

# TEACHER IDENTITY THROUGH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTIONS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS' WIDER FIELD EXPERIENCE

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Preservice teachers enrolled in teacher education programs are required to engage in reflective practice to develop understanding of the teaching profession and to develop a personal teacher identity. Reflective practices are particularly useful during rural and remote Supervised Professional Experiences (SPE). Preservice teachers also reflect on Wider Field Experiences (WFE) which provide them with additional experiences that extend their professional learning. This study examines the value of shared autobiographical reflections of a group of preservice teachers as they completed Wider Field Experience (WFE) in an Aboriginal community school in a rural area. Preservice teachers indicated that the WFE had an impact on their professional learning and contributed to developing a positive understanding of teaching Aboriginal students. However, it was the opportunity to participate in shared autobiographical reflections on the WFE that contributed significantly to their teacher identity, and their teaching practices for both urban and rural classrooms. The preservice teachers' autobiographical reflections about the WFE suggest the value of well-chosen WFE and the benefit of including personal experiences in developing professional learning and teaching practices for teaching in rural schools.

## Introduction

The impact of rural and remote Supervised Professional Experiences (SPE) on preservice teachers and the social and economic cost encountered in completing a rural SPE has been the focus of many studies (for example, Hemmings, Kay & Kerr, 2011; White 2011). Sharplin (2002) identified that many preservice teachers are very concerned that if they were placed to complete their SPE in a rural or remote location they would have to deal with isolation, face cultural barriers and lack the necessary resources required to teach effectively. Studies of the effects of rural and remote teaching experiences (Hatton, Watson, Squires, & Soliman, 1991; Hudson & Hudson, 2008; Boyland 2004; White, & Kline, 2012;) identified that preservice and indeed, in service teachers associate rural and remote teaching with social, cultural, geographical, and professional isolation. The studies in this area highlight a concern that preservice teachers could be viewed as inadequately prepared to teach in rural and remote communities (White 2011).

Sustainable SPEs focus on the relationship between pre service teacher perceptions and the qualities of a workplace in relation to the degree of satisfaction. This approach is useful as it allows for an examination of the influence of efforts to prepare preservice teachers in terms of their perceptions in addition to developing their skills and knowledge. A common feature of teacher education programs in preparing preservice teachers for remote placements is the provision of enlightening and educative experiences that are designed to change the largely negative perceptions many preservice teachers have about rural and remote placements, in other words to build a person-context relationship through deeper understanding of local culture. These 'rural and remote experience programs' seek to introduce preservice teachers to life in rural and remote schools through a short period of SPEs. However,

critical to this approach is the notion of going beyond the simple physical placement in a school, to include a process of engaging with rural and remote communities.

It is evident that the connection between school and community relationships in rural settings is one that features strongly in the literature regarding the preparation of preservice teachers for rural and remote placements (Boyland, 2004; Clarke & Wildy, 2004). In a study that compared the community-school relationships in large urban schools, compared to those that are found in rural communities, two clear factors that set rural schools apart from their city counterparts were identified. Firstly, the significance of the whole context and the fact that relationships were inclined to be a precursor to educational change. As such, teachers in rural communities were required to consider not only what happens within the school context, but to also embrace relationships with the wider community (Lester, 2011). In relation to the relationship approach preservice teachers need to have an awareness of the power of the teacher-community relationship and they need to be trained in harnessing it. However, studies in the area of pre service teacher preparation generally focuses on the social relationships within the classroom context (Hemmings, Kay & Kerr, 2011) rather than the effect of pre service teacher - community relationships. There have also been recommendations for training in areas such as communication, collaboration and participation, negotiation and social and cultural diversity to prepare teachers for their teaching and community roles (Clarke, Stevens, & Wildy, 2006).

A valuable opportunity to develop teacher-community relationships occurs in Wider Field Experience (WFE) which is service learning undertaken by preservice teachers in community based organisations. As preservice teachers develop partnerships with communities, the WFE extends the learning in their course work through the connections they establish between knowledge and practice. A particular advantage of the WFE is that it provides a context for preservice teachers to become more competent and capable classroom teachers, especially when they are working with diverse students. The benefits from WFE are maximised when preservice teachers engage in critical reflective practices as it builds capacity to be a more effective teacher. (Chambers & Lavery, 2012; Crosswell & Beutel 2012; Carrington & Saggars, 2008).

## Background

The 'Coast to Country' initiative introduced in 2010 at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) located in regional Queensland is an extremely successful WFE opportunity that familiarises preservice teachers with rural and remote schools and communities. Preservice teachers selected for Coast to Country participate in a week long orientation trip to rural schools and communities. The WFE was initially introduced to address two detractors that impeded preservice teachers' interest and ability to complete a rural and remote SPE. Firstly to address the, '*Fear of the unknown*', about teaching in locations preservice teachers were not familiar with and the negative initial perceptions they had about teaching in rural and remote locations. Secondly to address monetary concerns preservice teachers had about, '*A lack of finances and other financial factors*'. Preservice teachers were concerned that if they were away in a rural location on SPE, especially if it was a lengthy SPE, they would not be able to work and receive the usual income through work to support their financial commitments. The strength of the Coast to Country experience in addressing the, '*Fear of the unknown*' detractor and its value in providing students with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the general functioning of rural schools and the wider rural community is being realised. Anecdotal evidence indicates a high correlation between preservice teachers who have participated in the Coast to Country and the subsequent SPEs they have completed in rural and remote locations. In 2012 the Coast to Country WFE experience was enhanced to allow preservice teachers' productive time in the classrooms of the rural communities they visited. Pre service teachers worked alongside the classroom teachers in a supportive capacity, they engaged in professional conversations about meeting the needs of students in rural schools

and discussed personal perceptions about teaching in rural and remote locations. The critical reflections preservice engaged in during the Coast to Country suggest the preservice teachers believed the time spent immersed in the rural schools and rural communities were extremely valuable because it allowed them to contextualise the learning from their course work into effective practice. More importantly, it provided them with an understanding of community and the relationships between the school and the community.

## Research Framework

As a result of the Coast to Country experience in 2012 a group of preservice teachers volunteered to extend their understanding of rural community relationships and participate in a WFE project funded by the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP). Of particular interest to the preservice teachers was that the WFE would provide them with insightful and necessary cultural knowledge because the project was being carried out in a Band 8 primary school located in an Indigenous community in Queensland. There were approximately 190 students at the school with over 95% presenting as Indigenous. The preservice teachers' reflections of the WFE developed into a small study that examined the role of reflective practices in extending preservice teachers' understanding of the teaching profession and developing a teacher identity. The study builds on the early work of Lortie who researched the experiences of students enrolled in teacher education programs. Lortie suggested that preservice teachers' past experiences and perceptions about teaching practices influenced their view about the learning context and teaching practices Lortie (1975).

The past school experiences of students in teacher education has in the past been largely ignored with significant emphasis being placed on course content. However, there has been a repositioning towards engaging students in autobiographical work to support preservice teachers' understanding of teaching practice. (Vavrus, 2009). Recognition of the importance of teachers' backgrounds has been highlighted in studies examining the way in which teachers deconstruct and analyse their perceptions of effective and ineffective pedagogy in order to build on their pre-existing beliefs about teaching (Avery & Walker, 1993; Banks & McGee Banks, 2009)

Feiman-Nemser (1983, p 11) stated, "Unless future teachers get some cognitive control over prior school experiences, it may influence their teaching unconsciously and contribute to the perpetuation of conservative school practices". Therefore, teacher educators are now recognising the need to generate environments where the preservice teachers explore the experiences and opinions they bring to the classroom context. Several studies have involved students' reflections on their autobiography in order to identify the existence of pre-existing positions about appropriate teaching practice. Ross (1987) and LeCompte and Ginsburg (1987) undertook research where the students were asked to describe positive and negative aspects about former teachers. Others such as Harkness, Ambrosio and Morrone (2007) have researched discipline specific enquiry with autobiography. Their findings were similar to Lortie's (1975) categories as the preservice teachers associated their approach to teaching pedagogy with particular teachers they had during their schooling. The students learned to release predispositions and instead, project themselves into the role as teacher. Their autobiographical responses caused increased understanding and growth around the different pedagogical approaches and resulted in them adopting different approaches to teaching their students.

Grossman (1991) found benefit in engaging students in reflective exercises that meant the students recognised and challenged constraints emanating from prior school experiences. In an English methods class she questioned students' past experiences and then invited the students to align the past experiences with the theoretical frameworks proposed in the course. This engagement resulted in critiquing familiar practices. She also invited students to consider the teacher's pedagogical decisions and think about their own experiences from the viewpoint of a different student and from a different context. The approach resulted in the students using the accepted professional language of teaching and its associated discourse as opposed to that of a student. Grossman (1991) extended the findings of

Lortie (1975) by suggesting that students be exposed to extreme examples of innovative teaching practice to ensure students moved away from singularly advocating teaching practices based on their own past experiences.

Therefore, in teacher education there is an opportunity to acknowledge the use of autobiographical experiences of preservice teachers, and to consider their experiences in collaboration with others to develop professional learning and teacher identity.

This small study focused on the autobiographical experiences of preservice teachers engaged in WFE to answer the following research questions:

- What are the characteristics of a group of preservice teachers' autobiographical reflections?
- What are the features of the WFE and the process that influenced preservice teachers' teacher identity?

## Research Methodology

This study is situated in Participatory Action Research (PAR). The research methodology has many adherents and detractors, but provides the most socially conscientious approach for analysing issues within a particular community. Johnson and Guzman (2013) in their review of participatory action research describe it as an approach to research that places hierarchy on participation, collaboration and transformation. The approach or methodology, depending on perspectives, is varied and depends on the context that the problem, issue or question warrants (Balcazar, Taylor, Kielhofner, Tamley, Benziger, Carlin & Johnson 2004); and despite wide study there are no established sets of procedures for conducting the research (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano & Morales 2007). However, there are a number of proposed guidelines, principles and approaches to using participatory action research. Participatory action research is based on action and therefore focuses on research to promote action. This continues in a cycle as data is gathered and analysed, participants construct a path of action which is reflected upon, and the process continues (Baum, MacDougall & Smith 2006).

The process is an inquiry cycle that is ongoing and overlapping, it provides a theoretical structure to a fluid practice. The approach is to start from where the participants are, and through interactions, "build and deepen the involvement and voice of those affected by what is being researched, and over time to develop more robust and well-founded understandings." (Crane, 2011 p. 3) The ideology has the researcher and participants as one democratic group throughout the process, with success determined by a reflection and action cycle to assess the empowerment and effectiveness attained, during and after the process (Johnson & Guzman, 2013). Participatory Action Research was adopted for this study because the preservice teachers and the project leader were considered to be co-researchers in a democratic community of teaching practice that focused on participation, collaboration and shared critical reflections in order to improve professional learning and teaching practice.

## Pre-service teacher participation

Participants in this study were four education students enrolled in a Bachelor of Education (Primary) program at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in regional Queensland. During a year-long program of fortnightly visits to a regional primary school the students undertook teaching as part of WFE.

Table 1. General information about sample of pre service teachers

No	Gender	Age	Background	Education Program	Year of enrolment
1	Male	30-35	Mining	Bachelor of Primary Education	Fourth year
2	Female	20-25	School to University	Bachelor of Primary Education	Fourth year
1	Female	40-45	Workplace Health and Safety	Bachelor of Primary Education	Second year

The four students are referred to as Preservice Teachers 1-4 (PST1, PST2, PST3 and PST4) in the results and discussion section of this paper. The process underpinning the WFE involved collaborative discussion with cohorts and their HEI supervisor with regard to planning for lessons, teaching primary school students across various classrooms, and each evening engaging in a collaborative critical reflection about their teaching experiences during the day. The preservice teachers' reflections were documented in personal journals. The end-to-end process for the WFE is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 End-to-end process for preservice teachers involved in Wider Field Experience



## Procedure

Data was collected from the preservice teachers' autobiographical reflections from learning and teaching experiences during the WFE. There were 526 discrete reflective responses received from the participants.

The classification categories developed by Lortie (1975) and Boyd, Jones Gorham, Ellison Justice and Anderson (2013) through their research on autobiographical reflections have been used to code the autobiographical responses of the preservice teachers in this study. The Primary Code is the preservice teachers' background experience; personal education experience and autobiographical recount of their WFE. The Sub-Code Categories used are: Functional responses, Evaluative responses, Affective responses, and Disrupted responses. The Code and Sub-Code categories, and definitions of the codes are shown in Table 2. An examples for each sub-code has been included to provide meaning and to ensure consistency with the researchers' classification of the preservice teachers' autobiographical responses into each of the code and sub-code categories.

Table 2 Sub-Codes and Definitions

Code category	Definition of code	Example
Primary Code: Personal Education and Autobiography	Preservice teacher references own schooling experiences or own cultural background	<i>"My schooling was so different, it's like we spoke a different language to my teacher"</i> .
Sub-Code categories		
Functional	Names schooling procedures through a normalised discourse	<i>"I completely understand the skills based approach. It is what I experienced at school"</i> .
Evaluative	Moves beyond description and references the practice as positive or negative	<i>"I remember being disappointed upon entering school because it seemed there was not the place for literature that I had hoped"</i> .
Affective	Expresses an emotional connection	<i>"I have no doubt that I am the impassioned reader that I am because of Miss T"</i> .
Disrupted	Proposes a critique or considers a new perspective	<i>"I have come to see that literature is not just something that happens around us. Literature is meaningless without people, their communities, their motives"</i> .

## Results and discussion

### The characteristics of the pre-service teachers' autobiographical reflections

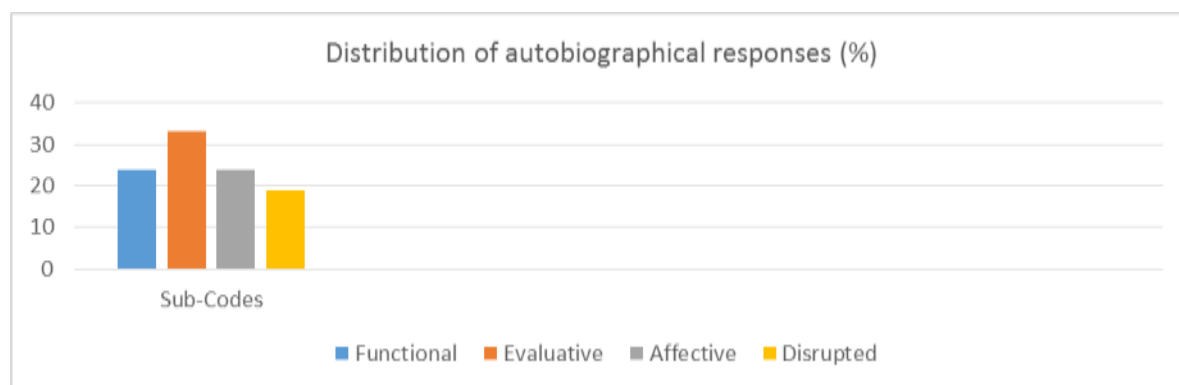
The coded autobiographical reflections recorded for the preservice teachers involved in the study produced results that were generally consistent with the findings from Lortie (1975) and Boyd et al (2013). The results for each of the sub-code categories were 24% for Functional Responses, 33% for Evaluative Responses, 24% for Affective Responses and 19% for Disrupted Responses. The interesting departures for the results from this study compared to other research in the area of autobiographical reflections were the higher number of reflections associated with Evaluative Responses and Disrupted Responses. Both of these sub-codes are associated with matters involving higher order consideration of the influencers of prior classroom experiences and, the formulation of prospective schemas for effective teaching practice in the future.

The Functional Response category drew upon preservice teachers' elementary recollections of effective and ineffective teaching practices. According to Lortie (1975), beginning teachers rely on these experiences when they have responsibility for their own teaching outcomes. It is invariably a default response for preservice and graduate teachers. Evaluative Responses are more than a recollection based on prior experience. The response includes a higher level of cognition on the part of the preservice teacher to enable an opinion to be formed about the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the teaching practice. The relatively high percentage of recorded responses in this sub-code points to more intensive consideration of teaching practice by the participants. In total, across all preservice teachers this category contained the highest number of reflective responses. Affective Responses were about

prior emotional connections and experiences between the preservice teachers, their teachers, and teaching practices. The percentage of coded Disrupted Responses was unexpected. This sub-code category is based on higher-order considerations about effective teaching practice by the participating preservice teachers.

The total percentage responses for the each of the sub-code categories and the relativities between the categories is shown in Figure 2. A detailed analysis of each of the responses is contained in the following sections.

Figure 2: Distribution of pre-service teachers' autobiographical responses across sub-codes



*Functional Responses:* The coded reflections showed 24% of preservice teachers described the functional aspect of their classroom experience. The preservice teachers had a personal awareness of teaching strategies that were effective in their teaching and learning context and were willing to rely on those experiences to guide their teaching practice in the future. A response from PST1 provided an objective statement about the wider community and the school visited as part of a WFE, but it did bring a cultural observation to the reflection. This is evidence of a slight variation from the traditional view of a Functional Response.

Sample response PST1:

*I am surprised at how important culture and identity is to the school and to the community. The relationship between the two is huge.*

*Reflective responses:* Coded responses in this category were about the most basic forms of teaching practice that don't require a teacher to experiment with alternative teaching methods. There is a strong assumption that simplistic, but well-rehearsed teaching strategies are the most effective for student learning. A response from PST3 was typical of the structured approach used to describe classroom tasks categorised as Functional Responses.

Sample response PST3:

*We would often sit and read many books and produce a spelling list of words from these books.*

Prior experience and the knowledge gained from it meant there was no reason to question or contradict approaches that were effective. The teaching strategies worked previously and there was no need to question whether they would be relevant for similar lessons in the same subject area, albeit in an

entirely different context.

*Evaluative Responses:* The coded reflections showed 33% of the preservice teachers described the evaluative aspect of their classroom experience. The preservice teachers shifted from a description of the teaching practice only to include an opinion about its effectiveness, or otherwise. It demonstrates a deeper level of interrogation of the teaching methods and some cognitive elements applied in the evaluation of the teaching practice. It shows an increased awareness on the part of the preservice teachers about the range of factors that have to be considered when applying best teaching practice. The observation by PST1 illustrates this point.

Sample response PST1:

*I believed teachers had to know the content, teach it to students in a fun and exciting way, examine students' knowledge and then it stopped there".*

The reflection response from PST2 is particularly interesting for two reasons. Firstly, there is an acknowledgement from the preservice teacher that they have prior experiences they bring to the teaching profession that may not present the most effective teaching practice, and secondly, the WFE and reflection caused "Me to open my mind" to different teaching methods and contexts. The inference is there was some form of self-actualisation achieved from the WFE process of review and reflection that resulted in a new experience and options for different teaching methods than those acquired during prior experiences.

Sample response PST2:

*The way in which this WFE drastically countered my preconceived perceptions – it was nothing like I expected and allowed me to open my mind to teaching students, not just the Indigenous students here at the moment, but from all different walks of life.*

Evaluation of teacher pedagogy and realisations about former beliefs arising from that evaluation were evidenced in PST4 reflections.

Sample response PST4:

*Education also placed a greater importance on the personal choice, the open-mindedness of differing viewpoints, closer human relationships and the maturity and growth of self-differences and self-responsibility.*

The Evaluative Responses do not seek to offer explanations to support the preservice teachers' opinions about teaching practices. They are simply observations about teaching practices that also contain an opinion. It represents a transitional phase in the process that demonstrates development in being a more informed teaching practitioner.

*Affective Responses:* There were 24% of responses coded in the Affective Responses domain. The category refers to the emotional connection between the teacher and their students. In reviewing the content of the reflections the preservice teachers frequently referred to the importance of the relationship between them and prospective students. It was seen as important for them to be liked by their students although there were no explanations about why it was important. For example, PST1 made the following reflective response.

Sample response PST1:

*I hope to walk beside students in experiences that have a deep intellectual quality, yet are stimulating, exploratory, have real life relevancy and develops the child on a personal and social level.*



There is clearly an interest in establishing an intellectual and emotional attachment with the students. The implication being that liking and respect would lead to fewer issues in terms of behaviour management and students will be more motivated to learn if there is an interpersonal bond. A similar response was received from PST2.

Sample response PST2:

*I always wanted to have a positive relationship with my students and to understand their perceptions, ideas and where they come from.*

A slightly different perspective is offered by PST3. The preservice teacher hints at their own experiences with teachers with whom they had a positive relationship and infers mutual respect and learning were consequences attributed to good relationships between the teacher and the students.

Sample response PST3:

*There were many books I was able to read but the Bible always stood out with its elaborate stories of intrigue, love, family and self-sacrifice. I believe that through this I gained a respect for great teachers. I gained a respect for teachers that would put the time and effort into a student that did not display any exceptional qualities.*

The last sentence is particularly telling, where impartiality, professionalism and a genuine willingness on the part of the teacher to produce achievement and success in students' ability and performance were considered important attributes for a teacher.

*Disrupted Responses:* There were 19% of reflective responses coded as Disrupted Responses, that is, a response that critiques a teaching method or practice and, offers a considered alternative deemed to be more effective by the pre-service teachers. The response implies an understanding of classroom students' capabilities and particulars about the context that are relevant to student learning. During one of the WFE visits, PST1 made the following reflection with regard to a teaching method employed during a series of classroom teaching sessions at the host school.

Sample response PST1:

*I began to realise that with real life connections to the learning for the group of students we were working with, true engagement and learning would occur. This became particularly apparent when working with students from \_\_\_\_\_ on a number of occasions, such as with the required theme of poetry being the beach. It was identified that students could not relate to a traditional Australian beach as they had not experienced one for themselves.*

They then continued with the solution.

Sample response PST1:

*In this case, we were able to provide them with that opportunity [took them on a beach excursion] to guide them in experiencing success with their learning.*

The reflection captured a position where the mechanical delivery of course material to the students without any consideration of the different physical and cultural contexts and literacies would have had no meaning or learning for the students. However, identifying the significance of the cultural differences and proposing an excursion where the students could see, feel and sense a beach offered a memorable learning experience to the students. The preparedness of the preservice teachers to challenge orthodox teaching practices and collaboratively evaluate alternatives produced a very effective solution. A similar sentiment was made by PST2 during a reflection about the same subject.

Sample response PST2:

*I believe that through teaching students in a way that forms links to the real world we, as teachers are able to better prepare students to further their knowledge and understanding of a subject.*

This is a new perspective on the preservice teacher's previous understanding about effective teaching practice and is consistent with the approaches typically domiciled in Disrupted Responses.

### The features of the WFE and the process that influenced teacher identity

The distinguishing features of the WFE experienced by the preservice teachers were the focus on teaching practice in a rural context in an Indigenous community school; the inclusion of pedagogies in an end-to-end process that included lesson planning; teaching practice; and reflections and review of the teaching and classroom practices. In reflections about the WFE process PST1 stated the following.

Sample response PST1:

*I regularly engaged [during WFE] in reflection and autobiographical reflections with my fellow teachers. This was a new process to me, as in the past, reflection had been an isolated task. Debriefing with peers on a regular basis has become a valued process that I have carried on through my SPEs.*

The response indicates that the opportunity to collaboratively reflect on the teaching experience with peers was beneficial. This has implications for WFE and perhaps even with the Supervised Professional Experiences where there are opportunities for preservice teachers to connect with each other and share similar experiences and challenges.

PST2 appears to attribute a transition from preservice teacher to competent graduate teacher to the WFE and the experiences and learnings gained from their participation.

Sample response PST2:

*Through our work [the WFE] I have been able to develop my understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the best teaching strategies used in supporting the students. I feel that I am still the same person who started the WFE, with enthusiasm and interest in the students but now I have the tools to be an effective teacher and probably more confident about what I am doing.*

A similar response was offered by PST4.

*I have been able to build my professional teaching skills, resources and pedagogy as well as build upon my personal beliefs and values to form a greater understanding of my professional educational philosophy which I think has enhanced my new teacher identity.*

The preservice teachers' reflective responses to the specifically designed WFE indicated an almost transformational change in their teaching capacity and capability to effectively engage in teaching practices across a range of cultural and rural contexts. Their WFE exposed the preservice teachers to a range of issues routinely confronting teachers in rural and remote areas, but also equipped them with the skills to be effective teachers and professionals that were more understanding of the necessary relationships between the school and the community.

## Conclusions

The research process and findings of this small initial study demonstrated the robustness and relevance of the research methodology. It elicited useful autobiographical responses from the preservice teachers which were capable of being coded using the Lortie (1975) and Boyd et al (2013) coding categories.

There were no inconsistencies between the characteristics of pre-service teachers' coded autobiographical reflections from this study and the findings of Lortie (1975) and Boyd et al (2013). However, this study is important because of the particular process approach adopted for the WFE. This involved a shift away from a community service activity towards a focus based approach on exploring and learning about effective pedagogy and practice in classrooms in a rural school.

With regard to the characteristics of the preservice teachers' autobiographical reflections, the coded autobiographical reflections produced results that were generally consistent with the findings from Lortie (1975) and Boyd et al (2013). The results for each of the sub-code categories were 24% for Functional Responses, 33% for Evaluative Responses, 24% for Affective Responses and 19% for Disrupted Responses. The main departures for the results from this study compared to other research were the higher number of reflections associated with sub-code Evaluative Responses and Disrupted Responses. These sub-codes involve evaluation and questioning of prior teaching experiences and identification of the influencers of prior classroom experiences and, the formulation of prospective frameworks for effective teaching practice in the future.

It was evident from the preservice teachers' responses that autobiographical reflections were significant experiences that caused them to question teaching practices and pedagogy gained from prior classroom experiences, and is consistent with the research. This study also placed the collaborative reflections and learning within a social context based on the participatory action research framework advocated by Creswell et al (2007) as being the most appropriate methodology for the particular context encountered during this research. The preservice teachers' collaborative recounts of classroom teaching experiences during the WFE which caused them to challenge prior beliefs. It facilitated strategic re-assessments about effective future teaching practices closely aligned with the categories and findings from Boyd et al (2013).

The preservice teachers' reflections about the WFE process showed the value of well-chosen WFEs and collaborative critical and autobiographical reflections immediately after each of the teaching sessions and after each visit to the school. In particular, the range of other perspectives offered by peers about the teaching and learning performances were fundamental in framing appropriate teaching strategies for different teaching contexts. In some instances the process of critical reflection and collaborative review was routinely carried out as part of the learning process.

## **Further research**

This small initial study elicited a higher percentage of Evaluative Responses and Disrupted Responses from the coded autobiographical reflections for the preservice teachers compared to the findings of other research in the area. It would be inappropriate to generalise and claim the WFE in this instance was the primary cause of the questioning approach about alternative teaching strategies and teaching practice that was evident in the preservice teachers' autobiographical reflections. However, it does invite further research with a larger population of preservice teachers. Extending the research to a larger group of participants completing WFE in different school communities in rural locations would improve the reliability of the findings and achieve a deeper examination of the end-to-end processes around WFE in developing an understanding of school community relationships and addressing professional learning and building capacity for teaching in rural and remote locations.

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