

Nurturing the Dispositions and Identities for Student Teachers' Professional Development: A Critical Review

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v4i3.788>

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ABSTRACT

This paper gives a critical review of studies centered on nurturing teachers' dispositions, which is a pivotal role to teacher educators when executing teacher preparation programs and teacher development. Basing on experiential evidence, pre-service teachers are said to have higher expectations during their enrollment into the teaching program on the goals to achieve and the kind of teacher they wish to be. However, during the process of learning to teach they usually face "reality shock" especially during their teaching practice where they are exposed to the actual school and classroom environment. The challenges encountered during teaching practice are said to have negative impact on their beliefs about the career which lowers their self-efficacy, hence leading to job attrition for some of them. The studies discuss issues related to theory and practice in preparing student teachers from their pre-service teaching to beginning teachers heading to their on job professional development. Teaching profession is not that much smooth and easy task but a complex and dynamic task of knowing the learners' expectations, differences and backgrounds and facilitating learning to suit the community's context. Thus, student teachers require well informed and careful training and ongoing professional development which will enhance their beliefs, self-efficacy and identities and make teaching a productive endeavor.

KEYWORDS

nurturing; dispositions; student teachers; professional development; self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

The training of student teachers is considerate to many diversified factors. Student teachers' learning to teach and professional development relies on teacher educators' support, mentorship, role modeling and interaction patters (Rose Ragins & Kram, 2007). In recent years, researchers have shown increased interest to exploring how student teachers struggle to develop their own professional future, trying to figure out how they are going to be effective teachers (Albakri et al., 2017). This reflect that, there is limited training and professional support in colleges and schools. For example, poor or limited professional relationship between student teachers and their educators during college training, and with their mentor teachers during teaching practicum make roots for student teachers' self-reliance in learning to teach (Humman & Romano, 2009). Such incidence limits or affects student teachers' dispositions, identities and professional growth.

Dispositions are frequent and voluntary habits of thinking and doing. Teacher dispositions play a great role in enhancing learners' achievement, educating and developing student teachers (Cline & Necochea, 2006). Apriliaswati and Fitrianingrum (2022) says that in the past, Dewey has defined teacher dispositions as teacher moral

exemplars. Nurturing teachers' dispositions from their pre-service teaching to on job professional development is a pivotal role to teacher educators and the central focus of teacher education programs (Dottin, 2009; Hunzker et al, 2009). Dispositions have much influence on teachers' identity, that is the kind of teacher we see. Identity is a "self or group" image constructed by social and cultural life through negotiation and communication about these experiences (Izadinia, 2014). Teacher's identity as a lifelong image and meaning making about the career is constructed and re-constructed, formed and transformed, and developed over time (Williams, Ritter & Bullock, 2012). Identity development is also dependent on effective relationships and interaction patterns between teachers with student teachers and the community. Teachers' identity development is based on and can be traced from their personal background and training to in-service teacher professional development (TPD) (Beijaard, 2019). Teachers' tensions about the possessed knowledge, skills, actual figures and meaning of 'what, how and why they do' enhance their understanding, planning and practices.

This review study was informed and got constructive insights for teacher's professional development from three key readings. First, Kim and Schallert's (2011) study on "relationships building between teacher and students in teacher preparation program". Second, Pandergast et al's (2011) study on "nurturing dispositions" focusing on pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, beliefs and identity. Third, Trent's (2010) study on "identity construction through teacher education". The three articles touch crucial aspects from classroom theory teaching and learning, through teacher practicum to beginning teacher's professional development. The studies cast a light on how teacher dispositions are nurtured and developed under support, guidance and mentorship by teacher educators and in-service teachers.

The articles raise awareness among teacher educators, teacher training institutions and curriculum planners to re-think deep on the proper means of preparing and developing teachers to be. Creation of insight and a think tank in teacher education programs should be enhanced for teacher educators, in-service teachers and pre-service teachers' benefit and collaboratively work. These efforts will then make teaching profession a more enjoyable and productive profession. The influence of these articles to teacher education drives the reviewer's interest and equips with practical knowledge and theoretical understanding towards effective preparation of student teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perspectives presented in the key readings

Kim and Schallert's (2011) study centers on the relationships building between teacher and students in teacher preparation program as a continuing activity. The focus is on "What teachers do and what they are". The ideal is on considering teachers' behaviours to students' achievement from teacher education through teacher practice to teacher on job which is in line with Cohen's (2011) idea on features of teaching. The authors stress on the concern on positive relationship between teachers and students development as a corner stone to pre-service teachers aspiring to successful teachers. The authors bring into attention that the perception of positive or negative relationship among many student teachers and teacher educators by experience is narrowed to only if a student is attentive to listen. However, little focus on learner's development and effect on teaching and learning are considered in Kim and Schallert's study. Lampert (2010) articulates that, such narrow perception is of short span but it should not ignore the lifelong learning effect to learners understanding and achievement.

Pandergast et al (2011) explain about the role of teacher education and teaching practicum (TP) in maintaining and promoting pre-service teachers' and beginning teachers' self-efficacy. On the other hand in-service teachers' role, mentorship and relationship to pre-service and beginning teachers have been seen and said to be a complement of teacher educators' theoretical work in training institutions. In-service teachers' roles and support to pre-service teachers enhance the sense of ongoing professional development (Lampert, 2010). However, little is understood and taken into consideration that in-service teachers are practical instructors of novices into the actual school setting and classrooms. The article summarizes the fact that pre-service teachers are used to have high self-efficacy, strong beliefs and expectations during their enrollment to teacher education. However, their efficacy faces "reality shock" when they go for teaching practice due to the challenges they face in the field, as a result their efficacy become lower during their graduation and as beginning teachers. The analysis of the current study highlight that, self-efficacy can be maintained by enhancing the three sub scales of efficacy, (i) instructional strategies, (ii) classroom management, and (iii) student engagement (Pandergast et al, 2011). This can be done through adhering and developing the four sources of efficacy which are: First, mastery experience which is a boost towards success using a belief of prior achievement, second, verbal persuasion which is the influence on the perceived capabilities with the sense of "If I try harder I will succeed", third, vicarious experience which deals with the modeling and observation of techniques, and fourth, emotional arousal as the perceived motivation for capability and outcomes of learning.

Trent's (2010) action research discusses the role of teacher education in construction of teacher identity, relying on teacher's interests, roles, ethics, views on student learning, goals of education and expectations for the future. Teacher identity is defined as the kind of person in a given context, and teacher identity construction is an active process of creation, learning to teach in the process of becoming a teacher that is "Who one is and who can become." Transformation is the central theme which sees teaching practice as sites of inquiry leading teacher to become decision maker, consultant, curriculum developer, analyst, activist and school leader. In the process of becoming teachers usually keep on focusing on "identity-in-practice" and "identity-in-discourse".

Identity-in-practice is an experience for example of teachers before and after teaching practicum (TP), from theory to actual classroom practice, where student-teachers develop awareness and correct misconceptions (Cohen, 2011) such as "I used to think that...now I know that..." Student teachers get chance to update their teaching methods, understand and experience the real and practical world of teaching through: engagement (real teaching and doing teaching); imagination (creating images of themselves, their communities and the world); and alignment (adherence to educational theories). This process transforms "who they are, what they do, why they do, and how they do it?"; from theoretical to practical teaching, behaving, relating with students, co-teachers and community. The internal factors like self-motivation and assessment together with external factors such as support from co-teachers, interpersonal relationship, acknowledgement and success (see Bandura, 1977; Bransford et al., 2005; Cohen, 2011), all together have a vital role in making a kind of a teacher we see in a community. Identity-in-discourse on the other hand refers to what individuals' commitment to what they "must, should, possibly and probably do"; by examining "good or bad" (modality), and the ways in which teachers explain and justify laws or institutional authority, and moral evaluation referencing to values (legitimation). Teacher professional ethics are therefore highly nurtured and developed through identity-in-discourse.

The roles of teacher training programs as a changing agent towards construction of teacher identity are to promote unit in teaching and learning, produce harmony among teachers' recognition and accepting roles. Teaching practice in between is a mirror showing students teachers their status in mastery and application of the theories and the content knowledge "pedagogical content knowledge" and practical living and doing of the teaching in the field. The roles of teacher educators and in-service teachers are to help student teachers build confidence and sense of commitment to strengthen their identities (Korthagen, 2017; Young & Erickson, 2011). However, the study suggested the need for further longitudinal study from teacher training, through TP to in-service teaching. The reviewer strongly concurs with such suggestion, because each level of teacher professional development has got its peculiarities in contributing to teacher identity construction.

Overlooked perspectives

Pandergast's et al (2011) view on pre-service student-teachers' self-efficacy and beliefs have overlooked and paid minimal attention to the influence of the background of an individual towards joining teaching profession and later on self-efficacy beliefs maintenance, monitoring and growth. The fact that teachers have personal influences towards loving or joining the teaching workforce have been left aside. In actual sense, some student teachers have inborn nature of liking teaching, others have been influenced by their former teachers, parents, guardians, friends or reinforced by the schooling system (Bandura, 1977; Bransford et al., 2005). Ignoring their backgrounds may have significant impacts on their training, monitoring and nurturing their dispositions towards desired goals. There is a need of other deep studies to understand how the background of pre-service teachers drives them to opt for teaching profession, and whether their background have contribution or impact on their self-efficacy beliefs. Such study will deepen an understanding and equip teacher training programs and teacher educators with valid knowledge and skills of nurturing, mentoring and developing the pre-service teachers' efficacy beliefs to enhance their learning and teaching efficiency.

Another key point that is overlooked by Pandergast et al (2011) is the role of mentors in assisting or discouraging student teachers, which is too crucial in self-efficacy development during TP has not been well observed by the researchers. However, Pandergast and fellows neglected the role of an individual in personal judgment and readjustment to situations "how well can one execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" and on such courses an individual being able to face obstacles (Bandura, 1977). But the authors relied much on external support as major means of sustaining and maintaining self-efficacy, neglecting individual efforts.

Kim and Schallert (2011) have overlooked the '*dark side*' of margins for teacher educator and student teacher relationship. Carefully examined teacher educator to student teachers' relationship must be considered not to endanger the teaching and learning process. It also should not let to be a friend to friend relationship without yielding positive results to teaching, learning and professional development. It is very crucial for learners to learn how the actual teaching situation is, and make teacher-student relationship as a continuing day to day and life-long activity, even when they are out of training and placed in schools (Cohen, 2011).

Trent's (2010) action research have laid little attention on how teaching practicum (TP) can be effectively used as among the key tools of enhancing student teachers' identities. Exposing student teachers to actual school and classroom contexts, help student teachers to interpret theories by theorizing the meaning and meaningful teaching and learning. Also, the sense of developing interpersonal relationship among student teachers themselves,

students, teacher mentors and with teacher educators was examined and reflected in the study. Similarly, the community is to be considered in influencing teacher identity because student teachers are from the community and works to train students who are from community and will be back to community (Bandura, 1977; Erickson et al., 2011; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Grossman's et al., 2009), so their identities should also reflect and adhere the community needs.

Aspects which need further consideration to be better developed

With response to Pandergast et al (2011), two semesters covered under research at the beginning and at the end of the program seems to be more generalized. Hence, there is a need to conduct more studies from different universities and settings so as to come with generalized findings. What is really and practically happening in the TP field is somewhat uncovered pertaining to influence of social realities (Bandura, 1977) and collaborations in teaching fields (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The better approach could be to show the evidences and realities of what faces the student teachers during teaching practicum and what efforts have been injected to rescue their efficacy dropping sharply.

The low turnover rate of respondents' surveys during the second survey could be better attached with the TP driving forces towards lower self-efficacy. That is adding to the results, as an evidence to the views and perceptions on lower self-efficacy after teaching practicum. This would alternatively provide room for development of teacher self-efficacy during teaching practicum, by bridging the gaps between theory and practice and being able to student teachers' positions and continuing identities (Korthagen, 2017). Also, it could be better for self-efficacy study to include undergraduate (bachelor degree) student-teachers. This drives a need for a longitudinal developing study which would be the potential in knowing of at least the status of self-efficacy within two to three years in different programs of different levels.

Kim and Schallert's (2011) arguments and the perception of positive or negative relationship among many teachers and teacher educators being narrowed to only if a student is attentive to listen, with little focus on learner's development and effect on teaching and learning. However, it is potential to focus on a broader perception towards learner's achievement through whole body and lifelong development. Thus there is a need to stretch up our minds as educators on seeing learner's whole body and lifelong development adhering to Feiman-Nemser's (2001) concepts of educative mentoring and modeling. Let us bring into our minds that, short term attention in class and pass in tests are not indicators of successful teaching and learning, but efficiency of teaching and learning must be viewed on how learners will be able to manipulate the acquired skills into managing varying challenges on their daily lives, being able to find solutions on their own. Also, the relationship between teachers and the community has been by passed, neglecting the fact that students teachers and students are part of community and are to go back and serve the community (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thus, teacher-community relationship must also receive considerable note, because teaching and learning, as well as knowledge and skills are community commodities.

Trent (2010) in his action research focused only on one group of final year undergraduate English language teaching program which is narrow in context. There is a need to investigate various groups of teacher students. The focus must be expanded to consider different cross-cultural settings and backgrounds, varied linguistic and educational backgrounds so as to bring a wider deep understanding on how teacher education plays a role in identity construction. Another comparative study might be done on examining the influence of teacher training program and education on identity

construction pre and after teaching practicum, to determine the influence of teaching practicum on identity construction of pre-service teachers.

The issue of identity should have been considered the light of Erickson et al., (2011) that identity comprises three layers; “relational, imagined and practical identity”. Identity as relational deals with relationships between teacher educators with student teachers in the institution. Imagined identity guides the student teachers’ adoption of teaching approaches and collaborative teaching with colleagues which develops one’s image and meaning associated with the career. Practical identity interprets five practices carried by teacher which include; “enacting pedagogy, serving as mentors, negotiating contexts, challenging norms and engaging in inquiry” (Liao & Maddamsetti, 2019; Wenger, 1998 in McAnulty & Cuenca, 2014; Young & Erickson, 2011).

Erickson et al (2011) further expound the above five practices differently as follows; enacting pedagogy to daily teaching and learning practices and collaborations. Serving as mentors by modeling practices of student teachers to students and fellow pre-service teachers. Negotiating contexts are real daily life and working of pre-service teachers with colleagues and community engagement. Challenging norms and engaging in inquiry refer to dealing with the culture of teaching and socio-cultural practices within the teaching content. A considerable note is to be borne in mind that, identity of teachers is subject to change over time influenced by obligations, duties and responsibilities of pre-service and their interpersonal relations and collaborations (Erickson et al., 2011). Moreover, institutional support and arrangements on policies and resources allocation must be considered as among influential factors to student teachers’ professional identity development.

CONCLUSION

The readings consider teacher education and training as multifaceted activities and operational pillars for pre-service teachers’ dispositions and professional identity development. The authors from different angles of their concerns have focused and insisted on the relevance of well-designed teacher education programs that will enable student teachers to interact with others, in their communities of practices and adjust to different teaching and learning circumstances (Bandura, 1977). From Cohen’s (2011) inputs, the three readings are too influential in helping student teachers cope with challenges on how to manage classroom, classroom material development, use of instructional strategies, assess student progress, attend to learners’ learning differences like those with special needs, those with different cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Well trained student teachers are expected to be creative and flexible enough to cope with the changing demands of classrooms ad community.

The key role of teacher educators, tutors and in-service teachers as mentors in nurturing and developing the pre-service teachers’ professional growth is of central focus in all the readings. However, the questions that need more sensitization, researches and to be addressed are: (i) Whether teacher educators and in-service teachers are equipped with, know and play their roles in nurturing and mentoring student teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs (expectations) and identities (real continuing being)? (e.g., Young & Erickson, 2011; Yuan, 2016), (ii) How well are the teacher educators and tutors prepared to develop identities among pre-service teachers?, (iii) How they do it? (e.g., Warren, 2017), (iv) How teacher educators, tutors and in-service teachers’ identities influence student teachers’ identity construction? And, (v) What is the position of student teachers in accepting the mentorship support offered by in-service teachers in developing their efficacy and identities during teaching practicum? The key ideas in the three articles in question are

interlocking and complementing each other. It is evidenced that pre-service and in-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and identity are to be maintained, nurtured and developed collaboratively. There must be mutual understanding and interpersonal relationships among teachers themselves (student teachers, in-service teachers, tutors and teacher educators). Their collaborative engagement should focus on the major goals of education which is students' achievement and later society transformation.

Experience through articles and in practice shows that, tutors and teacher educators within the training program and out of it are crucial agents in making a teacher to be with reasonable identity (e.g., Grossman's et al., 2009; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Wenger, 1998). Their roles include imparting content and pedagogical skills, psychological understanding, nurturing and developing the imparted skills. They are also obliged to preparing student teachers to be creative and flexible in adapting the teaching environment and have a sound professional development. Tutors and teacher educators must ensure and provide close supervision and advice to pre-service teachers during college training, teaching practicum and prepare them for their future teaching life. Educators are also having a crucial role of merging student teachers' cultural diversities and raise awareness of cross-cultural understanding on them. This will develop pre-service teachers' mastery of diverse community settings with varied educational needs, and enhance student teachers' and mentors' relationships and support.

There is also a need for student teachers to be sensitized, made ready to work in challenging school environment because teaching task is not always smooth and easy. Rather, teaching is a work that requires creativity and flexibility to the maximum extent. However, communities of practices (CoPs) and professional teaching and learning communities as groups of teachers and educators need to meet regularly and share expertise (Bandura, 1977). Also, these CoPs are to work collaboratively as professional avenues to improve teaching and learning skills and the academic performance of students (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Student teachers, teachers, tutors and teacher educators are the prominent figures of all these learning communities which provide continuous support to teachers' professional development.

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