

Rethinking reflective practices in teacher education through looking at in-service teachers' experiences

Yoon-Joo Lee* & Minsun Shin

City University of New York, Montclair State University, USA

Abstract

This qualitative study explored four in-service teachers' experiences regarding their reflective practices during their student teaching experiences in the graduate program in special education. The data sources included document analysis of journal writings and self-evaluation of videotaped lessons and a semi-structured interview upon completion of the student teaching experience. The findings of this study reveal how reflective practices were useful in acknowledging the need to constantly reflect as a way of sharpening teaching skills and enhancing their professional development. Also, it revealed how in-service teachers may bring other educational and professional experiences to their approach to reflection in teaching. This study suggested ways for teacher educators to enhance reflective practices as well as rethink and reframe teacher preparation programs.

Keywords: *reflective practice, in-service teachers, professional development*

Introduction

Excellent teachers are always in the process of 'becoming'. Given the dynamics of their work, they need to continuously rediscover who they are and what they stand or ... through deep reflection about their craft. (Nieto, 2006, p. 395-396)

* Corresponding author, yjlee@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Reflective practice has been suggested as one approach for improving the quality of teaching. Highly qualified teachers will not just meet the requirements and learn about teaching strategies and curriculum but also instill the tools for self-renewing growth and reflective thinking (Amobi, 2006). Given that reflection is “the process of linking means and ends so that self and context can be examined and reconstructed where necessary and formal and informal theories can be brought together in a dynamic and reflexive relationship” (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995, p.16), reflective practice will help educators gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their teaching practice, and their thoughts on teaching. Therefore, reflective practice is a critical process of refining teaching skills (Schon, 1983/1987), which deserves our attention. Many teacher education programs have embraced reflective practice as core value of teacher preparation.

Teacher education programs in the United States can be divided into two levels: pre-service and in-service programs. While preservice programs prepare candidates with no background in education, in-service teacher education programs train candidates who already went through an initial teaching preparation program. The context of this study is a teacher preparation program for advanced teacher candidates (in-service teachers). Candidates entering this program hold an Initial Certificate in one of the New York State approved teacher certification areas. Upon completion of this Program, they qualify for their first special education license (Initial NYS Certificate in Teaching Students with Disabilities) after satisfying additional State requirement of teacher certification examination. The majority of candidates in this program have initial certification in general early childhood and childhood educational background. Yet, they have no coursework in the field of special education and no student teaching experience with students with disabilities. The context of this study needed to be put forward because it examined the role of reflection for practicing teachers. Many studies (Kolar & Dickson, 2002; Pedro, 2005; Szabo, Scott, & Yellin, 2002; Yost & Mosca, 2003) have examined the importance of reflective practices in initial teacher preparation programs but still leave a big gap of understanding about how these practices can improve the teaching of in-service teachers.

Recognizing that in-service teachers, unlike pre-service student teachers, may

have already established a set of teaching practices and belief from previous educational and professional experiences, there is a strong need to examine reflective practices in teacher education program and explore the ways to strengthen devices of reflection in teaching. The purpose of study is to describe what four in-services teachers learned through the reflection process during the student teaching experience. Also it discussed different factors emerged during this process. Ultimately, this study seeks to address how teacher educators need to think about the role of specific reflective practices beyond the initial teacher preparation program. This study addresses the following two research questions:

- 1) How do the in-service teachers describe what they learn from reflecting on their practice?
- 2) How do different aspects of in-service teachers' educational and professional backgrounds influence the ways of engaging in reflection?

Reflective Practices

Many teacher educators have addressed different ways of empowering their teacher candidates to personalize and own the craft of teaching (Amobi, 2006). They have taught to develop individuals capable of problem solving and critically reflecting on issues that arise in classrooms, so that meaningful change can be made (Yost & Mosca, 2003). Effective teaching has been always linked to inquiry, reflection, and professional development (Schon, 1983/1987).

Many teacher education programs implemented different devices of reflection in order to teach teachers to be reflective practitioners. Reflective practices have been criticized since reflective practices tend to undermine their intended purposes for teachers while emphasizing teaching techniques and classroom management and disregarding the social and institutional context of teaching (Fendler, 2003). Our study is guided by Schon's discourse on intuitive reflective practitioners with a belief that reflection is a purposeful slowing down of life to find time for self-examination, and 'open-mindedness,' indicating an attitude of being open to other points of view (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore, and Montie, 2001).

Schon (1983) described the reflection as a way to "make new sense of the situ-

ations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience” (p. 61). Schon makes a distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. For Reflection-in-action, teachers get engaged in as they confront a problem in the classroom *while* teaching. Reflection-on-action, on the other hand, is the type of reflection that teachers get involved in *posteriori* of the event. It is the most common type of reflection which is encouraged and practiced in universities or centers of higher education. Our study is aligned with Schon’s idea of reflection-on-action.

Several studies have addressed different means of reflective practice in teacher preparation programs. For example, Yost and Mosca (2003) incorporated a specific model to help teacher candidates to reflect upon issues related to behavior managements. Kolar and Dickson (2002) focused on identifying and understanding their pre-service general education students’ perceptions of the usefulness of structured log writings. In general, journal writing has been considered an essential multi-purpose learning and study tool for reflecting, connecting and maintaining information (Kolar & Dickson, 2002). In addition to journal writing, action researches (Szabo et al, 2002) and videotaped analyses of teaching (Freese, 2006) are also considered as critical tools for reflective practices. As widely addressed in the literature, through reflection, teacher candidates become co-constructors of the knowledge of and about teaching (Amobi, 2006). Reflection not only heightens awareness of context but also enables one to take greater control over his/her own professional growth. Reflective practice can be a beneficial form of professional development at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching. The power of self-renewing growth resides in a teacher’s ability to think deeply about teaching in ways that produce new insights or improved action (Amobi, 2006).

Many studies (Kolar & Dickson, 2002; Szabo, Scott, & Yellin, 2002; Yost & Mosca, 2003) clearly stated the importance of reflective practices in initial teacher preparation programs. Therefore, our understanding about how these practices can improve the teaching of advanced teacher candidates is lagged behind. Considering that there is a need to attend to and address the beliefs that teacher candidates bring with them (Yost et al., 2000), it is imperative to discuss the issues around reflective practices in the advanced teacher preparation program. With a belief that reflective

practice is the foundation for the continuous development of an educator, this study seeks to re-emphasize the role of reflective practice as a tool for self-renewing growth and empowerment by presenting the voices of teacher candidates, and explores the ways to enhance reflective thinking practices.

Method

Context

The study took place in Graduate Program in Special Education at one of the public colleges located in New York City. Teacher candidates in this program already had an initial certification in one of the state approved teacher certification areas prior to their admission and enrolled in this program to acquire additional certificate (Teaching Students with Disabilities). At the mid-point of the program, all teacher candidates must take a student teaching course which includes 150-hours of structured, college-supervised classroom teaching in two or three different special education placements that reflect the candidates' certification levels. This allows the candidates to systemically examine their teaching experience in their own classrooms as well as different classrooms. The student teaching component also included a 15-hour seminar over one semester. All participants took a student teaching seminar, where author one was a seminar instructor. Author one collaborated with author two who did not have any personal engagement with these participants in order to establish the credibility of findings. Interestingly, both authors were within the first five years of university teaching and shared similar issues preparing teacher candidates from various backgrounds.

Participants

Because author one was their instructor, consents from the participants to participate in this study were obtained after the final grades of the student teaching seminar were submitted. Out of eight teacher candidates were enrolled in the student teaching seminar, four teacher candidates agreed to participate in this study. Four participants had a wide range of teaching experience in diverse early childhood educational settings prior to enrolling in the graduate program in special education. Two

participants (Jane and Barbara) had no experience in the field of special education but years of experiences in other education-related fields. Jane was the educational director at a hospital-affiliated early childhood special education center and had ten years of teaching in elementary and middle schools. Barbara had an initial certificate in early childhood but worked as a social worker for several years before she decided to pursue Masters' degree in Education. She worked with low SES minority children in foster care and ran an early intervention system. Rosa and Margaret were general education teachers who had two years of experience. Rosa taught a 1st grade classroom in a NYC public school, and Margaret worked in a private day care setting. Compared to Jane and Barbara came to the Program with more experiences, Rosa and Margaret were more novice teachers and recent graduates from the undergraduate program.

Data collection

Data collection was conducted over the period of one semester. The semi-structured interview upon the completion of student teaching experience was the main source of data collection. The interviews with individual participants took place over the summer break, and each interview lasted for 40-50 minutes. Author one conducted all the interviews since she had close relationships with the participants. These interviews served as an opportunity for a retrospective reflection. Individual participants were asked to describe the role of reflective practice during the whole student teaching experience and articulate their thoughts regarding how this experience helped them think differently about their teaching and future teaching careers (See Appendix A for interview questions). The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and reader-checked by the participants.

Also course assignments related to reflective practice, such as self-reflective journals, analyses of videotaped lessons, and Student Teacher Self-Evaluations after the formal observations were collected and analyzed. As a part of the student teaching requirements, the participants were required to submit three entries of self-reflective journals. Self-reflective journals were structured, incorporating a 4-step process for guiding reflection from York-Barr et al. (2001). This process guides reflection-on-

action and reflection-*for*-action, both focused around a specific event or circumstance. This represents a sequenced process of thinking: description (what?), analysis and interpretation (why?), overall determination of meaning (so what?), and projections about future actions (now what?). This structured approach has been shown to be effective in expanding teacher candidates' knowledge base, connecting new knowledge to their belief systems, and applying new information to future application in classrooms (Kolar & Dickson, 2002). The participants submitted three journal entries throughout the semester. Also after each formal observation, the participants had to self-evaluate their own teaching three times over a semester. They used a structured form for first two observations and wrote a more semi-structured 3-5 page narrative for the videotaped lesson, which was considered as one of the three formal observations. The purpose of these instruments was to provide insights into how teachers think, the conflicts they experience, the fears they encounter, and the benefits they derive from systematically examining their teaching (Freese, 2006). These course assignments were collected at the end of the semester as a part of the data source for this study.

Data analysis

Two researchers engaged in a collaborative data analysis process. The analysis of all the data sources focused on the written and oral language used when describing events, beliefs, and talking about teaching incidents (Freese, 2006). The researchers examined the data to identify emergent themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief through the analytic process (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). First, all the interview excerpts were extracted verbatim from the transcripts and put into a table to present all four participants' perspectives side by side. Each researcher independently coded the interview transcripts, identifying recurring themes that emerged from their reflections and their analysis of their experiences. Then, they came together to discuss and compare their findings, deciding any disagreement by consensus. All emergent themes were discussed and compared. Finally, they went back to the course assignments of the participants and incorporated the written responses, to match the initial patterns identified in the interviews. This qualitative data

analysis process was complex, elaborate, and interpretive, bringing meaning to the data.

To ensure credibility in qualitative research design, the researchers incorporated member checks where the participants read the interview transcripts to verify the information. The participants' perspectives were extracted from the interviews and the weekly journals without major changes in order to clearly convey their voices. The information from the interviews, journals and self evaluations of teaching provided the verification of at least two pieces of data (Huberman & Miles, 1994, p. 438).

Findings

The findings are indicative of themes, presenting along with excerpts from the interviews, journals and self evaluation of lessons.

How do the in-service teachers describe what they learn from reflecting on their practice?

Through journal writings and self-evaluation of their teachings, the participants were able to re-examine the extent to which they engage in reflection process in their daily teaching practice. At the initial stage of student teaching experience, some participants expressed how they were pretty familiar with different tools such as reflection journals and felt somewhat reluctant to repeat the same process when it was presented to them as one of the student teaching requirements. Rosa described how she was reflective to begin with during the interview, and her comment seemed to imply that she didn't consider journal writings as an innovative experience. Barbara honestly discussed her initial feelings.

Initially I didn't like it because ... I think that "why do I have to think the whole thing through again? I didn't have any thought." But as you begin to think through, as you write it down and process it, more thoughts come up and you begin to see more of what you did and what you can do differently, or how you learn from others. Um, you actually have to do the journal in order to reach that point (Barbara- Interview).

However, as the participants reflected on their practice, they were able to appreciate the values of journal writing and self-evaluation of their lessons. They began to realize different tools of reflection as the opportunities to gain deeper understanding of their own practice as described below:

*Journal writing helps me to step away to objectively reflect my feelings.
(Rosa-Interview)*

*Having the journal writing down, you can go back and see where you need
to work harder to improve. (Margaret-Interview)*

*I think that to be an effective teacher, one has to be reflective. It is important
to set aside time to think back on your days, your lessons, and particular
interactions you had. You always need to reflect on what went well and what
you can do better next time. (Rosa-Journal)*

Especially the process of evaluating their videotaped lesson became a way for the participants to see their strengths and growth as classroom teachers. They described this process as ‘looking through a third eye’ and appreciated an opportunity to observe their own teaching, as described below:

*I am glad that I had this experience because the tape provided me with the
opportunity to see myself teaching. (Margaret-Interview)*

*Watching the videotape of my lesson was really a great experience. It
allowed me to reflect on my instruction. (Rosa-Self evaluation of videotaped
lesson)*

Even though the videotaping process was logistically hectic at the planning stage, two participants expressed their willingness to incorporate this process into their daily teaching routine, as shown in their comments below.

*I think they [teachers] should do it for themselves to see how they teach in
the classroom, because seeing yourself teach is different. (Margaret-
Interview)*

Video is not something that we do on a daily basis. Maybe that's what we need to change. It needs to be a regular practice. (Jane-Interview)

Through engaging in reflection, the participants were able to systematically examine their daily practices and challenge their own taken-for-granted assumptions. As graduate students who were also working as professionals in the field, it was challenging for them to step back from nitty-gritty of daily routines and pause to reflect. Two participants articulated how the teachers could be caught up with daily making, and it was hard for them to find time to reflect. During the interview, Rosa said, “sometimes going through the whole day, you don’t have that chance to just like stop and think about it.” Jane explained how the reflective practice through journal writings helped her “keep accountable in our practice and what we do.” She also wrote the following in the journal.

I took a chance and stepped out of my comfort zone. I hope this becomes a trend in our center where we are able to recognize our individual expertise but nevertheless be willing to take the risk to step outside the box. (Jane-Journal)

Therefore, reflecting on their practice through writing journals and self-evaluating the videotaped lesson was helpful for in-service teachers to heighten their level of awareness of their current practice. They were able to take notice of their prior assumptions and critique their previous teaching strategies. For example, for Rosa who was already working with special-needs children in an inclusion setting as a general education teacher, it was an eye-opening opportunity to re-examine her teaching strategies. In her self-evaluation of the videotaped lesson, she discussed what she noticed about her teaching differently as shown in the following.

One thing I noticed when I was watching my videotaped lesson was that the children did a great job when they were working with partners. That day, when I was walking around while the children were working together, I remember being a little upset that the room was noisy. When I watched the tape, I noticed it was good noise. The children were engaged in the activity, talking to each other about what they were doing and helping one another. I

think sometimes teachers put a big priority on students being quiet and forget that conversation can be a great asset to learning. I also picked up on how long I had the children sitting on the rug. I am going to pay special attention to the length of time I had the children stay in one place.

Jane who had an administrative role felt more confident about her teaching as she reflected on her practice through evaluating her own videotaped lesson. This was important for her because she had to conduct a series of lessons in front of other teachers who were typically under her supervision. During the interview, she described “when I sat in front of the classroom, I was cognizant of the fact that everybody else was ... It was their time to evaluate me.” In the self-evaluation paper, she wrote “I was able to witness the growth that I have made in working with toddlers with developmental delays. I feel much more comfortable with the students and the number of staff members who were present in the classroom while I was teaching.” Overall, even though in-service teachers were pretty familiar with different ways of reflecting on their practice, they were able to re-discover the benefits of reflective practices and use these reflective approaches to re-examine and critique their previous teaching strategies.

How do different aspects of in-service teachers' educational and professional background shape the ways of reflecting on their practice?

This study revealed a picture of four in-service teachers who brought different experiences and backgrounds to bear on their approach to reflection in teaching. When reflecting on their practice, in-service teachers mentioned issues and concerns that seemed to be influenced by personal and professional experiences as well as contextual variables. For example, Barbara articulated how she had to change her perspective from what she had learned as a social worker.

I work as a social worker in early intervention and also an owner of early intervention program. I work children with special needs at the other end from mental health perspectives. My views and perspectives are shifting from social work, mental health views to educational views ... (Barbara-Interview)

Jane was a program director who had to evaluate other teachers. But during the student teaching experience, she had to make a major shift from an administrator's to teacher's perspective. She needed to step back and really examine what she could learn from other teachers who were under her supervision. During the interview, she discussed the shift in her perspective.

[When writing journals,] I found out that in actuality I was observing the teacher. Because I have done this such a long time, being a teacher trainer, modeling in the classroom, I found that I was writing from that perspectives. And then one day I just stopped and said "ok, I need to stop going that way." And then I fully integrated myself into the classroom, as one from the assistant teachers' point of view. So I had to pull back first and then after that, I looked at all the responsibilities that the teacher had, and from the perspective of where that teacher was coming from. (Jane-Interview)

Her journals also revealed how this was a major concern in her mind as she reflected in her teaching.

I led out circle time today for the first time. The staff was excited to see me modeling. However, it was awkward. I was modeling for people who have more years of experience in this field that I have in teaching. At the end, the teachers and staff were very receptive and helpful. This worked well because even though I am the director at the Center, I maintain a stance that I am a lifelong learner and willing to learn firsthand what the staff does. I also acknowledge their expertise in the field. (Jane-Journal #1)

In the beginning of student teaching experience, I was skeptical about whether I was capable of doing a good enough job to impress the staff I supervised. (Jane-Journal #2)

For Rosa and Margaret who were general education teachers, their reflections were more often around their process of figuring out how to accommodate children with different disabilities through implementing differentiated instruction. Through reflecting on their practice, they examined carefully the extent to which they were able to incorporate various teaching strategies in order to address diverse learning

needs of children. Especially, Margaret's journal entries illustrated a change in her feelings about becoming a special education teacher, from a sense of uncertainty and inadequacy to competence and confidence.

In the beginning I was overwhelmed with the challenges that I knew I was going to face in the classroom. This was my first time being exposed to a self-contained special education classroom. (Margaret-Journal #1)

I enjoyed working this group of students. This experience drives me to wonder about my future in special education. I have been thinking that I would like to teach in a self-contained classroom because I had a great experience with those students. (Margaret-Journal #2)

Also, in her journal, Rose discussed her limited experiences of working with special needs children. But as she gained more experience, in her journal entries she celebrated the success of working with children with different learning needs through incorporating differentiated instruction. For example, she reflected upon the situations when she had to problem-solve to work with children with special needs. She described how she came in terms with understanding a child with learning disabilities and his frustration with learning.

In sum, reflective practices were found to be a venue to express their thoughts and feelings for advanced teacher candidates. This study further confirms the view that it is critical to address the beliefs that the teacher candidates bring with them into the teacher education program (Yost et al., 2000), and to discuss changes in their perceptions of self and teaching practices through comprehensive reflective practices.

Educational Importance of the Study

This study demonstrates how reflective practices need be implemented as an essential element beyond initial teacher preparation programs, as Jane commented during the interview, *"I think any lifelong learner, any person who is growing on regular basis has to reflect."* This study supports that preparing the teacher candidates to engage in critical self reflective practices is a key to helping them become reflec-

tive problem solvers rather than “cookbook” practitioners (Hoover, 1994).

The pre-service teacher education program has been focused on developing ways of instilling reflection and providing different opportunities go engage in reflective practice (Pedro, 2005). This study showed how in-service teachers need to engage in reflective practice that will empower them to challenge their own taken-for-granted assumptions and habits of doing certain things. Since these practicing teachers tended to be caught up with daily routines and previous understanding of teaching, the more important issue seemed to be how to heighten teacher awareness of important issues instead of having them operate without a deep understanding of what’s happening in their daily practices. This study also highlights the need for teacher educators to pay attention to in-service teachers’ diverse experiences and educational background. While pre-service teachers’ reflection is more likely to be influenced by personal beliefs and educational theories (Pedro, 2006), this study revealed how in-service teachers may bring other educational and professional experiences to their approach to reflection in teaching. Depending upon each candidate’s prior teaching experience, it is important for teacher educators to guide him/her develop further as a reflective practitioner. This can be done though structured, yet individualized format when reflecting in practice. At the same time, it is important for teacher educators to remember that teachers are reflective even though they may not practice the specific techniques promoted by researchers. It is ironic that the rhetoric about reflective practitioners focuses on empowering teachers, but the requirements of learning to be reflective are based on the assumption that teachers are incapable of reflection without direction from expert authorities (Akbar, 2007; Fendler, 2003).

To challenge our own assumption about reflective practice, we, as teacher educators and researchers, sought to incorporate the in-service teachers’ perspectives when considering different tools of reflection for recommendation. The participants wanted more in-depth exploration of reflective practices, such as in-class discussion, in order to revisit their own beliefs and enhance their teaching philosophies. For example, during the interview, Barbara articulated, *“I would like to have more group discussion on our own reflective practices ... It will be helpful to have more discussion.”* Also, they articulated the need of various venues to express and share experi-

ences both individual and group reflections. During the interview, Jane suggested more informal dialogues among classmates, saying “*We could talk about without any pressure of writing a paper and honestly state how we felt and how this has helped us as a teacher, and what we are going to take from this experience.*” Their perspectives drew teacher educators’ attention to the need to nurture critical thinking by engaging teachers in shared dialogue (Szabo et al., 2002). Considering that reflection in teacher education is often practiced by journal writing (Fendler, 2003), his study urges teacher educators to utilize different types of activities beyond writing to develop in-service teachers’ ways of instilling critical reflection. This study also highlights that collaborative, socially constructing reflection sharing may benefit in-service teachers more rather than individual reflection.

As this study seeks to provide a holistic picture of challenges, learning, and development among teachers during student teaching, the voices of the in-services with whom we worked provide encouragement for teacher educators to reframe their thinking about teacher preparation programs at both initial and advanced levels. For example, Margaret expressed that it was difficult for her to clearly articulate her thoughts and feelings because she did not feel competent as a writer. Even though writing skill is essential in teacher education, this study raises the question of to what extent the formal writing may play a role. Specifically, this study provokes a discussion around whether a formal writing process itself can be a hindrance during the reflection process. If a candidate is an incompetent writer, is it possible that the candidate’s inept writing skills impede an ability to reflect in a deeper level? Or is it possible that great writing skills can mask the candidate’s true ability to reflect? This perspective suggests that a more free-style way of expressing thoughts and feelings such as group dialogues and blogs on the web might be considered as a valuable supplementary tool. The participants’ responses support the view that the group reflection needs to be implemented to a greater extent, creating an opportunity for in-depth conversations with others as well as for providing more critical feedbacks and reflection to each other.

References

- Akabari, R. (2007). Reflections on reflection: A critical appraisal of reflective practices in L2 teacher education. *System*, 35, 192-207.
- Amobi, F. A. (2006). Beyond the call: Preserving reflection in the preparation of “highly qualified” teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 33(2), 23-35.
- Bullough, R., & Gitlin, A. (1995). *Becoming a student of teaching: Methodologies for exploring self and school content*. New York: Garland.
- Fendler, L. (2003). Teacher reflection in a hall of mirrors: Historical influences and political reverberations. *Educational Researcher*, 32 (3), 16-30.
- Johnson, G. (1997). Reframing teacher education and teaching: From personalism to post-personalism. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13(8), 815-829.
- Freese, A. R. (2006). Reframing one’s teaching: Discovering our teacher selves through reflection and inquiry. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22, 100-119.
- Huberman, A. M. & Miles, M. B. (1994) Data management and analysis methods, in: N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds) *Handbook of qualitative research* (Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage), 428-444.
- Hoover, L. A. (1994). Reflective writing as a window on preservice teachers’ thought processes. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10, 83-93.
- Kolar, C., & Dickson, S. V. (2002). Preservice general educators’ perceptions of structured reflective logs as viable learning tools in a university course on inclusionary practices. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 25 (4), 395-406.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Nieto, S. (2006). Challenging current notions of “highly qualified teachers” through work in a teachers’ inquiry groups. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 54 (5), 386-398.
- Pedro, J. Y. (2005). Reflection in teacher education: Exploring pre-service teachers’ meanings of reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, 6 (1), 49-66.
- Schon, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.

- Schon, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Szabo, S. M., Scott, M. M., & Yellin, P. G. (2002). Integration: A strategy to help preservice teachers make the connection between theory and practice. *Action Teacher Education*, 24 (3), 1-9.
- York-Barr, J., Sommers, W. A., Ghere, G. S., & Montie, J. (2001). *Reflective practice to improve schools: An action guide for educators*. Corwin Press, Inc.: Thousand Oaks, California
- Yost, D. S, Sentner, S. M., & Forlenza-Bailey, A. (2000). An examination of the construct of critical reflection: Implication for teacher education programming in the 21st century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51 (1), 39-49.
- Yost, D. S., & Mosca, F. J. (2003). The E.N.A.C.T. Model: Enhancing teacher candidates' ability to manage student behavior. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 26 (4), 349-355.

Appendix A: Interview questions

I. General background

1. What made you want to become a teacher? How did you choose a teaching as a profession?
2. Describe your career path as a teacher. What kinds of classrooms and school settings have you worked so far?
3. What made you to pursue a Masters degree in special education?

II. Reflection on student teaching experience

4. How did reflective journals help you think differently about your current teaching practice?
 - a. How would you describe your experience of writing the journal?
 - b. What did you discover as strength and challenging areas?
 - c. What do see as the benefits and limitations of the journal writing requirements?
5. How did the videotaped lesson help you think differently about your current teaching practice?
 - a. How would you describe your experience of evaluating your own teaching?
 - b. What did you notice about your strength as well as challenging areas in your teaching?
 - c. What do see as the benefits and limitations of this assignment?
6. How did the reflective practice through these mechanisms change your teaching practice? What do you do differently after engaging in reflective practice? Please provide a concrete example.

7. What do you do as an individual teacher to enhance professional development?

III. Future career questions

8. How did this student teaching experience help you think about your career choice as a teacher?
9. What are your professional plans for the future after completion of the program?