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A Digital Qualitative Ethnographic Study of Preservice Teachers' Perspectives and Experiences of Teaching from To-Be Teachers

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Keywords

Pre-service teachers, career, profession, qualitative, sustainability, educational change theory, learning systems, learning organizations, creativity, digital ethnography, mentorship, teacher identity



A Digital Qualitative Ethnographic Study of Preservice Teachers' Perspectives and Experiences of Teaching from To-Be Teachers

Mohamed Abdullahi Ali, *Grand Canyon University*

Abstract

This digital ethnographic study aimed to understand how and why college students decide to be teachers while many trained teachers leave the profession every year in the United States. A purposive sampling technique enabled 30 prospective teachers in a college of education to participate in this study. The research questions that guided the study were: 1) How and why did preservice teachers choose teaching as a career? 2) How did preservice teachers' perception of the drawbacks of teaching and the opportunities to support them in becoming teachers influence their decisions? The conceptual framework to understand the phenomena came from educational change, teachers' professional development, and learning organizations. This research used qualitative digital ethnographic design to collect data. Digital ethnography uses anthropological and sociological research approaches to understand digital space as a typical 'traditional locale.' Thematic analysis followed three weeks of data gathering, and the results indicate that people decide to teach from personal convictions that stem from experiences with children in different settings. The themes were *service for children, payback to the community, other influences, and personal commitment*. The study's conclusions cover novice teachers' understanding of teaching as a career, its challenges, opportunities, and creativity.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers, career, profession, qualitative, sustainability, educational change theory, learning systems, learning organizations, creativity, digital ethnography, mentorship, teacher identity

Introduction

This digital ethnographic study aimed to understand how and why college students decide to be teachers. In contrast, many trained teachers leave the profession annually in the United States. First, the problem space explored in this study comes from research indicating

that many trained teachers leave the profession yearly (Garcia & Weis, 2019; Gary, 2015; Ingersoll, 2001). The issue of attrition has been extensively researched. However, education in the USA is localized, as highlighted by Seelig and McCabe (2021). This creates inequalities in resources for teachers in rural and other disadvantaged areas. Tennessee, where the participants of the study come from, has a similar decline in "human capital and financial" resources, the authors noted. This context is essential to understand the challenges in-service teachers and future teachers face in this area.

According to a recent study by Bergey and Ranelluci (2021), there are numerous reasons why college students prefer to pursue a more accessible career path in any education program. These reasons include the program's entrance requirements, geographical location, and perceived teaching flexibility. However, the study also highlighted some concerning issues that need further exploration. The authors discovered that most candidates consider teaching a fallback option, a worrying trend requiring more research. However, the participants in this study reported a favorable view of teaching though familiar with the profession's drawbacks of long hours of teaching, taking home some work, low pay, confronting 'apathetic' parents, and, in some areas, possibilities of dealing with unmanageable classes. The second purpose of the research was to describe preservice teachers' expectations and assumptions of their chosen profession in the process of understanding their decision to be teachers. Qualitative digital ethnography aligned with the primary goal of this study to understand preservice teachers' decision to teach, their expectations, and the notion of their shortcomings in the chosen profession. Digital ethnography, which uses anthropological and sociological constructs to understand phenomena, requires digital platforms for research.

This design and its procedures suited the study because they allowed focus group and participant observation techniques to collect data (Bogdan, 1973; Guest et al., 2012). The following questions guided the study: 1) How and why did pre-service teachers choose teaching as a career? 2) How did preservice teachers' perceptions of the drawbacks of teaching and opportunities to support them in becoming teachers influence their decisions?

Participants

A purposive sample of 30 preservice teachers from a Tennessee university participated in this digital ethnographic study. Purposive sampling is often a suitable procedure for understanding given participants' knowledge and experiences of a phenomenon (Babbie, 2016; Etikan et al., 2016; Lavrakas, 2008). Before the financial crisis of 2008, the target population and the sample for this study did not noticeably vary in age groups and experiences from typical college seniors in any college or department. However, due to some returning students who perceived job opportunities in teaching after the financial crisis, this study's sample comprised typical seniors and older seniors with varied work experiences in a college of education. This sampling technique yielded sufficient data from 15 participants per group. The study collected data from two age groups: 22-27- and 35-45-year-old seniors.

Research on Preservice Teachers

Empirical research on preservice teachers' perceptions largely has remained the same for decades. Minor et al. (2002) reviewed research conducted 20 years before theirs. They noted that preservice teachers still entered the field with mixed perceptions or experiences of elements of effective teaching, such as enthusiasm, knowledge of the subject matter, student-centered teaching, professionalism, competent instructor skills, and ethical approach to teaching. Although the most challenging aspect of teaching, according to Minor (2002) and colleagues, preservice teachers considered student-centered instruction an essential factor and component of effective teaching. Researchers like Decker and Kaufman (2005), on relationships between preservice- teachers' personalities and beliefs, pointed out preservice teachers' "openness" and agreeableness" as favorable traits for the profession. However, Decker and Kaufman concluded that preservice teachers also showed interest in student independence rather than classroom control or management by the teacher. The latter conclusion from the research indicates why most preservice teachers find classroom management challenging in their first teaching assignment.

Existing research on preservice teachers states that for most people, teaching is a second choice or "stepping-stone" for "greener pastures" (Young, 1995). Young indicated that this perennial issue of the profession stemmed from the need to attract and retain

sufficient talented people to enter the profession because of poor working conditions. Despite these inherent issues, people opt to teach during poor economic trends rather than in a solid economic environment (Rots et al., 2010). Nevertheless, according to Rots and colleagues, the intention to teach seemed optimistic, pending supportive conditions and practical initial training of teachers. Current research, however, reveals the difficulties of recruiting and training (Garcia & Weis, 2019). They also indicated that while the problem of hiring and training teachers persists, it is compounded by appointing or recruiting the teaching force candidates with low credentials who end up in high-poverty schools.

Even in a technology-intensive environment in the 21st century, preservice teachers entered the field with fewer competencies in technology and its practical use. In research on technology usage by preservice teachers in a large northeastern university, Lei (2014) indicated an issue of "unpreparedness" of preservice teachers when technological skills are necessary and required. Lei contended that despite being technology natives and having grown up with technology, preservice teachers showed a lack of skills in "advanced technologies, classroom technologies, and assistive technologies." The study further reported that preservice teachers displayed limited technological skills, primarily used in social communication and some basic technical knowledge that could only partially meet 21st-century classroom technology needs.

Elsewhere, the struggle for training and retaining teachers persists. In a study on Chinese educational programs, Wang and Zhang (2021) argued that professional identity is essential. The authors said that when teachers' identity was not developed or modeled at training levels, they did not stay in the program. Likewise, in a report on teacher recruitment and effectiveness in Finland, Korea, and Singapore, external factors like salary and other benefits matter to persuade preservice teachers to join the profession and to resolve retention issues (Augustine et al., 2010).

Learning Organizations and Educational Change Theory

Given teaching and school system issues, the concepts of learning organizations seemed relevant. Senge (1990) explained learning organizations through "learning disciplines" that develop personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning.

He further stated that each learning discipline connects to levels like practice, which refers to what individuals do, principles that guide ideas and insights, and essences that help form a state of being with high mastery of disciplines- due to core knowledge or skills. This means an organization that uses learning disciplines in this manner achieves systems thinking that enables "interconnectedness" and personal mastery that creates "connectedness" (Senge, 1990, p. 375). Senge claims organizations that do not use these models suffer "learning inabilities" and often fail to learn from their actions.

Research in educational change from the perspective of teacher support suggested practical ideas any teacher, whether novice or experienced, can use. For example, expressing concerns about staff development, Fullan (2007) proposed educational change in 'Tri-level' reform. The levels refer to not focusing on single or individual schools but addressing the school system as one entity. The model explains an interconnection between school, community, district, and state or country. Fullan considered this as "permeable connectivity" that generates capacity building instead of mere reliance on accountability. By capacity building, Fullan's model emphasizes identifying new knowledge, skills, and competencies for all educational practitioners. As a result, he recommended "a model of action" for system reform encompassing: 1) sector engagement, 2) capacity building, 3) development of leaders at all levels, 4) managing distractors, 5) continuous inquiry of results, and 6) two-way communication instead of top-down operationalization of the organization.

Both Senge's learning organizations and Fullan's educational change theory imply the notion of evaluability of organizations and the need for individuals to build capacity and assess performance or practice. These actions can gauge any organization's needs and require a clear mission and vision to develop goals and objectives. It is common knowledge that a school has a vision and mission. However, these underpinning evaluation indicators still need to be theoretical in implementation or untapped in practice and training. In practice, teachers are isolated and only learn on their jobs with limited support from the school district via designed training (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Teachers' Professional Development

As an organization, education does not appear to have learning disabilities, as Senge (1990) argued when describing learning disciplines in activities aiming at expert knowledge and skills. However, recurring failure to learn from activities of professional development that meet the needs of teachers indicates historical elements of a problem associated with teacher support and a continuous system of learning for all educators, whatever their experiences (Glatthorn, 1997; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Little, 1994;). On the other hand, these historic elements often posed post-formal training challenges, including inadequate teacher support or professional development at the school level (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Craig, 2011).

When considering what novice teachers might rely on in the field for further training, teachers' support programs through professional development become crucial. However, historically, these programs needed more effectiveness and faced challenges in their delivery and form. Researchers like Brandt (1994) and Knapp (1997) observed decades ago that packaged professional developments were aimed at fixing perceived teachers' practices. Others like Olson and Craig (2001) revealed that conventional professional development used seminars intended "to shape prospective teachers' pedagogical practices" (p.667). However, despite efforts, professional development for teachers had a persistent problem of addressing challenges teachers encounter in the 21st-century classroom (Ali, 2004). This problem, although noted decades ago (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Fullan & Watson, 2000), continues despite the abundance of research demonstrating how to deal with teaching and learning challenges through professional development that explored teachers' needs and practical training at the school level.

Recent research illustrates some success in professional development for some subject regions but still needs to indicate opportunities in other areas. For instance, Borko et al. (2010) confirmed the importance and positive impact on students' writing skills achieved via Professional Development (PD) in language teaching from the National Writing Project in some schools. Nevertheless, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), in a review of 35 empirical research on professional development in the last three decades, claimed that PD for teachers

was still ineffective because of classroom challenges in the 21st century. According to Darling-Hammond and colleagues, these challenges require what novice and veteran teachers lack – new skills and extended education or knowledge to teach. The empirical research on PD indicated that in the 21st century, there is a need for "sophisticated forms of teaching that convey communication, collaboration, and self-direction" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p.1). More specific conclusions that Darling-Hammond and colleagues emphasized for PD from the empirical sources were 1) content-focused, 2) active learning using principles of andragogy, 3) collaboration (among teachers) and job-embedded context, 4) models and modeling effective teaching, 5) coaching and expert support, 6) feedback, and 7) reflection and sustained duration of support.

Despite the potential of professional support for teachers and theories or models that explain them in the field, a college degree remains an essential prerequisite for teaching in the advent of apparent difficulties in retaining and developing teachers (Bullough, 2001; Gracie & Weis, 2019). Indeed, more than a college degree is required because it takes time to be a competent teacher. Berliner (2004) said on the question of how long it can take a teacher to develop high skills, "It might be 5 to 7 years, if one works hard at it" (p. 2). Aside from issues or problems noted in PD at the school level, its role in supporting teachers, whether novice or not, to acquire competencies and confidence remain essential and something to probe considering the evidence of large numbers of teachers leaving schools every year. Research also indicates mentoring and its impact on novice teachers.

Mentoring preservice teachers has varied effects on their teaching practices in their role as professional knowledge and skill management procedures. Traditionally, mentors play a crucial role in supporting in-service teachers. Their mentoring style tends to shift towards more non-directive skills as the mentoring relationship progresses and when mentees have substantial background knowledge (Michailidi et al., 2021). In contrast, Wati (2021) argued broadly that individual student mentoring in pre-service education has a multidimensional impact on teacher professionalism, including psychological and emotional support, support for goal setting and career choices, academic support, and serving as a role model.

The mentee's expertise, modeling, and effectiveness matter. Preservice candidates receive better coaching and are more instructional best practices when mentored by more effective cooperating teachers (Johnson et al., (2019). Mentor teachers significantly impact preservice teachers' awareness and responsiveness to contextual factors, particularly in disadvantaged school backgrounds (Ronfeldt, 2020). Mentoring pre-service teachers can also provide benefits to mentors, such as meaningful professional development and growth in teacher identity and practice (Trifonova, 2020).

Methodology

Qualitative digital ethnography was used in this research. As Lohmeier (2014) explained, digital ethnography uses traditional anthropological and sociological concepts to examine a phenomenon using digital space as a field. According to Lohmeier, digital ethnography is flexible like traditional ethnography and employs a mixed method comprising interviews, informal chats, focus groups, and participant observations. As with all other qualitative approach designs, the researcher is visible when employing digital ethnography because of the nature of the data-gathering process. Lohmeier argued that for "visibility or immediacy" to be possible, constant reflection and relationship building must be needed to develop trust with the participants.

The mixed approach used in this research was focus group and participant-observation. Although associated with market research in its early usage (Merton, 1987), the focus group approach used in this study, according to Gaiser (2011), is a "multi-method" in its strategy to evaluate and facilitate understanding of ideas in a "group setting" (p. 2). In that sense of research operationalization, the focus group approach suited this study and design to explore preservice teachers' experiences using digital space. Gaiser (2011) recommended asynchronous posts and interactions because they are easier to manage than synchronous chats. However, asynchronous interaction is not passive data collection; it requires active participant engagement to gather meaningful data.

This study's asynchronous approach containing two central questions proved appropriate and doable to moderate the interaction. Gaiser (2011) recommended that the researcher be a participant and moderate the process but avoid "infusing their own opinion"

initially. However, the researcher's active participation encourages a participant to respond to other posts, enabling ideas that otherwise would not be discussed to emerge. Consequently, considering the asynchronous approach, the focus groups of 15 participants for each group for three weeks were conducted using the questions: 1) How and why did you choose to teach? 2) What were your perceived drawbacks and opportunities to support you as regular teachers?

As Boellstorff et al. (2012) explained, even in online ethnography, attitudes and emotions can be noted through social interaction during participant observation. Also, another reason to employ participant observation came from Charmaz's approach, as cited in Berthelsen et al. (2012), that usually, when using participant observation, the researcher is silent, respecting the participants' space and interaction. This kind of participant observation enables the researcher to pay attention to "specific actions" and allows the researcher to "stay close to the data" (Berthelsen et al.; p. 416). Such actions and visuals can be lost in an online focus group. Nevertheless, "verbal expressions and emotional icons, or emoticons" (Gaiser, 2011, p.15), replace genuine emotions and interactions. Those notes from emoticons provided insights into how participants understood the interactions and phenomena during data analysis.

Findings

The data showed predictable and outlandish experiences contributing to some participants considering a teaching career. Most of the participants in this study indicated that contact with children either earlier in their lives or at some point in their lives influenced them to teach. For example, some participants reported that their childhood activities, like "*playing the teacher*," had inculcated an interest in teaching. However, the most recurring experiences of the participants that influenced them to be teachers appeared to be babysitting, extended school programs in some districts where they lived, and keeping watch over young relatives in family settings. The following are examples from the data indicating that early contact with children influenced the participants' desire to teach:

Participant (JS) said, *ever since I was a little girl, I would remember all Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners with family-- I remember all the younger cousins of mine running*

around as a young child, started noticing in myself I could one day become a teacher. I did start going to college to be a teacher. The thing that interested me in teaching ... Another participant (AG) said, *in 2005, I started work...-(in) city school extended school program; I loved it! That is what I never experienced in (a) job before.* Furthermore, the participant (AC) said *they always wanted to be a teacher and even played the teacher in childhood, which was recorded by my dad.*

The participants also expressed unusual reasons and insights in choosing to teach. The occurrences of such concepts range from the need to earn respect to wanting to be part of the solution for problems associated with schooling and children. However, there were also some altruistic reasons why people wanted to teach. For example, the participant (MB) said, *“I wanted to be a teacher because I want to give back to the community and help. So many people influenced and helped me get where I am, and I want to do that for young people.* While the participant (SP) said, *I wanted to become a teacher to help ...change the lives of poor children.* Participant (MH) said, *my son has ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), so I think that I will have some experience with the behavioral problem and will create an environment that has structure.*

From these data, people decide to teach for various reasons, including the need to serve the community and personal career choices that need more evident and standard ways for anyone to dedicate himself to a career. Those peculiar choices to acquire a job or career were noted under the "other influences" theme to teach. Examples of comments illustrating such unusual concepts of becoming a teacher were expressed by participant (MB): *"Ever since I have been in school, I have had problems with it. As a young child, I could do better than most of my teachers; none of them reached me."* Another peculiar concept came from a participant (JI): *"As a child, I have always been curious about what it is like on the other side of the classroom from a teacher's perspective... curiosity has led me to strive to become a teacher. I am ready to be standing at the front of the room looking at the students and wondering how I will effectively teach each of them-- every one of them."*

Discussion

Recurring conceptual categories and themes summed up preservice teachers' experiences and illustrated the rationale the participants used to be teachers. The categories varied from community-based reasons that seemed selfless to personal reasons that indicated diverse ways people acquire jobs or work. The subsequent categories that explained some of the ways the participants preferred to teach included—*wanting to pay back, respect from the community, desire to help people, childhood ambition, and family influence*. These categories demonstrated that the participants chose to teach from a deep commitment to early life experiences. Nevertheless, they expressed the challenges and difficulties the chosen profession could pose. They mentioned demands for extra time at home to complete grading or prepare for lessons or emotional struggles that may happen when children do not perform as required due to factors beyond them and the school environment. The participants were also aware of the far lower salary they would earn compared to a 4-year college degree in engineering or nursing. For example, the participant (ES) indicated she likes to be around children and wants children to enjoy school because of her, and she will not be there for the salary.

The belief that sometimes people critique education and its personnel that people teach when anything else seems not to work for them was evident also (Young, 1995). Still, some participants in this study tried other jobs before becoming teachers-to-be. Those participants claimed they left their initial jobs, perceiving they were not the right fit for long-term career choices. However, as noted in the participants' assumptions and expectations of teaching, their naïve experiences of their chosen profession, despite their strong commitment to it, demonstrated unawareness of the complexities of teaching, despite educational researchers confirming that teaching is a complex job (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) and has poor working conditions Fullan (2006). So teaching, because of its poor work conditions and its complexities, should not be a vocational destination or a job to try for those who cannot make it in other professions. Quite the reverse, the themes of this study showed that the participants had meaningful and positive reasons behind their decision to be teachers.

The themes of the study: *payback to the community, service to children, personal commitment, and other influences on teaching* - reflect the multifaceted and different ways the participants processed their decisions to be teachers. Most categories that led to the themes came from constructs that seemed mundane and discernable, like the influence of family members, for example, a grandmother who became a teacher at 52 or observing a teacher one was fond of and wanted to emulate. There were, however, out-of-the-ordinary and unexpected reasons why some participants wanted to teach. Those unusual reasons depicted a naive understanding of the profession and, at the same time, offered remarkable insight into novice teachers' attitudes and their assumptions of what instruction involves. Examples of such simplistic understanding of teaching and fundamental misconception of the job were evident in comments like, "*I have the curiosity to teach, and I am ready to stand in front of a class to wonder how to teach,*" or as another participant claimed, "*In childhood, I felt I could do better than my teachers who could not reach out to me.*" Those outlandish notions of teaching techniques, if prevalent in many novice teachers' experiences, can be the causes of early departure from the teaching profession because such an unrealistic assumption about teaching and classroom realities is not sustainable.

Analysis of existing literature indicates high attrition rates in the teaching profession (Darling–Hammond, 2003; Gray et al., 2015; Ingersoll, 2001). A longitudinal study by the Department of Education states that attrition rates are worst for beginning teachers (Gray et al., 2015). Gray and colleagues reported that beginning teachers left teaching voluntarily or because of a lack of contract renewal. The percentages of those who left the profession voluntarily in the report between 2008 and 2012 showed an adverse trend in retaining teachers: for example, in 2008-9, 72.7 percent left; in 2009-10, 64.5 percent left; 2010-11, 74.6 percent left; and 2011-12, 80.1 percent left teaching (Gray et al., 2015, p.11).

These high attrition rates have monetary consequences as well in funding state education. The Alliance for Excellent Education in 2014 reported that states lose \$2.2 billion yearly because of teacher attrition. The report showed some specific factors that contributed to this exodus from the profession: poor conditions, low morale, and a lack of peers who

could offer mentorship and feedback. According to the report, the most affected schools are in high-poverty areas in all 50 states.

Despite the issues of teaching the participants anticipated in their classrooms, they also revealed fascinating assumptions about their chosen profession. The following is a list of the assumptions that recurred in their responses:

- 1) *It will be fun teaching,*
- 2) *I Am a child at heart,*
- 3) *I am Ready to start,*
- 3) *I am an organized person,*
- 4) *I dream that all parents will work with me,*
- 5) *Kindness and hard work will speak volumes,*
- 6) *Positive attitude toward*
- 7) *Teaching is like parenting,*
- 8) *Respect will beget respect,*
- 9) *Experience in teaching will eventually help,*
- 10) *Happy and lay back-ness will help,*
- 11) *Control is a good thing,*
- 12) *Clue from excellent teacher I had will work,*
- 13) *Children are remarkable assets,*
- 14) *Automatic connection with a learner is possible,*
- 15) *Collaboration with colleagues,*
- 16) *Able to create an environment that is better for learning,*
- 17) *Learning from my own mistakes will help,*
- 18) *Can provide, Godly examples.*

The preservice teachers also demonstrated realistic knowledge of the shortcomings or challenges associated with teaching:

- 1) *Parental confrontation,*
- 2) *Assessment practices and preparing children to take them,*
- 3) *Stressful situation,*
- 4) *Difficulties with the curriculum,*
- 5) *Daily preparations to teach effectively,*
- 6) *Paperwork,*
- 7) *Having own children and possible absenteeism,*
- 8) *Classroom management,*
- 9) *Children from abusive homes or environment,*
- 10) *Expecting rough days and rewarding days,*
- 11) *Diversity issues,*
- 12) *Being responsible for children's safety,*
- 13) *Long hours of working to be a teacher,*
- 13) *Taking work home.*

The preservice teachers' assumptions suggested naivety in what teaching entails. However, in the drawbacks or challenges of the profession, they identified and indicated specific practical issues that need the attention of the school administrators and people who support programs for new teachers. These assumptions, in mind models of learning organizations (Senge, 1990), should be opportunities for a sustainable learning system that can allow mastery of knowledge and skills to cope with the demands of the profession. The

preferable time for such a learning system is the first years of teaching to eradicate simplistic assumptions and build resilience toward some of the drawbacks that the nature of the profession cannot eradicate.

The United States Department of Education reported that attrition was reduced where mentorship was used effectively (Gray et al., 2015). Certainly, mentorship can be beneficial, but it does not have a focused practice like staff-development programs with continuous activities that disappear shortly. For staff development or in-service education, "the idea that it is new; therefore, it is better" seems the norm, although such programs are short-lived and unsustainable (Ali, 2004). However, Guskey (1999) pointed out that old knowledge of teaching can be helpful as a foundation for new knowledge and skills in the training of teachers. If already not core training sources, there is the need to emphasize the works of Bruner (2006) on knowledge and how it can be organized from a psychological perspective and Dewey (1933-1938) on underpinning philosophical understanding of education and society. In their naïve assumptions, the preservice teachers expressed misconceptions of the profession that old knowledge can address. New knowledge can offer insights on how to develop programs to support them in the first year as regular teachers.

Some preservice teachers' comments that the in-born trait of creativity will assist them in teaching seemed surprising, and it was hard to determine its viability. Creativity is a challenging factor that needs to be understood in learning situations apart from encouraging teachers to be aware of its use. Creativity has a long history in literature, as Dino (2014) stated, and can only work with innovation or other factors that sustain organizations. Nevertheless, it has a "resulting flow to education, implementation, and practice" (Dino, 2014, p.145). Dino also argued that creativity leads to innovation. This is something that the current professional development programs for teachers can explore; otherwise, creativity and related traits the participants claimed to have can be stifled by many challenges of teaching, they noted.

Conclusion

The preservice teachers showed diverse experiences that led them to teach. They also indicated positive teaching expectations despite knowing some significant drawbacks that

can hinder their development and retention in the chosen profession. Based on what they said were the drawbacks of teaching, their beliefs about the profession seem motivated by novice assumptions suggesting that actual classroom teaching could be challenging for them. These naïve beliefs were demonstrated by comments like, "*I can provide Godly examples.*" Children would like them and "*can learn from my own mistakes or happiness, and laybacks will help,*" or as one participant said, "*experiences and mistakes in the classroom*" could assist in developing teaching skills more than what college training offered.

Perhaps the incorrect assumptions of teaching noted in the study came from the wrong idea that anyone can teach—what mattered was knowledge of the subject matter and its delivery. This erroneous idea contradicts existing research that informs teaching is both a craft and a science that needs careful mastery. Teaching is a science in that to be a teacher; one must learn and practice teaching principles during training (Fullan & Connelly, 1987; Schön, 1987). Further, teaching is a craft because it involves a "reflective approach toward problems, a cultivation of imagination, and a playfulness toward words, relationships, and experiences" (Popkewitz & Wehlage, 1973, p. 113).

Generally, the focus group approach provided substantive data that answered questions on how and why the preservice teachers chose to teach and their perceived drawbacks and opportunities to support them. The data revealed diverse reasons to teach, as revealed by the four themes: *service to children, payback to the community, personal commitment, and influences from others*. The data also clearly illustrated some critical assumptions from the participants that suggested the opportunity to develop training and learning systems to support novice teachers. Senge (1990) explained that organizations that do not have systems learning have "learning disabilities that can be bottlenecks" towards efficiency and even growth. The naïve assumptions of preservice teachers and drawbacks indicate some "bottlenecks." These can be detrimental and hard to eradicate because prior research confirmed shortcomings in education and school systems when discussing capacity building and developing competencies at all levels (Fullan, 2007).

Fullan (2007) suggested system-wide change via tri-level learning that does not target only the teachers but also the administrators to develop competencies, which can

eliminate some of the shortcomings and obvious naïve assumptions noted by the participants. Although this study lacked exhaustive data, the findings and assumptions expressed by the participants offer some directions toward possible practical solutions to counter those naïve understandings with actual realities of teaching. The study recommends system-wide capacity or mastery building early in the professional life of preservice teachers. This does not mean we should ignore existing support systems. However, I recommend changing how they are used to ground new teachers for the complexities of teaching in an information-intensive environment. Beyond apparent issues of the profession, capacity and competency training cannot be emphasized enough for novice teachers because even in the technology-intensive school system, they enter the profession with low knowledge of the subject matter and how to deliver it (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The results confirmed these inadequacies through their unrealistic teaching assumptions, but their accurate expectations of real-world teaching revealed opportunities to sustain methods to help them develop competencies.

The preservice teachers' skills in creativity and personal beliefs about their abilities to manage and teach in modern classrooms need further attention. Those concepts can be pathways to explore when training or offering professional development. The study further recommends research with a larger sample size to investigate novice teachers' assumptions about modern classrooms and their drawbacks.

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