is my goal, I will continue to face the conflict between what still remains of traditional teacher education and what I envision as a more progressive context that emphasizes inquiry and the primacy of student experience.

The general structure of teacher education programs including its components, are partially determined by governing bodies such as NCATE and state government. In addition, the university culture provides certain structures that must be considered (Posner, 2000). But perhaps the most important

structural aspect is that which the faculty can control, namely faculty behavior and attitudes. Faculty members also control components such as program goals, field experience and coursework, and strategies for facilitating reflection.

The structures of teacher education that were described in this study modify natural reflection. Moreover, this public venue legitimizes attempts to exert external forces on the individual engaged in reflection. These forces appear in the form of institutionalized standards and competencies along with individually devised expectations which teacher educators enforce through the authority of their positions. Reflective teacher education is thought to be a place where preservice teachers can make sense of their experiences through reflection. However, these students must make sense of their experiences in the right and proper way. There are standards and competencies to meet and they must prove that those have been met. It seems that reflection is used as another means to provide evidence of the correct learning, rather than to show the ability to be thoughtful and critical.

As the teacher educators in this study reflected on their experiences, they communicated to me areas that they would like to change in order to create a better learning environment for their students. They focused on their own practices and expressed possible solutions to what they saw as problems. And as Zeichner and Tabachnick (1991) suggested, they critiqued the institutional contexts in which they taught. However, they did not describe how they would act on this critique, they proposed changes that were at the personal rather than the institutional level. But as Fullan (1996) contended, change at the personal

level must be done in relation to others in order to build the capacity to affect systems. I have changed in relation to the participants and they have changed in relation to me. Therefore, we may have some effect on the system as we continue to reflect on our own actions and change our practice. However, sitting back and hoping that my individual changes will somehow eventually have effects outside of my teaching is an attitude that teacher education cannot afford. It is my professional obligation to work toward removing the structural and institutional barriers in teacher education that modify natural reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1995; LaBoskey, 1994; Richert, 1992; Sumsion, 2000).

It is the nature of professional education that students be held accountable for meeting the expectations set forth by the profession. Therefore, those elevated to places of authority through their knowledge of the profession are left to judge the extent to which future professionals have met the expectations. However, I question whether reflective assignments are the forum for this assessment. As my study suggests, dialogue is a key piece of reflection. And engaging in any type of overt assessment of reflective writing most likely will not contribute to the trust that is needed for productive dialogue. This notion is also supported by Curzon-Hobson (2002) who argued that “particular quality and accounting mechanisms” (p. 272) hamper trust between faculty and students. Further, trust, as defined by Curzon-Hobson is “a student’s sense that his or her projections of potentiality will be both encouraged *and* rewarded by the teacher” (p. 276) and that potentiality is a willingness to “question, think and act anew” (p.

276), not only related to disciplinary knowledge, but also knowledge of self and the world.

Nevertheless, if grading reflective assignments is absolutely necessary Cruickshank argued that it should be based on “the extent to which the participants are willing to become students of teaching and the extent to which they are becoming more thoughtful and wiser by demonstrating behaviors presumed to be characteristic of students of teaching” (p. 37). A similar notion was also communicated by the preservice teachers in this study. To accomplish this type of assessment, I would bring together preservice teachers and teacher educators to decide what behaviors are expected and what “more thoughtful and wiser” means. Further, I would move toward preservice teacher self assessment based on these mutually established characteristics.

Cruickshank (1987) suggested that it is the preservice teachers that require the grading of assignments. However, as my study communicates, it is not grades that they expect, but feedback. Further, I contend that it is the system that encourages the grading of reflective assignments. As the preservice teachers in this study communicated, meaningful feedback on written assignments increased their confidence and enhanced their learning. This is also supported by Spalding and Wilson (2002).

As I stated previously, creating a space for dialogue is an important piece of reflection in elementary teacher education. Putsey envisioned a “revolving kind of reflection, they reflect, you ask questions, they answer those questions. That would be perfect. I think that you could learn more about what they’re

learning and they would learn a lot more by having to respond” (interview 2).

Johnston echoed this notion of dialogue as well, but she believed verbal dialogue was vital:

You’re not getting feedback from someone else and I don’t think you get as much. It’s like going to a movie alone. And you’ve got thoughts in there and you might write a few down and that does help, but when you have someone, or many others to talk to about it, then things come out that never would come out in writing and that might be where we’ve missed the boat in this, you know. (interview 3)

As these participants described, dialogue can take both a verbal and written form. Further, a purpose of the dialogue described by the participants was to consider multiple perspectives (Loughran, 2002; Schön, 1983, 1987).

Establishing classroom environments that provide a safe venue for engaging in meaningful, critical dialogue about teaching and learning is critical (Lee & Loughran, 2000; Richert, 1992) as this environment provides access to multiple perspectives. This type of environment encourages risk and doubt rather than “objectivity and unquestioned authority” (Curzon-Hobson, 2002, p. 267) and provides the space and freedom for students to consider new interpretations and perspectives. Establishing the context for dialogue also works toward alleviating the perception that teachers are super human, infallible, and all knowing.

I would be naïve to believe that all efforts to create an environment conducive to dialogue are successful. I would bring together human beings into the same classroom where each brings her own history of trust. And those

enduring perceptions sometimes present barriers that are almost impossible to overcome, because the conditions that are necessary for dialogue to be realized and sustained “may well lie beyond the teacher’s control and even the classroom setting” (Curzon-Hobson, 2002, p. 272). However, I should not let this pessimistic story deter me; I must continue to strive for what I envision as important to my students’ learning.

Cruickshank (1987) indicated that reflective teacher education is effective and listed economy as one of its advantages. He described reflective teacher education as an inexpensive way to improve teacher education as it is not “labor-intensive” (p. 44). However, as my work implies, part of the problem of reflective teacher education is that it is not labor intensive and it should be. Providing the interaction and feedback that preservice teachers and teacher educators envision is labor intensive. This contention also adds to Laursen’s (1994) argument that Schön’s theory, which guides much reflective teacher education, “overestimates the possibilities of relevant feedback” (p. 129).

As all participants in this study indicated, there is a deep need for dialogue, particularly looking to those who are more knowledgeable. Preservice teachers look to their instructors for guidance and would like more intensive dialogical interaction which would ultimately result in the need for more time on the part of teacher educators. Consequently, in order for reflective teacher education to meet the needs of those involved in it, I suggest restructuring the compensation structure, particularly related to course load, to reflect the need to devote more time to one-on-one dialogue with students. While I recognize that



this is not an uncommon suggestion for many dilemmas of higher education, I cannot offer a specific plan for how this can be accomplished, as this restructuring must consider each program's unique existing structure.

Reflective ability remains fairly stable throughout teacher education (LaBoskey, 1993). Further, there is no particular structure that works best for facilitating reflection (Richert, 1992; Spalding & Wilson, 2002), and a preservice teacher's level of reflectivity is dependent on the relevance of the experience being reflected upon (Pultorak, 1996). Given these findings and the contention that reflection is difficult to facilitate (Sumsion, 2000), why is there an obsession with enhancing preservice teachers' reflection? I suggest that this enhancement be left to the students by giving them the choice of how to reflect and what to reflect upon. As my study suggests, the structure for reflection should be meaningful to the students. This means that teacher education students decide what is relevant and warrants reflection and in what form that reflection takes place. This notion is supported by the work of Dewey (1933) and LaBoskey (1993, 1994) who suggested that preservice teachers come to teacher education with certain predispositions and orientations toward reflection that influence their decisions regarding relevance and structure of reflection.

The preservice teachers indicated that they would like choices in this structure. For example, they suggested that reflective assignments be seen collectively, perhaps in a portfolio, so that this progression of thought could be presented over the course of their program, rather than at random moments predetermined by teacher educators. Through reflective teacher education,

students are expected to become independent thinkers; therefore teacher educators should leave it to the preservice teacher to select the problems on which to reflect (Bullough & Gitlin, 1991). Further, the focus should be on the preservice teacher analyzing, not the teacher educator dictating the analysis process along with the outcome (Loughran, 2002). Failure to give students control over their reflections may result in greater dependence on those viewed as experts rather than more autonomous teachers (Bullough & Gitlin, 1991).

Experience alone does not lead to learning. Learning is achieved through reflection on that experience (Dewey, 1933; Loughran, 2002). Further, preservice teachers require authentic, practical experiences on which to reflect (Yost, et al., 2000). They should be immersed in the world of teaching, and field experience is the primary source for this experience. As Eleanor Duckworth (1987) explained nearly 20 years ago, students should be put “into contact with phenomena related to the area to be studied – the real thing, not books or lectures about it” and teacher educators should “help them notice what is interesting; to engage them so they will continue to think and wonder about it” (p. 123). The current study is supported by these views; yet, the preservice teachers also indicated that they reflected on class experiences including journal articles and classroom activities as well as seminars. Moreover, they found that learning from these reflections was helpful in developing their theoretical understanding.

This discussion makes me question the purpose of having preservice teachers reflect. By limiting the experiences on which preservice teachers are

asked to reflect, it seems that some experiences are considered unimportant or irrelevant to their learning. If we want preservice teachers to construct their own knowledge by reflecting on their experiences, then all experiences are viable targets for reflection. This limit on experience is related to how traditional teacher education has been blended with reflective teacher education. Coursework, readings and the like are based in the tradition of telling. However, field experience or simulated teaching is where the theory that has been learned through coursework is integrated into practice. This is where reflection is valuable as it helps students perfect their craft and work toward certainty. As Johnston explained, the concepts and ideas presented in teacher education, such as constructivism and inquiry, will not be fully understood until put in the context of a real classroom.

They're [preservice teachers] getting all this inquiry and it's just inundating them, inquiry and constructivism and I don't think they really fully understand and I don't think anyone does until they start teaching....We can do things in the [university] classroom and we can go out...and we can do all these things, but until they start teaching it and really live it....It takes forever to get there and feel comfortable and really understand it.

(interview 2)

It seems that Johnston believed that reflection will be most valuable when "really" teaching, and reflection in teacher education programs is only practice for what reflection can be like as a practicing teacher. However, preservice teachers do not seem to be of the same mind. They are very much invested in helping the

students and are concerned that they are not being effective. Furthermore, the preservice teachers described a great deal of learning about students and the act of teaching. In addition, they learned about themselves as teachers, including their strengths and weaknesses, and how to improve their practice.

This limit on experience also exists because teacher education is primarily concerned with students learning to be “good” teachers. Good teachers always strive to improve practice and to implement the “best practices”. However, if students are not given the opportunity to make the decisions about what best practice is to them through reflecting on class experiences, reading, and the like, then we have done exactly what Britzman (1998) warned against. We have reduced reflection to that of correcting what we deem lacking in our students’ “practice” and expect them to be interested only in finding those “problems” that we have chosen to be worthy of attention.

I would argue that reflecting is part of any learning and that learning to teach is not just about improving practice. It is about considering new possibilities, developing theoretical frameworks, and understanding oneself as a teacher. Improving practice implies that there is one absolute end that all teachers should reach and that reflection is a means to reach that end. However, in the uncertain world of education, teachers reflect to understand themselves, their students, the learning environment, and their knowledge and that is a much more complex process than deciding what went wrong with a lesson and changing it.

If experience is reduced to practice only, then developing the level of experience needed to be successful in teaching takes time. Preservice teachers initially rely on their prior experiences with teaching that are dominated by the student perspective and then gradually gain experience as teachers. It seems impossible for teacher education to provide that level of experience. At the same time I question whether it is the function of teacher education programs to provide or expect this level of experience. The idea of students leaving teacher education programs with the experience of a practicing teacher is an artificial goal that has been set in order to lessen the uncertainty of their knowledge and skills. Further this idea perpetuates the myth that teacher education is not a part of the continuum of teacher professional development and again falls back to traditional teacher “training” where a student acquires a set of skills deemed effective through research and enters the classroom never to change because the skills have already been “proven” to work.

Finally, I believe it is this restricted view of experience that contributes to the popular notion that reflection can be compartmentalized, as Schön’s theory suggests. As my study implies, preservice teachers are engaged in reflection that is complex and multidimensional. According to the participants, they reflect both before and after experiences while at the same time continuously reflecting on those experiences that require more sustained thinking. Their experiences and reflections blend together. The reflection that takes place before an experience affects the reflection that takes place during and after an experience, and the prior experiences and reflections affect subsequent experiences and

reflections. It is this complex picture of reflection that makes reflection in teacher education problematic and seemingly impossible to implement.

However, the findings from this study suggest that there are certain conditions that can be established in elementary teacher education that may allow a more authentic reflection and successful implementation of reflective teacher education. These conditions may allow reflection that is more closely aligned with personal reflection as described by the participants of this study. These conditions characterize reflection as an individualized process that is dialogic and uncertain.

Although collectively the participants described similar processes for reflecting, each had her own unique preferences and dispositions. Further, each preservice teacher had a set of distinctive experiences which influenced her preferences and dispositions. Additionally, it is this history that allowed each individual to determine the relevance of each experience and how that experience would be processed. The process of reflection that the study participants described was a means of problem solving and change, which resulted in learning. As constructivist learning theory supports, learning is determined by each individual's prior experiences, preferences, and dispositions. Respecting this history could be a first step in giving students the choices that they desire in determining the relevance of their experiences and in selecting the focus and structure of their reflections. Therefore, setting a condition of respect for each individual's history is suggested for successful reflective teacher education.

Establishing an environment conducive to dialogue is also important. All the participants described conversation as part of their reflective process. In a public venue such as teacher education, establishing the level of trust necessary for this type of dialogue requires diligence and commitment. Initially, this responsibility appears to lie with teacher educators, but commitment on the part of the preservice teachers is also necessary. This may mean that classroom control be negotiated to allow discussion that is not led by teacher educators, but that is facilitated by both teacher educators and preservice teachers. Establishing this environment of trust is time consuming. Consequently, existing structures such as course schedules and class sizes may need to be adjusted to allow this condition to develop.

The preceding conditions are all encompassed by a global condition of uncertainty. Uncertainty is a condition that many teacher educators may be uncomfortable with, but a condition that is necessary. Teaching and learning to teach are inherently uncertain, as it is probably impossible to be prepared for every situation a teacher (including teacher educators) may encounter. This means that teacher educators cannot control the content or process of preservice teachers' reflections. Further, a consideration for teacher educators is that their students will choose what they will and will not learn and attempts to force other priorities on those students may result in the pseudo-reflection I described previously.

These conditions are offered as suggestions based on the findings of this study. It is left to each individual reader as to whether these suggestions seem

plausible in light of her particular context. However, I believe these suggestions merit strong consideration by anyone interested in structuring an elementary teacher education program with a goal of educating teachers who critically analyze their experiences as students and teachers.

### Future Research

It was difficult to limit myself to the study as designed. Even as I was collecting data, I was thinking of pieces I would like to add to the study. My first idea was that I needed to follow the preservice teachers in the study as they experienced student teaching and their initial years as practicing teachers. This idea came from the realization that the preservice teachers I was interviewing and observing would be student teachers the next semester. It was also prompted by one of the preservice teachers who expressed concern about being able to find time to reflect when she had her own classroom. I immediately thought of the possibilities for long term investigation with one or more of these students as they progressed from their teacher education program into their initial years as practicing teachers. This type of study would provide much needed longitudinal information regarding how teachers who have been expected to reflect as students (in whatever form that may be) continue or do not continue to reflect. This type of study would also provide a source for analysis of preservice teachers' reflection throughout teacher education.

Another aspect of this line of inquiry would be a comparison between inservice teachers who engaged in formal reflection as part of their teacher



education and those who did not. I wonder if they have differing perceptions of reflection and its role in preservice teacher education as well as their daily practice. Further, I am curious about how inservice teachers' notions of reflection influence student teachers' ideas about reflection. Would preservice teachers negotiate cooperating teachers' expectations similarly to the way they negotiated teacher educators' expectations?

I am also interested in talking with the teacher educators again. As they all expressed desire to change their teaching as a result of their reflection, I would like to find out what they changed, and what about themselves as teachers changed as a result. Further I would like to know what affects their changes had on the other faculty as well as the program.

Finally, I would like to further investigate the ideas of reflecting on practice and reflecting on experience. Do preservice teachers and teacher educators view these differently? And if so, how are they different?

### Final Thoughts

Teacher education is an uncertain endeavor. "Teacher educators often find themselves...facing uncertainty and searching for control while living in a changing world with competing requirements and expectations for teachers [and the education of teachers]" (Ben-Peretz, 2001, p. 53). It is this uncertainty that may squelch the desire for change. However, if reflective teacher education is to maintain its evolution, teacher educators must continue to battle this uncertainty

through continuous reflection on what they believe is possible in educating the teachers of tomorrow.

## REFERENCES

- Alarcao, I. & Moreira, A. (1993). Technical rationality and learning by reflecting on action in teacher education: Dichotomy or complement?. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 19,183-191.
- Argyris C. & Schön, D. A. (1974) *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ben-Peretz, M. (2001). The impossible role of teacher educators in a changing role. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52, 48-56.
- Bolan, R. S. (1980, July). The practitioner as theorist: The phenomenology of the professional episode. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 261-274.
- Boud, D. & Walker, D. (1998). Promoting reflection in professional courses: the challenge of context. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23, 191-206.
- Britzman, D. P. (1991). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Britzman, D. P. (1998). *Lost subjects, contested objects: Toward a psychoanalytic inquiry of learning*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Bullough, R.V. & Gitlin, A.D. (1991). In B. R. Tabachnick & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Issues and practices in inquiry-oriented teacher education* (pp. 35-55). London: Falmer Press.
- Calderhead, J. (1989). Reflective teaching and teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 5, 43-51.
- Calderhead, J. & Gates, P. (1993). Introduction. In J. Calderhead & P. Gates (Eds.), *Conceptualizing reflection in teacher development* (pp. 1-10). London: Falmer Press.
- Calderhead, J. & Shorrock, S. B. (1997). Understanding teacher education: Case studies in the professional development of beginning teachers. London: Falmer Press.
- Clarke, A. (1995). Professional development in practicum settings: Reflective practice under scrutiny. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11, 243-261.
- Crotty, M. (1998). The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process. London: Sage.
- Cruickshank, D.R. (1987). *Reflective teaching: The preparation of students of teaching*. Reston, VA: Association of Teacher Educators.
- Cruickshank, D. R. (1990). *Research that informs teachers and teacher educators*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Curzon-Hobson, A. (2002). A pedagogy of trust in higher learning. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 7, 265-276.

- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Boston: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Ducharme, E. R. & Ducharme, M. K. (1996). Needed research in teacher education. In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of research in teacher education* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 1030-1046). New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.) (pp. 119-161). New York: Macmillan.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (1990). Teacher preparation: Structure and conceptual alternatives. In W. T. Houston (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 212-233). New York: Macmillan.
- Freese, A. R. (1999). The role of reflection on preservice teachers' development in the context of a professional development school. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 15*, 895-909.
- Fullan, M. (1996). Professional culture and educational change. *School Psychology Review, 25*, 496-500.
- Gelter, H. (2003). Why is reflective thinking uncommon? *Reflective Practice, 4*, 337-344.
- Gilroy, P. (1993). Reflections on Schön: An epistemological critique and a practical alternative. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 19*, 125-142.

- Goodman, J. (1988). The political tactics and teaching strategies of reflective, active preservice teachers. *The Elementary School Journal*, 89(1), 23-41.
- Goodman, J. (1991). Using a methods course to promote reflection and inquiry among preservice teachers. In B. R. Tabachnick & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Issues and practices in inquiry-oriented teacher education* (pp. 56-76). London: Falmer Press.
- Grant, P. A. (2001). The power of uncertainty: Reflection of pre-service literacy tutors. *Reflective Practice*, 2, 237-248.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hatton, N. & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11, 33-49.
- Hullfish, H. G. & Smith, P. G. (1961). *Reflective thinking: The method of education*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company.
- Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. (1992). *Model standards for beginning teacher licensing and development: A resource for state dialogue*. Retrieved 1/25/03 from <http://www.ccsso.org/intascst.html>.
- Jarvis, P. (1997). Power and personhood in teaching. *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 29(1), 82-91.
- Kivinen, O. & Ristelä, P. (2003). From constructivism to a pragmatist conception of learning. *Oxford Review of Education*, 29, 363-375.

- Klein, M. (1998). Constructivist practice in preservice teacher education in math. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 20*, 75-85.
- Klein, M. (2001). Constructivist practice, pre-service teacher education and change: The limitations of appealing to hearts and minds. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 7*, 257-269.
- LaBoskey, V. K. (1993). A conceptual framework for reflection in preservice teacher education. In J. Calderhead & P. Gates (Eds.), *Conceptualizing reflection in teacher development* (pp. 23-38). London: Falmer Press.
- LaBoskey, V. K. (1994). Development of reflective practice: A study of preservice teachers. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Laursen, P. F. (1994). Teaching thinking and didactics: Prescriptive, rationalistic, and reflective approaches. In I. Carlgren, G. Handal, & S. Vagge (Eds.), *Teachers' minds and actions: Research on teachers' thinking and practice* (pp. 125-135). London: Falmer Press.
- Lee, S.K.F. & Loughran, J.J. (2000). Facilitating pre-service teachers' reflection through a school-based teaching programme. *Reflective Practice, 1*(1), 69-89.
- Logsdon, M. B. (2002). Memory texts and inherited notions of authority: A speculative essay. *Teaching & Learning, 16*(2), 7-17.
- Loughran, J. J. (1996). Developing reflective practice: Learning about teaching and learning through modeling. London: Falmer Press.
- Loughran, J. J. (2002). Effective reflective practice: in search of meaning in learning about teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*, 33-43.

- MacKinnon, A. M. (1987). Detecting reflection-in-action among preservice elementary science teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 3*, 135-145.
- Meek, A. (1991). On thinking about teaching: A conversation with Eleanor Duckworth. *Educational Leadership, 48(6)*, 30-34.
- Mertens, D. M. (1998). Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. (2002). *What teachers should know and be able to do*. Arlington, VA: Author.
- National Commission on Teaching & America's Future. (1996). *What matters most: Teaching for America's future*. New York: Author.
- Norlander-Case, K.A., Reagan, T.G., & Case, C.W. (1999). The professional teacher: the preparation and nurturance of the reflective practitioner. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Penso, S. & Shoham, E. (2003). Student teachers' reasoning while making pedagogical decisions. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 26*, 314-328.
- Pinar, W. F., Reynolds, W. M., Slattery, P. & Taubman, P. M. (2000). *Understanding curriculum: An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses*. New York: Peter Lang.



- Powers, L.S.W. (1999). The nature, roles, and interplay of the inner and outer voices of reflective teaching. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 60(10), 3598A. (UMI No. 9947742).
- Pultorak, E. G. (1996). Following the development process of reflection in novice teachers: Three years of investigation. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 47, 283-291.
- Putnam, R.W. (1991). Recipes and reflective learning: "What would prevent you from saying it that way?". In D. A. Schön (Ed.), *The reflective turn: Case studies in and on educational practice* (pp. 145-163). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Richert, A. E. (1992). The content of student teachers' reflections with different structures for facilitating the reflective process. In T. Russell & H. Munby (Eds.), *Teachers and teaching: From classroom to reflection* (pp. 171-191). New York: Falmer Press.
- Rodgers, C. R. (2002). Seeing student learning: teacher change and the role of reflection. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72, 230-253.
- Rogers, R. R. (2001). Reflection in higher education: A concept analysis. *Innovative Higher Education*, 26, 37-57.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Russell, T. & Munby, H. (1991). Reframing: The role of experience in developing teachers' professional knowledge. In D. A. Schön (Ed.), *The reflective*

- turn: *Case studies in and on educational practice* (pp. 164-187). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Russell, T., Munby, H, Spafford, C., & Johnston, P. (1988). Learning the professional knowledge of teaching: Metaphors, puzzles, and the theory-practice relationship. In P. Grimmett & G. Erickson (Eds.), *Reflection in teacher education* (pp. 67-90). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Smagorinsky, P., Cook, L.S. & Johnson, T.S. (2003). The twisting path of concept development in learning to teach. *Teachers College Record*, 105, 1399-1436.
- Spalding, E. & Wilson, A. (2002). Demystifying reflection: a study of pedagogical strategies that encourage reflective journal writing. *Teachers College Record*, 104, 1393-1421.
- Sumsion, J. (2000). Facilitating reflection: A cautionary account. *Reflective Practice*, 1, 199-214.
- Tom, A. (1997). The deliberate relationship: A frame for talking about faculty-student relationships. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*. 18(1), 3-21.

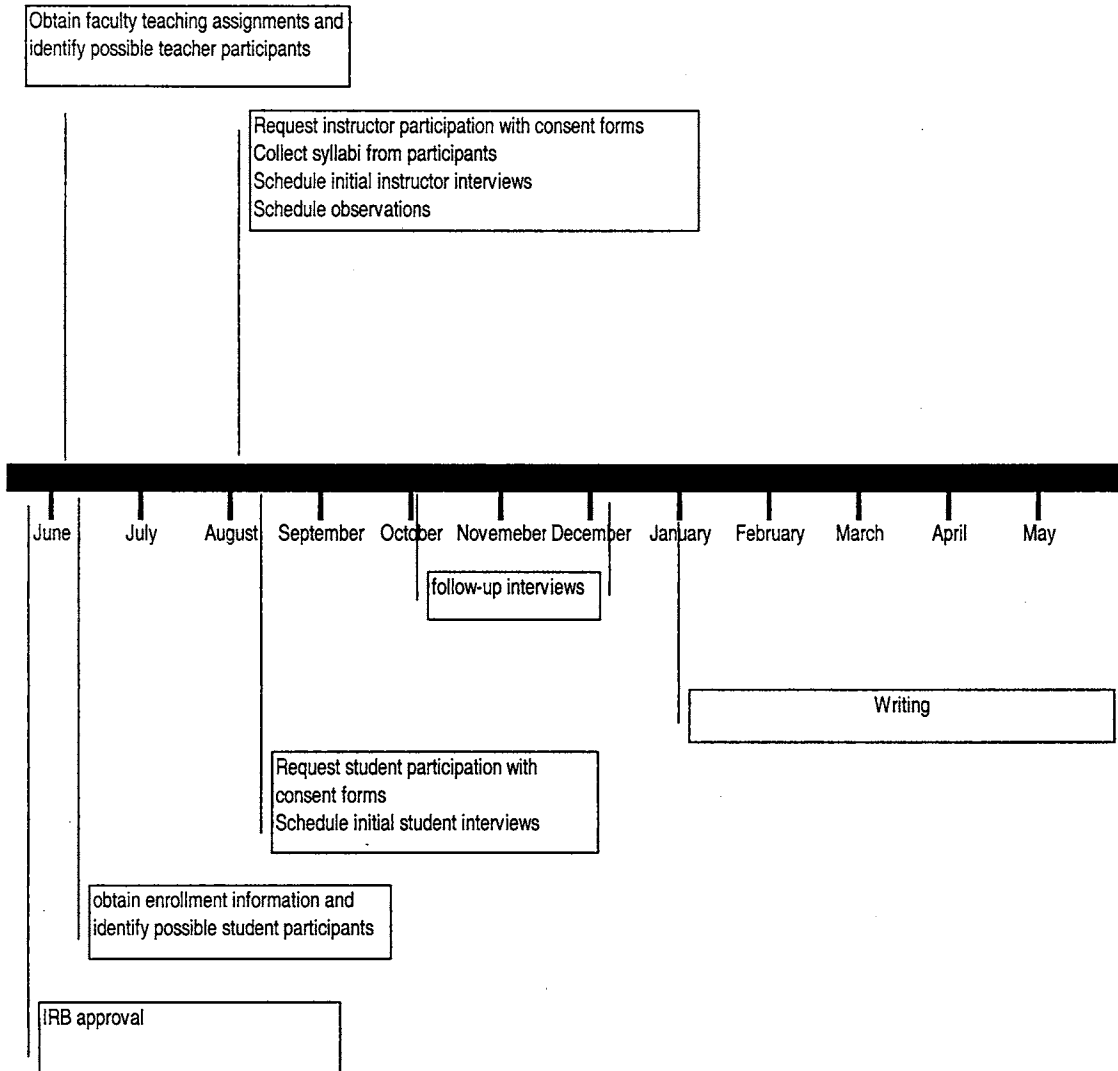
- Tom, A. R. (1985). Inquiring into inquiry-oriented teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(5), 35-44.
- Tomlinson, P. (1999). Conscious reflection and implicit learning in teacher preparation - Part II: Implications for a balanced approach. *Oxford Review of Education*, 25, 533-544.
- Valli, L. (1992). Afterword. In L. Valli (Ed.), *Reflective teacher education: Cases and critiques* (pp. 213-225). New York: State University of New York Press.
- van Manen, M. (1977). Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 6, 205-228.
- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- van Manen, M. (1999). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- van Manen, M. (1995). On the epistemology of reflective practice. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1(1), 33-50.
- Wunder, S. (2003). Preservice teachers' reflections on learning to teach elementary social studies. *Reflective Practice*, 4, 193-206.
- Yost, D. S., Sentner, S. M., & Forlenza-Bailey, A. (2000). An examination of the construct of critical reflection: Implications for teacher education programming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51, 39-49.

- Zeichner, K. M. (1990). Changing directions in the practicum: Looking ahead to the 1990s. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 16*, 105-132
- Zeichner, K. M. (1994). Research on teacher thinking and different views of reflective practice in teaching and teacher education. In I. Carlgren, G. Handal, & S. Vagge (Eds.), *Teachers' minds and actions: Research on teachers' thinking and practice* (pp. 9-27). London: Falmer Press.
- Zeichner, K. M. & Liston, D. (1990). *Traditions of reform and reflective teaching in US teacher education* (Issue paper 90-1). East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Education.
- Zeichner, K. M. & Tabachnick, B. R. (1991). Reflections on reflective teaching. In B. R. Tabachnick & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Issues and practices in inquiry-oriented teacher education* (pp. 1-21). London: Falmer Press.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Timeline



## APPENDIX B

### Instructor Participant Letter of Invitation

Dear Semester Y Instructor,

I am conducting a study titled: Instructor and Student Perceptions of Learning to Teach. As an instructor of a Semester Y course, you interact with students who are in a very important stage in their development as a teacher. It is important to my study to understand your perceptions of how these students learn to teach. Therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Although I would like to include everyone who volunteers, this is not feasible. In volunteering to participate, you will be asked to complete an information sheet. This sheet will be used to select participants for the study. The purpose of gathering this information is to allow selection of a variety of backgrounds including gender and faculty rank.

I will be contacting you in the next few days to inquire about your interest in participating. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sarah J. Ramsey, Doctoral Student

School of Teaching and Curriculum Leadership

## APPENDIX C

### Preservice Teacher Participant Invitation Script

I am conducting a study titled: Instructor and Student Perceptions of Learning to Teach. As a Semester Y student, you are in a very important stage in your development as a teacher. It is important to my study to understand what are your perceptions of learning to teach. Therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Although I would like to include everyone who volunteers, this is not feasible. In volunteering to participate, you will be asked to complete an information sheet. This sheet will be used to select participants for the study. The purpose of gathering this information is to allow selection of a variety of backgrounds including gender, commuter/resident, and traditional/non-traditional students.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

## APPENDIX D

### Information Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please check all that apply.

I live in Big State University Town during the academic year.

I live outside of Big State University Town during the academic year.

I entered the university the year following high school graduation and have attended at least one semester each academic year since.

I entered the university within five years of high school graduation and have attended at least one semester each academic year since.

I entered the university more than five years after high school graduation and have attended at least one semester each academic year since.

I entered the university after completing my GED.

I transferred to Big State from a 2 year institution.

I transferred to Big State from a 4 year institution.

I am a male.

I am a female.

I am married.

I have children.

I am between the ages of 18 & 21.

I am between the ages of 22 & 25.

I am between the ages of 26 & 40.

I am more than 40 years old.

Please complete the following sentence.



When asked about my ethnicity and/or race, I say I am \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### Instructor Informed Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Sarah Ramsey, or associates or assistants of his or her choosing, to perform the following treatment or procedure.

#### THE STUDY

*Instructor and Student Perceptions of Learning to Teach* is a study being conducted by Sarah J. Ramsey a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. The purpose of this study is to understand teacher education instructors' and students' perceptions of learning to teach. The following questions will guide the study: What are elementary education instructors' and students' perceptions of learning to teach? How do these perceptions converge and diverge and what are the implications for teacher education?

#### PROCEDURE

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to

- Participate in at least one (1), but no more than three (3) individual interviews in which you will be asked to discuss learning to teach. These interviews will be approximately 1 hour in length and take place during the fall semester of 2003. All interviews will be audiotape.
- Allow the researcher to make one (1), but no more than three (3) observations in your classroom for the purpose of observing student and professor discussion about learning to teach. These observations will not require your interaction with the researcher and should not disrupt the normal operation of the class. Each observation will require the researcher to be in the classroom for between one (1) and three (3) class periods. Hand written field notes will be taken during classroom observations.
- It may be necessary to follow-up with participants after the initial data collection. This would involve clarifying interview or observation data.

#### BENEFITS

This study will investigate perceptions of how people learn to teach. By participating in this study you may benefit from increased understanding of your own perceptions of learning to teach.

#### POSSIBLE RISKS

This study will not involve any discomfort or risk that would exceed that which is experienced in the course of instructing your course.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym. All electronically stored data will be kept in computer files that can only be accessed by password. In addition, observation notes and transcriptions of interviews will include no participants' names. Interview tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet. The keys and passwords for all data and records will be accessible only by the researcher and her OSU faculty supervisor. In the research report, pseudonyms will be used to disguise the participants' names.

I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty, after notifying the project director. I may also contact Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 405-744-5700 or Sarah Ramsey, 245 Willard, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078 405-744-8050.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_(a.m./p.m.)

---

Name (typed)

Signature

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Project director or authorized representative

## APPENDIX F

### Preservice Teacher Informed Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Sarah Ramsey, or associates or assistants of his or her choosing, to perform the following treatment or procedure.

#### THE STUDY

*Instructor and Student Perceptions of Learning to Teach* is a study being conducted by Sarah J. Ramsey a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. The purpose of this study is to understand teacher education instructors' and students' perceptions of learning to teach. The following questions will guide the study: What are elementary education instructors' and students' perceptions of learning to teach? How do these perceptions converge and diverge and what are the implications for teacher education?

#### PROCEDURE

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to

- Participate in at least one (1), but no more than three (3) individual interviews in which you will be asked to discuss learning to teach.
- These interviews will be approximately 1 hour in length and take place during the fall semester of 2003. All interviews will be audiotaped.
- Allow the researcher to make one (1), but no more than three (3) observations in your class for the purpose of observing student and instructor interaction about learning to teach. These observations will not require your interaction with the researcher and should not disrupt the normal operation of the class. Each observation will require the researcher to be in the classroom for between one (1) and three (3) class periods. Hand written field notes will be taken during classroom observation.
- Allow the researcher to collect at least one (1) written assignment from one of the following courses: CIED 4153, CIED 4353, CIED 4323, CIED 3430, CIED 4012, or CIED 4363.
- It may be necessary to follow-up with participants after the initial data collection. This would involve clarifying interview or observation data.

#### BENEFITS

This study will investigate perceptions of how people learn to teach. By participating in this study you may benefit from increased understanding of your own perceptions of learning to teach.

#### POSSIBLE RISKS

This study will not involve any discomfort or risk that would exceed that which is experienced in completing your coursework.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym. All electronically stored data will be kept in computer files that can only be accessed by password. In addition, observation notes and transcriptions of interviews will include no participants' names. Interview tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet. The keys and passwords for all data and records will be accessible only by the researcher and her OSU faculty supervisor. In the research report, pseudonyms will be used to disguise the participants' names.

I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty, after notifying the project director. I may also contact Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 405-744-5700 or Sarah Ramsey, 245 Willard, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078 405-744-8050.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.)

---

Name (typed)

Signature

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

---

Signed:

Project director or authorized representative

## APPENDIX G

### Interview Protocol

#### *Teacher Educator*

##### Initial Interview

###### *Main questions.*

- What course do you teach?
  - Tell me about the most recent session.
  - What did you do while you were teaching?
  - What did you do after you taught?
- How do you improve your teaching?
- How do people learn to be teachers?
  - What types of experiences do you provide in your courses that contribute to their learning?

##### Subsequent Interviews

###### *Main questions.*

- What types of reflective assignments are included in your course?
  - What prompted you to include these?
  - When did you start to include reflective assignments in your course?
  - When you ask your students to write a reflection, what does that mean? What are your expectations?
  - When you ask your students to verbally reflect, what do you expect?
  - How do you design a reflective assignment?
- What is your goal in having students do reflective assignments?
- How do you as a teacher educator support student reflection?

#### *Preservice Teachers*

##### Initial Interview

###### *Main questions.*

- Tell me about your last class.
- Tell me about your last tutoring session/teaching experience.

- What did you do while you were teaching?
- What did you do after you taught?
- How do you improve your teaching?
- How do people learn to be teachers?

### Subsequent Interviews

- What types of reflective assignments are included in your courses?
  - When you asked to write a reflection, what does that mean? What are your expectations?
  - When you asked to verbally reflect, what does that mean?
- In what forms do you prefer to reflect (written, small group, one to one with peer, one to one with faculty)?
- When you are asked to reflect, how does that make you feel?
- How do you reflect?
- How do you complete a reflective assignment?
- How did you learn to reflect?
- What value does reflection have for you?
- What is the purpose of reflecting?

### *All Interviews*

### Probing Questions

- You used the word, \_\_\_\_\_. Tell me what you mean by that.
- Tell me more about what that means to you.
- Would you give me an example?
- How did you come to that conclusion?
- What was that like?
- What did you do?
- In what way?
- How did you become aware of that?
- How did you feel about that?

### Closing Question

I will transcribe the tape. As I review the transcript and my notes, may I contact you if I have questions or need clarification?

# APPENDIX H

## Institutional Review Board Approval

---

### Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 7/14/2004

Date: Tuesday, July 15, 2003

IRB Application No ED046

Proposal Title: INSTRUCTOR AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNNG TO TEACH

Principal  
Investigator(s):

Sarah Ramsey  
245 Willard Hall  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Christine Moseley  
245 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and  
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

---

Dear PI :

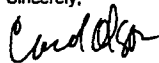
Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair  
Institutional Review Board



2

VITA

Sarah Jayne Ramsey

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: REFLECTION IN ELEMENTARY TEACHER EDUCATION

Major Field: Education

Education: Graduated from Grove High School in Grove, Oklahoma (May, 1980). Then earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Information Systems at the University of Tulsa (May, 1985) followed by a Master of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Washington University in St. Louis (December, 1988). Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education with emphasis in Professional Education Studies at Oklahoma State University in July of 2004.

Experience: Taught elementary school for six years prior to becoming Master Teacher in Residence at the Oklahoma State University Center for Science Literacy. From 2000-2004 was employed by Oklahoma State University School of Teaching and Curriculum Leadership as a Graduate Associate and Lecturer.

Professional Memberships: American Educational Research Association, American Association of Teaching and Curriculum, Phi Kappa Phi, Kappa Delta Pi, National Science Teachers Association, Phi Delta Kappa