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# “This is Not What I Expected”: Knowledge Reconfiguration in Preservice Teachers

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## **Keywords**

preservice teacher, field experience, case study

## THIS IS NOT WHAT I EXPECTED: KNOWLEDGE RECONFIGURATION IN PRESERVICE TEACHERS

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### Abstract



The aim of this qualitative case study was to investigate how two Preservice teachers reconfigured their role as teachers during their practicum. We collected data through interviews, field observations, and documentary notes gathered at an urban school across four months. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. The results revealed three themes: (a) Blaming vs. Connecting, (b) Idealism vs. Realism, and (c) Retreating vs. Reconfiguring. The findings of this study indicated that placement was influential for the two Preservice teachers. This case study shares valuable information regarding the importance of connecting Preservice teachers with quality teaching practicum experiences aimed at bridging theory and practice.

### Introduction

Colleges devote significant time and human capital in the preparation of preservice teachers. The preparation of novice teachers through field experiences is crucial to their growth as teachers. Indeed, teaching experiences play an important role as far as helping new teachers develop confidence in teaching and professional expertise. Scholars have indicated that exposing preservice teachers to quality supervised field experiences is beneficial to their professional growth (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009; Constantinou, 2011; Duncan & Clemons, 2012; Spooner, Flowers, Lambert, & Algozzine, 2008; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Therefore, it is important to investigate what preservice teachers learn during their field experiences (Eisenhardt, Besnoy, & Steele, 2011-2012). Unraveling the experiences of preservice teachers in teaching and learning settings is an important research area augmenting our knowledge of teachers and program assessment (Hand, 2014).

The aim of this qualitative case study was to illuminate challenges and opportunities facing two preservice physical education teachers during their teaching practicum. Qualitative case research offers supervising teachers opportunities to reflect on field experience placements. Quality preparation of preservice teachers should be a process, linked in practices and informed by sound pedagogies (McDonald & Kahn, 2014).

### The Role of Field Experiences

The problem at the heart of this qualitative case study is how preservice teachers reconfigure their roles as teachers during their teaching practicum. In order for preservice teachers to benefit from their practicum experiences, university faculty members need to understand how field experiences influence preservice teachers in their teaching decisions. The field placement itself is a very important contributor to preservice teachers' understanding of teaching (Constantinou, 2011; Moulding, Stewart, & Dunmeyer, 2014; Ronfeldt, 2012, 2015). If not carefully planned and supervised, field experiences may curtail learning of significant teaching skills in novice teachers and may end up being of "little or no value" (Beck & Kosnik, 2002, p. 81). Researchers have noted the importance of carefully designing and selecting field placements to help preservice teachers learn necessary skills (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Britzman,

1991; Duncan & Clemons, 2012; Hand, 2014; McIntyre, Byrd, & Fox, 1996; Moulding, et al., 2014; Ronfeldt, 2012, 2015; Zengaro & Zengaro, 2016; Zengaro, Zengaro, & Belcher, 2015). Thus, field experiences have promising results (1) when designed to target specific teaching expertise in preservice teachers (Ericsson, Charness, Feltovich, & Hoffman, 2006) and (2) when structured so that preservice teachers work directly with students (Eisenhardt et al., 2011-2012; National Research Council, 2010).

Concern over placement in field experiences is not a new development. Lortie (1975) discussed that field placements help formulate preconceptions about teaching in preservice teachers. Borg (2004) added that field observations may create a false sense of expertise in preservice teachers, leading them to think they understand teaching better than they do. Field experiences and teaching practica play a pivotal role in terms of shaping knowledge of teaching and learning (Britzman, 1991; Lafferty, 2015; Levine, 2006; McIntyre, Byrd, & Fox, 1996). However, poorly planned experiences may not help preservice teachers develop the expertise they need to teach.

Teaching can be a stressful event for preservice teachers when personal beliefs about teaching differ from the actual reality of teaching (Anhorn, 2008; Barrett, Kutcy & Schulz, 2006; Kokkinos, 2007; Liu, 2007; Melnick & Meister, 2008; Murshidi, Konting, Elias, & Fooi, 2006; Quinn & Andrews, 2004; Roth & Tobin, 2005; Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005; Yost, 2006). Nevertheless, teaching promises to be most beneficial to students when teachers care about and nurture their students (Bain, 2004; Noddings, 1992; Shulman, 2006). Preservice teachers, who have a dual role of teachers and students, need to be able to connect with their cooperating teacher supervisors (Beck & Kosnik, 2002) and see the work “behind the scenes” involved in teaching, not just being in front of students in the classroom (Lafferty, 2015).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The aim of this qualitative case study was to describe the reconfiguration of their teaching roles by two preservice teachers. We framed this qualitative case study through the lenses of constructivism, because knowledge in constructivism is created by rather than received by an individual (Woolfolk, 2013). We based the research on a theoretical framework of Piaget’s cognitive constructivism and Vygotsky’s theories of sociocultural learning. We believe that knowledge reconfiguration is consistent with constructivist theories of knowledge creation. Therefore, from a constructivist perspective, knowing is an active process individuals engage in to restructure their own knowledge, via adaptation, accommodation, and integration; individuals’ new knowledge comes from internal dissonance, or a state of imbalance, where learners try to reconfigure their own knowledge (Eisenhardt et al., 2011-2012; Piaget 1966, 1970a, 1970b).

Knowledge is also shaped by culture & language (Vygotsky, 1978). This implies that the expertise of preservice teachers is influenced by sociocultural factors as well, such as their field placement experiences. When preservice teachers reflect on their actions, they are able to reconfigure their knowledge, by integrating new information with old information through active reflection and positive feedback provided by faculty members working with preservice teachers (Hand, 2014). Field placements are uniquely suited for self-reflection, a practice used and supported by faculty mentoring preservice teachers in field experiences (Eisenhardt et al., 2011-2012; Zengaro et al., 2015; Zengaro & Zengaro, 2016).

This research is based on a qualitative framework. Qualitative case research draws out important information from small samples. The scope of qualitative case research is not to isolate particular variables within a study. Rather, the scope is to let the disciplinary framework, the dynamic context of the research, direct the purpose of the investigation. Instead of making

inferences to the population, qualitative case studies utilize “analytical generalization,” or connecting the results of the case study to previously developed theories to support the findings (Yin, 2003).

When conducting constructive qualitative research, the study’s design should reflect (1) the active role of the participants (2) and the researchers generating their own theories (Charmaz, 2014). The researchers narrate the story from the participants’ perspectives (Zengaro et al., 2015; Zengaro & Zengaro, 2016). It is important to investigate how preservice teachers reconfigure their knowledge of teaching while engaged in teaching practice. This research is necessary not solely as an augmentation of knowledge, but because of its connection to program placement, effectiveness and evaluation. Researchers have highlighted the importance of understanding what teachers learn while involved in field teaching experiences (Eisenhardt et al., 2011-2012; Hand, 2014; McDonald & Kahn, 2014; Mutton, Hagger & Burn, 2011; Norman, 2011; Zengaro et al., 2015; Zengaro & Zengaro, 2016).

In this qualitative case study, we discuss the experiences of two preservice physical education teachers during their teaching practicum. Their experiences are carefully captured in a narrative style. The description of their own personal experiences calls for grounded constructivist theories (Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, the design of this case study and the research questions framing it underscore an in-depth qualitative research paradigm. We suggest that individual knowledge framed in interpretative research designs relies on (1) the richness of data, (2) limited sample size, (3), data saturation, (4) data comparison, and (5) insightful knowledge deriving from multiple sources of evidence (Ali, Zengaro, & Zengaro, 2016; Charmaz, 2014; Check & Schutt, 2012; Creswell, 2015; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Onwuegbuzie, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2003; Yin, 2003).

The following research question guided this investigation: How do preservice teachers reconfigure their knowledge of teaching during their teaching practicum? This study is important because it seeks to explain the role of field placement in helping preservice teachers learn their roles in teaching.

### **Method**

This research follows a qualitative case research design (Yin, 2003, 2009). The design was chosen first to create a crisp and detailed account of the cases following the transcription of the interviews (Merriam, 1998). Second, case study methodology draws on the richness of data collection and description typically found through interviews, field observation and documents (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam, 1998; Shaw, 1978; Wilson, 1979).

### **Participants**

The participants of this qualitative case study were two preservice physical education teachers enrolled in their last semester of student teaching. We obtained Institutional Review Board approval from the university’s Office of Research and Compliance. The two preservice teachers volunteered to participate in the study after being informed of the scope of the study in their methods of teaching class. The two participants consented to be part of the study by signing informed consent forms. The preservice teachers (one male and one female) taught at the same middle school in a small town in the southern United States.

### **Materials and Procedure**

This qualitative case study consisted of an investigation of two preservice physical education teachers during their teaching practicum. The participants taught at a middle school located five miles from the university where they were studying teacher education. We submitted a short synopsis of the study to the school’s principal, and the principal granted

permission for data collection through interviews and observations of the two preservice teachers.

### **Data Collection**

We collected written documents, field visits or observations, and semi-structured interviews. The two preservice teachers were each observed and interviewed twice over the course of the semester. The interviews were spaced in order to allow time for reflection in between interviews so the two researchers could reflect on data transcription. The interviews were recorded with permission of the participants. The interviews took place during the planning period of the two preservice teachers. The two interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were used to gather data on feelings, experiences, and knowledge the two preservice teachers experienced during their teaching practicum. Additionally, we made several visits at the middle school where the two preservice teachers taught. This additional procedure allowed us to conduct triangulation across multiple data points. Table 1 contains the initial interview questions.

Table 1

### **Interview Questions**

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Describe your typical teaching day from the time you arrive at school till you leave  
 What curriculum models are you using when teaching?  
 What prompted you to become a physical education teacher?  
 What would you like your students to learn in physical education?

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### **Field Observations**

We made four visits to the middle school where the two preservice teachers taught and took field notes during the course of those visits. Merriam (1998) has indicated that qualitative researchers look for additional support, data corroboration deriving from multiple sources. This practice enriches the scope of the study and confirms the nature of qualitative research (rigor, gathering rich data, and triangulation) for the scope of reaching saturation (Patton, 1990; Rossman & Rallies, 1998.)

### **Documents**

Additionally, we also looked at lesson plans. Their lesson plans provided additional insights into their planning and reflection for teaching and were used for triangulation purposes. The analysis of those documents allowed us to have additional data from which to make global inferences from the case study. This data allowed us to delve into plans for teaching, notes on reflection, and our documentary notes following our field visits. The documents were not used as an amalgam of mixed information; rather they were used by the researchers as artifacts of evidence.

### **Data Analysis**

We analyzed data through constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Straus, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 1980; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The data analysis was ongoing, reflecting the design of qualitative research, through the interviews, field notes, and documents. We compared and contrasted categories which emerged as a result the data analysis following interviews and field notes (Dey, 1993; Patton, 1990). Category creation started with the first interview (Merriam, 1998). We reflected on the data from the transcripts, thus creating notes (Merriam, 1998). LeCompte, Preissle, and Tesch (1993) have indicated that initial notes reveal important information about

the data. We reflected on the notes created from ongoing data analysis. The notes we created helped with the construction of categories, or the cyclical nature of themes, in qualitative analysis to form recurrent patterns; and from reflection on the notes we took, we began constructing categories, or themes that captured patterns (Merriam, 1998) that appeared from across a preponderance of the data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). As categories were identified through data summary, they were clustered into themes (Dey, 1993; Glaser & Straus, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 1980; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Merriam (1998) said that “data analysis is done in conjunction with data collection” (pp. 180-181). We tried to focus on the data objectively and sought to give credibility through member checking. We relied on multiple sources of information for the case study analysis (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990).

### **Triangulation**

We reflected on the emerging data from transcribed interviews first, and later we brought the transcripts back to the two preservice teachers for data verification and credibility (Creswell, 2015; Eisenhart & Howe, 1992; Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Gardner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Cuba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 1990). The practice of member checking was used in order to increase data trustworthiness, reliability, and the analysis of the results while looking for disconfirming evidence (Patton, 1990; Rossman & Rallies, 1998).

We analyzed and reflected on the transcripts of recorded interviews with each participant in order to capture any significant and relevant factors within the investigation. Each interview was transcribed, and developing themes were categorized using constant comparative analysis (Creswell, 2015; Glaser & Straus, 1999; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 1980; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

### **Results**

Through the analysis of the data, the following themes emerged: (1) Blaming vs. Connecting, (2) Idealism vs. Realism, and (3) Retreating vs. Reconfiguring. Table 2 contains examples of the preservice teachers’ comments leading to the themes.

### **Cases**

Kelly is a fictitious name for a female student teacher in her last semester of her student teaching. In her words,

My name is Kelly. I am teaching a unit on sport education. I am focusing on team game play with all my classes. This is the regular season tournament. To plan, I had to look at all the teams that had played each other and then decide which ones are going to play today.

As a 23-year-old, Kelly was experiencing difficulties working with middle school students. Kelly’s background in sports was not a major decisive factor for deciding to become a physical education teacher. She stated that she decided to be a teacher because she wanted to teach young children how to move and use their bodies. No explanation was given as to why she was placed at a middle school for her student teaching. She said that she preferred working with elementary school children. Kelly said, “I like to work with elementary school children more than the middle one.” She was not sure why she had to do her student teaching at a middle school since she felt she would not be teaching this age group after completing her degree. She said,

Table 2

| Themes                       | Kelly  | Matt  |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Blaming vs. Connecting       | They want to do what they want to do instead of what I want them to do. It is hard to motivate those kids. | I tell them every day. I care about them I just say, guys, I care about you. You have to get to know the kids on a personal individual level. |
| Idealism vs. Realism         | With the little ones, it is different. You can motivate them.  | Teaching is a hard profession.  |
| Retreating vs. Reconfiguring | I like to work with elementary school children more than the middle one.                                   | Teaching is more than what you just learn in these classrooms.  |

With the little ones, it is different. You can motivate them, but with these kids, it is a different story. It is very hard because my 5<sup>th</sup> period class, they just, they do not care. They do not want to care, and they do not care about their grade. That class is by far the most difficult. They want to do what they want to do instead of what I want them to do.

Kelly did not enjoy her student teaching practicum with middle school students and felt that she was asked to do activities she should not do. She said, “We come in, and we do it all free. We go home and we have all this stuff to do, and then we have all this other stuff to do.” She felt that her role as a student teacher affected her students’ behavior. She stated,

They know that you are a student teacher, and they know you are not really an authority figure. It is kind of like having a substitute teacher, and kids try to see what the limits are. They want to do what they want to do instead of what I want them to do. It is hard to motivate those kids.

She had a conflict between what she wanted to teach and how the students reacted to her. She discussed,

I talk about health and fitness, how exercise affects their body and how it will affect them in the years to come and ask them about their parents, grandparents, and if they have any health problems. All of them did, but they do not care.

In discussing motivation for students, Kelly said,

I try to keep them doing different things, one day switch it up so they do not get in the same routine. That might help them get motivated, but I do not even think that helps at all. These kids never have to do anything.

Kelly also felt that she had to teach more than other preservice teachers. She discussed,

We have to do three schemes of work. We teach three different things. The other people at the other schools, they only have to do two schemes of work. They only teach two things. So I just feel like they need to make it all equal so we are all doing the same.

Kelly’s perceptions of her workload and her students affected her ability to connect with her students and be productive. She appeared to resent her students, since she did not anticipate working with that age group after graduation, and her placement affected both her motivation and her sense of self-efficacy, or how well she thought she was accomplishing her task of teaching.



Matt is a fictitious name for a student teacher who was completing his student teaching semester. He introduced himself as follows:

My name is Matt. I am teaching a basketball and soccer sport education unit. My objectives for the basketball unit are to teach kids to be able to officiate, to keep score, sportsmanship—a major, major thing with me. I am going to enforce sportsmanship. I am going to enforce teamwork, through sport education.

Matt talked about the positive experiences he had as a high school athlete and credited his decision to be a coach and teacher to his coaches. He said that playing sports gave him the discipline and motivation to do well in school. His coaches and parents stressed the importance of hard work and academics. He wanted to emulate some of the things he learned while he was in high school, but he felt that he was going to be his own teacher someday. For Matt, teaching was more than just imparting knowledge to the students. Teaching was a personal matter for him. Matt stated,

You have to be a parent, and I think that some teachers kind of dread a lot of things about that and think, why don't they listen? But you have to put yourself in their shoes. And you cannot try to figure out a kid. You have to be a kid to understand what his needs are, and that is a tough thing. Teaching is a hard profession.

Matt added,

I tell them every day I care about them. I just say, "Guys, I care about you. If I did not care about you, I would just roll the ball out and say, Go out at it," and I would sit up here and read the newspaper. But I care about you, and I want you to be better people and know how to take care of yourself." Teaching is more than just the things you learn in the classrooms. And I think that is the most important thing every young teacher has to know. You are a parent of your students. And I think that is important for young teachers to be able to show a lot of motivation and want to be a teacher, and that it is fun for everybody. You do not want the kids to think that you are just there wasting their time like everybody else. Make it fun for them. Get them motivated.

When asked how he keeps his students motivated, Matt added,

And I tell you one thing that is probably good. I jogged out on the soccer field the other day, and I think this had a lot to do with good teachers. I had kids come up to me and say, "We did not know teachers could run." I jogged out there. I think that has a lot to do. If a teacher is motivated, they have never seen any of their teachers just run out on the field with them. And I think that is important for young teachers to be able to show a lot of motivation.

Matt talked about the importance of his own attitude in teaching:

And that comes with the teacher's attitude. And I believe because I have seen days where I thought I may not have enough smiles on my face where it reflected in my kids. And they will see that. After this they say, 'Coach, you did not smile too much today.' So I make sure I am in a pretty good upbeat mood every day.

Matt felt that his success as a teacher was tied to her personal involvement with his students.

Matt talked about his perception of the emotional connection teachers need with students. Well, the way I did it is you have to get to know the kids on a personal individual level. Take the time with them one on one, two or three kids a day, and after about a month, they will understand where you are coming from. Walk with them off the field one day. Spend a few minutes talking to them, asking them how their day's gone, just all kid stuff so they will get to trust you and believe in what you're trying to teach them. That's the

only way to do it, and I've see it work. Every day if you just spend a few minutes with different kids every day, get to know their names, get to know their lives, their interests, if they like fishing, if they like a lot of other stuff, talk to them about it. They have to trust you as a teacher. . . . And I believe that's how you get the most out of your kids, if they believe in you. They have to believe in what you're teaching them. But they have to believe in you, not just what you're teaching them. They have to believe in you. They can't if you're just a rock that is teaching some days, have no facial expressions or anything, just words coming out of your mouth. They are going to look at you, I think, as a chalk board. Teaching is more than just the things you learn in these classrooms.

The data analysis indicated that the teaching practicum for Kelly did not go very well. As a result, Kelly became disappointed, frustrated, and upset with the entire placement experience. Matt experienced less frustration from his middle school placement. He was able to cope with the new experience without having too many problems.

These stories serve as a reminder that the trajectory toward becoming a teacher and the result of the student teaching practicum are problematic concepts which cannot be generalized to all facets of the teachers training experience. Still, it is imperative that faculty, preservice teachers, and cooperating teachers work closely together throughout the teaching practicum.

### **Discussion**

One point that came from this qualitative case study is that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution for preservice teachers involved in student teaching. It is imperative that we try to give preservice teachers a well-rounded field teaching experience grounded in the realities of teaching and working with young people (Boyd et al., 2009; Constantinou, 2011; Duncan & Clemons, 2012; Spooner et al., 2008; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). However, in this qualitative case study, Kelly did not have a positive learning experience during her student teaching. She felt that her placement did not meet her professional goals. She felt uncomfortable working with middle school students. She tried to connect with her students, but she was not able to relate with them. As a result, she distanced herself psychologically and emotionally from her students. The problems she had highlight the point made by Beck and Kosnik (2002) of the importance of the placement site for the teaching practicum.

### **Blaming vs. Connecting**

In the first theme, Kelly blamed her poor experience on the school and her students. She needed more close mentoring. Hand (2014) discussed how important it is to have effective mentorship during field teaching. Kelly lamented the fact that she did not have the time to properly prepare for her teaching. She said teaching was the most important aspect of her entire experience as a student teacher, but she did not agree on the assignment of the age group she had.

Kelly experienced her own reconfiguration of teaching through her personal dissonance embedded within the reality of teaching. Her field placement was critical to her lack of integration; as expressed in the literature, field experience needs to be well integrated and part of an ongoing process aimed at scaffolding knowledge of effective teaching in novice teachers (Eisenhardt et al., 2011-2012; Hand, 2014; McDonald & Khan, 2014.) Supervising and cooperating teachers need to help preservice teachers sort out their teaching beliefs in practice. Changing beliefs about students may occur when preservice teachers experience dissonance, or when new teachers internalize new beliefs about caring for students (Eisenhardt et al., 2011-2012).

On the other side, Matt talked about getting to know his students. Matt felt that good teaching was putting students first, an idea echoed by Bain (2004). Matt understood that caring

for students' needs was the bedrock for a successful education, as expressed by Noddings (1992). He believed that good teachers go the extra mile in trying to help their students learn. He indicated that teaching was more than what he learned in class. He stated that teaching was a difficult profession; he felt he had to make a compromise between his objectives and the students. He spoke about wanting to get the best out of his students, and that to be a good teacher, he needed to be able to motivate his students. For him, that meant caring and professionalism; he expressed that there is not a perfect teaching situation, even teaching in some of the best schools in the state. Good teaching for him did not come pre-packaged. He learned to take each situation for what it was and learn from it. He also suggested that teachers cannot use one experience and let that experience dictate how they are going to be, because according to him each situation was different, and not all students would be the same. He took his students' learning in a serious way because he took learning as a serious business, an idea highlighted by Shulman (2004).

Both preservice teachers emphasized the importance of student learning in their experiences. However, while one preservice teacher discussed the need to connect with students at a personal level, the other indicated that her students did not want to learn. She was upset with her school for placing her with an age group she didn't want to teach. She questioned her university's decision for placing her in a school where she had to teach more than other preservice teachers at other schools. Kelly was not able to connect at the school she worked, and this contributed to the negative experience she encountered. She felt isolated and frustrated, showing signs of burnout as a young teacher, something the cooperating teacher and faculty member should have taken seriously (Anhorn, 2008; Kokkinos, 2007; Liu, 2007; Quinn & Andrews, 2004; Roth & Tobin, 2005; Schlichte et al., 2005; Yost, 2006).

#### **Idealism vs. Realism**

In the next theme, it appears that Kelly experienced what Murshidi et al. (2006) called a "reality shock," facing the reality of teaching. Novice teachers often do not realize how complex teaching may be (Murshidi et al., 2006). Kelly's own personal ideas about the teaching profession were different from what happened in reality (Melnick & Meister, 2008). Her current personal experiences coincided with the characteristics of teachers who leave the profession: feeling isolated, dissatisfied, and stressed-out (Anhorn, 2008; Kokkinos, 2007; Liu, 2007; Quinn & Andrews, 2004; Roth & Tobin, 2005; Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005; Yost, 2006). However, Matt did not seem to have the same problem. He recognized that each situation would be different and stated that he felt he would need to change to meet the demands of the actual context.

#### **Retreating vs. Reconfiguring**

Last, both Preservice teachers had to retreat and reconfigure or adjust their preconceived notions of teaching. For Kelly, this meant retreating to her comfort zone of elementary children who would automatically respect her and do what she said. However, Matt learned to reconfigure his expectations toward a better understanding of his current situation and the needs of his students, an idea put forth by Bain (2004) and Eisenhardt et al. (2011-2012). Once he placed their needs first, he was able to find ways of connecting with them. The lessons he learned about teaching were not always about fulfilling objectives; often they involved meeting students' emotional needs. He wanted to make a difference in their lives beyond what he could teach them in the curriculum. However, Kelly was not able to reconfigure her current knowledge to accept her new reality. Instead, she blamed others for giving her a placement that was not going to work, from her perspective.

### Conclusion & Limitations

Ultimately, what this study reveals is that preparing new teacher to be successful is a complex endeavor and that university programs should look carefully at the placement of their preservice teachers. Also, this study suggests that cooperating teachers and university professors must examine some of the idiosyncrasies of each situation. Each teaching practicum is an opportunity to scaffold knowledge for novice teachers. This study suggests that cooperating teachers and university professors need to support the development of preservice teachers by helping them manage their tasks.

However, it also suggests that successful teachers must find a way to connect to their students in a personal way beyond the basics of the classroom. While the results of the case studies may not be generalizable to other preservice teachers, they are promising in terms of understanding the role placement has in connection to preservice teachers' knowledge reconfiguration. The story of these two preservice teachers is important because they provide an insight into the process of knowledge reconfiguration during their teaching practicum. They also highlight the struggles preservice teachers go through as they reconfigure knowledge and adjust to the realities of being a teacher in the classroom. It is important to research preservice teachers enrolled in teaching practicums representing other areas besides physical education. It is important to know if the same challenges, opportunities, and frustrations are shared across other teaching fields.

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