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Preservice teacher perspectives on field experience, the development of teacher identity, and professional practice

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PRESERVICE TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON FIELD EXPERIENCE,

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER IDENTITY, AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

by

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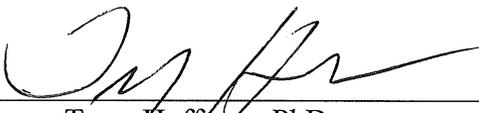
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the experiences of ten preservice teachers during the first semester of student teaching in Oregon public schools. The purpose of the research was to examine preservice teacher perspectives on how field service impacted professional identity development, instructional methods and the use of instructional technology.

The results strongly suggest that field service contributed to the teachers' sense of professional identity. Field placement also largely determined the quality and nature student teaches' instructional practice, as well as the extent to which teachers were able to integrate technology. The study considered factors which influenced the nature and quality of the preservice teachers' field experience and proposed strategies for the host institution's teacher education program to identify, train and retain outstanding mentor teachers.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this effort to my wife Ann-Marie, my family, and to all of the outstanding preservice students with whom I work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Institutions of higher learning that train teachers are under increasing pressure to demonstrate how program design and instructional practices adequately prepare teachers for professional service. In October of 2009, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2009) delivered a scathing indictment of teacher preparation programs claiming that schools of education were doing "a mediocre job" at preparing teachers. According to Duncan, teacher education programs have failed to provide students with sufficient meaningful field-based learning opportunities. Secretary Duncan's comments reflect mounting criticism being directed towards teacher education programs, which is further reflected by the introduction of federal accountability measures for teacher training programs along with proposals to restrict access to federal grants for teacher preparation programs that are deemed at-risk or low performing (Field, 2011; Field, 2012). With the reauthorization of the Primary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (now known as No Child Left Behind), teacher education programs and schools of education in the United States are likely to be increasingly held accountable for the performance of teachers entering the workforce. Therefore, it is essential that teacher-training programs identify, model and validate best practices in preparing teachers for professional service.

Teacher preparation programs have traditionally integrated field-based learning in the form of practicum, internship or student teaching. Although requirements vary widely between states, traditional university-based teacher training programs generally incorporate field experience as a requirement for teacher certification. However, time spent by preservice teachers in field-based practice also varies widely. Nationally,

student teachers spend an average of 177 hours in supervised field service prior to student teaching and an average of 514 hours during student teaching (*Preparing and Credentialing the Nation's Teachers,* 2011). In the state of Oregon, preservice teachers must complete a minimum of fifteen weeks of student teaching, which includes nine weeks of full-time experience (Brown, 2012).

Researchers and educational policymakers have debated the value of field-based experiences for preservice teachers over the past ten years. Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) reported that teacher candidates with significant field experience were better prepared to address the challenges facing educators. A 2008 study found that student teachers given extended field training received higher performance reviews, had stronger relationships with mentor teachers, and were better integrated into the school community than preservice teachers with less field experience (Spooner, Flowers, Lambert, & Algozzine, 2008). These findings stand in stark contrast to previous studies, which failed to identify a link between field service experiences and teacher performance (Lortie, 1975; O'Sullivan & Jiang, 2004; Richardson, 1996). Over the past twelve years, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) published consecutive reports claiming that, "schools of education and formal teacher training programs are failing to produce highly qualified teachers" (2002, p. viii) while asserting that "the best available research shows that solid verbal ability and content knowledge are what matters most" in teacher preparation (2002, p. 9). Five years later, Secretary Duncan reaffirmed the Department of Education's position that teacher educators were failing and further admonished schools of education to incorporate significant, meaningful field experiences into licensure programs (Duncan, 2009). While researchers have challenged the U.S. Department of Education's conclusions about the

ineffectiveness of teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002), empirical research asserts that under the right circumstances, field experience can yield positive results and produce more qualified teachers (Ballou & Podgursky, 2000; Hascher, Cocard & Moser, 2004). Moving forward, it will be increasingly important for teacher educators to more thoroughly explore the potential value of field service opportunities for preservice teachers.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research was to explore student teacher perspectives related to how field experiences contribute to teacher identity development and professional practices. Using personal interviews and student journals with a group of undergraduate preservice teachers, the researcher sought to develop an understanding of how student teachers' professional perspectives and practices are shaped through field experience. This is clearly an important contemporary issue, considering the USDOE's recent emphasis on the importance of facilitating meaningful field experiences in teacher training programs.

Purpose of the Research

The research ultimately sought to identify strategies for improving student teaching experiences. The study hopes that by building on this research, teacher educators might help novice teachers more effectively integrate theoretical ideals with professional practices, and thus ensure that emerging professionals receive the necessary support to meet state standards related to instructional design and delivery and the effective use of instructional technology. The study's findings may ultimately add to the existing literature, which could help student teachers overcome internal and external barriers to implementing active, student-centered instructional practices while

further encouraging the effective use of educational technologies to enhance teaching and learning. The study may also expand theoretical understandings related to teacher identity. Because professional identity is closely linked to teacher performance (Pajares, 1992; Schepens, Aelterman & Vlerick, 2009), it is essential for teacher educators to pursue practices that support healthy professional identity development for preservice teachers.

Research Questions

The investigation focused on answering the following three research questions:

1) What are preservice teacher perspectives on how field experiences contribute to the development of an individual's teacher identity?

2) What are preservice teacher perspectives on how field experiences influence preservice teachers' instructional design and practice?

3) According to preservice teachers, how do field service experiences impact novice teachers' use of instructional technology?

Key Terms

Within the scope of this project, there were two specific types of experiences that were classified as field-experience for preservice teachers. These experiences included practicum and student teaching. Both practicum and student teaching experiences are intended to promote the development of teacher identity and professional competencies. Practicum was defined as time spent in a K-12 classroom environment prior to student teaching where preservice teachers are provided with opportunities to observe while gradually adopting a formal instructional role in the classroom. Often, practicum service is separate from student teaching as a discrete experience and serves as the first formal opportunity to function in a lead instructional capacity. A practicum

assignment often lasts one semester. However, some university programs require up to two semesters of practicum prior to student teaching. It is common for preservice teachers to complete a practicum assignment prior to the start of student teaching. For this study, practicum referred to a two-semester, discrete experience that served as a prerequisite to student teaching in the participating institution's course of study.

Student teaching is generally a prescribed period of full-time teaching, where the teacher candidate leads all aspects of classroom activity, including lesson planning, daily instruction and classroom management. Student teaching may last anywhere from three weeks to an entire academic year. For the purposes of this study, student teaching referred to two separate 15-week teaching assignments, which were completed during an undergraduate student's senior year, in a traditional undergraduate teacher education program.

In both practicum and student teaching, a preservice teacher is assigned to a field-based cooperating or mentor teacher and is gradually given opportunities to teach under the direct supervision of the cooperating teacher. Within the existing research, the terms mentor teacher and cooperating teacher are often used interchangeably. For the purpose of this project, the terms mentor and cooperating teacher referred to a state-licensed educator who directly supervises the individual student teacher that has been assigned to his or her classroom. Oregon law mandates that mentor teachers must have "at least two years of successful teaching experience in early childhood, or elementary, or middle, or high school immediately prior" to supervising student teachers (OAR 584-17-0070).

Practicum students and student teachers are also assigned a field supervisor, who works on behalf of the student teacher's university licensure program to provide

feedback, guidance and mentoring. The field supervisor is responsible for formally observing the student teacher, keeping a record of hours spent in field service, and along with the mentor teacher, evaluating the student teacher's performance in accordance with state standards.

While not all teacher preparation programs require that students participate in both types of field experience, many institutions incorporate practicum with foundational coursework and then conclude the certification process with student teaching. For the purposes of this study, the term field service was synonymous with both practicum and student teaching, and referred to any formal, sustained pre-professional participation in a local or regional classroom. The terms student teacher, preservice teacher, and novice may be used interchangeably and all refer to an individual who is in the process of completing a teacher preparation program for state licensure. The terms license, credential and certificate may be used interchangeably and all refer to a state-issued document that serves as evidence that an individual is legally qualified to teach within a specific K-12 environment as detailed according to the terms and limitations outlined by the licensing agency.

Limitations

The study featured a small sample (N=10) that was regionally specific and limited to preservice teachers enrolled in a four-year undergraduate teacher education program. The study focused on the experiences of undergraduate students at a single undergraduate teacher education program at a small, private university in Oregon. The school included in the study is one of eighteen institutions in the state that offer a state-approved teacher licensure program. Students from other teacher preparation programs in the state of Oregon or in other states were not included in the study.

Delimitations

The participants included traditional daytime undergraduate students who were simultaneously enrolled in the same teacher education program during the fall semester of 2012. None of the participants were graduate or post-baccalaureate students. The study did not include an exploration of the experiences of students in non-traditional or alternative licensure programs. The study did not include students enrolled in online, evening adult programs, graduate, post baccalaureate, or Master of Arts in teaching programs.

As a daytime undergraduate program, field-based experience at the participating institution is embedded into the coursework over four academic years. However, depending on the number and nature of transferable credits, transfer students who enroll into the program occasionally have some field experience waived. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, transfer students who had field experience requirements waived as part of the transcript evaluation process were excluded from the study.

CHAPTER 2

A Review of the Literature

Introduction

Since the mid-nineteenth century, those who have aspired to teach have followed various paths into the classroom. The contemporary model for teacher training set within an accredited university focused on pedagogy, theory and field-based practice, leading to state licensure is a relatively recent phenomena. In general, there was little formal teacher preparation prior to the 1830s (Labaree, 2008). The prevailing thought during the early part of the nineteenth century was that if one had achieved a particular level of study and possessed the appropriate moral disposition, he or she could qualify to serve in the classroom (Labaree, 2008). This typically involved passing a state test and being approved for hire by a local school board. With the establishment of state normal schools and teacher's colleges, the practice of preparing teachers for professional service matured. By the middle of the twentieth century, teacher preparation had shifted from normal schools and teacher colleges to university campuses (Herbst, 1989). Throughout this process, emphasis has increasingly been placed on developing highly qualified teachers who possess both subject matter expertise and a strong understanding of teaching methodology.

Although theory and practice have been refined over the years, twenty-first century training programs share many of the same goals and philosophical priorities that were idealized within historical models of teacher training. Both contemporary and historical models of teacher education established norms for professional preparation that were structured around pedagogy and coupled with some form of classroom-based experiential practice. The conventions that were pioneered in the

nineteenth and early twentieth-century normal school programs have been gradually refined and justified through research. Within the past fifty years, through the widespread establishment of state-mandated university certification, historical efforts at teacher training have evolved into the current structure and practice that is found within state-approved teacher education programs.

Historical Overview of County and State Certification

During the first half of the nineteenth century, most rural communities relied on various forms of informal oral interrogation by local clergy or elected officials when hiring teachers. This may or may not have been coupled with a written test. In 1834, Pennsylvania became the first state to require a test for teacher certification (Ravitch, 2010). By the late 1830s, some towns were experimenting with locally-developed written examinations in an effort to ensure that applicants possessed the requisite content-area knowledge (Lucas, 1997). It was not until the late 1860s that the majority of states required a basic skills test for teacher certification (Ravitch, 2010).

In the state of Oregon, starting in the 1850s, prospective teachers who successfully passed the teacher's examination were granted a county teaching certificate. It was valid only in the county where it was issued and was valid for a length of time specified at the discretion of the regional board of examiners. There was no minimum age requirement for applicants, and the tests themselves varied widely between various counties (Matthew, 1932).

By the mid-nineteenth century, most states required teacher candidates to pass a state examination in order to be licensed and prior to being offered a teaching assignment. The tests focused primarily on content area knowledge. Often the examination featured both a comprehensive written essay followed by an oral exam

and personal interview. In California for example, the 1874 State Board examination for elementary school teachers consisted of a day-long written essay exam covering twenty topics, including arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, algebra, physiology, philosophy, school law, reading, orthography, vocal music and industrial drawing (Shulman, 1986). In most states, a teacher would be issued an initial teaching certificate upon passing the state or regional examination, which was good for one year. The initial certificate could be renewed or upgraded for a permanent license by adhering to a set of requirements outlined by each state, county or district. This often included evidence of success as a teacher, the successful completion of additional courses, and further examinations.

By 1872, most states had moved to state rather than regional certification. However, in all but three states, the responsibility for certification was shared with individual counties (Tyack, 1967). In Oregon, statewide certification provided teachers with four possible levels of licensure. The Life Diploma qualified individuals to teach in any public school for life. There was also a six-year State Diploma, a two-year state certificate and a six-month state certificate (Matthew, 1932).

The Emergence of Normal Schools

According to Labaree (2008) one of the most significant educational initiatives to emerge out of the mid-nineteenth century was the state-sponsored normal school. Normal schools in America were initially introduced as an effort to establish high-quality, standardized academic and pedagogical training for thousands of new teachers (Harper, 1939). Initially, the singular focus of the normal school was to prepare large numbers of well educated, highly skilled teachers who could meet the high calling of the common school reformers and serve as the prototype for public school teachers

across the nation (Borrowman, 1965). During the second half of the nineteenth century, large cities were introducing their own normal schools to train prospective teachers. Counties also established normal schools to support the needs of regional school districts. Such programs offered instruction in core academic disciplines, and provided training in the art and science of teaching (Harper, 1939). Practice teaching within a model classroom was an essential component of the normal school course of study. A principal oversaw the studies, while a normal school teacher was assigned to each room. Over one-third of the normal school teacher's time was spent either observing or teaching in the practice school (Harper, 1939).

A Shift Towards University-Based Certification

During the middle third of the nineteenth century, a number of state universities introduced normal programs. In subsequent years, this was followed by the introduction of model or laboratory schools on university campuses where students could practice teaching. By 1914, every city in the United States with a population of 100,000 or more had either a normal school or a department in a local high school for teacher preparation. As colleges and universities began training increasing numbers of prospective teachers, normal programs closed, or were gradually transformed into teacher's colleges and liberal arts universities. By the 1950s, teacher preparation programs had become the responsibility of public and private colleges and universities (Haberman, 1982).

It was during the 1940s that teacher preparation programs abandoned model schools, and by the 1950s undergraduate teacher education programs were regularly sending students off campus for student teaching. With the exception of minor variations from state to state, over the past fifty years the practice of student teaching

has remained unchanged (Johnson, 1968). The current model, which generally features at least three months of classroom-based student teaching, provides opportunities for student teachers to integrate and apply theoretical knowledge in an authentic instructional context.

The Value of Field Service Experiences

Research related to preservice teacher education suggests that field service experiences can powerfully and positively impact the perspectives and practices of novice teachers (Britzman, 2003; Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Schepens et al., 2009; Trent, 2010). According to Spooner et al. (2008) field experience is "one of the most critical elements in the development of a preservice teachers' pedagogical skills and his or her socialization in the profession" (p. 254). Bullough (1997) observed that preservice teacher experiences served as the foundation for problem solving, decision-making and interpreting professional experiences.   Britzman (2003) described field experience as a "time of formation and transformation" (p. 31).

Although field experience can provide meaningful opportunities for developing professional competencies, it can be particularly challenging for the student teacher, especially in terms of negotiating professional identity (Zembylas, 2003). The novice must quickly learn to balance a combination of complex and sometimes-incongruent expectations from mentor teachers, administrators, professors, students, parents, and the greater community (Samuel and Stephens, 2000; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Student teachers operate within a dual world, concurrently performing student and teacher roles. Because the student teacher must often alternate between the role of student and teacher, it is common for novice teachers to struggle with "feelings of self-doubt and instability" (Dotger & Smith, 2009, p. 162). While working to establish his or

her place as the teacher, the novice is also simultaneously learning to become a competent subject matter expert, master of pedagogy, complex problem solver, ad-hoc decision maker, and manager of the complex social and emotional variables inherent in a classroom (Alsup, 2006). According to Dotger and Smith (2009), "the formulation of the professional self is messy work" (p. 163).

In an effort to help preservice teachers adopt professional roles and competencies, licensure programs provide courses on instructional methods, classroom management and pedagogy. While this coursework is intended to support novice teachers during the transition from student to teacher, the literature indicates that integrating theoretical ideals with actual classroom practice does not necessarily occur as a natural by-product of participation in field service (Capraro, Capraro & Helfeldt, 2010). Often, university coursework is completed prior to field service rather than concurrently, which may hinder novice teachers' efforts to implement the strategies and methods that are promoted within the education program. The literature suggests that if theoretical ideals are presented apart from actual practice, they may be perceived as having little practical value. As a result, disharmony may develop between theory and practice as instructional routines in the classroom conflict with the pedagogical ideals promoted during university-based coursework. This sometimes results in the "two-worlds pitfall" (Anagnostopoulos, Smith & Basmadijian, 2007; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985), which is characterized by novice teachers' tendency to adopt the practices and values modeled within the classroom while "dismissing those espoused in teacher education courses"(Capraro, Capraro & Helfeldt, 2010, p. 132).

Although there is evidence that field experiences offer the potential for positive professional growth, there is a body of research that suggests that field experiences in

teacher education programs do not necessarily deliver positive results (Bullough et al., 1999; Lortie, 1975; Hascher et al., 2004). Some of the shortcomings associated with teacher education field service include poor communication between mentor teachers and university supervisors (Hascher et al., 2004), unclear expectations between mentor teachers, student teachers and university supervisors, and inadequate training for mentors and supervisors (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011).

As teacher education programs seek to more effectively align theoretical instruction with practical classroom experience, research indicates that certain approaches are more effective than others. For example, one way to facilitate positive change during student teaching is to closely integrate theoretical coursework with field service (Linek, Nelson & Sampson, 1999). Cuenca cited the importance of "tethered teaching;" where the mentor teacher maintains close proximity to the student teacher, while allowing the novice to independently manage instruction (2011). According to Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011) having an accessible cooperating teacher who understands when to offer support served as a significant factor in helping novice teachers feel comfortable in the classroom.

Another key factor in ensuring a more positive field experience is effectively matching student teachers with mentors. Cuenca (2011) argued that it was essential to utilize mentor teachers whose vision of good teaching align with those advocated by the student teacher's preparation program. Ensuring that mentor teachers and university supervisors operate according to clearly articulated expectations, coupled with good communication and ongoing opportunities for reflective discussion has also been cited as a characteristic of a well-designed field experience (Cuenca, 2011; Johnson & Naper-Owen, 2011).

Teacher Identity Defined

There is a significant body of literature that examines the value of supervised classroom experience in promoting the development of an individual's identity as a teacher (Schepens et al., 2009; Tickle, 2000; Korthagen, 2004). However, within the research there appears to be no singular definition of teacher identity (Beijaard. 1995). An analysis of 22 studies related to teacher identity found no commonly shared definition of teacher identity (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Of the 22 studies, nine failed to provide any explicit definition of teachers' professional identity. However, among the studies that did define teacher identity, common characteristics emerged. Most of the literature describes professional identity as an ongoing process involving the integration of one's personal and professional life. Teachers' professional identity is also characterized as dynamic and highly contextual. "Professional identity development takes place as novice teachers work to become expert members of the teaching community- gradually learning the boundaries, expectations, and guidelines of a social profession" (Dotger & Smith, 2009, p. 164). According to Winslade (2002), professional identity is the fostering of "self-descriptions" (p. 35), which are confirmed or contradicted by the prevailing social perspectives and cultural practices that novice teachers encounter while in the field (Winslade, Crocket, Monk, & Drewery, 2000). According to Beijaard (1995), teacher identity is a dynamic process that is shaped through individually and socially prescribed meanings.

Teacher identity is most often described as a dynamic developmental progression, rather than a status (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Wenger, 1992). Beijaard et al. (2004) explained teacher identity as the ongoing process of becoming and being a teacher (p. 113). Zembylas (2003) defined professional identity as "the self, never

completed" (p. 113). Kerby regarded identity formation as an "ongoing process that involved the interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences as one lives through them" (as cited in Beijaard, Verlooop & Vermunt, 2000, p. 750). These perspectives suggest that the ideas and operational values of novice teachers are perpetually challenged and molded as they encounter various circumstances during professional service.

Agency in Identity Development

In addition to the dynamic nature of professional identity, a distinguishing characteristic of teacher identity development is that teachers participate as active agents in the process (Beijaard et al., 2004; Coldron & Smith, 1999). This view aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivist view that both active participation and social engagement are critical components of knowledge construction (Yasnitsky & Ferrari, 2008). Vygotsky believed that individuals learn by observing and engaging in social activities (Zurita & Nussbaum, 2004). Through active participation with competent peers and adults, learners construct knowledge, build skills, develop perspectives, and form attitudes (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Zurita & Nussbaum, 2004). Vygotsky viewed learning as an ongoing process of constructing knowledge by combining new information with existing knowledge (Bencze, 2000). Constructing this knowledge involves participation in a series of actions (Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989). These actions are initiated by curiosity, followed by questioning, inquiry, active exploration, social engagement, and collaboration (Newman et al., 1989). The process concludes by socially sharing and individually reflecting on the newly constructed knowledge (Newman et al., 1989). In the constructivist paradigm, knowledge construction employs all of these actions in a perpetual, cyclical process where learners' existing schema is constantly challenged,

integrated and modified by new information, resulting in updated and expanded perspectives, skills and attitudes (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996; Rochelle & Teasley, 1995). Furthermore, according to Gordon (2009), this newly constructed knowledge is shaped by the cultural perspectives and prevailing values within the community. According to Windschitl, "these fluid intellectual transformations occur when students reconcile formal instructional experience with their existing knowledge, with the cultural and social contexts in which ideas occur, and with a host of other influences that serve to mediate understanding" (as cited in Gordon, 2009, p. 39). Coldron and Smith (1999) argued that novice teachers direct the process of identity construction, by participating in dialogue, personal reflection, and exposure to various approaches, resources and ideas. Wenger (1998) describes this "social ecology" as a process involving engagement, imagination and alignment (p. 190). According to Wenger, engagement enables individuals to establish a sense of who they are by investing with others in shared activities (p. 192). Imagination is the process of orienting ourselves within our world through visualization, reflection and exploration (p. 185). Alignment occurs as we adopt common boundaries and share values, perspectives and practices with those of the larger community (p. 185). Wenger's focus on community aligns with Korthagen (2004) who argued that self-concept is a relational concept that is largely determined by the nature of our relationships with others. This view is further supported by Taylor (1989), who wrote that "a self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (p. 35) and Sleegers and Kelchtermans who argued that professional identity is constructed through interaction with others (as cited in Korthagen, 2004, p. 84).

The Contextual and Personal Nature of Teacher Identity

While many scholars consider teacher identity development a social process where

the novice teacher is actively engaged in developing professional skills, values and perspectives, it is essential to acknowledge the highly personal and contextual nature of this process (Beijaard et al., 2004). Powerful social, moral and cultural expectations are embedded within the formal role of an educator. These expectations are both explicitly and implicitly expressed. According to Beijaard et al. (2004) student teachers are expected to develop according to prescribed societal and cultural expectations. From the perspective of the novice educator, school environments may be described as demanding, restrictive and averse to change. (Reynolds, as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004). Alsup (2006) observed that as novice teachers transition into professional service they become engaged in a "complex integration of personal self and the taking on of a culturally scripted, often narrowly defined professional role while maintaining individuality" (Alsup 2006, p. 4; Zembylas, 2003).

While environment may serve as a powerful force in facilitating the potential character of one's professional identity, existing values and beliefs play an equally powerful role in aligning one's teacher identity. As a pioneer in the study of identity and the self, Mead (1934) proposed that while the development of a professional self may be dependent on environmental variables, it is "further dependent on the degree and manner in which the novice teacher engages with that environment" (Dotger & Smith, 2009, p. 163). Mead acknowledged that environment is a significant factor. However, he also understood that one's personal reaction to that environment works in tandem with environmental factors to shape professional perspectives. This would suggest that prior experience, values, and beliefs powerfully influence identity development. According to Beijaard et al. (2004) individual adoption of culturally observed standards and practices varies widely based on an individual's existing

knowledge, skills and attitudes. Consequently, as student teachers enter into professional service, they tend to align themselves with those social and cultural expectations that they personally value, and thus implement pedagogies that reflect those beliefs (Beijaard et al., 2004; Polly & Hannafin, 2011; Schepens et al., 2009).

There is evidence that field service experiences may primarily serve to reinforce novice teachers' existing preconceptions of being a teacher. For example, Pajares (1992) reported that preexisting attitudes and beliefs about teachers and teaching were difficult to change, even after extensive education courses and student teaching. O'Sullivan and Jiang's study of Azuza Pacific University student teachers found that field experiences did not contribute to changes in perspective. O'Sullivan and Jiang (2004) concluded that professional experience served primarily to reinforce and solidify novice teachers' existing perspectives.   Attributing their findings in part to the limited nature of the experience, O'Sullivan and Jiang concluded that student teaching was "inadequate to change the beliefs and attitudes of teachers" (p. 57). According to Bullough and Baughman (1997), "fundamental changes in teacher identity do not take place easily; identity change is a difficult and sometimes painful process, and often there seems to be little change at all in how teachers view themselves" (as cited in Korthagen, 2004 p. 85). Consequently, the combination of prior experience, coupled with an individual's preconceived ideas about teaching may ultimately limit the potential for field service experiences to truly shape a teacher's values, beliefs and identity (Richardson, 1996). Moving forward, it is important for teacher educators and schools of education to identify strategies that can help temper those dispositions and perspectives that may be incompatible or in conflict with professional standards of practice.

Field Experience, Instructional Practice, and the Use of Instructional Technology

In addition to fostering the development of a professional identity, an essential purpose of field service during teacher preparation is to provide novice teachers with a wide range of opportunities to design and implement instruction (Pohan, 2003). As teacher educators work to support student teachers in meeting state standards including the use of technology, it is critical to acknowledge both the internal and external variables that govern decision-making related to instructional design and practice. An overview of the research suggests that student teachers often adopt teaching strategies and methods that reflect their personal beliefs and are similar in nature to what they experienced as students (Goodman, 1988; O'Sullivan & Jiang, 2004). There is also empirical evidence indicating that instructional methods can be influenced by the beliefs and practices of mentor teachers (Choy, Wong & Gao, 2009; Malderez, Hobson, Tracey & Kerr, 2007). Furthermore, the literature concludes that given the proper conditions, teacher preparation programs can also positively contribute to the development of effective teaching skills (Pohan, 2003).

Prior experience shapes beliefs and attitudes, which in turn serve as predictors of behavior (Bandura, 1982; Pajares, 1992). The predictive value of belief has been especially evident with regards to the integration of technology in the classroom. In a study of preservice teachers, Teo, Lee and Chai (2008) observed that student teachers' attitudes towards instructional technology largely determined the extent to which teachers would utilize technology in the classroom. Some of the key variables that shape attitudes towards instructional technology include an individual's level of confidence (Teo, 2009), the perceived value of the tool (Rovai & Childress, 2002; Teo, 2012), and prior experience with technology (Kumar & Kumar, 2003).

Although student teachers may be exposed to innovative instructional practices during university courses, they tend to adopt instructional practices that align with their beliefs and mirror their own experiences as students (Nilssen, 2010). O'Sullivan and Jiang (2004), attributed this tendency to the fact that most teacher candidates represent a homogeneous group of white, middle class females from rural communities who expect students to learn according to the ways they were taught. Holt-Reynolds (1992) reported that belief holds such a powerful influence on teacher candidates' behavior that even when refuted by research, prior beliefs prevailed. Nilssen (2010) found that without good modeling and encouragement, student teachers were more inclined to imitate familiar, but less effective instructional methods. Nilssen's findings are consistent with Polly and Hannafin (2011) who observed that without ongoing support, both new and veteran teachers tended to revert to more teacher-centered, prescriptive instructional approaches, despite the fact that they valued and aspired to utilize innovative practices. It is worth noting Pajares' observation that changes in belief appear to follow, rather than precede changes in instructional practice (as cited in O'Sullivan & Jiang, 2004).

Technology integration during student teaching may also be influenced by external variables (Henning, Robinson, Corwin-Herring & McDonald, 2006) such as the accessibility of resources, dominant attitudes and practices within the school culture, and the availability of training and technical support (Doering, Hughes & Huffman, 2003; Henning et al.; Tsitourdou &Vryzas, 2003). However, attitudes and beliefs towards technology appear to be one of the most significant factors in shaping teachers' actual use of instructional technology (Hermans, Tondeur, van Braak & Valcke, 2008).

Because experience and attitudes can serve as powerful predictors of future practice, it is essential for student teachers to be placed with mentors that can affirm and encourage innovative teaching while working to reduce reliance on more passive, teacher-centered instructional methods. This approach has been justified by research demonstrating that in addition to an individual's prior experience, instructional practice among student teachers can be powerfully shaped by the values and practices of mentor teachers (Choy et al., 2009; Malderez et al., 2007). This appears to be especially true with regards to the effective use of instructional technology. According to Teo (2010), "the success of any initiative to implement technology in an educational programme depends strongly upon the support by and attitudes of the teachers involved" (p. 65). Teo's perspective confirmed recommendations by Voithofer (2005), which emphasized the importance of effectively matching preservice teachers with mentors. In a study of preservice social studies teachers, Crowe (2004) reported that when mentor teachers used technology resources in the classroom to enhance learning, student teachers felt more at ease and were more likely to incorporate technology during their own lessons (p. 164). A study by Bullock (2004) reported significant changes in student teacher attitudes and behavior as a result of being placed with a mentor who was highly skilled and enthusiastic in the use of instructional technology. In the same year, Grove, Strudler and Odell (2004) found that mentor teachers could influence student teachers' instructional behavior by modeling preferred practices, demonstrating student-centered learning activities, and by jointly analyzing and evaluating lessons. These findings have been further confirmed by Kim and Baylor (2008), who reported that when preservice teachers receive appropriate support, willingness to integrate technology increases. Furthermore, according to Moursund &

Beilefeldt (1999), a significant determinant in the successful integration of instructional technology is the extent to which the mentor teacher provided guidance, support and resources for using technology in the classroom. The contextual nature of field experience suggests that effectively pairing student teachers with competent, innovative educators and mentors is one of the most critical variables in teacher preparation. However, it is essential to further consider the potential value of teacher education programs to contribute to novice teachers' professional competencies.

Numerous studies have questioned the power of teacher education programs to effect positive change among student teachers (Bullough et al., 1999; Lortie, 1975; Hascher et al., 2004). Skills and techniques that are taught in university classrooms are not necessarily implemented in our nation's schools (Scheeler, 2008). However, research also suggests that under the right circumstances, teacher preparation programs can support student teachers' ability to implement effective instruction. For example, Thomas, Larson, Clift, and Levin (1996) observed that teacher educators could positively impact student teachers' instructional practices by simultaneously infusing "meaningful, contextualized experiences in university and school settings" (p. 6). Moore-Hayes (2011) argued that having student teachers immediately and regularly apply what they were learning in university courses within their field placement, student teachers demonstrated higher levels of confidence and were more willing to innovate. With regards to the use of instructional technology, Weisner and Salkeld (2004) observed that preservice teachers used technology on a more consistent basis as university supervisors developed connections with other computer-using educators and shared that information with student teachers.

Conclusions

An overview of the existing literature confirms that the longstanding practice of embedding field experience into teacher education programs can yield positive results under the proper conditions. One positive outcome related to field experience is the development of one's professional identity while learning to understand and navigate the complexities inherent in our nation's schools. Although the literature defines professional identity rather loosely, teacher identity is characterized as an ongoing process involving the development of competencies and dispositions that enable teachers to successfully operate within educational systems. Field service has been shown to contribute to the development of professional competencies, including the ability to meet state and national performance standards related to instructional design and the use of technology. Although there are numerous variables at play, when student teachers are effectively matched with well-trained mentor teachers, they can learn to innovate and grow as professionals. The efficacy of field experience relies heavily on one's values and disposition, which are both powerfully influenced by personal experience. Therefore, it is appropriate to more closely examine the perceptions of student teachers as they engage in field experiences. Such efforts may provide teacher educators with greater insight for facilitating positive professional growth, which ultimately could lead to improved teacher performance and retention (Cattley, 2007).

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how student teachers' professional competencies, perspectives and practices are shaped through field experiences. The study was conducted in an undergraduate teacher education program at a small, private university in Oregon. This microethnographic study used personal interviews and student journals with a group of undergraduates to investigate how preservice teachers' perspectives and practices are shaped as a result of field service experiences. This research sought to address an important contemporary issue, namely the recent U.S. Department of Education emphasis on the importance of facilitating meaningful field experiences in teacher training programs.

As stated previously in chapter 1, this investigation attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are preservice teacher perspectives on how field experiences contribute to the development of an individual's teacher identity?
2. What are preservice teacher perspectives on how field experiences influence preservice teachers' instructional design and practice?
3. According to preservice teachers, how do field service experiences impact novice teachers' use of instructional technology?

The research methodology followed established professional procedures. This chapter describes the process including the setting, participants, sampling strategy, research ethics, research design, data collection, analytical procedures, and the role of the

researcher. In addition, this chapter considers the potential contributions of the research, which may be of interest to teacher educators and educational policymakers.

Setting

Eighteen institutions in the state of Oregon are approved by the Teachers Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) to prepare teachers for licensure and professional service. Each year, these schools recommend about 3,000 teachers for state licensure through a variety of traditional undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate programs. Each of these programs offers a combination of coursework and field experience that are aligned with TSPC standards for teacher preparation.

This study focused on a group of student teachers from a single teacher education program. The school that was selected for this study offers undergraduate and graduate licensure programs and features a student-teacher ratio of 16:1. The institution has offered a teacher-licensure program since 1997. As a traditional daytime undergraduate program, field-based experience is embedded into the coursework over four academic years. With the exception of some transfer students, undergraduate teacher education majors participate in 20 hours of observation known as service learning at the freshman and sophomore levels. This is followed by 180 hours of junior level practicum, 260 hours of initial senior level student teaching and at least 600 hours of full-time student teaching, which is typically characterized by 16 weeks of full-time student teaching in local public schools. The school's program design extends the practicum and student teaching assignments over two complete academic years. In total, preservice teachers enrolled in the traditional undergraduate teacher education program at the participating institution engage in at least 1,080 hours of field experience. This figure stands in stark contrast to the national average, where student

teachers spend an average of 177 hours in supervised field service prior to student teaching, followed by an average of 514 hours during student teaching for a total of 691 hours of classroom-based experience (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Rules established by the Oregon Teacher and Standards Practices Commission (TSPC) require that teacher candidates select one of the following four "levels" or authorization areas for licensure (OAR 584-060-005):

1. Early Childhood (age 3 through grade 4)

2. Elementary (grades 3-8 in an elementary school)

3. Middle Level (grades 5-8 in a junior high or middle school)

4. High School (grades 7-12 in a high school)

The institution selected for this study requires that all teacher candidates earn two consecutive levels of authorization. As a result, each participant was assigned to two different mentor teachers during the first semester of student teaching. One of the teacher placements represented the student teacher's major authorization level, while the other served as the novice teacher's minor authorization level. Each student teacher spent at least 140 hours in his or her major authorization assignment. The time required to complete the minor authorization was a minimum of 120 hours, for a total of at least 260 hours of initial student teaching.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

The unit of analysis in the study was individual undergraduate students enrolled in a teacher education program at a small, private university in Oregon. The sampling strategy employed a purposive approach with senior-level student teachers based on Patton's (1990) Maximum Variation sampling. According to Patton, this approach is appropriate for "capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that

cut across a great deal of participant or program variation" (p. 172). Maximum Variation sampling is particularly well suited for small samples and allows the researcher to identify patterns, themes and core experiences that are shared by the participants. For the purposes of this research, an effort was made to select participants that represented the range of diversity within the institution's student population. The Maximum Variation approach served this purpose, and enabled the researcher to include a variety of perspectives with a small number of participants. Maximum Variation sampling was not intended for the purpose of generalizing findings to a broader population, but was used as a means to include as many perspectives as possible in the study.

Basic demographic considerations in the sample selection included gender, age, marital status, academic standing and previous experience with children. The study also included participants from all levels of teacher certification, including early childhood education, elementary, middle level and secondary licensure. In order to establish the purposive sample, undergraduate education advising files were used. Review of the advising files allowed the researcher to identify potential participants using demographics such as gender, age, marital status, academic standing, desired licensure level, and previous experience with children. Based on a review of the advising files, the researcher identified and contacted potential participants, distributed consent letters and established a sample that represented a cross-section of the program's student population. Because fewer non-traditional students enroll in traditional daytime undergraduate programs, a random approach to sampling would likely have resulted in a sample that failed to represent the true demographic diversity of the student population such as non-traditional undergraduate students who were

older, married, or transitioning into new careers. At the time of this study, the
participants were selected from a potential population of 24 student teachers. All of the
participants were senior-level undergraduates enrolled in the same teacher education
program during the fall semester of 2012. The candidates were seeking authorization in
early childhood, elementary, middle and high school teaching.

Research Ethics

All George Fox University Institutional Review Board standards were adhered to
during the research project. Specifically, the researcher developed appropriate and
comprehensive procedures for securing the informed consent of all participants. The
researcher also developed procedures to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of
the participants. Therefore, individuals are identified by pseudonym in the reporting of
the data.

Prior to collecting data, the research participants signed a letter of consent. This
letter explained the nature and purpose of the research and included contact
information for the researcher and the George Fox University dissertation chair
(Appendix A). The letter specified that participation in the study was entirely
voluntary and individuals had the option to withdraw from the study at any time
without penalty. Individual names were included on the consent forms. However, all
consent forms have been kept in a locked file separate from other research materials,
and only the researcher has access to the materials. These materials will be destroyed
three years following completion of the study.

Personal interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. Recordings
were transcribed. All recorded and transcribed materials have been kept in a locked file
cabinet that is accessible only by the researcher. No names or other personally

identifiable information has been used in the reporting of the findings. The researcher will destroy all audio recordings within three years of completion of the project. Because the research is being conducted with the cooperation of the host school, the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects at that institution has served as a secondary body to review the ethical and moral design of the project and ensure that the researcher has held to the highest standards of ethical practice.

Research Design

The researcher used a microethnographic approach in order to develop an understanding of how field experience shapes the perspectives and practice of new teachers. Microethnography is a research methodology that uses qualitative data collection and analysis with a small group of individuals for the purpose of developing insights into the shared life experiences of the group (Smith, 1978). According to Fetterman (2010), a microethnographic approach provides "a close-up view, as if under a microscope, of a small social unit or an identifiable activity with the social unit" (p. 29). This approach is not used for generalizing findings to the larger population, but does provide the researcher with a highly detailed narrative that can be utilized as a vehicle for theoretical development. According to Creswell (1998), the ethnographic approach examines a groups' behavior, customs, social practices and ways of life in routine settings, and seeks to identify pervasive patterns and themes. Data are generally gathered through close observation, interviews and artifacts.

The data sources for the study included a series of personal interviews with ten undergraduate preservice teachers. The research questions were addressed through detailed description and in-depth reflective responses that allowed the possibility of probes to elicit greater detail. This additional detail served to support a rich and

comprehensive understanding during the data analysis. Therefore, considering the nature of the research questions, a microethnographic approach using personal interviews was an appropriate research design for the project.

In research approaches such as microethnography, triangulation of data is an appropriate strategy to help overcome bias associated with qualitative analyses (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Triangulation is a "method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data" (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003, p.78). The combination of multiple empirical measures helps establish a more detailed and balanced perspective during qualitative analysis (Altrichter, Feldman, Posch, & Somekh, 2008). For this project, triangulation of data was achieved through the use of interview transcripts, reflective student journals from student work samples, and field notes kept by the researcher.

Data Collection and Analytical Procedures

The protocols for the research called for using data from personal interviews and reflective journals. The research design included an initial interview, which was conducted during the first month of the fall semester using 22 guide questions. The questions were aligned with the professional standards outlined by the TSPC in accordance with Division 17 of the Oregon Administrative Rules. Division 17 specifies competencies that teacher candidates must demonstrate prior to licensure. Therefore, Division 17 served as a conceptual framework for examining preservice teachers' professional development and practices. Each initial interview lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were held with participants in the offices of the School of Education. The initial interview sought to establish initial student perspectives as they began student teaching. All of the interviews were recorded for transcription, and the

researcher also used a field journal to take notes and collect additional data related to direct observation and participant responses.

Follow-up interviews were administered toward the end of the fall semester in the same location. During the follow-up interviews participants were given an opportunity to reflect on their initial responses and consider how their perspectives shifted or solidified as a result of their field experience. The follow-up interview questions also provided an opportunity for participants to specifically address the study's three research questions. Each follow-up interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. The follow-up interviews were also recorded using a digital recording device and later transcribed using Express Scribe 5.5.

Reflective student journals were also used as a source of data for the study. The journals provided students with an opportunity to consider how each lesson went, and provided a formal process for student teachers to self-evaluate lesson design, instructional delivery and learner performance.

After each round of data collection, the researcher analyzed the data in an effort to identify themes, patterns and trends in the perceptions and experiences of the participants. The researcher used the traditional coding procedure of open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Berg, 1989). Open coding seeks to group responses through the development of an initial coding scheme. Data was coded into initial categories of responses. The process continued with axial coding where the development of initial categories of responses was followed by clarification and modification of the coding scheme. This process involves adding and collapsing the categories where appropriate and leads eventually to selective coding which serves as

the researcher's final effort to refine the coding categories and assign data to each of the refined categories.

Role of the Researcher

This research was initiated as a requirement for completing a Doctor of Education program at George Fox University. The researcher works extensively with student teachers and practicum students in a traditional four-year undergraduate teacher education program. He also teaches in two graduate programs and advises both preservice and in-service teachers. He currently serves as a full-time faculty member in one of the eighteen state-approved teacher education programs in Oregon. The researcher is a faculty member at the host institution where the research project was completed. The researcher has extensive experience training new and veteran teachers to design and implement instructional solutions using technology and student-directed, project-based strategies. He recently worked in collaboration with other colleagues as a technology support specialist in a field test of teacher portfolio assessment developed by Pearson. In addition, the researcher recently designed and developed curriculum for an online Master of Education program for Savant Learning Systems.

Potential Contributions of the Research

The research may help identify or affirm strategies for improving student teaching experiences, by identifying ways for educators to help student teachers more effectively integrate theoretical ideals with professional practices, and better ensure that novice teachers receive the necessary support to meet state standards related to instructional design and delivery, classroom management and the effective use of instructional technology. The final chapter of the study identifies specific

recommendations for teacher education programs which may help novice teachers overcome barriers to implementing innovative, student-centered instruction, and further encourage the effective use of educational technologies to enhance teaching and learning.

The study also seeks to build on existing research, which may serve to expand theoretical perspectives related to teacher identity development among preservice teachers. It is the researcher's hope that the findings of this study might enable teacher educators to help student teachers make the transition into professional service. Because professional identity is closely linked to teacher performance (Pajares, 1992; Schepens et al., 2009), it is essential to consider how teacher educators can more effectively support healthy professional identity development. Ultimately, this may lead to strategies for improving professional dispositions and ameliorating pre-existing bias or perspectives that may be in conflict or incompatible with standards of professional service.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Introduction

This study was a qualitative investigation of how preservice teachers view field experience. The researcher was interested in exploring teacher perspectives on how and to what extent field service contributes to a teacher candidate's professional behavior. This included choices related to instructional design, the use of technology and how novice teachers develop a professional sense of who they are. This chapter introduces the participants, establishes the background and context for their experiences as student teachers during the first months of student teaching, and provides a detailed summary of student responses from interviews and the students' reflective journals. The summary of student responses has been organized according to the initial guide questions, and highlights prominent themes that emerged as participants reflected on their field experiences.

Profile of the Participants

The study included ten participants. Each participant possesses a unique combination of prior experience and personal qualities that color his or her perspectives while in the field (Pajares, 1992). Therefore it is important to briefly consider the background and personal characteristics of each participant to more clearly understand the student teacher's professional disposition and values as he or she enters student teaching. This provides context for the findings, which is relevant when discussing the significance of the findings. All of the participants are senior-level undergraduates enrolled in the same teacher education program during the fall semester of 2012.

Elwood is a 22-year-old secondary education major who is working to become a middle or high school language arts teacher. He is also earning a minor in English. He comes from a rural town in Oregon where both of his parents are teachers. He is a high academic achiever, a two-time all-conference scholar athlete, and last year was an academic All-American. His professional goals include teaching, serving as a high school wrestling or golf coach, and completing his master's degree upon graduation.

Diego has returned to undergraduate studies as part of his move into a second career, having spent the past 18 years in retail electronics. He is 42 years old and has lived in rural Oregon since he was 6. He has been married for 15 years and has two children, ages 14 and 11. He has been active within his community and served as a member of the local school board. Diego is working on both elementary and secondary endorsements, which will allow him to teach at any level from third through twelfth grade. His professional goals include teaching within his community, and he has also expressed interest in serving as a school administrator. According to Diego, he previously never lived up to his potential as a college student and now feels academically strong, motivated and excited to graduate and become a teacher. Diego feels that his maturity, experiences and work ethic will help him be successful.

At 20 years old, Jenny was the youngest participant in the study. As a result of numerous advanced placement and dual-credit courses in high school, she began work on upper division education courses and student teaching after just one year of formal undergraduate studies. Jenny is working on her middle and high school endorsement in language arts. She grew up in a singlewide trailer in a small town outside of Eugene, Oregon, sharing a room with her brothers, while her parents slept on the floor in the living room. Reflecting on her experiences, Jenny said, "I busted my ass in school so I

could get scholarships, since my parents could not afford to help me go to college." Her father is a logging equipment mechanic and her mother is currently serving as a special education paraprofessional for a local school district. Jenny's professional goals include earning a doctorate in her content area, working with struggling students and "possibly teaching college level courses at some point." She would also like to host a poetry club, a book club, and work with students on a literary publication.

Caroline is a 22-year-old Early Childhood Education (ECE) major. Her fiancé recently purchased a home in the small rural community where she is student teaching. She is engaged to her "high school sweetheart," and is a "stepmom" to her fiancé's five-year-old son. During high school and through college, Caroline has maintained a 3.35 grade point average. According to Caroline, she would like to "teach in many different ways, be a sub, use my ESOL endorsement, teach for multiple years and teach different grades or blended rooms." Caroline says that, "later, after all of that experience, I would love to become a principal."

Amy is a 22-year-old early ECE major who grew up on a cattle farm and moved closer to the city when she was ten. Amy's great grandmother and grandmother were teachers and her sister is a licensed teacher who also graduated from the same teacher education program. She enjoys academics, has always been a strong student and currently has a 3.9 grade point average. Amy says that she can't wait to be able to run her own classroom and finally be able to test out the strategies and techniques she has learned so far. She is also working on her ESOL endorsement, which would enable her to work with language learners who are developing English-language competency.

Kasey is a 21-year-old ECE major who was raised in a large Southwestern city. Her father, grandparents and several other relatives have worked in education as

teachers, principals, administrators, and superintendents. Her father is the Information Technology Director for the local school district in her hometown. She is a student athlete with a 3.94 grade point average. Kasey is interested in pursuing law school after graduation and would like to work with school districts as an educational attorney.

Sara is a 41-year-old ECE major, with two children aged 13 and 16. She grew up in Washington and Oregon and also lived in the San Francisco Bay Area for ten years prior to returning to the Pacific Northwest. She received an ECE certificate and has taught preschool for 14 years. In 2008 Sara went back to college part-time to earn a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education.   In 2009 she remarried "one of the nicest men I've ever met," and is now the stepmother to five adult children, aged 21-27. Her dream is to continue to teach as a kindergarten teacher, though she would be happy teaching any elementary grade. After graduating, she plans to complete an online master's degree program so that she can "work during the day, parent my boys and be a supportive wife." Her placement for student teaching was in the largest elementary school in the county in a kindergarten and fourth-grade classroom.

Marie is a 21-year-old senior education major who grew up in a small town in Idaho. She is in a serious relationship with a man who has a four-year-old son who she, "treats like my own." Her professional goals are to become an elementary teacher and eventually earn a doctoral degree in Education Administration. Marie has a 3.87 grade point average in her undergraduate coursework and was assigned to a suburban elementary school with an enrollment of about 400 students. The school had recently experienced significant budget cuts, which resulted in some teachers being reassigned to different grade levels. Her major placement was fourth grade and her minor placement was first grade.

Sylvia is a 21-year-old elementary education major who is working on her elementary teaching license and also earning an ESOL endorsement. She grew up in a small, rural community in Eastern Oregon. Both of Sylvia's parents are teachers, and her extended family features numerous educators including an uncle who is a principal, an aunt who is a first grade teacher, and another aunt who serves as a special education teacher. Sylvia graduated in the top 10% of her class and currently has a 3.7 grade point average in her undergraduate studies. She is a scholar-athlete whose personal goals include becoming a "well-rounded individual," earning a master's in education, becoming a "master teacher" and coach in a public school "anywhere in Oregon, Idaho, Montana, or anywhere on the West Coast."

Paige is a 21-year-old ELE major who grew up in Southern California, about an hour and a half southeast from Los Angeles in a racially and culturally diverse city. Her mother is a teacher and has taught kindergarten, first and second grade over the past nine years. Paige has a cumulative GPA of 3.67 and her professional goal is "to be an ethical and effective elementary teacher, by giving students the opportunities for what they need and deserve to learn at their highest potential." Paige was student teaching in a "smaller school," in a suburban district that has recently experienced significant budget cuts. It is the same school where Marie had been assigned. Her major placement was in the fifth grade and her minor placement was in a second grade classroom.

Guide Questions Alignment with State Standards

Each of the candidates was presented with a series of 22 guide questions during the first interview session. The questions were developed with consideration of the teacher competencies outlined in Division 17 of the Oregon Administrative Rules

(OARS). Division 17 outlines expectations for standards of practice set forth by the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC). The TSPC is an administrative body that manages teacher licensure in the state of Oregon. According to Division 17, in order for an individual to serve as a licensed teacher, candidates must be able to demonstrate over 40 specific professional competencies, which includes the ability to:

1. Demonstrate sensitivity to student differences and needs.

2. Utilize effective teaching strategies to facilitate learning.

3. Collaborate with others as part of the school and community.

4. Demonstrate a commitment to continued improvement and professional development.

Using these competencies as a guide, interview questions were developed. The questions were divided into five categories that explored various aspects of the student teaching experience. The five categories included:

1. School environment and community

2. Curriculum and instruction

3. Mentor teachers and field supervisors

4. Relevance to university coursework

5. Student teachers' perspectives on teacher identity and professional characteristics

The interview questions were intended to be open-ended, and participants were encouraged to elaborate. Each participant was asked the same series of questions, in the same order. The questions in the first section related to school environment and community life and were intended to explore professional expectations, school culture,

and initial duties of student teachers as they began their teaching assignments. The curriculum and instruction questions focused on each participant's philosophical approach to teaching, including instructional design, instructional strategies and methods, and perspectives on the use of instructional technology. The questions related to mentor teachers and field supervisors were designed to explore the participant's response to the field assignment. This included the student teacher's impressions of the mentor teacher's professional values, perspectives and practices. The purpose of this section was also to examine how and to what extent mentors and supervisors supported student teachers' professional development during field service. Participants were asked to consider the extent to which mentors and supervisors influenced novice teachers' instructional practices, including the use of instructional technology. Participants were also asked to reflect on how their professional identity and values aligned or conflicted with mentors and field supervisors. The fourth set of questions for the initial interview explored how and to what extent field service experiences connected to university coursework. The guide questions related to teacher identity development sought to identify student teachers' perspectives about the development of their identity as teachers, which included the defining characteristics and critical competencies of professional educators.

The follow-up interview questions allowed student teachers to reflect on their initial responses and consider how their perspectives shifted or solidified as a result of their field experience. The follow-up interview questions also provided an opportunity for participants to specifically address the study's three research questions.

Reflective student journals were also used as a source of data for the study. These journals were used to triangulate data from the interviews and field journals, and

were also aligned with Division 17 of the TSPC standards. The journals provided students with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences while teaching a unit of instruction, known as a work sample. A work sample is a series of student-developed lesson plans focused on a specific topic and aligned with a set of specific academic standards. The reflective journals allowed participants to consider how each lesson went, and provided a formal process for student teachers to self-evaluate lesson design, instructional delivery and learner performance.

An analysis of participant responses revealed prominent themes related to student teachers' professional identity, professional practices related to instructional design and use of instructional technology.

Responses Related to the School Environment and Community

Participants were asked a series of questions related to the environment and professional culture of the schools where they had been assigned. Student teachers were also asked to identify professional dispositions and behaviors that were important in their field. The purpose of these questions was in part, to identify how student teachers perceived the established professional values and practices within their schools. The questions in this section also sought to determine whether participants believed they had aligned themselves with the professional culture and expectations of the school, and to what extent they felt they had become a part of the established academic community. The questions served as a basis for examining an individual's professional identity. The rationale for this approach aligns with Winslade, Crocket, Monk, and Drewery (2000), who argued that reflective self-description and the ability to articulate professional characteristics and values serve as indicators of identity development. Further rationale is based on Wenger (1998) who proposed that

alignment within a professional community was also a measure of professional identity development.

When describing the professional expectations for teachers at their schools, all of the participants identified standards of dress, punctuality, attendance at meetings, and participation at school functions as important professional expectations. Participants in the study also identified preparation for instruction, collaboration with others, and adherence to school policies as essential professional practices. According to the participants in the study, being an educator meant becoming an active member of the community. This was viewed as a gradual process that started with observable behaviors such as standards of dress, speech, physical presence, and adherence to school policies and programs.

Dress Code

A school's dress code was collectively cited as one of the most immediate indicators of professionalism. Although all of the student teachers identified standards of dress as a professional expectation in their school, Kasey, Sylvia, Paige and Caroline observed that the dress code modeled by elementary teachers was considerably less formal than they were led to believe in their university courses. According to Kasey:

> When our professors talk to us student teachers, they tell us, 'do not wear jeans, whatever you do; it doesn't matter if all of the teachers in your building are wearing jeans.' And then when you go work at the elementary school level, everyone is in jeans, or more comfortable clothing. At my school, the professional expectation is that you are able to meet the needs of your kids, so if that means that you wear jeans and a school t-shirt to do that, then you are still being professional because you are doing your job.

Paige noted that although it was acceptable for elementary teachers to dress casually at her school, she saw advantages to dressing more formally. "Because I am younger, I need to dress up to look more professional." Amy also noted that by dressing like a teacher, students, parents and other teachers would take her more seriously. On the secondary level, Jenny and Elwood observed that teachers modeled professionalism by their practice, rather than through dress. Elwood said, "I've spent the last 2 1/2 years in a university classroom looking at how schools should run, and then when I got out there it wasn't as daunting as I thought it would be. It's definitely professional, but it's just not quite as suit and tie as I thought it would be." As a student teacher in a rural community, Jenny noted that the expectation was to look nice, but that "jeans were fine." Despite variation in dress among veteran teachers, the prevailing perspective among participants in the study was that standards of dress enabled student teachers to assume the role of the teacher. Formal dress served as a non-verbal sign of authority in the classroom. Participants believed that dressing the part helped them differentiate themselves from the students. This was especially evident on the secondary level where younger teachers were placed in junior and senior level classrooms.

All of the student teachers in the study used dress to express identity as a teacher. However, external expressions of professional identity were not limited to dress. Student teachers all used voice, language, posture, and physical movement to model what they perceived as teacher behaviors. Modeling teacher actions and movements helped participants in the study feel like "real" teachers. According to Amy, "at school my posture is better, I'm always crossing my legs, my hands are folded on my knees. I guess I want them to view me as professional so I try and act the part." Amy further explained that, "when I want my presence known, I stand up tall and

straight, I try not to fidget, and I smile. My voice gets louder; I use my teacher's voice."

Caroline described another way to physically differentiate herself as a teacher from

students and adult volunteers. "At my school, if you have a whistle, keys, ID card and

lanyard, you are a teacher, and the students will listen to you." According to the novice

teachers in the study, external expressions such as these served as a first step into

professional practice.

Preparation for teaching

Professional expectations such as punctuality, attendance at meetings, and

participation at school functions were also consistently cited as important professional

expectations during initial interviews. However, Diego dismissed these as "entry-level

competencies" for the profession. He explained that such expectations were important

in any profession, and not unique to education. Preparation for instruction was a

professional expectation cited by participants that was viewed as specific to being a

teacher. Preparation for instruction was described as a combination of organization,

preparation, flexibility and sensitivity to student needs. Kasey described preparation as

a professional disposition that enabled teachers to respond to "whatever might happen

in the classroom." According to Marie, preparation for instruction meant taking time to

know your students, "so that you could address each student's unique needs."

According to participants in the study, preparation for instruction was far more

complex than simply looking, speaking or acting like a teacher. Preparation for

instruction developed over time, as a teacher became comfortable with the environment

and the content he or she was teaching. It may be worth noting that among veteran

mentor teachers associated with the study those who had recently been reassigned to a

different grade level or subject area were perceived as weak in this area and were

consistently viewed as less professional than other mentor teachers. Preparation for teachers was viewed as a demanding professional expectation that was dependent on time and experience in the classroom. Most of the student teachers in the study acknowledged that becoming prepared for instruction would take time.

Collaboration with Others

Another professional expectation that student teachers cited during the study was collaboration with parents and faculty. Kasey noted that the teachers at her school were encouraged to serve on "multiple committees having to do with bettering the school and using the school to better the community." Caroline also cited committee participation as a key professional expectation within her school.

> All of the teachers are expected to be a part of committees. They have the PBIS committee, which is their discipline program, and they have a talent show committee and student wellness committee and behavioral committee. They have tons of committees and all the teachers are expected to participate unless you're within your first two years. After you get over those first two years most teachers are involved in five or six committees.

According to Amy, the teachers at her school collaborated closely with one another. "They are always talking at lunch, asking each other advice for different things." Amy observed significant informal collaboration that included seeking advice on how to work with different students, designing curriculum, and sharing lesson ideas. Paige described a culture where the teachers took advantage of breaks throughout the day to collaborate with each other in the teacher's room. Sara noted that teachers at her school cooperated daily to ensure that content and pacing were aligned within grade levels. According to Elwood, teachers spent considerable time during the summer prior to the

start of classes working together to clarify academic goals and articulate curricular objectives for courses within each academic department.

In the primary grades, most of the collaboration appeared to take place between individual teachers in the same grade level. On the secondary level, collaboration between teachers took place by discipline, and was formally coordinated by a department chair. At both levels, student teachers observed that collaboration between teachers was an ongoing process that occurred both formally and informally throughout the year. On the secondary level, very little collaboration with parents was observed. Parent volunteers were limited to elementary grades. The only significant interaction with parents that student teachers described on the secondary level was initiated as a result of behavioral problems or poor academic performance. Along with lower levels of parent involvement, student teachers in secondary schools saw less collaboration between faculty members and fewer opportunities for coordinated student care than elementary student teachers.

In addition to collaboration with parents and faculty, elementary student teachers in the study cited participation in afterschool activities as an essential part of professional service. According to Caroline, Amy and Sylvia activities that extended beyond the boundaries of the regular school day were common. Student teachers also observed that teachers invested significant time before and after the school day preparing for lessons, grading student work and communicating with parents. Most, like Caroline felt that the investment in time was a "worthwhile and necessary part of professional service."

Secondary teachers cited attention to administrative processes and school policies as one of the most critical professional expectations within their schools. Jenny

reported that, "all teachers have to upload grades and turn in lesson plans every week. The principal checks it. It's mandatory, and you get in big trouble if you don't do it." The importance of supporting campus initiatives was noted by elementary student teachers as well. For example, Caroline observed that adherence to the prescribed curriculum was very important at her school. "Teachers are expected to teach straight out of the book using a specific reading and math program. One of my teachers does and one doesn't, and there's a lot of interesting conversation around school for the one who doesn't." Sara reported that this year's school-wide focus was on meeting state academic standards and implementing a behavioral management system. "The energy is pretty high right now. The principal is new and he is kind of kicking it up a notch, and the teachers are rising to the occasion in terms of their professionalism."

School Culture

When asked about culture of the school they were assigned to, Paige, Sylvia, Maria, Diego, Caroline and Sara all described elementary schools that were welcoming environments where parents were heavily involved. This was a common perspective at the elementary level. Parents and community volunteers regularly supported elementary classroom activities. In Caroline's classroom, a retired woman volunteered twice a day. "She calls herself our classroom grandma and the kids call her grandma, and it's awesome." According to Paige, "my school has a lot of parent volunteers, and I have parents in my room at least twice a week."

Although Kasey described her school as student-centered and collaborative, she made a point to emphasize that the school was "collaborative in terms of teachers, but not in terms of the administration." Kasey noted a "huge disconnect between management and teachers." Paige also observed strained relations between

administrators and teachers. "My first impressions were positive until I got to the staff meeting. Teachers were whispering while the principal was talking and they were passing notes, I felt it was disrespectful and didn't expect that from the teachers." When further describing her relationship with teachers at her school, Paige added, "they do include me in things, but because I am the age of most of their children I'm not on their same level. It can be hard to work with teachers who have been teaching for more than 20 years."

Paige's perspective of feeling like an outsider at her school was a common theme expressed by participants during the first six weeks of field service. This theme was expressed by student teachers at all levels of authorization. Even student teachers who were highly engaged in afterschool or extracurricular activities admitted that integration as a member of the school community occurred gradually over the course of the semester. "It takes time," said Diego when describing the process of becoming integrated as a member of the community. "At first it felt a little odd, but now it is good. Now I am 100% both a teacher and member of the community."

By the conclusion of the study, initial impressions about professional expectations and the culture within the schools were unchanged. Student teachers believed that they were able to align themselves with the schools' professional expectations, even when personal beliefs about teaching conflicted with practices in the field. During the final interviews all of the participants felt that they had become more accepted as teachers, and were more integrated as members of the community. However, three participants still believed that certain administrators, teachers or support staff members failed to acknowledge them as "real" teachers.

Rural School Culture

Half of the student teachers in the study were assigned to rural schools. Over the course of the study, these students reported that through their field experiences they had developed an appreciation of the dynamics of rural school life. Amy, who was teaching in the same rural town where she grew up, noted the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in a small school. "Everybody knows everybody, which is cool but also bad because she (the mentor teacher) judges the kids coming into her class based on the brothers or sisters she has had before." Amy also credited a school-wide initiative with establishing a positive school environment.

> Our school has adopted a program of positive behavior support (PBS) that uses
> positive reinforcement to reward students. The school also has a check-in,
> check-out process with a behavioral specialist, so everyday the kids who have
> problems can go and meet at certain times, and get their sheets signed by the
> teacher throughout the day to indicate if they did well or not. It is a pro-active
> approach for maintaining a positive environment.

Sara observed that having a close-knit academic community helped prevent students from falling through the cracks. Caroline, who was serving in the same school as Amy, observed that "since the community is so involved, the school is able to host an annual auction that raises thousands of dollars to buy technology, projectors and document cameras. That's the only technology they have, and they fund it exclusively through community involvement."

Throughout the study, student teachers serving in rural communities cited strong school support as a community value, and noted how rural schools worked to address the needs of economically disadvantaged students. Caroline noted how

socioeconomic factors shaped the culture of the school. "It is a very low income area, and a lot of families are just getting by, so the kids need extra resources from the school, and it is great that the school can provide them." Sara had no prior experience in a rural school. She observed that in her placement, a large rural elementary school in the Willamette Valley, a significant number of children were placed in foster care. According to Sara, this dynamic impacted the culture of the school community. Even though Sara had many years of experience working with preschool children in urban and suburban settings, she reported that her experience in the rural school helped her become more attuned to at-risk students, and she learned to trust her intuition when she sensed that a student needed additional support or formal intervention.

All of the student teachers in rural schools reported that as a result of their experiences in rural communities they had become more sensitive to the impact of socioeconomic factors on students' academic performance and overall well-being. Most expressed that their experience in rural schools provided them with an important perspective on how to navigate through bureaucratic processes while advocating for student needs. Jenny was assigned to a school with a significant number of students living below the poverty line in a "really conservative rural area." Jenny observed that her experience in a rural school created a shift in how she perceived herself as an educator. She noted changes in her self-concept and became conscious of her role as an advocate for economically disadvantaged students. Like Jenny, participants who served in rural schools expressed similar shifts in perception. The participants attributed the conceptual changes to experiences with students who were classified as "low performing, or at-risk."

Responses to Curriculum and Instruction Questions

At the start of the study, participants were asked a series of questions related to instructional practice, including the types of experiences they were having in their classrooms. The purpose of these questions was to identify student teacher perspectives related to instructional philosophy and how that philosophy might translate into classroom activity. The participants were also asked to contrast their personal approach to that of their mentor teachers. This allowed student teachers to reflect on how their field experiences influenced instructional practice, which was one of the study's research questions.

During initial interviews, student teachers were asked to describe the types of activities that they were doing in their classrooms. In the first weeks of the semester, all but three of the student teachers reported that they were primarily functioning as a support for their mentor teacher. Student teachers participated in activities such as making copies, serving as "an extra set of eyes," helping students stay on task, and assisting individual children during independent practice. The student teachers also provided direct instructional support in small groups, or led limited daily routines such as administering quizzes, transitioning between activities, or collecting homework. For example, Kasey reported that during her first weeks of student teaching she was doing a lot of work with small groups while developing lessons for upcoming whole group instruction. According to Marie within the first month of class, she had transitioned into "teaching mornings" in her minor placement, which involved leading various instructional routines. Caroline reported during her initial interview that she was leading math warm-ups, dictation, physical education, social studies, and reading. Most of the student teachers gradually assumed instructional duties. Leading whole group instruction was uncommon for most participants during the first weeks of

student teaching.

There were three exceptions where student teachers rapidly took control of classroom activities. For example, Diego reported that he was able to immediately assume lead instructional duties in his high school placement where he was regularly facilitating daily math instruction including, "planning and teaching six periods a day." Diego believed that his age and physical presence presented an advantage, and was at least partly responsible for his mentor's willingness to allow Diego to take over. Sara also reported that she was able to serve as the primary instructor in her classroom soon after starting her student teaching assignment. Sara cited her prior experience as a preschool teacher as one of the reasons why her mentor felt comfortable giving her responsibility for the class. Sylvia also reported that she was able to lead instruction shortly after joining her fifth grade class. She credited this to the fact that she had worked extensively with the same mentor the previous academic year during her practicum assignment. She felt that as a result, her mentor already trusted her and let her move into instructional duties after the first week of school.

Although most student teachers were increasingly granted teacher duties over the course of the semester, some participants in the study found it necessary to self-advocate in order to assume instructional duties during student teaching. For example, on the secondary level, Elwood spent the first week of student teaching grading papers. In an effort to take on more teacher responsibilities, he looked for ways to "insert himself" into class activities.

It was frustrating; she had me sorting papers and stapling, teacher's aide stuff. So it got to the point when the kids were working independently in class and

they'd raise their hand, I would just go answer their question and took the

chance of maybe offending my mentor or overstepping my bounds.

Elwood was encouraged by his mentor's response and pursued opportunities to expand

his role in the class during whole group instruction.

They were doing Beowulf and I was able to jump right in because that is really

fresh in my memory. She would be teaching and I just kind of quietly raised my

hand in the back and she would call on me. So I went from answering student

questions, to inserting myself into the discussion, to her finally agreeing to let me

teach a lesson.

According to Elwood, within three weeks he was able to "take over" lessons for his

mentor teacher's freshmen classes. During that time, Elwood felt that he was extended

a significant measure of freedom. He attributed his ability to assume a lead

instructional role to his initiative and proactive approach to defining his role in the

classroom.

It took a solid two or three weeks. All I needed was that chance to show her that

I could do it, and when I finally got it I think I did a good enough job that she felt

comfortable with me taking over the lessons. There was a tension bubble during

those first three weeks, she was uncomfortable letting her classroom go, she was

helicopter teaching, but since I had the chance to prove myself, she relaxed a bit

and now we're good to go.

Elwood's experience with a mentor who had trouble turning over her classroom was

similar to the experiences shared by a number of the student teachers in the study.

Some participants felt that their roles as teachers were limited or marginalized by

mentors who were resistant to having student teachers lead classroom activity. Weeks

into her field placement, Paige was unsure when her mentor would let her begin teaching, and she worried that she might need to convince her mentor of her readiness to take on a lead instructional role. Delays in assuming instructional duties in the classroom led to frustration for many of the participants. Jenny seemed particularly annoyed that one of her teachers appeared unwilling to let her teach. Even Diego, who had a tremendous amount of respect for his middle school mentor, wished that he could "be allowed to do more, and get more time in front of the class." Amy also expressed disappointment that she was not able to facilitate whole group instruction sooner. During the first weeks of student teaching, Amy expressed frustration that she was not doing more in her classroom.

> Right now, I am not doing a lot other than observation in my fifth grade
> classroom. The only things I get to do every day is go get the students from
> recess and bring them back. I also walk around while they are reading and
> help them, or have them read to me, but that is as far as it has gotten.

Although Amy expressed both readiness and enthusiasm for teaching, she worried that her mentor might not let her teach. "She has trouble letting go and seems reluctant to hand over the class." By contrast, Amy's placement with one of the school's kindergarten teachers was completely different. "She just told me, you are starting teaching tomorrow. You can read this story and do these activities." Amy's aspiration to assume greater responsibility represented a common theme among student teachers in the study. All of the participants expressed a strong interest in taking charge of the classroom. However, it appeared that some mentor teachers were reluctant to release control of the classroom. When those mentors eventually did allow student teachers to lead instruction, the experiences often occurred spontaneously, with little prior

warning, preparation or collaboration. Paige's experience illustrates how spur-of-the-moment teaching opportunities led to frustration and anxiety among student teachers.

> I haven't taught really yet except for two days ago, and I got thrown into
> it. She (the mentor teacher) didn't tell me her instructions for what she
> wanted, so I felt weird and awkward. She stopped me mid-sentence
> while I was teaching and said that I was doing it wrong in front of all of
> the second graders. So she was sitting back in her desk and having to
> interject because she didn't supply me with instructions, nothing at all,
> and then after she told me, 'this is real life and sometimes you get things
> thrown at you at the last minute and you have to teach it.' But I felt
> strange because I am thinking that if I have my own classroom, I could
> manage this. It wouldn't matter if I have to teach them something at the
> last second because I am in charge, and I will know what I want. But I'm
> not used to her management style.   I didn't know what she wanted, I felt
> like I didn't have the authority to make decisions in her classroom, and I
> didn't want her to correct me again in front of the whole class, because she
> did it twice. The experience was very frustrating.

Participants reported ad hoc instructional opportunities from mentors at all levels of authorization. Although the student teachers felt they performed well under the circumstances, all expressed a desire to prepare more systematically and intentionally for instructional responsibilities.

Mentor Influence on Instructional Design and Delivery

Another common experience reported by student teachers in the study was how mentor teacher perspectives largely determined, and in many cases limited the

instructional approaches that student teachers were able to practice in the classroom. While some mentors were open to creative or innovative instructional approaches, others preferred that student teachers simply mimic the processes and methods that they themselves used. Student teachers often found themselves in environments that clashed with their personal values and philosophies related to teaching.

Jenny's secondary experiences served as an example of how disposition between two mentors resulted in dramatically different field experiences for the same student teacher. One of Jenny's mentor teachers coordinates the alternative program at the high school, a rural school with a student population of less than three hundred. Jenny's other mentor teaches language arts at the adjacent middle school. Jenny reported that the culture and instructional approach within the two classrooms were "completely and utterly different." As a result, Jenny found it necessary to adjust her expectations and modify her instructional approach depending on whose classroom she was in.

> My middle school teacher has everything planned out literally to the day. She handed me a sheet that outlined what we're going to do every day of the school year. On the other hand, my high school teacher decides what she's doing in the shower before she comes to school, so I never know what we are doing.

As a result, Jenny found it necessary to set aside any creative lesson ideas or instructional methodologies that she might have otherwise tried, and simply imitate her mentors' approach to lesson planning and instructional methodology.

> My middle school mentor does the same thing every year. It's really kind of really mundane and boring because it's like, the students read three days in class, complete the cookie cutter worksheets and then take the test. That is what they do every week and the kids are bored.

Later in the semester, Jenny reported that in her high school placement, she was free to experiment and try instructional methods that more closely aligned with her philosophical approach to teaching. However, in her middle school placement she had to rigidly follow her mentor's plan, even when she felt that plan was contrary to student needs.

Student teachers reported that they felt compelled to imitate mentors' instructional methods partly due to the fact that mentor teachers assigned grades for field service placement. Student teachers must receive a passing grade in order to earn the credits required for teacher licensure. Amy, Paige and Jenny all admitted that they were mindful of this, and they were careful to appear supportive and accommodating towards their mentors. Jenny explained,

> I am not going to rock the boat. I'm not going to do it, not to the person who's grading me. I'm not going to push her buttons; I'm just going to do whatever makes her happy. I am jumping through my hoops. I'm a good hoop jumper. So it kind of sucks but yeah, that's what I have to do.

Jenny explained that her concern for pleasing her mentor teacher was rooted in comments made by her mentor at the beginning of the semester.

> She told me flat out, 'I don't give high marks. Don't expect to get a high mark from me.' So I have to be like her for her to give me a high mark but I'm not like her. So I just really feel like at this point I just have to suck it up and do whatever she wants because this is a hoop I have to jump through really.

Student teachers, including Jenny admitted that they felt forced to exercise a measure of self-restraint and were unwilling to suggest innovative instructional strategies, even though they believed that such approaches would be effective and engaging for

students. According to Paige, instructional innovation would have to wait until after graduation.

> I don't know if I'm willing to experiment so much. I'd rather just do what they tell me to do, and do it how they want it. When I have my own class, then I can experiment with ideas we've learned in our college classes. She is grading me, so I just want to get through it.

Despite the frustration expressed by participants, student teachers in the study felt that their experiences during field service expanded their understanding of instructional design and delivery and helped them build an "arsenal of methods and strategies."

All of the participants hoped for a measure of instructional freedom at the start of the semester. As they started student teaching, they expected that they would have opportunities to design and implement lessons as they saw fit. Participants also hoped that they would be able to experiment and try various instructional methods during student teaching. By the end of the study, although four of the participants had opportunities to explore instructional approaches that aligned with their philosophical approach to teaching, the majority reported that they would have to wait until they had their own classrooms to pursue their personal approach to instructional design and delivery.

Regardless of whether participants were able to implement lessons according to their own approach, the student teachers in the study did identify ways that field service helped them develop essential skills and competencies related to instructional design and delivery. A common theme amongst the participants was how field service helped student teachers acquire planning skills for lessons. According to Elwood, he learned that it was essential to "preplan as much as possible, and give yourself time to

develop lessons." Sylvia reported that field service introduced her to a method for lesson planning and design that she intended to use in her own classroom.

> My teacher showed me how to layout lessons in a planner, and I think that's really helped me be more organized. I think just by observing and listening and doing what they did really has helped me shape my approach to teaching. The greatest lesson I learned was to be super organized, because you can't just wing it. You have to be overly organized too and write down everything, every little tiny step, because if you don't then you forget it, because there's so much else going on. And I believe that goes for any classroom, not just when you have a large or blended class.

Others, such as Caroline, also cited the value of lesson design and how to use a lesson planner, a skill that was complemented by, "what we learned in our curriculum and instruction class."

Increased Sensitivity to Students

Another benefit of field service that participants identified was increased sensitivity to students. All of the student teachers reported that field service enabled them to become more sensitive to the unique needs of students. This translated into an appreciation for the need to develop differentiated lessons based on an individual's readiness, learning style, or interest.

Another expression of increased sensitivity to students related to learners with special needs. Greater appreciation for students with special needs was widely cited and directly attributed to field experiences. Kasey explained,

> I have a whole new perspective for students with special needs. I really haven't had much experience before this semester with students with special needs and

      really what that meant to have a child with special needs. There is such a wide

      range, it's such a broad term, and it can mean anything from a kid who can't eat

      gluten to a kid who needs special colored paper so it won't hurt their eyes. It's so

      individualized, which is great. It's a lot to keep track of, but when you have each

      kid figured out and you've addressed the need, your day runs so much

      smoother.

Especially in rural schools, student teachers who had exposure to special education students in traditional classes reported that they felt more comfortable and were better equipped to address the unique needs of learners as a result of experiences during student teaching.

      Ultimately, student teachers felt strongly that field experience provided significant opportunities to practice instructional design, delivery and assessment. Student teachers' ability to experiment with methods that aligned with their personal educational philosophy was largely dependent on mentors, or other circumstances within the classroom. Nevertheless, student teachers believed that even when circumstances where not ideal, field service helped them develop essential teacher skills and competencies related to instructional design and delivery.

Responses Related to Instructional Technology

      In addition to exploring how field service influenced student teachers' instructional design, the study also sought to understand how field service experiences impacted novice teachers' use of instructional technology. During interviews all of the student teachers in the study expressed a willingness and interest to integrate technology into instruction. They also described their attitude towards technology as positive. In fact, all of the participants believed that using technology could enhance

teaching and engage students. Furthermore, they believed that they had a professional responsibility to do so. However, because the available technology in schools was so inadequate, student teachers were mostly unable to incorporate technology into classroom activities. They expressed frustration with the limited opportunities to use instructional technology during student teaching. Amy's comments reflected a common perspective among the participants.

> I would love to use more of it, but in the school I am in now, there is not really any technology. I would use it, but I can't. One of my teachers uses a document camera which she uses a lot, but that is about as technical as it gets. She struggles with it, I think just because she's older and has not had as much experience with it. She does seem resistant to technology, and admits that she prefers things on paper.

Elwood's comments were also representative of the perspectives expressed by most of the participants in the study. Elwood described his attitude towards technology as positive, and he believed that technology could be used to connect with students and "get them involved and engaged." He further expressed that technology should be an essential component in lesson design.

> It's how students learn now, and there is so much more you can do with it. It gives you the opportunity to hit four learning styles all at one time. From my perspective, a lesson plan isn't complete; it's missing something if you aren't using some kind of technology.

Unfortunately, like his colleagues, Elwood saw very little in the way of available resources and support at his initial high school placement.

> My teacher might encourage me to use it, but I don't think she really cares. If I

want a projector or something, I have to check it out from the media center and they only have three that are in rotation. There's nothing set up that I can just use regularly.

Later in the semester, Elwood was reassigned to an alternative high school program where he had access to a variety of technology resources for direct instruction as well as for independent student activity. Elwood's varied experience between two different mentor teachers illustrates how in spite of the student teacher's individual willingness to use instructional technology, available resources and mentor disposition largely determined what student teachers could do. Student teachers reported that their ability to use technology was primarily defined by the availability of resources and their mentor teachers' willingness to support instructional innovation. Student teachers appeared to be highly dependent on mentors' approval for any instructional activity that deviated from what the mentor might consider routine. Six of the participants described mentors as either generally supportive or indifferent towards using technology in the classroom. Amy, Caroline, Sara and Jenny said that their mentors were intimidated by or resistant to technology. Jenny explained that she was willing to incorporate technology, but she felt like her mentor teacher considered it a waste of time.

> I would be interested to try and do something with technology, and my middle school teacher has a Smart Board, which is the only Smart Board in the building. But she only uses it as a projector. I think that she finds a lot of things just a waste of time, even though they're fun or they're useful. I can't see her doing them. She uses her document cam like an old overhead projector and she uses her smart board like a projector too, and that's all she really uses any technology

for. And she only uses that for the daily so the kids can correct the sentences.

And that's really all the Smart Board ever gets used for.

Of the ten participants in the study, only Diego, Sara, Elwood, and Sylvia reported

significant experiences using instructional technology in the classroom.

Those who were able to use technology reported that technology resources were

primarily used to augment presentation during direct instruction. The most commonly

cited technology was a document camera, which is the digital equivalent of an overhead

projector. Student teachers also used video projectors and Smart Boards to share

instructional resources with students. Access to web-based resources in most

classrooms was most often limited to a single teacher computer. Wireless access was

extremely limited. Student teachers that wanted to use computers for a whole group

instructional activity were disappointed to discover that they had only limited access to

an outdated computer lab. According to Kasey, "They have technology. It's not always

available, and some of it is really dated. They do have a room full of rainbow iMacs

from back in the day. They are good for browsing the web, but that's about it." Kasey

noted that on the one occasion that she did try to use the computer lab with her class,

"none of the logins worked." Only one classroom in the study had web-based access

readily available for students to work on projects, complete research and engage in

classroom related activities. Participants observed very little instructional technology

use that was student-directed, independent or group-oriented.

Despite the limitations that student teachers encountered in the field, a few

novice teachers demonstrated personal initiative in order to use technology to enhance

lessons. For example Diego used his personal iPhone to share web-based content with

students. Diego explained,

I'm into technology, and I'm a little dissatisfied with what is available. You can't use YouTube in the classroom in our district because they have it blocked. On my iPhone with a simple adaptor, I can show them videos on YouTube. Last week we studied gravity in science for sixth grade. I used the classroom's existing projector, my iPhone and a twenty-dollar cable and showed them Felix Bombgardner breaking the sound barrier on YouTube. For a group of sixth graders, how much better can you get than a real world example of breaking the sound barrier?

Diego also used his own technology to teach students about the Mars Rover, the 2012 presidential election and he shared breaking news related to Hurricane Sandy. Although he was disappointed that the district offered little in the way of classroom technology support, Diego understood why districts might be afraid of open wireless network access in a high school. He believed that providing safe, network access would eventually have to be considered. "With smart phones, you've already lost the ability to control network access. Any kid with a 3g or 4g phone already has access so I think it could be more beneficial if districts would go ahead and make those resources available."

Sara also took the initiative to bring smart phone technology into her classroom after discovering that her room lacked a convenient method for sharing web-based content. Unfortunately, her iPhone would not connect to the Internet in her rural school building. Despite this, she was still able to utilize her own digital video resources to support student learning while teaching a unit on local indigenous tribes.

Sylvia also reported significant opportunities to use technology as a daily part of instruction. Sylvia's teacher was the only mentor in the study to observe regular use of an iPad as an instructional resource.

> Every day, my mentor does the lesson on her iPad while showing the kids on the projector, she uses Educreations and records it, so then after the lesson she uploads it to her blog and the kids can go at home, go to her blog and see the lesson and review it if they didn't understand and the parents can see it as well.

According to Sylvia, her experience in her major placement helped her expand her aptitude with classroom technology, and helped her grow as a professional.

> I think that the kids like technology more than I thought they would. I thought that they would get bored seeing it every single day, but in reality they really respond to it. They've grown up on technology, and I've seen a lot of students being motivated to do more work because of the technology. I will definitely use it and there's probably going to be so much more in the next few years that we can use as teachers. There are so many different ways that you can use it. I have seen that in my placement.

Sylvia believed that her experience with technology in her field placement did solidify her resolve to integrate technology once she had her own classroom.

By the end of the study, the participants expressed that despite personal intentions and a willingness to integrate instructional technology, inherent limitations in the field such as availability of resources and Instructional Technology (I.T.) support severely limited student teachers' use of instructional technology. Mentors were viewed as passive in their support of instructional technology and for the most part were not a deterrent. Moreover, two participants believed that their attitudes towards

instructional technology became more negative as a result of field experience. Despite limitations that student teachers encountered during the study, all of the participants reported that they still intended to use instructional technology to enrich classroom activity when they moved into professional service.

Perspectives Regarding Mentor Teachers

During the course of the study, student teachers discussed their expectations and experiences working with mentor teachers and university field supervisors. The purpose of the questions was to identify student teacher perspectives on how mentors and supervisors supported student teachers' professional development during field service. Participants were asked to consider the extent to which mentors and supervisors influenced novice teachers' instructional practices, including the use of instructional technology. Participants were also asked to reflect on how their professional identity and values aligned or conflicted with mentors and field supervisors. As the prior section on instructional methods suggests, experiences for student teachers varied widely and the results suggest that one of the most significant factors that influences the nature and quality of field experience is the disposition of the mentor teacher.

Student teachers entered into student teaching with the hope that mentors would provide support in teaching, along with guidance and feedback that would encourage professional development. At the start of the study, only four of the student teachers felt they were well matched with their mentor. Student teachers expressed concern that their personal ideals, philosophy and overall approach to teaching were in conflict with those of their mentors. Half of the student teachers worried that this might limit their ability to experiment with instructional strategies and methods during their student

teaching. Nevertheless, nine of the student teachers reported that they liked and respected their mentors. In fact, all of the participants described their mentors as professionals, and felt that they were learning skills and strategies that they could use to become better teachers.

Mentor Commitment to Professional Improvement

It may be worth noting that although student teachers described mentors as professionals, only half of the participants described their mentors as master teachers. When asked to differentiate between the terms professional and master teacher, participants cited commitment to professional growth and a dedication to ongoing improvement as hallmarks of master teachers. One of the characteristics that student teachers admired most about their mentors was a commitment to professional development and curricular revision. Kasey viewed one of her mentors as a master teacher, and described her as "passionate and innovative. She's constantly evaluating herself and finding ways to make things work better." Many of the participants cited flexibility, a willingness to try new things, and maintaining excitement about teaching as measures of one's professional competence. According to Paige, her mentor teacher demonstrated mastery by being willing to change. "She's not stuck in her ways. She is open to trying new things that she hasn't done before." Jenny shared Paige's perspective, "I actually view my middle school teacher as a little bit less of a professional because she's just so stuck in her ways." Elwood also considered "self-reflection, constant revision and ongoing improvement" key characteristics of a master teacher. This view was shared by Caroline who explained that what made a master teacher was a willingness to "learn forever, and being willing to take feedback from

peers, from the principal, from parents and students, and to continue improving as a lifelong learner."

Participants also cited enthusiasm for the content and sensitivity to student needs as essential qualities of master teachers. Diego described a master teacher as someone who displayed a love and passion for both the students and the content. He also explained that if he ever lost his love and strong enthusiasm for his subject or his students, then it was time to retire. Sara's perspective aligned with Diego. However, Sara also equated master teacher status with student performance. Kasey expressed the same conviction as Sara. "It has to be reflected in student outcomes. If your kids aren't learning, you are not a master teacher." Most of the participants cited the ability to know and individually address student needs as one of the qualities that distinguished the exceptional educator from the average teacher. Participants' ideas of what it meant to be a master teacher appeared to directly align with the professional values and behaviors that they aspired to, and hoped to exemplify as teachers.

Facilitating Student Teaching Experiences

Ideally, student teachers in the study hoped to be placed with someone they could admire professionally. They were delighted when they were assigned to someone who shared their values, perspectives and philosophical approach to teaching. Student teachers were also very satisfied when they were placed with someone who they perceived as well prepared, enthusiastic and student-centered. However, the single most desirable quality that student teachers hoped for in a mentor was a willingness to grant meaningful opportunities to practice teaching. For example, Elwood expressed that he did not necessarily identify with or respect the professional characteristics of his mentor teacher. However, he expressed satisfaction with his initial

placement because his mentor gave him opportunities to teach. Furthermore, Elwood believed that those opportunities were united with a measure of freedom that enabled him to explore his persona as an emerging professional.

> I am designing everything completely as my own. She did give me a packet of material, basically some vocab worksheets and some white bread study guide questions. Other than that, she said, 'ready, go.' So I'm completely designing my own curriculum with help from some of my professors and my old language arts teacher…I have the freedom. Whether it's good or bad, I don't know, it could be a circus, but I'm basically creating my own unit from the ground up, according to how I see fit.

When Elwood moved to another placement later in the semester, he also reported that he was given significant freedom in that classroom as well.

With the exception of Amy and Paige, by the end of the study, all of the participants reported that they had been given significant opportunities to direct classroom activity. However, mentor disposition and mentor approaches to instructional practice did appear to make a significant difference in how student teachers positively or negatively perceived the experience. For example, at the end of the study, Paige still felt limited by her field placement.

> I feel like I just had to do exactly what my teacher did, even if it wasn't something I would do. It works well and she runs an effective classroom, so I'm willing to do it even if I don't feel comfortable doing it her way."

As previously cited in the participants' responses related to curriculum and instruction, perceived pressure to align instructional behavior to mentor teachers' expectations appeared to discourage student teachers from exploring potentially effective

methodologies and strategies. This perspective was reflected by Amy's comments at the start of the study.

> It's hard when you're student teaching you know you can't really discover your teaching style completely because you still have to go from what they do. If they let you go on your own, that's awesome but with the people I've been with they're kind of like, 'this is how we do it. You watch me do it. Now you do it too.' The only problem is that her way is a lot different from how I would do it, but she is the kind of teacher that only wants you to do it her way.

Amy believed that she was learning a great deal in her field service, but she added, "I feel like I am learning by non-example."

Jenny's experience with two different mentors serves as another example of how the nature of a student teacher's field experience could vary depending on the disposition of the mentor. "I'm having a little trouble with my teaching because I want to do something different that's not part of her routine." Jenny was teaching a unit on identity in her middle school placement. The students were reading about an American girl who was living in China and struggling with her identity. Jenny explained,

> So I was hoping to talk to them about what China is like, and get them looking at the world because their world is so small. They don't really get to see the world and the diversity that's out there. So I want to talk about that, and have them make things about themselves and how they perceive their identity. But I can't do that and fit into my mentor's mold. It's just going to be the same boring mundane thing that they've been doing everyday.

Jenny's experience in her high school level placement was completely different.

> My high school teacher is pretty awesome. She is 26, pretty fresh out of college
> and open-minded about things. I have freedom to do what I want in her class. I
> go over my stuff with her and make sure she approves of it, but she's always
> open to new things and new ideas and she's always asking me what I think
> about things and if I had any ideas about what we should do.

As a result, Jenny felt safe to experiment in her high school placement and believed that her high school mentor teacher was helping her navigate the path towards becoming a skilled educator.

> With my high school teacher, I feel free to make suggestions or just say whatever
> I'm thinking, whether I disagree or agree, but with my middle school teacher I
> just kind of agree with everything that she does even if I don't. I just kind of nod
> my head and smile.

Jenny's positive experience in her high school classroom illustrates how mentors in the study who were receptive to varied instructional approaches or shared participants' educational philosophies were described positively by student teachers. Under such circumstances, participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with their field placement.

Opportunities for Guidance and Reflection

Another practice that student teachers considered valuable was setting aside time to provide feedback, guidance and opportunities for reflective practice. Student teachers were highly appreciative when mentors spent time on post-instructional discussion or reflection. Most of the reflection and discussion between participants and mentors happened informally, either after school or during breaks in the schedule. This

time was viewed as invaluable by the student teachers. Mentors who took time to provide feedback were very highly regarded by participants. Caroline reported,

> My second grade teacher is very big on reflecting and talking about it. We spend the whole lunchtime everyday and after school as well. We probably spend 45 minutes to an hour each day.

Whether it was formal or informal, student teachers unanimously expressed a desire to receive constructive feedback on their performance. Mentors who provided opportunities for feedback and discussion were those who were routinely described as caring, competent professionals. Mentors who failed to make time for reflection represented mentors who were described in more negative terms.

All of the participants engaged in individual post-instructional reflection as part of the student teachers' work sample. The written reflections in the work sample provided student teachers with the opportunity to consider how each lesson went and what they could do to improve. In some cases, student teachers were able to share their reflections with their mentor or field supervisor. However, this did not occur with most of the participants. Half of the participants participated in formal post-instructional reflection with mentor teachers. Three participants reported that with the exception of a few visits from field supervisors, they had no formal or informal opportunities for reflection. This appeared to be related to the mentor's willingness to take time to reflect. As Jenny reported, "My junior high mentor teacher told me she doesn't believe in reflection, so we don't do that."

In addition to post-instructional discussion with mentor teachers and the formal reflections in the work sample, participants identified other methods that they used to reflect on their experiences. In Jenny's high school placement, her mentor teacher set

up an online journal for daily reflection. Jenny's high school mentor teacher also provided written comments on the entries. Marie kept a personal journal and shared her published blog with her mentor as part of her reflective practice. In addition to the feedback she received daily from her second grade teacher, Caroline regularly used time commuting home from her placement to reflect on the day with her grandmother. Participants acknowledged that various forms of reflection during student teaching helped them identify effective strategies and improve professional practices. Furthermore, student teachers believed that reflective practice supported professional identity development.

Mentor Preparation and Qualification

During interviews four of the student teachers questioned the qualifications and selection process for mentor teachers. A common sentiment was that mentors were primarily selected based on their willingness to have a student teacher and were not necessarily selected because of their qualifications, expertise or professional disposition. Student teachers also wondered what measures the university had taken to communicate expectations and requirements for serving as a mentor, and student teachers questioned whether mentors were adequately prepared to facilitate field service for student teachers. Kasey's comments illustrate the student teachers' concerns,

> I feel like some of the mentor teachers I have worked with really had no idea
> what the expectation was to have a student teacher, and perhaps they signed up
> thinking that we were helpers in the classroom and were there to make copies. I
> know that can be part of our role as student teachers to make copies and to
> laminate because those are things that teachers do, but sometimes I feel like there
> isn't any qualification to be a mentor teacher. We have to jump through hoops to

meet all these qualifications to be student teachers, but what kind of training is

required for a mentor teacher to have a student teacher? I think that the only

requirement is that they have to have been teaching for a certain number of

years. And so that I think we need to examine what qualifies a mentor

teacher to have a student teacher.

Kasey's perspective was shared by a number of participants in the study. In fact, half of

the student teachers in the study recommended that the university make more of an

effort to screen prospective mentors and ensure that individuals understand the

expectations for serving as a mentor. Elwood suggested that the university needed to

more seriously consider annual mentor evaluations from student teachers when

determining placements for the coming year. "Being a good teacher doesn't mean you

are a good mentor," was Amy's reaction to a question about her mentor's performance.

"She is a really great teacher, the students and parents all love her. But when you work

with her everyday, she is not a positive influence." Amy characterized her daily

interaction with her mentor as "full of negative energy." Like Amy, Paige considered

her mentor an outstanding teacher, but "not a great mentor." Along with others in the

study, Amy and Paige strongly encouraged administrators in the licensure program to

pursue strategies to more effectively match student teachers with mentors.

Perspectives Regarding Field Supervisors

In addition to identifying student teacher perspectives about their mentors,

participants were asked questions about university field supervisors. Each student

teacher is assigned a field supervisor, who administers student teaching on behalf of the

university licensure program. The field supervisor coordinates paperwork for the

student and mentor, and also completes a series of observations in the classroom. Eight

of the student teachers reported that they received supportive guidance and direction from field supervisors. Of those, six of the student teachers said that they received constructive feedback and post-observation follow-up that was both practical and encouraging. Four participants described their field supervisor as an advocate. Diego and Marie were the only student teachers in the study to express low expectations for their field supervisors. Diego believed that his field supervisor was there to observe his progress and coordinate paperwork for the university. However, he did not consider his supervisor someone to turn to for guidance or advice. Marie attributed her low expectations to previous experiences she had with the same supervisor during her junior practicum assignment the year before.

Participants appreciated opportunities to meet together with both the mentor teacher and field supervisor. Field supervisors that were able to successfully facilitate three-way collaboration were highly regarded by student teachers. According to Amy, she was able to sit down and have a three-way conversation with her mentor and field supervisor prior to the start of the semester. Like others who were able to do so, Amy felt that the experience was worthwhile and helped clarify expectations for the field placement. Sylvia was also able to meet with both her mentor and field supervisor and felt that it ensured that everyone was "on the same page" in terms of requirements and expectations. Sylvia reported that the experience helped her feel "more comfortable and confident" as she moved into her student teaching.

One of the most essential duties of field supervisors from the perspective of student teachers was helping participants navigate through the specific university requirements for student teaching. This included helping mentors and student teachers manage the paperwork, processes and timelines established by the licensure program.

Student teachers were issued a detailed handbook at the start of student teaching. However, student teachers often required assistance interpreting program requirements. Anxiety regarding university procedures and documentation was common among participants. Field supervisors who were able to confidently address student teacher concerns were more highly regarded than field supervisors who were perceived as less knowledgeable or unsure of university processes and requirements. In a few instances, interpersonal conflict surfaced when field supervisors appeared unclear or inconsistent about paperwork, procedures or deadlines associated with student teacher supervision.

Some participants reported that conflict between mentor teachers and field supervisors negatively impacted the student teacher's field placement. For example, three student teachers reported that disagreements between mentor teachers and field supervisors increased tension, and negatively impacted relations between student teachers and mentors. Most often the conflict was attributed to field supervisors who held dissimilar or conflicting perspectives with mentors. Personality differences also appeared to contribute to negative experiences between field supervisors and mentors. Three student teachers in the study reported that mentor teachers perceived his or her field supervisor as arrogant or "authoritarian." The root of these impressions was most often traced to incidents when field supervisors allegedly disrupted classroom activities or routines. Student teachers and mentors also perceived field supervisors who were late to appointments negatively.

> I expect my supervisor to be on time for observations. I have had some trouble
> with that. My supervisor has been late, and I had already taught the lesson that
> she was supposed to observe.

Amy felt that her field supervisor's lack of punctuality reflected negatively on her own professional character. It also made it more difficult for Amy to complete the observations required by the university.

By the end of the study, student teacher perspectives regarding field supervisors were mixed. Most referred to their supervisor in positive terms. However, four of the participants expressed frustration with their field supervisors and believed that the university needed to do a better job training and supporting new supervisors.

Perceived Relevance to University Coursework

When asked about how their university courses related to experiences in the field, the student teachers expressed that some of their college coursework had prepared them for service in the classroom. For the most part, participants believed that university coursework was relevant to their professional service. The courses that were most often referenced as relevant during the initial interviews were Classroom Management and Curriculum Design and Instructional Methods. Students expressed that they were able to apply content from their university courses during their field service. Like other participants in the study, Diego described his university courses in foundational terms, and perceived coursework as just one part in a series of steps towards professional service.

> The theoretical approach in classes has been wonderful because it gives you a frame of reference to dive in once you start your field service. It's kind of like a diving board. It allows you to climb the diving board, and look down, but when you jump in the water, you hope that all of the training you've had allows you to come to the surface and swim to the edge.

Caroline reported that a great deal of what she learned in university courses "has been very practical and very applicable in the field." Caroline appreciated that her training featured "a lot of practical application that could be used in the classroom." She also acknowledged that her prior experiences enabled her to better understand and utilize what she had learned in her university courses. Sylvia and others also cited prior experience with educators as key to developing one's philosophical and practical approach to teaching. The student teachers in the study perceived university courses as one layer in a multi-layered foundation of skills and perspectives that prepared them for professional service.

Although the student teachers in the study believed that university coursework was relevant to field experience, three participants expressed frustration that they had been unable to experiment with methods and strategies learned in university courses during student teaching. According to Amy, though she was able to use some strategies from the Classroom Management course, there were methods and strategies that she would not be able to try until she had her own classroom.

> I feel like we learn all these cool new things, new procedures, class management or instructional strategies, and then they are not really used in the classrooms that I am in because those teachers are older, so maybe they haven't been introduced to them or they just want to stay with what they know.

Sara also expressed frustration that some of the tools and resources that were endorsed in university courses were not available in the field.

> I'm doing this wonderful Technology for Teaching class that I love, and then I get into this school that's in a rural community that can hardly get internet

access…It is a disconnect. Not because we're not aiming in the right direction, but because it's not the reality on the ground.

Student Teachers' Perspectives on Teacher Identity and Professional Characteristics

One of the major purposes of the study was to examine preservice teacher perspectives on how field experience contributed to the development of an individual's teacher identity. During both initial and follow-up interviews, student teachers were asked a series of questions to ascertain perspectives on teacher identity and the professional characteristics of teachers. Some of the questions explored the extent to which the student teachers perceived themselves as teachers, professionals, and members of the school community. Students were also asked how and to what extent their field service contributed to their professional identity.

Initial questions related to professional identity examined how student teachers became integrated as professional members of the school community. The rationale for these questions was rooted in research suggesting that professional identity develops as one becomes integrated into the professional environment (Korthagen, 2004). Student teachers develop professional identity as they are initiated and accepted as contributing members of the community (Beijaard et al., 2004). Student teacher perspectives suggested that integration into the school community occurred slowly and was impacted by a number of factors. During the first month of student teaching, most of the participants felt that they had not been integrated into the school community. Eight of the participants expressed initial feelings of being an outsider, a visitor, or guest. According to Kasey, she didn't feel like a member of the community when she was outside of her classroom.

When I'm inside the classroom, my teachers are very inclusive and they refer to

me respectfully as Miss C and they tell the students, 'she's another teacher in the

classroom so you owe her the same respect as you give me,' which is great. But

when I'm in the building and I'm not in the classroom, some of the other teachers

won't address me. I didn't know where to eat lunch for the first week, so I ate in

the staff room and nobody addressed me. It was kind of awkward.

This sentiment was shared by eight of the student teachers during the first months of

student teaching. Participants cited a number of factors that helped student teachers

feel more accepted and integrated into the community. Elwood described how simple

gestures from faculty and administrators supported his sense that he was a contributing

member of the academic team.

This might sound silly, but they do birthday cards for the staff and they asked

me to sign the cards. It's not my mentor teacher, but the actual administrator

saying, 'you need to sign this.' It sounds silly but it makes me really feel like I'm

part of the staff. Little things like that make a difference.

Diego shared a similar experience related to teacher in service training.

At this point, I feel like a full participant. There doesn't seem to be any

distinguishable difference between myself as a student teacher versus a real

teacher among the staff, students or administration. It's a pretty collaborative

group and my opinion is valued and sought after. I've been invited to all the

trainings and they even spent dollars on my professional development. With

staff luncheons and potlucks, I'm required to participate as any other people,

which is neat, and that makes feel completely part of something bigger than just

me.

Attending teacher meetings, being assigned routine teacher duties, and engaging with administrators, other teachers, parents and community members outside of the classroom all helped student teachers feel like they were becoming part of the school's academic team.

The Power of Perception

Another key factor in how student teachers perceived themselves was how others perceived them. This included teachers, students, administrators, parents and field supervisors. For example, early in his field placement, although Elwood viewed himself as a teacher, he felt that the teachers at the school primarily viewed him as a student.

> I feel like a teacher. I dress like a teacher. I act like a teacher. I work my butt off like a teacher. I prepare like a teacher, but I think they still view me as the student. I know I don't deserve it, and I haven't earned the licensure yet, but I wouldn't mind being recognized as Mr. S in the hallway by those other teachers just to help my appearance and professionalism.

Elwood added, "If your mentor teacher views you as a student, the kids will never view you as a teacher." Identifying oneself as a teacher was closely connected to the perception and reception of others. This was a feeling shared by all of the participants in the study. Kasey explained,

> We had open house before the first day of school and my mentor teacher introduced me as the other teacher in the classroom. I'm on the bulletin board with her and my name is next to hers, which is huge to me to be included so far as the bulletin board. I know that sounds trivial, but to be introduced as the other teacher has made a real difference.

According to Caroline, being introduced as a teacher to both students and parents made a significant difference in how she perceived herself.

> I was introduced as Miss D, the other teacher. So the students know that I'm a student teacher…but they still perceive me as a teacher. As far as their parents are concerned when they come in the classroom or pick up after school they treat me and talk to me the same way they do the head teachers, and I've actually had some really nice things positive things said about me from parents and volunteers, they like having me as part of the team, their kids like me, it's great seeing me there early in the mornings…that all comes from being introduced as one of the teachers.

From Caroline's perspective, positive reactions from parents, teachers and students reinforced her sense of identity as a teacher. Amy also reported that her sense of professional identity was tied to how she was introduced by her mentor teacher.

> My fifth grade teacher introduced me right when I walked in. She said, 'This is Ms. A, she's going to be learning how to be a teacher with us.' My kindergarten teacher never did that…I would have liked that because I think the students would see me more as a teacher. The fact that she didn't introduce me as a teacher put me at a disadvantage.

Amy's comments illustrate how a mentor's endorsement could serve to support a student teacher's sense of professional identity and help legitimize his or her position as a teacher.

Student Perceptions

Amy's comment about being seen as a teacher by students also reflects another finding in the study related to teacher identity development. According to the

participants in the study, how students perceived them appeared to positively or negatively contribute to each student teacher's sense of professional identity. Amy reported that, "When the students view me as a teacher, then I feel like I'm a teacher." Marie also attributed changes in her professional self-concept to student perceptions saying, "It was the kids, 100% that made the difference in how I perceive myself." Student teachers at both the elementary and secondary level admitted that how students received them contributed to their sense of professional identity. Student teachers in the study reported that over the course of the semester, the students in their classes came to perceive them as partners with the mentor teacher, and responded to them accordingly. According to the participants, this perspective was present almost immediately among lower elementary students. However, in secondary classrooms, the shift came about more gradually, as students interacted more regularly with the student teachers, and there were opportunities to make personal connections and develop relationships with students in the classroom.

Teacher Identity Tied to Teacher Actions

Kasey reported that upon entering into student teaching, she felt confident in her role as a teacher. She also acknowledged that her sense of professional identity was greatly expanded by assuming professional duties, and through her interactions with students.

> To the students I'm a teacher. They raise their hand and say, 'Miss C, I need help with this math problem.' When I'm in the hallway they say, 'Hello Miss C.' I have the same amount of weight in my authority that a teacher has, and I see myself as a teacher. The things that I'm doing, the work that I'm putting in, the hours, it's all things that teachers do, so I feel like a teacher. When I'm working

with kids, I absolutely sense that I am a teacher, but I'm a teacher with a lot to

learn still.

Like Kasey, participants in the study believed that student perceptions and reactions

contributed to how they perceived themselves professionally. Kasey also reported that

as her engagement in professional duties increased, her understanding of what it meant

to be a professional deepened. Kasey's perspective illustrates another finding of the

study. Increased responsibility in the classroom appeared to contribute to participants'

sense of professional identity. Student teachers increasingly viewed themselves as

professionals when they engaged in duties that they identified as key teacher behaviors.

At the beginning of the study, Amy said, "At the moment, I feel more like a student, but

hopefully once I get the opportunity to be in front of the class and teach, then l will see

myself as a teacher." According to Amy, in order to really be a teacher,

You need to be doing it. You're helping the students learn in a positive way, in

an engaging way, you're making learning fun for them and you're helping them

grow. You're helping them to become better people. Just getting in front of

them, instructing them as my mentor teacher does, that is when I see myself as a

teacher.

Jenny explained that the reason she viewed herself as a student rather than a teacher

was, "simply because I haven't had the opportunity to do a lot of teaching. Once I start

teaching and taking control of the classroom more, I'll see myself as a teacher." Student

teachers in the study collectively identified participation in teacher actions as the most

important contributor to developing a sense of professional identity.

At the start of student teaching, participants primarily perceived themselves as

students, rather than teachers. Of the ten participants, only two said that they

perceived themselves primarily as a teacher. It may be significant that the two individuals who identified themselves primarily as teachers were both older, non-traditional students with significant prior experience in educational environments. A few other participants with prior experience in educational environments described themselves as both teachers and students. By the end of the study, students who had significant opportunities to engage in teacher duties identified themselves as teachers rather than students. The participants also acknowledged that becoming a teacher was a progressive experience. Diego reported that he was, "at good starting point." He added, "I see myself as a teacher but realize that everyday, I will add to who I am through my experiences."

Changes in Orientation During Field Service

As participants completed the required hours in field placements, the orientation of student teachers' perspectives became more student-focused. For example, at the end of the study when asked about the characteristics of a professional, student teachers' responses reflected increased sensitivity to student needs. Student teachers' responses concentrated less on personal or external characteristics and instead emphasized the importance of putting students first. For example, Sylvia said that, "Being a teacher is continually catering to student needs, basing instruction and everything you do in the classroom on what will help kids learn."   Kasey expressed another example of student teachers becoming more student-focused, "Being a teacher is not about you. It means you don't put yourself first. And that's not a bad thing. Actually I think it's a great thing, but I've come to the realization that it's totally not about me." This shift in perspective was commonly reported among participants.

Participants' shift in orientation extended to non-academic concerns as well, and

included attention to the physical and relational needs of students. The student teachers in the study demonstrated increased awareness of students' emotional status and issues related to students' overall health and welfare. Marie argued that it was essential to address students' "physical, social and emotional needs" before attempting to "meet the academic needs of your students." Marie attributed the development of this core value to her interaction with students during her placement.

By the end of the study, participants regularly referred to students as individuals, rather than as a group. A common theme that emerged by the end of the study was the importance of developing strong, healthy interpersonal relationships with students.

Elwood characterized being a teacher as "so much more than just delivering content and curriculum." He explained,

> Teachers are the bridge. They are the bridge from being a kid to becoming an adult. You build on that bridge. From first grade into high school you're preparing students for real life, and you become part of that framework by building relationships, being a mentor or life coach. I think that's all part of being a teacher. You build those relationships as someone who students can come to for help. You help students succeed in the real world and also make sure that everything's decent at home so that they can learn in the classroom.

Elwood concluded his remarks with the observation that, "It's kind of a weird position to be in, but I think that it's much more than just delivering the plot of Romeo and Juliet."

Summary

Overall, participants in the study reported that field service experiences powerfully contributed to perceptions of professional identity. The participants reported changes in how they perceived themselves between the beginning and end of the study. The participants' responses suggest that a range of experiences during student teaching influenced professional practices, and challenged assumptions related to instructional design and delivery. In many cases field experiences reaffirmed previously held beliefs about teaching. Participants in the study also reported that field experience did not contribute to significant changes in their beliefs about instructional technology. However, due to limited resources and support, field placement did appear to influence student teachers' ability to use instructional technology. Although many student teachers in the study were unable to integrate technology during instruction, participants maintained that they still intended to do so later as professionals. However, two student teachers reported that their attitudes towards using instructional technology become more negative as a result of limitations and lack of support in the field.

At the end of the study, all of the participants identified field experience as the most significant part of their professional preparation. Even those who reported difficult or challenging field placements felt strongly that the experience provided them with essential skills and insight.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

This qualitative study used interviews and reflective student journals to explore

the perspectives and experiences of ten preservice teachers enrolled in a teacher

education program at a small, private university in Oregon. The purpose of the

research was to explore student teacher perspectives related to how field experiences

contributed to teacher identity development and instructional practices. In this chapter,

the researcher discusses how the findings of the study address each of the research

questions. This chapter also explores how the findings connect to the existing literature

and considers implications and recommendations for action and further research.

Three research questions were established at the start of this investigation:

1. What are preservice teacher perspectives on how field experiences contribute
   to the development of an individual's teacher identity?

2. What are preservice teacher perspectives on how field experiences influence
   preservice teachers' instructional design and practice?

3. According to preservice teachers, how do field service experiences impact
   novice teachers' use of instructional technology?

Research Question #1

What are preservice teacher perspectives on how field experiences contribute to the

development of an individual's teacher identity?

According to Winslade (2002), professional identity is the fostering of "self-

descriptions" (p. 35), which are confirmed or contradicted by the prevailing social

perspectives and cultural practices that student teachers encounter while in the field

(Winslade et al., 2000). Addressing the first question required that participants reflect upon their understanding of what it means to be a teacher. Assessing teacher identity development also involved consideration of how participants learned to personify or express those core values and dispositions. During the course of this brief study, the participants identified changes in their self-perception, professional ideals and instructional practices. Participants attributed these changes to their field experiences. These findings align with Cooper and Olson (1996), who argued that an individual's professional identity is continually molded and reformed over time, through interaction with others in the field. The findings are also supported by Beijaard et al. (2000), who characterized teacher identity as a developmental progression. In the current study, field service experiences served to validate student teachers' previously held beliefs about teaching. Participants also reported having individual values or beliefs challenged and subsequently modified as a result of their field experiences. A review of the existing literature suggests that novice teacher perspectives and self-conceptions are challenged and influenced by immersion in professional settings (Schepens et al., 2009; Tickle, 2000; Korthagen, 2004). An analysis of the data in the study strongly suggests that field service did challenge and shape student teachers' self-concept and professional values. Therefore, it follows that field service also contributed to the development of student teachers' professional identity.

It appears that professional identity developed gradually during student teaching. At the start of the study, most of the participants described professionalism using external representations such as appropriate dress, being on time, and attending meetings. As the student teachers became more deeply involved in teaching, their perspectives matured and become less self-oriented. This resulted in student teachers

becoming more sensitive to the needs of students, which included attentiveness to learning styles, cognitive function, readiness, as well as sensitivity to students' social, physical and emotional well-being.

Fuller and Brown (1975) described this phenomenon as part of a series of stages during student teaching. According to Fuller and Brown, novice teachers initially identify with students more than teachers. Novice teachers are generally self-focused and concerned with survival during the early stages of field service. They may also experience conflict as they negotiate between their philosophical ideals about teaching and the realities in the classroom. As the novice adjusts to the demands of the classroom, attention shifts away from the self and is redirected towards student concerns. At that point, the novice becomes concerned with ensuring the personal and social well being of the student.

Fuller and Brown's findings sound remarkably similar to the experiences of the student teachers in the current study. At the start of student teaching, most of the participants perceived themselves as students rather than teachers. Initially, they also appeared to be self-oriented. As they became deeply engaged with the professional environment they began to perceive themselves primarily as educators. Changes in the novice teachers' professional identity were directly attributed to immersion within the social environment of the classroom. This finding reflects the conclusion by Wah Tan (1997) that professional identity is established and maintained through negotiations within social situations, and by assuming socially prescribed roles. Participants identified changes in their professional self-concept in all circumstances and types of placement, regardless of whether the student teacher viewed his or her situation as ideal.

At the start of the study, all of the participants expressed detailed beliefs of what it meant to be a teacher. The researcher observed that perspectives varied in both depth and complexity depending on one's prior experience. Beijaard et al. (2000) argued that constructs of professional identity vary, and are limited by one's personal knowledge and experiences. This appeared to be the case with the participants in the study. Student teachers with significant prior experience and those who had family members who were educators provided richly detailed views of professional expectations, competencies, and indicators of professionalism. Student teachers with significant prior knowledge brought highly specific foundational perspectives with them into student teaching. Student teachers whose professional knowledge was limited to personal experiences as students were less specific and more general when expressing their views. However, it appeared that all participants, regardless of the nature and extent of prior knowledge, brought foundational ideas into student teaching and then added to or modified those perspectives during their field placement.

To adequately address the first research question, it is essential to consider not only whether field service contributed to identity development, but also to identify the factors that fostered or inhibited positive identity development. One notable pathway to positive identity development was opportunities for reflection. Participants who spent time reflecting on their experiences reported significant professional growth during student teaching. The type of reflection appeared to be insignificant. Whether it was individual, corporate, formal or informal, self or mentor directed, those who engaged in reflective practice more clearly articulated their professional self-concept than those who did not engage in meaningful reflective practices. This was evident during interviews as well as in the formal written reflections included in the student

work samples. This finding is supported by Shulman (2004) who argued that teachers do not learn from experience, but by thinking about experiences. Feiman-Nemser and Remillard (1996) cited reflection during professional preparation as a way to confront and challenge pre-conceived beliefs. Student teachers believed that reflection supported their professional growth. Mentor teachers who took time for post-instructional reflection and discussion were very highly regarded by student teachers.

School environment was another factor that appeared to foster professional identity development. Participants who were placed in schools that took simple, proactive strides to support student teachers claimed that such efforts helped them become integrated as part of the academic community. Practices such as including student teachers in faculty meetings, in-service training, parent meetings, routine social activities and campus events helped students become professionally integrated. This in turn fostered their sense of professional identity.

Another factor that appeared to contribute to positive changes in a student teacher's professional identity was reception by others. This included how faculty, administrators, parents and students treated student teachers. An analysis of the data strongly suggests that when participants were treated like professionals, the student teachers viewed themselves as professionals. Likewise, if student teachers were treated like students, they were more likely to perceive themselves as students, rather than as teachers.

Finally, duties and activities that student teachers engaged in fostered professional identity. This was clearly evident in student responses. As teachers became more deeply involved in teacher responsibilities, their self-concept as teachers strengthened. The combination of environment, professional responsibility, social

engagement and reflection all served to encourage professional identity development among student teachers in the study.

Research Question #2

What are preservice teacher perspectives on how field experiences influence preservice teachers' instructional design and practice?

According to Berliner (1998), novice teachers are rational, relatively inflexible, and conform to the rules. They have context-free rules to govern behavior. Field placement provides novice teachers with a professional context to develop essential skills. Depending on the environment, student teachers experienced varying degrees of freedom to explore instructional methods and strategies during student teaching. The range and nature of what they did was largely dependent on the disposition of the mentor teacher and the extent to which student teachers were granted control of the classroom. The mentor's philosophical approach to teaching also appeared to play a significant role in how novice teachers approached instructional design and practice. Without exception, participants in the study perceived mentors as gatekeepers who managed the nature and scope of student teachers' involvement in the classroom.

In the final analysis, it appeared that field service experiences provided opportunities to engage in meaningful instructional practice. Subsequently, field service appeared to contribute to student teachers' professional competencies related to instructional design and practice. Furthermore, student teachers learned skills, instructional strategies and methodologies that they believed equipped them for professional service. However, field service did not necessarily provide opportunities for student teachers to experiment with teaching practices that deviate significantly from what the mentor considered routine. As a result, those who were placed with

more innovative teachers were encouraged to innovate. Those who were placed with mentors who relied on a select repertoire of proven strategies tended to use those specific instructional approaches when designing and teaching instructional units. These findings are supported by Nilssen (2010) who argued that student teachers mostly imitated the methods and instructional practices that were modeled by mentor teachers.

Research Question #3

According to preservice teachers, how do field service experiences impact novice teachers' use of instructional technology?

It appeared that much of what a teacher could do with instructional technology depended on the school building, the available I.T. support and the mentor teacher. In schools associated with this study, there appeared to be a strong relationship between available resources and the level of technology integration that teachers could pursue. An analysis of the findings suggests that if novice teachers have access to resources and technical support, they tend to be open to using instructional technology, even when the mentor may be reluctant to do so. The student teachers in the study intended to integrate technology into lessons. Overwhelmingly, however, they encountered roadblocks to innovation. This finding appears to be congruent with Bingfang (1999) whose study of novice EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers in China concluded that student teachers acknowledged a significant gap between what they wanted to do with technology in the classroom and what they were able to do, based on resources and support. The study in China found that students expressed both the desire and the ability to use educational technologies, but the facilities that they were assigned to were not equipped with the necessary tools. This appeared to be the case in

the current study. Attitudes and intention indicated a disposition towards utilizing instructional technology. However, as Sara pointed out, "the reality on the ground" was not conducive to actualizing those intentions.

Another interesting finding is that technology use in the current study was limited to teacher-centered tools that were primarily used during direct instruction. Student-centered technologies that would enable students to independently direct learning, engage in active inquiry, or participate in project-based activities were not present in classrooms associated with the study.

An analysis of participant responses during interviews and reflective journals suggested that most of the field service placements in the study did not offer meaningful opportunities to integrate technology. The primary roadblocks to using technology were limitations in available tools or infrastructure, I.T. support, and mentor teachers' own disposition towards using instructional technology. Based on an analysis of the data collected during the study, it is reasonable to conclude that field service held the possibility of positively supporting student teachers' use of technology. However, for most of the participants in the study, field service experiences failed to support student teachers' use of instructional technology.

Implications for Educational Professionals

Field service placement can provide powerful formative experiences for emerging professionals (Chong, Ling & Chuan, 2011). The results of the current study illustrate the importance of ensuring that student teachers are matched with highly qualified mentors. Unfortunately, research suggests that teacher education programs need to do more to identify and retain outstanding mentor teachers. For example, in 2011 the National Council on Teacher Quality reported that out of 134 teacher

preparation programs, only 14% required that mentor teachers possess the experience, instructional effectiveness and mentoring skills necessary to serve as mentors (Greenberg, Pomerance & Walsh, 2011). In fact, 43% of the institutions included in the study had no criterion for the selection of mentor teachers other than requiring a minimum number of years of experience. The NCTQ study estimated that although an average of 6 out of 25 teachers served as mentors in schools, only 3 out of 25, or 12% actually possessed the necessary qualifications. The National Council of Teacher Quality identified three key qualifications of an effective mentor teacher. These qualities included teaching experience, instructional effectiveness and mentoring skill (Greenberg et al., 2011).

The findings of the current study suggest that the teacher education program featured in the study should establish specific performance criteria for prospective mentor teachers. In the current study, the process of identifying, selecting and assigning mentor teachers was essentially ad-hoc. With the help of school administrators, the institution's Field Service Coordinator relied on personal knowledge and contacts within the schools to identify potential candidates. Principals routinely solicited faculty members to identify teachers who were willing to host a student teacher. These measures could hardly be described as systematic or comprehensive. In many cases student teachers were assigned to mentors with little knowledge or consideration of the prospective mentor's ability to support the student teachers' professional development. Although TSPC mandates a minimum number of years experience to qualify as a mentor, there is no explicit criteria that specifies the disposition or competencies necessary to serve. The institution featured in this study

should consider establishing measurable criteria along with a systematic process to identify outstanding mentor candidates.

Furthermore, the institution should pursue strategies to ensure that mentors understand the expectations of the teacher education program. Although the university distributed a detailed handbook for student teachers, mentors and field supervisors, in many cases mentors appeared to lack a clear understanding of the depth and range of activities that student teachers needed to experience in the classroom. This may be due to the fact that regional school districts host student teachers from at least four university teacher education programs. Each program has unique expectations and requirements for student teachers. It may help for program administrators to specifically articulate the differences between the various teacher education programs when working with school administrators and prospective mentors. One effective strategy for expressing clear expectations was for field supervisors, mentors and student teachers to meet prior to the start of the academic year to discuss goals and objectives. It would be beneficial to make certain that all mentors, field supervisors, and student teachers have the opportunity to formally meet together prior to the start of the semester.

In addition to establishing clear processes for identifying, training and retaining prospective mentors, schools of education need to carefully reevaluate how student teachers are assigned to mentors. Assignment to a mentor could be described as a random process. As mentors are identified, student teachers are matched by authorization level or subject area. In the current study, this process could not be described as systematic. Although the program featured in the study did make an attempt to match student teachers with mentors, the process was limited and could be

improved by introducing self-inventory tools that allow students and mentors to describe personal characteristics, qualities and preferences. The results of each self-inventory could be entered into a database and used to match mentors with student teachers who share compatible philosophical and professional perspectives. In the same manner that dating websites utilize self-inventories to find suitable partners, school districts and universities can employ those same tactics to identify compatible field placements.

Ideal Mentor Characteristics

The findings of the study highlight the critical importance of identifying and recruiting outstanding mentor teachers. Student teacher experiences varied dramatically based on their placement. At issue was not whether the mentors were excellent teachers. By all accounts the mentors in the study were regarded as excellent teachers and professionals. The critical factors appeared to be whether mentors possessed the necessary competencies and the disposition to serve as effective mentors.

Student teachers who were placed with mentors with many years of experience and high levels of subject matter expertise often received insufficient feedback and guidance regarding lesson design and delivery. Expert teachers were not always able to provide student teachers with adequate, concrete rationale for choices and instructional practices. To student teachers like Elwood, it appeared that the mentor was "flying by the seat of her pants." This phenomenon has been observed by Berliner (1988) and Wajnryb (1999) who proposed that merely competent teachers might make better mentors than expert teachers, because the competent and proficient teachers are better able "to communicate their reasons for thinking and acting the way they do" (p.24). Wajnryb concluded that the proficient teacher possessed the essential skills and

competencies necessary, but also acted intentionally and consciously. Therefore, he or she was better able to share methods, strategies and rationale with student teachers. This is critical for student teachers who desire specific feedback and guidance while developing and implementing lessons that are grade level appropriate.

While it is essential that mentors demonstrate excellence as teachers and exemplify professionalism, it is equally important that mentor candidates possess the ability to serve as supportive facilitators and guides for novice teachers. They must understand how to work with adult learners, be socially articulate, and possess skills to facilitate participatory, field-based learning for student teachers. To ensure that field service positively supports novice teachers' professional growth, mentors must be willing to release the reins within the classroom. They must view student teachers as partners, and relate to them as peers, rather than students. Mentors need to provide student teachers with timely, meaningful feedback and opportunities for reflection. The results of the study strongly suggest that someone who is an outstanding teacher may not necessarily have the necessary skills to serve as a good mentor. As Paige observed, "My mentor is a really great teacher, but not a great mentor."

Using the National Council of Teacher Quality study as a model, along with the competencies outlined by the Oregon Teachers Standards and Practices Commission, teacher education programs in Oregon should consider defining qualifications for prospective mentor teachers. The National Council of Teacher Quality identified three key qualifications of an effective mentor teacher. These qualities included teaching experience, instructional effectiveness and mentoring skill (Greenberg et al., 2011). Based on this criteria, mentor candidates would possess the capacity to positively impact student learning while also demonstrating skills in observation, providing

feedback, working collaboratively and reflecting on performance to improve instruction (Greenberg et al., 2011).

Through a formal application process, prospective mentors could be evaluated in each of the three key areas. This would require the development of tools to measure potential or existing aptitude as a mentor. Coupled with pre-existing data such as performance reviews, and feedback from students, student teachers and colleagues, the data could be aggregated, analyzed and reviewed by Field Service Coordinators and school administrators to identify quality mentor candidates. The process would ensure that student teachers are assigned to only the most qualified candidates. At the end of each academic session, summative feedback could be collected and reviewed to validate mentor performance and evaluate whether additional training or support is needed.

Field Service Specialists

Another potential strategy for identifying, training and retaining quality mentors is for school districts and university teacher preparation programs to corporately fund embedded field service specialists within local schools. Field service specialists would be responsible for using identifying and assessing prospective mentors, training and evaluating existing mentors. Specialists would serve as a link between regional schools and university programs to ensure that goals and objectives for field service are met. Field service specialists could also be used to help articulate or validate the essential criteria for serving as a mentor, and they could also provide important ongoing formative assessment and support for mentor teachers. Working alongside field supervisors, the field service specialists would provide additional data for evaluating student teachers. As dual stakeholders in the process, priorities and concerns could be

more consistently expressed, so that school districts and university preparation programs could better ensure positive field experiences for novice teachers.

Student Teacher Orientation

Another proactive measure that can improve student teacher experiences is to provide a welcoming environment for student teachers. Instituting basic orientation procedures would help student teachers more rapidly and efficiently integrate into the school community. This could be achieved by treating student teachers like members of the extended faculty within the building. Districts can support the transition into the school environment by providing each student teacher with an assigned parking space, access to the school network, a district email address, official school identification, and classroom keys. Administrators should ensure that student teachers are formally introduced as faculty to students, parents, staff and other faculty members. Mentor teachers and field supervisors can also support student teachers by clearly defining expectations for duties and responsibilities and establishing a timeline with benchmarks for performance. Furthermore, including student teachers as participants in all aspects of routine professional life such as faculty meetings and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings for students with special needs, curricular planning, and social events helps student teachers become integrated as members of the community. Efforts to receive and support student teachers at the start of field service may translate into more rapid community integration, which supports positive teacher identity development.

Additional Recommendations

Another strategy worth considering is to provide greater incentives for highly qualified mentors. This could include providing release time for mentors to work with individuals or groups of student teachers. Districts and teacher education programs

should explore ways to provide monetary incentives for outstanding mentors. A modest investment towards supporting and retaining highly qualified mentors could lead to improved performance among student teachers and provide a positive start for the next generation of educators.

A frequent recommendation from participants in the study was to provide sustained exposure to students with special needs. Participants at all levels of authorization expressed this perspective. Student teachers believed that experiences with special education students expanded their understanding of how to address special needs within a traditional classroom. This is significant considering that current law requires that students with special needs be mainstreamed in regular classes to the furthest extent possible.

One final recommendation for professional practice is to consider the benefits of placing student teachers in rural or inner-city schools. This may provide student teachers with opportunities to engage with individuals from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds that might not otherwise be represented in suburban schools. In the current study, significant shifts in perspective related to students' social and physical well being were widely attributed to placement within rural schools.

Limitations of the Research

While the findings of the study suggest a number of common themes, it is important to note that the study's findings cannot be generalized to all preservice teachers or all teacher education programs. The sample size of the study was small (N=10) and included students at a single institution. Despite the fact that the sample was representative of the student population within the program, the demographics of the sample were fairly homogeneous, and comprised of mostly young, single,

Caucasian, female, middle class undergraduates from rural or suburban communities. The limited representation of social and cultural diversity within the sample may have unintentionally narrowed the range of possible responses. The fact that the field supervisors and mentors in the study also shared similar social and cultural demographics may have also impacted the findings of the study.

Because the researcher had previously taught and worked extensively with the study's participants, it is possible that bias may have influenced results. Social desirability bias is the tendency for participants to answer questions in a way that will be favorably perceived by others (Berg, 1989). It is possible this type of bias may have resulted as a result of the researcher's familiarity with the participants. In an effort to limit this form of bias, the researcher informed participants during interviews whenever potential bias could arise and asked participants to answer as honestly and accurately as possible.

The researcher pursued additional measures to limit potential bias during the personal interviews. One method for limiting bias during interviews was that participants were asked the same questions using a guide sheet as a frame of reference. Interview questions were phrased in neutral terms that were simple, direct, and concrete. Participants were also given the questions in advance. Efforts to reduce reference bias involved having separate sections for the guide questions and introducing each section as a series of themed questions. Within each section the questions were ordered with more general or objective questions first. More personal or subjective questions followed. Also, where applicable, behavior questions were listed before attitude questions to avoid question order bias.

Another potential limitation of the study is the possibility that the interview questions failed to serve as appropriate measures of professional identity development. This appears unlikely, considering that the questions were derived from state standards using research-based measures for assessing professional identity.

Another limitation of the study is the fact that the interview questions excluded subject-matter expertise as a measure or indicator of teacher identity development. According to Beijaard et al. (2000), content-area mastery is one aspect of teacher identity. However, confidence in one's expertise develops over time. The current study provided a highly detailed albeit brief examination of student teachers' formative experiences. Therefore, the interview questions focused primarily on measures of identity development that are commonly associated with early stages of professional experience including self-description, articulation of professional ideals and characteristics, and integration and social navigation within the professional setting.

Suggestions for Further Research

The data generated through this study appear to be consistent with the existing literature related to preservice teacher preparation. However, there are a number of areas related to field service that merit further study. For example, additional research on how to best prepare and support mentor teachers and university field supervisors may help reform and improve teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, teacher education programs could benefit by more closely examining how to align university coursework with field service experiences. Also, examining teacher identity development from the perspective of mentor teachers and field supervisors could provide additional insight into the processes associated with teacher identity development.

Another possible area of further study relates to field service duration. To date, research has failed to demonstrate a solid relationship between the length of field service and student teacher performance. Although it was not one of the research questions, most of the participants in the program attributed their confidence and performance as student teachers to the prior experience as practicum students. The teacher education program that hosted the current study requires significantly more field experience than many teacher education programs in the United States. The program mandates a minimum of 1,080 hours of field placement. This figure stands in contrast to the national average, where student teachers spend an average of 691 hours in field placement. It may be worthwhile to further investigate whether and to what extent additional time in the field contributes to teacher identity development and professional practices. Furthermore, extended field service opportunities permit the possibility of exploring how positive partnerships between student teachers and mentor teachers impact K-12 student performance.

Conclusions

It is essential that educational leaders redouble efforts to enlist and retain highly qualified mentor teachers and field supervisors. This must include adoption of specific, measurable criteria to ensure that only the most qualified teachers serve as guides for emerging professionals. Establishing higher standards for mentor candidates, providing release time for collaboration, and compensating mentors for service could lead to improvements in teacher education programs.

In addition, participating school districts and teacher education programs should identify ways to partner and ensure that mentors and field supervisors provide the necessary support and expertise to adequately train new teachers. University faculty

must also shoulder the burden of responsibility for reform, and become engaged in ongoing dialog with mentors, field supervisors, and district personnel to ensure that university courses are relevant to the realities in our public school classrooms. University coursework must be intentionally and specifically tied to field placement. Methods for course assessment should be field-based and aligned to state or national standards. As coursework is embedded into the student teachers' classroom experiences, it must be carefully monitored to ensure that specific methodologies and strategies are appropriately explored during student teaching. Teacher preparation programs should consider collaborating with local school districts and technology providers to ensure that best practices in instructional technology are implemented across campuses, disciplines and grade levels. Furthermore, teacher educators should be proactive in identifying ways to support innovation within local schools.

Teacher educators in the United States have been entrusted with the enormous responsibility of preparing the next generation of K-12 teachers. Although national studies largely discount the efficacy of teacher education programs in the United States, the current study demonstrated that field service did contribute significantly to student teachers' professional understandings, and provided them with opportunities to develop essential skills and professional competencies. On a granular level, the study served as a brief snapshot of professional growth for a small group of emerging professionals. Each of the participants acknowledged that the experience was significant. Although the findings of this study are not intended to be generalized to all teacher education programs, the findings do reflect and support the current literature related to preservice teacher field experiences. By reflecting on the findings of this and

other studies, educational leaders can identify practical measures for improving the

professional training for future generations of teachers and administrators.

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APPPENDICES

A: Letter for Prospective Participants

B: Guide Questions for Initial Interviews

C: Lesson Plan Template

D: Lesson Plan Outline with Prompt for Reflection

E: Guide Questions for Follow up Interviews

Appendix A – Letter for Prospective Participants
Letter for Prospective Participants

A qualitative study of preservice teacher field experiences

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You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear, or if you need additional information.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research is to explore how extended field service opportunities shape preservice teacher confidence, attitudes, identity and perspectives about teaching.

Your expected time commitment for this study is one semester

Participation will require two face-to-face interviews. The interviews will be held once at the start of the study and once at the conclusion of the study. Each session is expected to last one hour. Participation will also involve the review of student work that is submitted as part of the student work sample.

Risks:
The risks of this study are minimal. These risks are similar to those you experience when disclosing work-related information to others. The topics in the survey may upset some respondents. You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

Benefits:
There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. However, I do hope that by providing you with the opportunity to reflect on your experiences, the reflective process may positively contribute to your preparation for service as an educator. One potential benefit of the study is that information obtained from this study will be used to identify trends and consider theoretical models for improving preservice and in-service teacher training. The research may also serve to expand existing theoretical perspectives related to teacher identity development, social learning theory, and constructivist approaches to instructional design.

Confidentiality:

Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all researcher notes and documents.

- Notes, interview transcriptions, and transcribed notes and any other identifying participant information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher. When no longer necessary for research, all materials will be destroyed.

- The researcher will review the collected data. Information from this research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and any publications that may result from this study. All participants involved in this study will not be identified and their anonymity will be maintained

- Each participant has the opportunity to obtain a transcribed copy of their interview.

- Participants should tell the researcher if a copy of the interview is desired.

- Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part in this study, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You are free to not answer any question or questions if you choose. This will not affect the relationship you have with the researcher.

Costs to Subject:
There are no costs to you for your participation in this study.

Compensation:
There is no monetary compensation to you for your participation in this study.

Any further questions can be directed to the researcher, or to:

Dr. Terry Huffman
George Fox University
414 N. Meridian St., #V 124
Newberg, OR 97132
503-538-8383

Consent:
By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant Signature
_____Date_____

Researcher Signature _____Date_____

Appendix B – Guide Questions for Session 1

Preservice Teacher Interview Questions: Session 1

School Environment and Community
1. What are the professional expectations for teachers within your school?
2. Describe the culture of your school.

Curriculum and Instruction
3. Describe what you are currently doing in your classroom.
4. Describe your approach to instructional design.
5. Describe your approach to teaching.
6. Describe your approach to the use of instructional technology.
7. What is the basis for your approach to each of these areas?

Mentor Teacher and Field Supervisor
Based on your experience to date:
8. What is your mentor teacher's approach to instructional design and practice?
9. Does your mentor teacher use technology in the classroom?
10. Do they encourage or discourage you from using instructional technology?
11. Do you consider your mentor teacher a professional?   ….A master teacher?
12. What do you expect from your mentor teacher?
13. What do you expect from your field supervisor?

Relevance to University Coursework
14. To what extent do you expect to use/apply technology skills you have learned in your college courses in your student teaching?
15. To what extent do you expect to use/apply the strategies and methods you have learned in college courses in your student teaching?
16. Have your learned strategies and methods for differentiating instruction in your college coursework?

Teacher Identity
17. Do you perceive yourself a member of the community in your school building? To what extent?
18. During your field experience, are you a teacher or a student?
19. Do you view yourself as a teacher?
20. What does it mean to be a teacher?
21. What are the key characteristics of a competent educator?
22. How do you measure professionalism in teachers?

Appendix C – Lesson Plan Template

> **Submitted by:**
> **Date:**
> **Grade Level:**
> **Number of Students**:

Title:

Common Core Standards or Common Core State Standards:

Focus Statement (Big Idea/Goal):

Lesson Objectives:

Materials/Safety:

Anticipatory Set/ Pre-Activity:

Step by Step procedures:

Closure:

Assessment:
>   **Before:**

>   **During:**

>   **After:**

Reflection:

>   **Student Success:**

>   **Teacher Instructional Strategies:**

>   **Differentiation:**

Appendix D – Lesson Plan Outline with Prompt for Reflection

Lesson Plan Explanation

Title: Each lesson should contain a title that helps identify the focus.

Common Core Standards or Common Core State Standards: Select no more than two common core standards for any one lesson. You may address more but only identify two.

Focus Statement: This is the big idea or the ultimate goal you want your students to understand. It is a short, simple statement, using student-friendly language that tells the students what they will be doing during the lesson and why it is so important.

Lesson Objectives: These are what students should be working towards during your lesson. They must be written in terms that can be assessed. (2-3 objectives are suggested).

Example: Students will be able to successfully list 6 out of the 7 colors of the rainbow.

Materials/Safety: What items will you need to successfully complete the lesson? List all materials (manipulatives, books, supplies, etc.) that you need as well as the students. List any safety precautions your students should be taking.

Anticipatory Set/ Pre-Activity: This section answers the question, "How will you engage students in your lesson?" It is the "hook" that gets your students excited and anxious to participate in your lesson. Include a **short** statement, question or example that relates to the topic and to the interests/prior knowledge of the students.

Example: If students are doing a lesson on 3-D figures, you may start out by asking who has seen any 3-D movies before. Ask them to explain how it was different than normal movies. Lead into the focus statement.

Step by Step Procedures: This is the bulk of your lesson, and the main focus. Give step by step instructions that you would follow during teaching. Consider the following when planning/writing this out:
- ° What will you be saying or doing to ensure student thinking/learning?
- ° What strategies, activities and examples will you incorporate into the lesson?
- ° How will you transition students from one segment to the next?
- ° What questions will you be asking them?
- ° What technology or materials will you be using? How do you us them?

Closure: Closure is a wrap up at the end of a lesson that allows students to organize the information they just learned. How do you want to close the lesson? Will students be doing another activity? Students should be engaging in discussion, thought processes,

or review. Students may also be given time to reflect on what they learned. (1 paragraph)

Assessment: This is a three part section, focusing on before, during and after your lesson. Each section should include the strategy you used, a description of the strategy, and the success of your strategy.

> **Before the lesson:** This is when you'll gather information about students' prior knowledge. How will you use this knowledge within your lesson? (You may use a pre-assessment, such as a pop quiz, or a quick discussion).

> **During the lesson:** This section seeks to answer how you will be assessing your students' understanding of the lesson during your teaching. What type of feedback would you give your students? How would you help them to improve their performance, or challenge them? (Some ideas would be guided practice, questioning, structured observations, independent practice, discussions, etc.)

> **After the lesson**: This is a summative assessment, seeking to answer how will you know if your students understood and grasped the concept? How will your assessments provide evidence of student learning in relation to objectives or common core standards/common core state standards? How will you differentiate assessments?

Reflection: Reflection is a vital and key component in lesson planning. It allows you to reflect upon the success of the lesson, change components that were unsuccessful, and make notes for the future. **Every** lesson will include three components:

> 1. A reflection of the lesson success in terms of student learning
> 2. Teacher Instructional Strategies you used
> 3. How you did differentiate in this lesson and/or how you could differentiate it for students in the future

The following five components only need to be included in 25% of the lessons (approximately 4). Not every lesson will need all of them. Choose which portion you want to include in what lessons.

> **Implications for future teaching:** How will you teach this in the future? What modifications or changes would you make in order to enhance or fix this lesson?
> **Implications of alignment with Professional Development Goals:** How did this lesson align with the Professional Development Goals you created at the beginning of the year? Did it meet any of your goals? How did it meet the goal? Could you modify the lesson to meet a goal?
> **NETS:** Include one or two NETS standards that were met in this lesson. What did you implement in the lesson that aligned with the standard? How successful was it?

Literacy: Include two literacy strategies that were used in this lesson. How did you execute these strategies? Were they successful? Why or why not?

Classroom Management: Include two classroom management strategies you used. Why did you choose these strategies? Did they work in this lesson? What could you have done differently?

Use the Lesson Planning Checklist to make sure your lesson plans are complete. (Optional)

Appendix E – Guide Questions for Session 2

Guide Questions for Session 2
Teacher Identity, School Environment and Community
1. How and/or to what extent has your student teaching experience contributed to your identity as a teacher?

2. Do you perceive yourself as part of the community in your building?
   a. To what extent?
   b. How are things different (or the same) from when you started?
3. Describe how your duties and responsibilities have shifted since you started.
4. Do you perceive yourself as a teacher?   Why, why not?

Curriculum and Instruction
5. How and to what extent has your student teaching experience shaped your professional behavior in terms of instructional design and teaching?
6. How and to what extent has your student teaching experience shaped your professional behavior in terms of the use of instructional technology?
7. How has your mentor teacher influenced or shaped your instructional practices?
8. How has your mentor teacher influenced or shaped your use of instructional technology?
   a. Has your mentor teacher used technology in the classroom
   b. Have they encouraged or discouraged you from using instructional technology
   c. Have they encouraged or discouraged you from using certain resources/strategies

Relevance to University Coursework
9. To what extent have you been able to apply the skills, strategies or methods you learned in college courses during student teaching?
10. Have you had opportunities to differentiate instruction while in the field?
11. Have you become more sensitive to student needs as a result of your field experience?
12. To date, what is the most valuable lesson you learned during your field service?
13. Do you feel that your field experience has been worthwhile?

Mentor Teacher and Field Supervisor
14. What have you learned from your mentor teacher about being a professional?
15. How has your mentor teacher supported your development as a teacher?
16. How has your field supervisor supported your development as a teacher?
17. What does it mean to be a teacher?