

2007

## Voices Echoing The Past: 'I Decided To Do Teaching Because of the Teacher That I Had.' Thirteen Female Secondary Entry-Level Teachers Candidates Teaching Not Only What But Also How They Were Taught

Steven S. Sexton

*Te Wananga o Aotearoa, New Zealand*

---

### Recommended Citation

Sexton, S. S. (2007). Voices Echoing The Past: 'I Decided To Do Teaching Because of the Teacher That I Had.' Thirteen Female Secondary Entry-Level Teachers Candidates Teaching Not Only What But Also How They Were Taught. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(3).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2007v32n3.6>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.

<http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol32/iss3/6>

## **VOICES ECHOING THE PAST: 'I DECIDED TO DO TEACHING BECAUSE OF THE TEACHERS THAT I HAD.' THIRTEEN FEMALE SECONDARY ENTRY-LEVEL TEACHER CANDIDATES TEACHING NOT ONLY WHAT BUT ALSO HOW THEY WERE TAUGHT**

Steven S. Sexton, Te Wananga o Aotearoa, New Zealand

*Abstract: This paper reports on a study that sought to uncover and explore the beliefs female secondary pre-service teachers held about teaching and being the teacher as they entered into their teacher education programs. The results indicated that for the participating teacher candidates it was their prior teachers in their intended subject who most informed how they saw themselves in the role as the teacher. Specifically, those secondary teachers who sought critical thinking in them as students impacted upon this teacher-role identity the most. Implications highlight the lack of research on females in secondary education and the importance in-service teachers play in shaping those who may or may not become the teachers of tomorrow.*

### **Introduction**

Lortie's (1975) seminal work, *Schoolteacher: A sociological study* recognised that teachers were the product of their own lifetime of experiences. It was these life experiences which affected not only what they did, why they did it and how they did it. Similarly, pre-service teachers have been shown to hold beliefs about teaching. Kagan (1992) defined beliefs as those tacit and often unconsciously held preconceptions and assumptions about students, classrooms and the academic material to be taught.

Different aspects of these beliefs have been addressed by research studies. In particular, studies that focused on: challenging student teachers' prior beliefs (Renzaglia, Hutchins & Suzanne, 1997; Anderson & Holt-Reynolds, 1995); tracking the changes in beliefs over the length of the initial teacher education course (Greene & Magliaro, 2003; Mahlios, 2002); investigating how initial teacher education could best approach teacher candidates' prior beliefs to better align them to those of the institution or researcher (Raths, 2001; Morales, 2000; Wubbels, 1992); and exploring the issues of why initial teacher education needs to address teacher candidates' prior beliefs (Henson, 2001; Holt-Reynolds, 2000). This research, however, neither sought to understand where, why or how these beliefs were formed nor explored pre-service teachers' interpretations about their own schooling experiences.

This paper reports on a study that sought to investigate how prior teachers impacted upon the participating female secondary pre-service teachers' preconceptions and assumptions of teaching and their role as the teacher. This student teacher population was targeted as there is a paucity of studies that focus on females entering their secondary education programs. There exists a great body of work on, for example:

- ∞ Gender in education (Haynie, 2005; Anderson, 2005);
- ∞ Gender in the classroom (Mael, Alonso, Gibson, Rogers & Smith, 2005; McCaughy, 2004);
- ∞ Female pre-service teachers' effective learning in the Maths and Sciences (Bullock & Freedman, 2005; Preece, Postlethwaite, Skinner & Simpson, 2004);
- ∞ Female student teachers and their experiences of sexual harassment in the classroom (Schilt, 2003; Miller, 1997); and
- ∞ Ethnic females in education (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).

But there is very little that addresses females in secondary education teacher training. In fact an ERIC (Educational Resources Information Centre) search under this topic at the time of this study (2005-2006) included only one research study. Huerta and Flemmer (2005) reported on a study that examined six female secondary student teachers. The focus of the study was to investigate how growing up, learning, living and studying in communities that were overwhelmingly made up of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints would not prepare these student teachers for diverse student populations other than what they themselves were members of. As insightful as this study was to how religion acted as a filter to educational training, further research is needed to explore how pre-service teachers see themselves in the role as teacher. This paper attempts to highlight one aspect of female secondary pre-service teachers, how their own prior experiences in the classroom informed their teacher-role identity.

## **Rationale**

When I undertook my own teacher education training, we were required to record, discuss and elaborate upon how we saw teaching, the role of the teacher and the role of the student. It was in those discussions that the impetus for this study arose. It appeared that some student teachers had more articulate and clearer reasons for deciding on teaching as a career than others, such as the females entering secondary maths and science as compared to their male counterparts. Some teacher candidates were able to recall and discuss how two to four explicit prior teachers had set the example of how we wanted or did not want to see ourselves as the teacher. Were these prior schooling experiences that were so vividly remembered representative of other pre-service teachers in other programs? This question formed the kernel that grew into a research study that sought to explore this idea. Specifically, what do female secondary pre-service teachers remember about their prior schooling experiences? Why do they remember these events and teachers? How do their interpretations of prior schooling experiences influence the teacher they see themselves to be?

## **Method**

The study employed a mixed-model research design using both survey instrument and interview methods and approached the 2005 teacher education program entrants at a large Australian and New Zealand university. Phase 1 used quantitative and qualitative analysis of the modified self-administrated questionnaire *What Was School Like?* (Sexton, 2004, Mahlios & Maxson, 1995). Phase 2 utilised qualitative analysis of life story accounts gathered in semi- and

unstructured interviews to explore how pre-service teachers interpreted prior teacher experiences. While phase 1 approached all successful applicants enrolled in the teacher training programs, phase 2 focused on three student teacher groups: female secondary, male primary and non-traditional, of whom the female secondary candidates are being reported on in this paper. Both phases were conducted prior to the commencement of any coursework to prevent possible course content altering pre-existing beliefs.

### **Phase 1**

The questionnaire asked participants to provide demographic data then recall both their primary and secondary school years and choose from a list of metaphors, or write in their own metaphor, that best described what these educational experiences actually were like and what they wished these school experiences should have been like. The questionnaire asks participants to describe themselves using a four-point Likert scale inventory of self-esteem adapted from the short form of the Coppersmith (1967) Self-Esteem Inventory. Participants then chose from a list of metaphors or wrote in their own for how they saw teaching and finally chose eight characteristics from a list of 62 characteristics as to what they perceived were ideal student and teacher characteristics. This questionnaire was selected as it has a research history with cross-cultural populations, established validity and research use in both its original and modified forms (Sexton, 2004; Mahlios, 2002; Mahlios & Maxson, 1995; Yamamoto, Hardcastle, Muehl, & Muehl, 1990; Hardcastle, Yamamoto, Parkay, & Chan, 1985). For this study the survey instrument's reliability was deemed acceptable as the reliability coefficient  $\alpha$  was .7483,  $F = 33.2797$ , and  $p < 0.0000$ .

Of the 354 (40.2%) respondents who voluntarily agreed to complete the survey instrument, 130 were female secondary education majors. 32.3% of whom were entering an undergraduate degree program and 67.7% were post-graduate candidates. 47.7% were under the age of 23; 28.5% were between the ages of 23 and 30; 21.5% were between the ages of 31 and 45 and 2.3% were over the age of 45. 45.4% were entering the Australian university and 54.6% the New Zealand university.

As stated the study sought to explore how pre-service teachers interpreted their own prior experiences, therefore to facilitate this, the initial analysis focused on participants' belief and confidence in their own abilities, i.e. self-esteem. The self-esteem portion of the survey instrument allowed for each participating student teacher to be placed into categories for possible interview selection. This enabled a sample of as broad a range as possible of the teacher candidates based on: very high, high, medium or low self-esteem. For the study, the maximum self-esteem score was 1.0 and lowest 4.0. Very high was defined as 1.0 – 1.3, high as 1.31 – 1.6, medium as 1.61 – 2.5 and low 2.51 – 4.0. None of the five candidates self-identified with low self-esteem agreed to be interviewed. The thirteen who did agree almost equally represented the three remaining categories.

### **Phase 2**

The second phase interviews began semi-structured focusing on what the participants reported on their questionnaire and the meanings behind why their responses were reported as such. This allowed a means of establishing a prior schooling context for the further exploration

of prior teacher experiences informing how they see teaching and being the teacher through unstructured interviews. The number of possible interviews was limited by the researcher conducting all interviews in both countries prior to respective program commencements requiring travel back and forth between countries.

The audio-taped interviews ranged from Zoë's 16 minutes to Sophie's 68 minutes with an average of 37 minutes. All interviews were conducted on the respective universities' campuses. Similar to the survey instrument phase, all interviews were conducted prior to the commencement of the program to prevent any course content from altering the teacher candidates' preconceptions and beliefs about teaching and their role as the teacher. Interviewees were guided by the researcher as needed to provide explicit examples of their prior teachers. Transcripts were returned to interviewees for data authentication prior to data analysis and any changes made by interviewees were incorporated.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The questionnaires allowed the researcher to gather demographic data about the participating teacher candidates and were used as a means of obtaining life stories, an interpretive framework through which the meaning of human experience is revealed in personal accounts (Creswell, 1994) from the interviewees. This qualitative approach allows for the documentation of the inner experiences of individuals, such as how they subjectively interpret, understand and define critical episodes of their life (Dhunpath, 2000). More importantly for the present study, the stories were a way of avoiding the excessive imposition of external theories and constructs of the researcher on the pre-service teachers so as not to stifle the story-telling urge. As such, life stories are peculiarly suited to discovering the confusions, ambiguities and contradictions of experiences as the focus is not on the factual accuracy but on the meaning the experiences had for the individual (Dhunpath, 2000).

Student teachers' memories are not explicit and literal disclosures of their past as people reconstruct past events in light of knowledge about the outcomes of their lives (Chase, 2005). This very reconstruction of the past can be more telling even though some people might unconsciously assimilate events of the past, adjust perceptions or simply try to make sense of their present by distorting the past. Each person is a historian of the self creating an internally consistent representation of their own life so that their past, present and future appear to be congruent (Chase, 2005). This recollection is interpretive and concerned more with the conceptual evaluation of the subjective structure of one's life story than with the actuality of experience. Therefore recollection is facilitating rather than displacing objectivity of recall because it provides a more comprehensive perspective.

Using the questionnaire to set the context and the respondents' own words allowed an exploration of the thinking of the pre-service teacher candidates in their own language. Specifically, it facilitated the opportunity to try and understand how this thinking had influenced their future practice as to the type of teacher they did and did not want to be. Due to the polysemy of language, what the participant meant and what the researcher understood it to mean may not always be the same. Phase 2 invited the respondents to expressly state what they meant and then attempted to uncover the reasoning behind their meaning.

The transcripts were analysed following Polkinghorne's (1995) analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. First using analysis of narratives the transcripts were read and re-read to

inductively develop concepts from the data rather than approaching the data with pre-determined expected concepts. As each concept was highlighted within the transcripts other interviews were examined to note whether similar concepts were reported. As this process was recursive and took place both before all the data was collected and then continued after all the data was collected, it allowed the concepts to be refined and altered as they were derived from the corpus of data.

The paradigmatic analysis built the categorical definitions by continually testing their power to order the data (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The concepts developed from the data rather than being imposed by previous theoretically derived concepts. These categories were then revised until they provided the best possible fit of a categorical scheme for the data set seeking to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). This paradigmatic analysis provided a method to uncover the commonalities that existed across the stories that made up the study's database (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) to generate knowledge. The concepts that the student teachers held were then used to develop narratives about trends, similarities and differences among the sample population and the subpopulations within the sample.

### **Teacher Candidates' Recall of Prior Teachers**

Out of the thirteen female secondary teacher candidates interviewed twelve were able to recall at least one well-remembered event for which they used to describe an example of either a 'good' or 'bad' teacher. Jessica (all names are pseudonyms) was able to explicitly recall seven prior teachers. These teachers then also directly related to at least one of their selections for what they believed were ideal teacher characteristics. Grace and Zoë were notable exceptions. Grace was the only female secondary candidate unable to relate any of her ideal teacher characteristics back to her own prior schooling experiences. Similarly, Zoë was the only female secondary student teacher unable to explicitly recall any prior teachers.

Jessica was an example of the pre-service teachers able to recall past experiences. She described a good teacher as someone who provided not only a role model in teacher behaviour but also personal behaviour:

My Year 12 history teacher is a whopping good example of someone who worked extremely hard, he also offered History Extension classes in the morning, before school started and he lived practically a half an hour to an hour's drive from our school, we learnt, through the year how determined and dedicated a person he was, he told us how he spent 3 days, non-stop without sleep on his thesis and that has left a huge imprint upon me because it demonstrated to me how much effort he puts into his work, prior to becoming a teacher.

This history teacher demonstrated what Jessica felt was role model behaviour for a teacher. Jessica was very explicit in how this teacher and the others like him affected her:

From his example and many of my other teachers I do wish that I could become as dedicated and as hard working as he is, he and my other previous history teacher wrote history books, and they were involved in various other educational things and it inspired our whole class in developing a great love for history

and a great appreciation for their hard work, it compelled us to work harder and to continue with this example.

In these descriptions Jessica supported Calderhead and Robson's (1991) summary of how student teachers report on those traits commonly held about good teachers and teaching. Her History teacher stood out as a vivid example for her to emulate. He evidenced six of the characteristics she saw in an ideal teacher: Thorough, Industrious, Self-Confident, Receptive to Others' Ideas, Sincere and Energetic. Jessica then went on to describe five other examples of good teaching which again reflected her belief about what characteristics made an ideal teacher. Her memories also supported all four postulations of Mayer-Smith, Moon and Wideen (1994) on how pre-service teachers saw good teaching:

1. First teachers knew their subject well
2. Teachers cared about their students
3. Teachers were seen as competent and
4. Teachers made learning fun and challenging

Just like Jessica in describing her prior teachers who she saw as positive examples of teaching, Emma demonstrated a similar interpretation of a less favourable prior experience. She was able to articulate exactly what made this teacher a negative example, as she explained:

One particular teacher she was yeah, she was basically who I was describing when I was describing bad teachers, no feedback on tests, talk in a monotone voice, had no command of the class, would talk really kind of softly and everyone would just talk and talk and talk and she would say class this and this and no one would pay any attention, it was a waste of time, people would come and go as they please.

In this example, Emma listed three reasons why she recalled this teacher as a bad example of teaching: no feedback, monotone voice, and no classroom management skills. Calderhead and Robson (1991) claimed that bad images of teachers were generally derived from a composite of the worst aspects of several teachers. Six of the present study's female secondary interviewees supported that assertion but there were seven like Emma who explicitly recalled prior teachers demonstrating what they saw as bad examples of teachers. These explicit examples were seen for reasons such as: distant, boring, cruel, ineffective, or insincere.

Sarah and Grace were the only two teacher candidates who did not refer to any negative prior teachers either generally or explicitly. When Sarah was explaining her ideal teacher characteristics, one of the few negative comments she made still acknowledged her teachers were good teachers but just not the right type of teacher for her, "*I had teachers who were good teachers but who never had much of an effect on me because they weren't flexible enough.*"

Seven of the participants in the present study supported the Mayer-Smith et al. (1994) conclusion that bad teaching was seen due to their teachers not making connections with students. These teachers were also seen to be lacking one or more of the traits seen in good teachers. Emma acknowledged this in her Science teacher who did not made any personal connection with the entire class.

Knowles (1992) acknowledged that pre-service teachers did have both positive and negative impressions of prior teachers and held images of the teacher they did and did not want to become. This image was primarily influenced by childhood memories of experiences in school and then positive role models from school. These images were then influenced by other non-teaching significant adults in their lives and finally by non-school experiences.

The present study's female secondary participants only rearranged the last two of these four sources. Twelve of the thirteen reported childhood memories of schooling with six of these commenting on positive teaching role models they experienced as students. However, Grace, Charlotte, Zoë and Emma referred to work experiences after secondary school as providing influences for their beliefs about teaching and being the teacher. Only Emma made comments about significant people outside the school setting when she talked about setting up a business venture with her husband before she was able to enter into teacher training.

In contrast, Lily and Zoë were the only participants who referred to prior teachers in only general or vague terms. While Lily generalised all her teachers into either positive or negative examples of teaching, Zoë only negatively referred to her prior teachers. Lily demonstrated this collective grouping of teachers in her description of those teachers who evidenced the characteristics she felt an ideal teacher needed, for example:

I had teachers like this in secondary school who loved their topic and were therefore able to convey the material in an interesting manner, as a result of this they were the most liked teachers and the results of students in these classes were of high calibre.

Then she used this same style of generalisation of teachers she remembered as displaying what she believed was bad teaching practice:

In secondary school I had teachers without any of these characteristics and I hated attending their classes, in these classes we often ignored the teacher, particularly when a student had to correct a mistake he/she had made.

Zoë only recalled teachers from her past for the cruelty they demonstrated. She explained she had attended a convent school and therefore all her teachers were similar in character and approach to education. As she remembered them, "*They were very conformist and they tended to think more so, control and what is the word, discipline.*" When prompted to recall any teachers that stood out in her memory, she described one prior teacher who demonstrated what she believed would now be seen as inappropriate teaching practice. For example:

Only in the cruel department (that's fine, why did those stand out?), because they were cruel, they did things that would be constituted as cruel now a days, like I used to learn the piano and if you played a wrong note you got the strap, so you were terrified to play.

All but one of the thirteen female secondary teacher candidates was able to recall their prior teachers. These participants were then able to describe how they saw those teachers as examples of what they felt were good or bad teachers. These female secondary candidates supported Calderhead and Robson (1991) and Mayer-Smith et al.'s (1994) conclusions as to how pre-service teachers see good and bad teaching.

### **Recall of teachers as significant adults**

Galbo and Demetrulias (1996) reported on a study that sought to identify the significant adults that university students were able to recall from their own childhood. Galbo and Demetrulias reported that female students were more likely to report female prior teachers as



significant adults from their past and that these teachers would be from their primary school years. This study further refined an earlier study (Galbo, Demetrulias & Crippon, 1989) which reported that primary students would recall predominantly primary teachers as significant while their secondary counterparts would cite secondary school teachers as significant adults. These teachers were seen as significant because first and foremost they were personal, caring, sensitive, and felt to be trustworthy adults. Second, they were remembered for their classroom involvement beyond the delivery of the curriculum and more as a role model in behaviour. Finally, they were remembered for involvement both in and out of the classroom whether it was as a sporting coach, in a music event, or other extra-curricular activities.

The participating female secondary student teachers did support the conclusions from the Galbo et al.'s (1989) study but refuted those presented in the Galbo and Demetrulias' (1996) study. These student teachers remembered nine prior female teachers and fourteen male teachers (there were another eight teachers referred to gender neutrally). Of these recalled teachers, ten of the male teachers and six of the females were remembered as positive examples of teaching. Only Jessica referred to a primary teacher as the other thirty references were to secondary teachers. Even Lily and Zoë who made only general references referred only to their secondary teachers. Sixteen of the thirty recalled teachers were remembered for their teaching abilities and the impact this had on them as students with another nine were remembered for their lack of teaching ability. Only six prior teachers were recalled for reasons put forward by Galbo and Demetrulias (1996) specifically: five were remembered because they went beyond the curriculum to bring in what was current or topical at the time; and one as he was seen as having been caring, sincere and trustworthy.

As noted, the female secondary teacher candidates referred explicitly to eight prior teachers in gender neutral terms. These teachers were referred to as competent subject teachers, as demonstrated by Hannah, "*I had a fabulous History teacher who taught me modern and ancient history.*" and Sarah:

I had a couple of English teachers who just had this really amazing kind of style that, they had the most amazing way of asking questions while not penetrative in themselves really got you thinking.

Eight teachers were remembered because of their teaching capabilities with no reference to gender, of whom seven were recalled for their good teaching practice in support of Lahelma's (2000) assertion that students remember teachers due to their perceived abilities not their gender.

The participating female secondary teacher candidates not only recalled more secondary teachers but also almost exclusively secondary teachers (30 of 31). Holt-Reynolds (2000) reported that secondary pre-service teachers in her study committed themselves to a future professional role based on their successes as students of a subject and their vision of what excellent teachers of that subject did and did not look like. Significant for twelve of these thirteen participants, it was those teachers who had impacted on them positively or negatively in terms of teaching who were remembered. These recalled teachers were examples of either how to or how not to teach the subject matter. Of these participants only Ella recalled a teacher for going beyond the curriculum and bringing into the classroom outside topics to suit the needs of the students with no explicit reference to this as a positive teaching practice. It would appear then that for these female secondary student teachers, it was those teaching examples from their own past of subject matter that informed their teacher role identity the most. This was seen as

well in their selection of ideal characteristics. For these pre-service teachers, how they were taught was how they wished to teach.

These participating female secondary student teachers have been influenced in how they saw themselves in the role of teacher by their own prior teachers. This influence was most evident in two ways: first those teachers who sought critical thinking in their students and second, those teachers who acted as role models of teacher behaviour. Seven of these thirteen student teachers recalled those teachers who expected, demanded or encouraged critical thinking in them as students and now see this as important in their own future students. Similarly, seven also recalled those teachers who were seen as role models of behaviour and how they now wanted to see themselves as the teacher.

#### **Teachers who sought critical thinking**

More than half of these female secondary student teachers had teachers from their past who encouraged, demanded or sought independent thinking in them as students. This was then reflected in how they saw students and teaching. Isabella, Emily, Hannah, Sarah, Jessica, Emma and Mia all reported students needing independent or critical thinking. These student teachers commented on this critical thinking first being developed in them as students and that now they saw this as something beneficial to their students.

Jessica highlighted this in her description of her year 11 History teacher. She described how this teacher challenged her to improve upon her own writing by providing critical comments that pushed her to improve what the teacher saw as a weakness in her academic abilities. From this teacher she saw how important it was for her as a teacher to be Thorough. Just as this teacher had done for her, she would look for the ways in which she as a teacher could impact on her students by allowing them the opportunities to reflect upon their work and then provide them with the tools to improve on their mistakes. Mia expressed almost the same ideas when she described how some of her secondary school teachers instilled in her what she was most proud of, *“I feel I am able to come up with my own ideas and able to express them.”* And like Jessica, this was also how Mia would like to see her students in her class; students who know they are able to not only think for themselves but also express their own ideas.

#### **Teachers who were role models of teaching**

Five of the seven student teachers who had personal experience of teachers who sought critical thinking also commented on those teachers whom they felt were role models for good teaching. Sarah, Jessica, Emma, Mia and Emily explained how those teachers influenced their decision to become teachers along with Charlotte and Sophie.

Both Jessica and Emily explicitly stated that teachers were role models to their students. Jessica described her teachers as good role models for teaching and supported her descriptions by stating, *“We had great role models who taught us that we should give back to community, to use the talents God has given us to help others, to make a difference and to teach them what they themselves had so passionately taught us.”* Emily stated a similar idea as she believed teaching was a privilege as students were looking for role models. However, it was Sarah and Charlotte who explained that it was through witnessing the examples of their prior teachers that gave them the reason to select a career in the teaching profession in their chosen academic subjects. These

teachers had influenced not only their decisions to become teachers but also teachers of the same discipline area. It was these examples of teaching that were most evident in their selection of ideal teacher characteristics. Charlotte was entering an education program to become a Mathematics teacher and described one of her teachers that stood out in her memory, *“I had one teacher and it is funny because she was my maths teacher and now I am going to be you know wanting to be a maths teacher, so she was fantastic and I will always remember her.”* Then when prompted to explain how this teacher was ‘fantastic’, Charlotte detailed how this one teacher was able to incorporate four of her ideal characteristics. Sarah was even more explicit. She attributed her entering teaching to those high school teachers she had who had engaged her as a student, *“I mean I decided to do teaching because of the teachers that I had in high school, particularly in my area which is History, Drama, and English which is what I am gonna teach.”* Sarah was perfectly clear in how her teachers of English, History and Drama showed her aspects of themselves that she wished to emulate. These teachers excited her not only about these subjects but also about life-long learning, *“I became a teacher because I had teachers who made me love learning.”*

Out of the thirteen female secondary student teachers, seven saw their future students based on the way they themselves were as a student. There were also seven participants who had role models of teaching behaviour that they wished to emulate in their own teaching practice. It would appear that those female secondary teacher candidates who were able to express a sense of self-as-teacher did inform their teacher role identity based on their own prior experience as students with those teachers they saw as role models of good teaching practice. Notable was the fact that it was those teachers who acted as role model teachers of the subject that these student teachers now wanted to emulate.

## Conclusions

While there were similarities and differences among the female secondary student teachers as to how they saw teaching and the teacher, few opportunities exist in the current literature to compare these student teachers to the wider teacher population. While there are many studies that include female secondary student teachers only one was found to focus on female secondary teacher candidates.

This study investigated the influence prior teachers had on the type of teacher that thirteen female secondary pre-service teachers do and do not want to become. These teacher candidates did remember their prior teachers and the associated school experiences. It was the positive prior experiences which influenced them the most. In particular, those prior teachers who demonstrated the teaching practice they most wanted to see in their own teaching. For these participating student teachers it was those prior secondary teachers who not only sought independent thinking in them as students but also acted as teaching role models of subject matter were who they now wished to emulate. It has been shown that these participating female secondary teacher candidates used their own prior experiences in the classroom to formulate the image they held of themselves as the teacher in the classroom.

## Implications

Future research would be valuable to investigate whether the patterns emerging from this study were similar in other pre-service teacher education programs. The findings of this study make an important contribution to the effective teacher literature by highlighting the dearth of work relating to pre-service teachers' beliefs at the entry-level. While there is a large body of work relating to how educational institutions affect pre-service teachers' beliefs there is very little relating to what they bring with them. Future research in this area should continue.

There are notable implications of this study which all centre on the fact that the actions of teachers today shape those who may or may not become the teachers of tomorrow. The conclusions drawn from this indicate that these entry-level teacher candidates did remember their time spent in the classroom as students. It was those memories of actions both taken and not taken by teachers that have influenced the type of teacher they did and did not want to become. Further, these previous experiences have had important consequences for their beliefs about their role as the teacher.

This leads to the need for present in-service teachers to be made aware of their own formative learning experiences. As this study has shown, classroom decisions and instructions did have an effect on most students. These student teachers recalled events and teachers with clear and vivid memories. As a result, teachers need to be conscious of the impact of their own prior experiences and how it influences their classroom behaviour. This classroom behaviour can be a positive and motivating force as the participating secondary candidates reported that teachers who presented a topic or assignment with enthusiasm, suggesting that it was interesting, important or worthwhile were likely to adopt this same attitude towards the subject matter. Teachers are not in the classroom by themselves; there are students with whom they interact on a daily basis.

## References

- Anderson, D. L. (2005). A portrait of a feminist mathematics classroom: What adolescent girls say about mathematics, themselves, and their experiences in a 'unique' learning environment. *Feminist teacher: A journal of the practices, theories and scholarship of feminist teaching*, 15 (3), 175-194.
- Anderson, L.M. & Holt-Reynolds, D. (1995). Prospective teachers' beliefs and teacher education pedagogy: Research based on a teacher educator's practical theory, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University. An ERIC Document (Educational Resources Information Centre) No. ED 392 792.
- Bullock, P. L. & Freedman, D. M. (2003). (Re)visions to a secondary teacher education course: Trials and triumphs in attempting to disrupt hegemonic understanding and performances of education. Paper presented at the International Conference on Teacher Education and Social Justice, San Francisco, CA.
- Calderhead, J. & Robson, M. (1991). Images of teaching: Student teachers' early conceptions of classroom practice. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 7, 1-8.
- Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (pp. 651-675). Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research Design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Dhunpath, R. (2000). Life history methodology: 'narradigm' regained. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13, 543-551.
- Galbo, J. J. & Demetruvias, D. M. (1996). Recollections of nonparental significant adults during childhood and adolescence. *Youth & Society*, 27, 403-420.
- Galbo, J. J., Demetruvias, D. M. & Crippen, C. M. (1989). Recollections of significant adults by preservice teachers and nonteaching students. Paper presented at the March 1989 American Education Research Association Conference, San Francisco, CA.
- Greene, H. C. & Magliaro, S. G. (2003). Images of Teaching. An ERIC Document (Educational Resources Information Centre) No. ED 478 625.
- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (pp. 191-215). Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.
- Hardcastle, B., Yamamoto, K., Parkay, F. W. & Chan, J. (1985). Metaphorical views of school: A cross-cultural comparison of college students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 1, 309-315.
- Haynie, W. J. (2005). Where the women are: Research finding on gender issues in technology education. *Technology Teacher*, 64(7), 12-16.
- Henson, R.K. (2001). Relationships between pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, task analysis, and classroom management beliefs. An ERIC Document (Educational Resources Information Centre) No. ED 450 084.
- Holcomb-McCoy, C. C. (2005). Empowerment for urban African American girls: A response. *Professional School Counselling*, 8(5), 390-392.
- Holt-Reynolds, D. (2000). Prospective teachers as learners: Intellectual development and learning to teach. An ERIC Document (Educational Resources Information Centre) No. ED 444 155.
- Huerta, G. & Flemmer, L. (2005). Identity, beliefs and community: LDS (Mormon) pre-service secondary teacher views about diversity. *Intercultural Education*, 16, 1-14.
- Kagan, D. M. (1992). Professional growth among pre-service and beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, 62, 129-169.
- Knowles, J. G. (1992). Models for understanding pre-service and beginning teachers' biographies, in: I. F. Goodson (Ed), *Studying teachers' lives*. (pp.99-152). London: Routledge.
- Lahelma, E. (2000). Lack of male teachers: A problem for students or teachers? *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 8, 173-86.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mabokela, R. O. & Mawila, K. F. N. (2004). The impact of race, gender, and culture in South African higher education. *Comparative Education Review*, 48(4), 396-416.
- Mael, F., Alonso, A., Gibson, D., Rogers, K., & Smith, M. (2005). Single-sex versus coeducational schooling: A systematic review. An ERIC Document (Educational Resources Information Centre) No. ED 486 476.
- Mahlis, M. C. (2002). Teacher role formation. *Action in Teacher Education*, 24(1), 9-21.
- Mahlis, M. & Maxson, M. (1995). Capturing pre-service teachers' beliefs about schooling, life and childhood. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 46, 192-199.
- Mayer-Smith, J. A., Moon, B. J., & Wideen, M. F. (1994). Learning to teach: The journeys and entering views of four beginning teachers. *Journal of Professional Studies*, 1, 11-25.

- McCaughty, N. (2004). Learning to read gender relations in schooling: Implications for personal history and teaching context on identifying disempowerment for girls. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 75(4), 400-412.
- Miller, J. (1997). Gender issues embedded in the experience of student teaching: Being treated like a sex object. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 48, 19-28.
- Morales, R. (2000). Effects of teacher preparation experiences on students' perceptions related to developmentally and culturally appropriate practices. *Action in Teacher Education*, 22(2), 67-75.
- Preece, P. F. W., Postlethwaite, K. C., Skinner, N. C. & Simpson, K. A. (2004). Investigating the 'failure of further learning' effect in preservice science teacher education. *International Journal of Science Education*, 26, 805-820.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5-23). London: The Falmer Press.
- Raths, J. (2001). Teacher's beliefs and teaching beliefs. An ERIC Document (Educational Resources Information Centre) No. ED 452 999.
- Renzaglia, A., Hutchins, M. & Lee, S. (1997). The impact of teacher education on the beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions of preservice special educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 20(4), 360-377.
- Schilt, K. (2003). 'I'll resist with every inch and every breath': Girls and zine making as a form of resistance. *Youth & Society*, 35(1), 71-97.
- Sexton, S. S. (2004). Prior teacher experiences informing how post-graduate teacher candidates see teaching and themselves in the role as the teacher. *International Education Journal* 5(2), 205-214.
- Wubbels, T. (1992). Taking account of student teacher's preconceptions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 8, 137-149.
- Yamamoto, K., Hardcastle, B., Muehl, S. & Muehl, L. (1990). Metaphorical images of life in young and middle adulthood: An exploration. *The Journal of Psychology*, 124, 143-154.