PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER IDENTITY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Authentic, care, caring behaviour, environment, epistemology, factors, graduate pre-service teacher, Graduate Diploma program, integration, mature-aged, middle school, middle years, ontology, relational cultural theory, relational-ontology, teaching and learning, teacher identity.
Abstract

This research study investigated the factors that influenced the development of teacher identity in a small cohort of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers over the course of a one-year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). It sought to illuminate the social and relational dynamics of these pre-service teachers’ experiences as they began new ways of being and learning during a newly introduced one-year Graduate Diploma program.

A relational-ontological perspective underpinned the relational-cultural framework that was applied in a workshop program as an integral part of this research. A relational-ontological perspective suggests that the development of teacher identity is to be construed more as an ontological process than an epistemological one. Its focus is more on questions surrounding the person and their ‘becoming’ a teacher than about the knowledge they have or will come to have. Hence, drawing on work by researchers such as Alsup (2006), Gilligan, (1982), Isaacs, (2007), Miller (1976), Noddings, (2005), Stout (2001), and Taylor, (1989), teacher identity was defined as an individual pre-service teacher’s unique sense of self as a teacher that included his or her beliefs about teaching and learning (Alsup, 2006; Stout, 2001; Walkington, 2005).

Case-study was the preferred methodology within which this research project was framed, and narrative research was used as a method to document the way teacher identity was shaped and negotiated in discursive environments such as teacher education programs, prior experiences, classroom settings and the practicum. The data that was collected included student narratives, student email written reflections, and focus group dialogue. The narrative approach applied in this research context provided the depth of data needed to understand the nature of the mature-aged pre-service teachers’ emerging teacher identities and experiences in the graduate diploma program.
Findings indicated that most of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers came in to the one-year graduate diploma program with a strong sense of personal and professional selves and well-established reasons why they had chosen to teach Middle Years. Their choice of program involved an expectation of support and welcome to a middle-school community and culture. Two critical issues that emerged from the pre-service teachers’ narratives were the importance they placed on the human support including the affirmation of themselves and their emerging teacher identities. Evidence from this study suggests that the lack of recognition of pre-service teachers’ personal and professional selves during the graduate diploma program inhibited the development of a positive middle-school teacher identity. However, a workshop program developed for the participants in this research and addressing a range of practical concerns to beginning teachers offered them a space where they felt both a sense of belonging to a community and where their thoughts and beliefs were recognized and valued. Thus, the workshops provided participants with the positive social and relational dynamics necessary to support them in their developing teacher identities.

The overall findings of this research study strongly indicate a need for a relational support structure based on a relational-ontological perspective to be built into the overall course structure of Graduate Pre-service Diplomas in Education to support the development of teacher identity. Such a support structure acknowledges that the pre-service teacher’s learning and formation is socially embedded, relational, and a continual, lifelong process.
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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: _________________________

Date: ___________________________
Acknowledgments and Dedication

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the graduate pre-service teachers who so willingly participated in this research study. I am deeply grateful for their generosity in sharing with me so openly their experiences in the Graduate Diploma Program (Middle Years). They provided inspiring examples of commitment and passion for teaching and I sincerely hope that I have been able to honour their narratives.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents Voitto and Sinikka Uusimaki, my late sister Satu Uusimaki and especially to my son Marcus J. Uusimaki whose unconditional love and steadfast support inspired me to further research issues of quality in education and to give my all in this study.
Chapter 1  Introduction

1.1  INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the factors that influenced the development of teacher identity, and specifically of pre-service teachers’ identities as middle-school teachers. The study focused on a small cohort of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers as they took part in a one-year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). For the purpose of this study teacher identity is defined as the pre-service teacher’s self-perception and articulation of their unique sense of self (Alsup, 2006; Beljaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Noddings, 1995; Stout, 2001; Wenger, 1998), here specifically as a middle-school teacher (Alsup, 2006; Pendergast, 2005).

The study is based on a revised version of Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) (Comstock, 2005; Comstock & Qin, 2005; Jordan, 2002; Jordan & Hartling, 2002; Miller, 1976; Miller & Stiver, 1997) of identity. RCT suggests identity is developed through and toward relationships, which occur within and are influenced by a cultural context. Underlying this model are the concepts of mutual empathy, growth-fostering relationships, connections and disconnections. Growth-fostering relationships are defined as characterized by mutual empathy, authenticity and empowerment (Jordan, 1995; Jordan & Hartling 2002; Miller & Stiver, 1997). Mutual empathy is perceived as mutual involvement and commitment to the relationship, authenticity is being genuine in the context of the relationship, and empowerment is the experience of being personally strengthened, encouraged and inspired to take action (Liang, Tracy, Glenn, Burns & Ting, 2007). Miller and Stiver (1997) argued that personal growth occurs both in connection and in disconnections. Connection refers to the experience of relationships that are characterized by mutual empathy and mutual empowerment. Disconnection is the
experience of ruptured relationship(s). According to Miller and Stiver (1997), where there is an experience of ruptured relationship a re-connection can sometimes lead to a strengthened relationship and increased sense of confidence or alternatively to a diminished sense of self. In this framework the development of a committed and positive middle-school teacher identity is seen as dependent on growth-nurturing relations of mutual empowerment and empathy (Comstock, 2005; Comstock & Qin, 2005; Jordan, 2002; Jordan & Hartling 2002; Miller, 1976; Miller & Stiver 1997) with those from within the teaching profession, including teacher educators, school supervising teachers, mentors and other significant persons.

To embrace the notion of teacher identity, pre-service teachers need acceptance and recognition from the teaching profession. This entails, among other things, being accepted for registration as a teacher, and accepted and recognized as a colleague by other educators. They will also require an ability to adapt to the culture of [middle-school] teaching and learning (McNally & Gray, 2006). In this sense, “becoming a teacher is not simply a derivatively social experience; the sense of a ‘self’ is socially situated rather than socially constructed” (McNally & Gray, 2006, p.4). This recognition offers a valuable insight into how to advance knowledge in such a way as to inform the design of Graduate Education (Middle Years) programs that seek to facilitate and support the growth and development of committed and caring graduate middle-school teacher identities.

1.2 BACKGROUND

This research study had its genesis in a previous Master of Education study (Uusimaki, 2004) that sought to challenge negative beliefs and anxieties about mathematics in 16 self-identified maths-anxious final year primary pre-service student teachers. The results from that study identified a corresponding reduction in the participants’ negative beliefs and anxieties about the nature of mathematics, as they increased their repertoires of mathematical subject-matter knowledge (Uusimaki, 2004; Uusimaki & Nason, 2004, 2005; Uusimaki & Kidman, 2004).
Of special concern to this thesis was the finding that participants came to value small-group work where each member was empowered to elucidate and examine their own concerns and personal anecdotes about themselves as learners (Uusimaki, 2004). In turn, this process of critical reflection informed their personal teaching praxis. Further, participants came to value the inherent power of the resultant learning community that allowed each of them to resolve their own conceptions about what was valid in their growing repertoire of subject matter knowledge and in their personal development as beginning primary teachers. A consequent exploration of the relational and social dynamics of the one year middle-school teacher education program to help pre-service teachers develop a positive teacher identity seemed warranted. While there has been research investigating the development of teacher identity in general terms, there has been no research to date that has investigated the development of the mature-aged graduate middle-school pre-service teacher’s teacher identity. The reason for choosing this particular cohort was not only based on their availability—they were the first cohort taking part in the newly developed one-year graduate diploma program with a focus on middle schooling—but also on the rich and diverse backgrounds and work experiences that they bring to the middle-school classroom (House of Representatives Standing Committee, 2007). In particular noted in the research (see Allen 2005; House of Representatives Standing Committee 2007; Richardson & Watt 2005; Whitehead, 1996), is that mature-aged graduates have the potential to enrich and diversify the middle-school teaching profession. The mature-aged person is defined here as over 25 years of age. A graduate is an individual who has completed a bachelor’s degree, a pre-service teacher is a person who is studying to become a teacher and a middle-school teacher is a person who teaches young adolescents (10-15 year olds).

The shift from the traditional two-tiered post-graduate teacher education program approach of primary and secondary schooling to a four-layered model (early childhood, primary, middle years and secondary schooling) suggests “new times for teacher education” (Pendergast,
in Australia. Specialised middle-school teacher education programs have only been available since 2002 (Pendergast, 2005) and the rapid growth in post-graduate teacher education programs specializing in the middle-years strand is indicative of these “new times” (Pendergast, 2005). It is suggested that this context opens possibilities not only for new ways of thinking about the complexity of teaching and learning in the 21st century, but also and in particular, how to prepare and support the development of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher’s middle-school teacher identity (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Pendergast, 2005).

Middle schooling is “the intentional approach to teaching and learning that is responsive and appropriate to the full range of needs, interests and achievements of Middle Years students in formal and informal schooling contexts” (Middle Years of Schooling Association, 2008, p.1). Middle schooling has been acknowledged as a time of transition for young adolescents from primary to secondary school that can be a time of apprehension and anxiety for some (Chadbourne, 2001). It has been recognized that adolescents between 10 and 15 years of age experience profound personal changes that affect them physically, mentally and emotionally, and it is during the first years of secondary schooling that adolescents are most likely to demonstrate disengagement, disruptive behaviour, boredom and disenchantment (Chadbourne, 2001). Furthermore, it has also been noted that during this time there is a “high incidence of clinical depression, eating disorders, delinquency, unsafe sexual practices, substance abuse, deliberate self-harm, suicide and mental health breakdown among young adolescents” (Chadbourne, 2001, p.3). Hence, it is crucial that teachers working in the Middle Years of schooling understand the needs and concerns of young adolescents so that they can effectively support their students achieving educational outcomes as well as providing them with the necessary emotional support during this fragile time.

Many mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers are particularly suited to teach in the middle years because of their life and or work experiences with young people. For example,
many mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers who have chosen the middle years have done so because of their experiences being parents of adolescents or they have had experience working with young people (for example, as youth workers, coaches and so on), and are aware of the at times psychologically and socially demanding role teaching some young people can be (Richardson & Watt, 2005).

The successful attainment of a positive and committed middle-school teacher identity, especially among graduate pre-service teachers, is dependent on their ability to integrate the intellectual, emotional, and the physical aspects of their lives to that of the teacher (as presented and defined by the teacher educators and university postgraduate education programs) (Alsup, 2006). However, integrating their (pre-service) teacher identity while “simultaneously being true to themselves may result in tension, frustration and sometimes abandonment of the profession” (Alsup, 2006, p. 7), that is if what is provided for in the middle years teacher education program does not align to their ontological and epistemological beliefs. Only those pre-service teachers who have a strong sense of personal identity and are committed to teaching (Alsup, 2006) young adolescents are able to successfully transition into the middle-school teaching profession.

Hence, this research study focuses on mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers’ experiences as they negotiate and renegotiate new ways of being and learning to develop middle-school teacher identities during a newly introduced one-year Graduate Diploma Education program. Based on case-study (Creswell, 2002; Kerlin, 2002; Merriam, 2002) and narrative research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Estola & Syrjala, 2001; Feuerverger, 1997; Zembylas, 2003), and drawing on workshop situations, face-to-face interview situations, email reflection responses, and focus group situations, it explores their journey throughout the program.

1.3 DEFINING TEACHER IDENTITY

As McLean (1999) has observed, the preparation of teachers has been commonly viewed as a non-problematic technical exercise, and it is only recently that the notion of teacher
identity has begun to receive and attract interest in the areas of teaching and teacher education (Alsup, 2006; Bullough, 1997; Franzak, 2002; Korthagen, 2004; Rorrison, 2008; Stout, 2001; Walkington, 2005). Drawing on multiple perspectives and work by researchers such as Alsup (2006), Gilligan, (1982), Isaacs, (2007), Miller (1976), Noddings, (2005), Stout (2001) and Taylor, (1989), teacher identity is defined for the purposes of this study as an individual pre-service teacher’s unique sense of self as a teacher that includes his or her beliefs about teaching and learning (Alsup, 2006; Stout, 2001; Walkington, 2005). It is recognized that a personal sense of what it means to be a teacher and associated beliefs about teaching and learning may be influenced by the individual’s recollections of his or her prior schooling experiences, and in particular, by teachers who make lasting impressions on the individual (Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Knowles, 1992; Miller Marsh, 2002). Understanding teacher identity is important because it forms the basis for teachers’ meaning and decision-making in schools and in particular in the classroom (Bullough, 1997). It “incorporates the cognitive, the emotional, the bodily, and the creative” (Alsup, 2006, p. 14), such that:

   to not allow [pre-service] student to talk about such issues, to not teach them how and why such issues are important to their teaching lives, to not give them the opportunity to speak and take the time to hear them are doing pre-service teachers and in-service teachers a disservice–we are leaving out, we are forgetting or choosing to forget, an important (if not the most important) part of being a teacher: the teacher identity. (Alsup, 2006, p.14)

Even so, the development of teacher identity has been seen, at best, as a by-product of teacher education programs rather than as a targeted outcome (Alsup, 2006; Rorrison, 2008), and this is certainly the case from the pre-service teacher’s perspective (Franzak, 2002).


1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to redress the lack of research studies investigating the development of middle-school teacher identity among mature-aged graduates. In particular what seem to be lacking is an adequate understanding of mature-aged graduates’ professional and personal backgrounds, and the influence of these backgrounds on their teaching and learning practices in the classroom.

In order to understand how best to support the graduate teacher’s developing teacher identity during the one year pre-service Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) it is necessary to begin by identifying pre-service teachers’ beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning and their beliefs as to what constitute a ‘good’ teacher, which, in turn, relate to their own perceptions of themselves as learners. That done, any changes that take place in these identifications during this period can be identified. Consequently, the first research question is:

*How do students undertaking a one year pre-service Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) identify as teachers and what changes in those identifications take place across the duration of the program?*

Responses to this question provide a point of departure and a benchmark for further analysis of the students’ accounts. In particular, this study seeks to ascertain those factors that significantly influenced or shaped the development of their identity as teachers during this period. Hence the second research question is:

*During the pre-service program, what factors shape the development of a middle-school teacher identity?*

As noted previously, the central analytic tool on which this study is predicated draws on a modified relational-cultural theory of identity. The final question, then, is whether such a
framework can be extended to provide an adequate and effective means for supporting the
development of the graduate pre-service teacher identity:

How might a relational-cultural theoretical framework (RCT) be extended to
support the development of graduate pre-service teachers' middle-school teacher
identity?

1.5 INFORMING THE RESEARCH STUDY

The theoretical framework that informed this research study was derived from an
analysis and synthesis of the research literature from the following areas:

1. Formal opportunities to learn: Professional learning experiences supporting the
development of teacher identity that were found within graduate teacher education
programs with a middle-years focus.

2. Existing research on the Personal and Professional Background (PPB) of the
mature-age graduate pre-service teacher, their beliefs and their reasons for
wishing to teach.

3. Theories on the development of identity applied to the development of teacher
identity, including RCT.

4. An emergent Relational-Ontological theoretical perspective on the development of
teacher identity, adapted from RCT.

1.5.1 Formal opportunities to learn that support the development of (middle school)
teacher identity.

A number of research studies (Ballantyne, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Iredale,
1996; Temmerman, 1997) have consistently shown that teacher education programs have
significant impact (both negative and positive) on pre-service as well as early-career teachers’
teaching skills and their philosophies of teaching, that in turn influence their emerging teacher
identities (Alsup, 2006; Rorrison, 2008). Preparing and supporting pre-service teachers in their
development as middle-school teachers requires not only an understanding of their PPBs, beliefs about teaching and learning, and their reasons to teach in the middle years, but also explicitly teaching the underlying principles of middle schooling and its philosophy (De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005).

According to most pre-service teachers, the practicum is considered the most relevant and useful component of teacher education programs (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2003; Ingvarson, 2007; Keogh, Dole & Hudson, 2006; Korthagen, Loughran & Russell, 2006; Lawrance & Palmer, 2003; Rorriso, 2008). The importance of the practicum component of teacher education programs relates to the range of experiences involved, including the teaching experiences the practicum affords, getting to know the students, working alongside the supervising teacher in the classroom setting, and being welcomed as a future colleague into the teaching community. Chapter 2 continues and extends the review of the relevant literature and research on the contribution of teacher education programs, including the practicum, to the development of teacher identity.

1.5.2 Personal and Professional Backgrounds (PPB) of the Graduate pre-service teachers their beliefs, and reasons to teach:

Graduate pre-service teachers’ personal identities and their personal and professional backgrounds (PPBs), their beliefs about teaching and learning, their reasons for teaching, and their perceptions of self as a teacher are significant influences on the development of their personal sense of teacher identity (Alsup, 2006; Grudnoff, 2007; Richardson & Watt, 2005). These factors can provide opportunities for teacher educators to develop innovative ways to enhance the mature-age graduate pre-service teacher’s learning experiences (Alsup, 2006; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1998). Such an approach can be especially important since most mature-age graduate pre-service teachers come to teacher education programs with “a clear set of goals”
(Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1998, p. 177), high expectations and “a sense of themselves that their cumulative life experiences have shaped” (Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1998, p. 177).

However, research studies (e.g., Holt Reynolds, 1992; Knowles & Holt Reynolds, 1991) have noted that many mature-age graduate pre-service teachers come to teacher education with traditional beliefs about the role of the teacher, learner and teaching and learning. These beliefs have been developed through prior experiences including observations and participation in schools, homes, and / or in the larger community (Alsup, 2006; Holt-Reynolds, 1992).

It has been well established that because these traditional beliefs are so “tenacious and powerful” (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, p. 344), they are difficult to challenge or change. However, research (Alsup, 2006; Brownlee, Purdie & Boulton-Lewis, 2001) suggests that providing opportunities in teacher education programs to access and bring forth tacit knowledge can lead to cognitive, emotional, and corporeal changes, resulting in personal growth and / or increased meta-cognitive awareness (Alsup, 2006). For example, in carefully designed workshop situations, mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers can be supported and encouraged to examine their beliefs so that change can occur (Alsup, 2006).

Chapter 2 provides a more extensive review of the existing literature on these factors and their contribution to the development of teacher identity.

1.5.3 Theories on adult development of teacher identity

Research (see e.g., Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005) suggests that to develop a deep appreciation of the complexity of teacher identity, openness to multiple theoretical approaches is essential. A dialogue across paradigms can enhance an understanding of the different assumptions underlying each theory. For the purpose of this thesis, then, four paradigms of identity have been chosen and will be explored, namely: (1) developmental psychology, (2) socio-cultural, (3) poststructuralist, and (4) relational-cultural theory. These approaches are reviewed in detail in Chapter 2.
The developmental psychological perspective focuses on individual development and primarily examines internal developmental processes (Clark & Caffarella, 1999). From this perspective, while social influences are acknowledged, the goal of interaction and social relationships is the internalization or appropriation of the lessons (Raider-Roth, 2002, 2005). The conditions and explanations of the self are determined by biological and psychological factors (Erikson, 1978).

In contrast to the psychological perspective, socio-cultural views reject theories of development based on pre-determined stages that are not foundationally based on social interaction (Sawyer, 2002). Learning is an experience of identity formation (Wenger, 1998). Individuals locate themselves within particular communities of practice in a process of belonging and ultimately knowing (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Poststructuralist theories, however, argue that neither psychological nor socio-cultural theories are adequate to explain the dynamic and unstable process of identity development. From a poststructuralist perspective, identity formation is seen as a continuing process of becoming (Grootenboer, Smith, & Lowrie, 2006). To provide opportunities to critically examine and reflect on beliefs and values from a poststructuralist perspective allows the developing identity to shift / change and increases its capacity for agency.

Similar to the socio-cultural perspective, a relational-cultural perspective (Comstock, 2005; Jordan & Hartling 2002; Miller, 1976), sees the development of self / identity as dependent on dialogical relations with others. RCT suggests that identity is developed through and toward relationships which occur within and are influenced by a cultural context. In this framework the development of a committed and positive middle-school teacher identity is seen as dependent on growth-nurturing relations of mutual empowerment and empathy (Comstock, 2005; Jordan & Hartling 2002; Miller, 1976) with those from within the teaching profession, including teacher educators, school supervising teachers, mentors and other significant persons.
As predicated in this thesis, a relational perspective on teacher identity incorporates the following three dimensions that impinge on pre-service teacher education programs: ontology, epistemology, and the practice of teaching and learning.

1.5.4 Relational-ontological perspective to teacher identity

In the philosophical framework underpinning relational cultural theory, the development of teacher identity is construed as an ontological process (cf. McNally & Gray, 2006). In this framing, epistemological issues are shaped by and consequent on a relational ontology. In other words, when dealing with the development of identity, including teacher identity, epistemology is always an aspect of ontology (Packer & Coicoecha, 2000). Hence, a relational epistemology becomes the concomitant of relational ontology (Packer & Coicoeacha; 2000; Slife, 2005). In the application of RCT in this study, the central concern is about the person, and their ‘becoming’ a teacher while the knowledge they have or will come to have is contingent. However, while there has been substantial research on identity and the self (Beljaard et al., 2000; Korthagen, 2004, Ottensen, 2007), the development of identity as viewed from a relational-ontological perspective has been a largely unexplored territory.

Unlike traditional epistemologies where the underlying assumption is that being (ontology) can be separated from knowing (epistemology) (Packer & Coicoecha, 2000), or the knower is separated from knowledge / ideas (Packer & Coicoecha, 2000), a relational epistemology (as has been already noted) considers being (ontology) as directly connected to knowing (epistemology), thereby effectively highlighting the interactive connection between social beings and ideas (Packer & Coicoecha, 2000).

From a relational-ontological perspective it is suggested that teaching and learning have always taken place within embedded social contexts (Packer & Coicoecha, 2000). These contexts do not just influence but determine the kinds of knowledge and practices that are constructed.
(Nunez, Edwards & Matos, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990), and the connections that are built with [our own] knowledge and ways of knowing (Raider–Roth, 2005).

It is from this perspective of understanding learning that teacher identity and its development are placed at the heart of the learning process (Alsup, 2006). Learning can thus be described as “a process that brings together cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in one’s knowledge, skills, values and world views” (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 277). Most importantly, teaching from a relational perspective would appear to be intimately associated with the notion of care (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Gilligan, 1982; Jordan & Hartling, 2002; Miller, 1976; Noddings, 2000, 2003, 2005; Smith & Emigh, 2005), and that involves establishing relations of both care and trust with the student.

Chapter three provides an extensive treatment of relational-cultural theory and its amplification into relational-ontological theory, along with the particular contribution of relational-ontological theory to the nature and formation of teacher identity.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This research study explores the process of becoming a teacher as a dynamic ontological process of identity formation, growth, commitment, and engagement in the company with other members of the teaching community. In doing so, it offers insights into the experiences of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers and their perceptions of themselves as beginning middle-school teachers. Their experiences studying the middle-years curriculum have been largely ignored. Thus this research study contributes to an understanding of the developmental nature of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers’ teacher identity and their perceptions of effective middle-years teaching and learning. Hence, its findings can be drawn on for the development of innovative approaches to teacher education programs specializing in the middle-year phase of learning. This is particularly urgent in the current context where there seems to be a
focus away from the offerings of middle years of schooling teacher education programs in some Australian universities (Personal communications, Crosswell, 2009).

The study is also significant in presenting a conceptual and analytic framework derived from and extending relational-cultural theory (Jordan, 1995; Miller, 1976; Miller & Stiver, 1997). This relational-ontological framework enables a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the development of the mature-aged graduate and middle-school pre-service teacher identity, and it offers the promise of more effectively supporting that development. It presents a critical evaluation of current assumptions regarding the purpose of pre-service teacher education programs and offers a more appropriate and effective alternative. In particular, it seeks to articulate clearly and to incorporate into its practices a more constructive ontology, one which recognizes that individuals are social, interrelated and dialogical, and one in which there are critical questions about rational understanding and the procedures being mastered.

However, it is not the intent of this research to make generalisations about all mature-aged graduate middle-school pre-service teachers’ experiences in teacher education programs. Rather, as noted previously it seeks to develop and enhance an understanding of how to better meet the needs of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher and how to ensure positive learning outcomes in their future and prospective students.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study explores the development of teacher identity in 12 mature-age graduate pre-service teachers’ as they take part in a newly developed Graduate Diploma Education program with a focus on middle years. The reason for choosing this particular cohort was based not only on their availability--being the first cohort taking part in the one-year graduate diploma program with a focus on middle schooling--but on the rich and diverse backgrounds and work experiences that they brought to the middle-school classroom. The case-study research illuminates the social and relational dynamics of the small group (Creswell, 2002) of mature-aged graduate pre-service
teachers’ experiences. As a qualitative research method, the aim of case-study research is “to illuminate the general by looking at the particular” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 30). That is, case-study typically examines the interplay of all variables that allow for as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible (Palmquist, 2005). There is “a focus on relationships and processes in a natural setting to discover interconnections and interrelationship and how the various parts are linked” (Jones, 2008, p. 315). The benefits of case-study research for this investigation are that it provides an understanding of both the outcomes of teacher identity development and the manner in which this took place.

Within the framework of a case-study, narrative research provides a method of accessing and understanding (pre-service) teachers’ developing middle-school teacher identity, and understanding their thinking, culture and behaviour (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Estola & Syrjala, 2001; Feuerverger, 1997; Kohler-Riesman, 2002; Zembylas, 2003). According to Kohler Riessman (2002) it is through personal storytelling that (teacher) identities are formed. Narrative research provides a powerful tool to document and analyse the way environments such as the university lecture environments, tutorial rooms and the classroom shape teacher identity (Zembylas, 2003). Narrative, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) suggest, is concerned with specific, concrete events in a person’s life and is concerned to give an account of a person. Hence, a narrative approach to analysis offers an interpretive reconstruction of parts of a person’s life through the construction of personal philosophies, images and narrative unities. Zembylas (2003) notes how narrative research has become an important means for understanding teachers’ culture, a culture that involves teachers as knowers of themselves, of their particular situations, of children, of subject matter and of learning (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Narrative analysis analyses the discursive environments that shape the process by which experiences and meanings are assembled into identities (Zembylas, 2003, p. 215). “Considering the self in terms of narrative practice allows us to analyse the relation between the hows and whats of storytelling; analysis
centers on storytellers engaged in the work of constructing identities and on the circumstances of narration, respectively” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 104). This way of researching identity is a move away from traditional questions of who one is to new questions of when, where, and how one is (Zembylas, 2003). Thus the study examines these mature-age graduate pre-service teachers’ journeys through workshop situations, face-to-face interview situations, email reflection responses, and focus group situations. The data collected and analysed include pre- and post-enactment interview data, student email responses / narratives, and focus group discussions. A narrative analysis (Thorne, 2001) is then used as a strategy to analyse the pre- and post-enactment interview and focus group data whilst a listening guide (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertysch, 2002) is used to analyse the pre-service teachers’ email responses. These issues will be described in detail in Chapter 4.

1.8 THESIS OVERVIEW

This chapter has presented the issue of teacher identity, the three research questions, the background to the research study, and its theoretical framework. Chapter 2 reviews formal opportunities to learn, as provided by graduate teacher education programs (middle years), and the influence these experiences have on the graduate pre-service teacher emerging teacher identity. It also addresses the relevant findings regarding mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers’ personal and professional backgrounds (PPBs), their reasons for choosing teaching as a profession, and their beliefs about teaching and learning and how these factors influence their emerging teacher identities. The existing literature and research findings on identity and teacher identity are also reviewed. Chapter 3 presents the relational-ontological perspective that provides the conceptual framework for the study, along with three identified dimensions that impinge on teacher education programs: ontology, epistemology and teaching and learning.

Chapter 4 then presents the research methodology that is utilized in the study. Chapters 5 and 6 provide the analysis and findings of the study, including an in-depth analysis of three
outlier case-studies. Finally, the implications and limitations of the study, directions for future research and concluding comments are presented in Chapter 7.

1.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter the purpose of the research study and its importance were presented. The centrality of the development of an appropriate teacher identity during the one year pre-service graduate course for middle-years teachers was argued. Teacher identity was defined as the pre-service teacher’s self-perception and articulation of their unique sense of self as a middle-school teacher, and the various experiences which contribute to that development were noted. Three research questions followed:

1. How do students undertaking a one year pre-service Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) identify as teachers and what changes in those identifications take place across the duration of the program?

2. During the pre-service program, what factors shape the development of a middle-school teacher identity?

3. How might a relational-cultural theoretical framework be extended to support the development of graduate pre-service teachers' middle-school teacher identity?

A relational-ontological perspective was then presented as best suited to address these issues, while narrative research was seen as an appropriate research methodology. In the next chapter, the relevant literature on teacher identity and teachers’ personal and professional background will be reviewed.
Chapter 2  Literature Review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study investigates the factors that influenced the development of teacher identity in a small cohort of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers over the course of a one-year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). It seeks to illuminate the social and relational dynamics of these pre-service teachers’ experiences as they begin new ways of being and learning during a newly introduced one-year Graduate Diploma program.

This Chapter begins by reviewing and critiquing the relevant literature on formal opportunities to learn, as provided by graduate teacher education programs (middle years) in Australia, and the influence these experiences have on the graduate pre-service teacher emerging teacher identity. Next it addresses the relevant research on mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers’ personal and professional backgrounds (PPBs), their reasons for choosing teaching as a profession and their beliefs about teaching and learning and how these factors influence their emerging teacher identities. A review and critique of the existing literature and research findings on identity and teacher identity is then be presented together with a critical evaluation of four major theoretical frameworks which have been applied to the development of teacher identity. This review and critique substantiates the need for a more effective foundation in theory and practice for the development of teacher identity in graduate pre-service education.

2.2 FORMAL OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

2.2.1 Teacher education programs and reasons for standards

Good teachers matter and are indispensable in shaping the lives of all children, in all communities and nations (House of Representatives, 2007; Ingvarson, Elliott, Kleinhenz & McKenzie, 2006; Korthagen et al., 2006; Menter, 2008; Watson, 2005). Indeed the complexity of
teaching in the 21st Century means:

the teacher is charged with providing a foundation for life (for all students) in these new complex, diverse and uncertain economic and social environments. They must address issues relating to the emergence of new citizenships and identities, and the impact of new technologies and new economies. They also need to help students develop skills and knowledge for life-long learning. (Mayer, 2003, p.3)

Hence, the agreement among stakeholders is that the goal and focus of teacher education programs is to prepare good quality teachers (House of Representatives, 2007; Sim, 2006; Watson, 2005). However, while there is research evidence about the impact of teacher education on teacher performance in schools and the consequent learning outcomes in their students, “very little research evidence exists to determine how to best prepare teachers” in Australia (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 6).

Tighter regulatory controls of teacher education programs since the late 1990s have seen a decline in the previously enjoyed autonomy of university education faculties in their decision-making processes regarding not only what teachers needed to know but also the duration of their teacher education programs (Ingvarson et al., 2006). Currently teacher education programs are being heavily controlled by externally imposed frameworks, such as standards that set out the key elements of professional activity (e.g., Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2003; QCT, 2006).

Underlying the standards-driven model of teacher education programs is a concern that teacher education programs are becoming instruments of ideological compliance to the logic of economic performativity rather than of an emancipatory ideal (Elliott, 2002). Dehli and Fumia (2002) state that working with or against education reform is a complex process of identity-making not only for the experienced teacher but also for the pre-service student teacher. For instance, “negotiating between old and new methods, between child- and curriculum-centred
teaching and between evaluations focused on process (or experience) and outcomes are hard work that has profound effect on teachers’ sense of self and identities” (Dehli & Fumia, 2002, p. 1). In this sense teacher education is a process with epistemological and ontological elements where pre-service teachers construct disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge as well as they need to develop the physical, intellectual and discursive space that allows for a sense of confidence in their selves as learners and as innovative and inclusive teachers of the future (Klein, 2004). In particular, it is important that pre-service student teachers come to know that “a teacher’s identity is an invention, a constant social negotiation among discourses that are made available during teacher education and thereafter” (Phelan, 1996, p. 344).

As Dehli and Fumia (2002) state, an increasing policy stress on prescriptions for professional standards can be seen as attempting a resolution to such perceived pedagogic and curricular deficiencies. For example, the professional and personal requirements of Teaching Standards (Education Queensland, 2002), with their prescriptions for what pre-service teachers should know and be able to do (Ingvarson, Beavis, Kleinhenz & Elliott, 2004), also influence how they view their identity (Sachs, 2003; Stout, 2001). Given the perceived lack of teacher competence addressed above, this close articulation of teaching standards with student learning outcomes in curriculum frameworks (cf. Parr, 2004) supports the expectation that the development of teacher knowledge should focus on the specific knowledge and / or skills that teachers are required to possess to teach their students. Hence, underpinning teaching standards there is an implicit conceptualisation of teacher knowledge as a fixed and stable commodity that seems to be “unconnected to the social or cultural context of the learners, to be consumed and then passed on in a simple series of learning transactions” (Parr, 2004 p. 4). As Tickle (2000) has stressed, this issue is critical for beginning teachers:

The identification of teaching standards that is happening across the globe is evidence of the most endemic problem of induction. There has been a failure to
Comprehensively identify the nature of professional knowledge of what new teachers should know and be able to do, or what kinds of persons they should be or be willing to become. A failure to manage the changes in responsibilities that teachers have, in such a way the new entrants can reasonably make sense of what they must learn and do, has added to that problem. (Tickle, 2000, pp. 8-9)

Given that research studies have consistently shown the significant impact of teacher education programs on pre-service teachers’ understandings of teaching and in turn upon their developing teacher identities (Ballantyne, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Iredale, 1996; Stout, 2001; Temmerman, 1997), the implications of the current standards-driven model of teacher education programs are substantial.

2.2.2 Teacher Education programs in Australia

In 2005 there were more than 400 different teacher education programs on offer in Australia’s 36 universities, enrolling an estimated 35,000 pre-service teachers who were in the main female (Louden & Rohl, 2006). The length of teacher education programs varied from one to two year Graduate Diploma programs, to Bachelor of Education undergraduate degree programs that in general take four to five years to complete. There are in general three components involved in teacher preparation: subject matter knowledge, learning theory (pedagogy) and the professional experience (practicum) (Watson, 2005).

The preparation of primary teachers (in Australia) is based on a generalist approach where they teach across all content areas and levels. In contrast at the secondary level pre-service teachers specialize in two subject areas.

Based on pre-service teachers’ feedback about their experiences in teacher education programs in general, the most common and consistent complaint is that they have not been adequately prepared for the job of teaching (Education Queensland, 2000; House of Representatives, 2007; Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Louden, 2008; Louden & Rohl, 2006; Skilbeck
& Connell, 2004; Tasmanian Educational Leaders Institute, 2002). In a national study of Australian teachers less than half of teachers (44%) saw themselves as well or very well prepared for their first year of teaching (Tasmanian Educational Leaders Institute, 2002). In terms of subject matter preparedness, a national survey of newly graduated primary school teachers that was conducted in 2005 reported that only 69% thought that they had been well prepared to teach in the area of literacy (Louden & Rohl, 2006). In the area of mathematics, 40% of secondary mathematics teachers, 44% of middle-school mathematics teachers and 46% of primary school teachers felt dissatisfied with their mathematics teacher preparedness (Harris & Jenz, 2006).

A number of common concerns have been identified and raised in relation to teacher education programs. For example, an American study, The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTA) (1996), identified four common problems within pre-service teacher education courses. The four areas of concern related to (1) inadequacy of time, (2) fragmentation of units, (3) uninspired teaching methods, and (4) a superficial curriculum. These concerns can also be applied to the Australian context (cf. Hudson & Hudson, 2006; House of Representatives, 2007; Ingvarson, 2007; Louden & Lohr, 2006; Rorrison, 2005, 2008).

The inadequacy of time provided to complete graduate teacher education degrees seems to be a shared concern for both primary and secondary pre-service teachers. For example, primary pre-service teachers found the lack of time spent on subject matter knowledge frustrating, while secondary pre-service teachers found that they were not provided with enough time to learn sufficiently about the nature of learners and their learning (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTA), 1996). In an Australian survey it was found that in contrast to the reports from both primary and secondary pre-service teachers who completed the four year teaching degree, mature-aged pre-service teachers from the one year graduate diploma reported feeling unprepared to teach based on the inadequacy of time provided for the learning of content knowledge and pedagogical skills (Ingvarson, 2007).
The second problem that was found related to the fragmentation of units (e.g., subject specific, curriculum studies and field studies) in the teacher education course. For example, some pre-service teachers found that the lack of clear links between content and subject matter units or subject matter units and units about how to teach the content was confusing (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2003; House of Representatives, 2007; Hudson & Hudson, 2006).

The third problem related to the uninspiring and passive teaching methods of their teacher educators, such as, for example, lecturing and recitation or reading aloud from text or power-point material rather than observing models of expert teachers in action (Bransford et al., 2003; Ingvarson, 2007). Many pre-service teachers felt these passive teaching methods were in contrast to the teaching strategies that they were expected to be able to demonstrate in their practicum (e.g., team teaching, collaboration, group work) (Ingvarson, 2007). Moreover, whilst it is expected that the pre-service teacher understands how to engage and motivate their prospective future students, there was a lack of understanding on the part of the teacher educator about how to motivate and engage the pre-service teacher in the various subjects (Ingvarson, 2007).

The final and fourth problem that was found within teacher education programs was that of a superficial curriculum. This referred to the superficial way in which the curriculum subjects were presented and explored (Bransford et al., 2003). One of the most important features of teacher education programs according to pre-service teachers themselves is the ability to develop a deep understanding of the content knowledge (e.g., mathematics, history, English) (Ingvarson, 2007). Another important feature was the provision of links between content and teaching strategies. Furthermore, pre-service teachers stated that they needed to be provided with a deeper understanding of how students learn, assessment strategies and strategies how to explore, and build on students’ existing knowledge (Louden & Lohr, 2006). In addition, the lack of preparedness to handle student behaviour and relationships with parents has also been seen as areas of concern by pre-service teachers (Skilbeck & Connell, 2004; Ingvarson, 2007).
While the above concerns in particular, relate to pre-service teacher concerns in four to five year undergraduate teacher education programs these same concerns can also be applied to mature-aged graduate teachers undertaking Graduate Diploma Programs.

The above mentioned concerns may be related to the poor attrition rates of beginning teachers in Australia (House of Representatives, 2007). For example, it has been estimated that 25% of all new teachers leave the teaching profession within 5 years (Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, 2003). In a survey by the Australian Education Union (2006) of beginning teachers it was found that 45.6% of the respondents did not see themselves teaching in 10 years time.

2.2.3 Postgraduate course structure (Middle Years)

Postgraduate diplomas programs in Australia have traditionally been compartmentalised into three phases of learning, namely, early childhood, primary, and secondary courses (De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005). However, new curriculum frameworks developed across Australia since the late 1990s recognised early childhood, middle childhood, early adolescence and late adolescence/young adulthood as distinct phases of student development. This led a number of universities to develop postgraduate teacher education courses specializing in the following four phases of learning: early childhood, primary, middle and secondary schooling.

Of particular interest here is the growth of graduate diploma teacher education courses specializing in the middle years in Australia that have been available since 2002 (Pendergast, 2005). Pendergast notes that this is especially exciting in that the emergence of formal middle-school teacher education programs suggests possibilities for the development of new and innovative teacher education programs and new specialist teachers (Pendergast, 2005). The steady increase in postgraduate pre-service teacher enrolment into postgraduate diploma courses with a focus on middle years is particularly encouraging not only for advocates of middle schooling but also for possible reform in teacher education itself. However, there have also been concerns raised in
regards to the piecemeal implementation and coordination of middle-schooling programs for universities and schools (Main & Bryer, 2007). In the USA where there have been calls to abandon middle-school practices (Reising, 2002) the underlying reasons have been attributed to schools implementing only some of the recommendations for reform (Main & Bryer, 2007). For Australian education systems to avoid making the same mistakes as their American counterparts and to allow for whole school improvement, specific goals of middle schooling; goals that are clearly aligned to and adhere to middle-schooling philosophy need to be implemented in the planning stages. For this to occur there needs to be an understanding of the reasons for middle schooling.

2.2.4 Reasons for middle schooling

The reason for middle schooling is to bridge the traditional primary-high school gap and provide a more developmentally appropriate educational experience for young adolescents (Main & Bryer, 2007). One of the reasons for anxiety among young adolescents transitioning from primary to secondary schooling relates to whether or not they had only experienced being taught by one teacher throughout the year prior to their transition to secondary school (Waggoner, 1994). For example, research (Hill, Mackay, Russell & Zbar, 2008; Mizelle, 1995) investigating the effects of team teaching on adolescents transitioning to secondary schooling found that students who had experienced team teaching during their primary schooling exhibited fewer signs of stress and concerns in the transition to secondary schooling than those who had not experienced team teaching.

Other reasons associated with anxiety among young adolescents transitioning into secondary schooling are that many experience profound personal changes that affect them physically, mentally and emotionally, in particular, changes to brain and cognitive development peak during this period (MYSA 2008). Research notes that it is during the first years of secondary schooling that adolescents are most likely to demonstrate disengagement, disruptive behaviour,
boredom and disenchantment (Chadbourne, 2001). Furthermore, it has also been noted that during this time there is a “high incidence of clinical depression, eating disorders, delinquency, unsafe sexual practices, substance abuse, deliberate self-harm, suicide and mental health breakdown among young adolescents” (Chadbourne, 2001, p.3).

The term, Middle Years, is commonly associated with the following assumptions:

1. Middle Years is a term that applies to early adolescence in the 10-15 age group (Chadbourne, 2001; De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005; Pendergast, 2005);

2. Middle school is a term that refers to the organizational unit for the schooling of young adolescents separate from traditional primary and secondary arrangement. Middle schools may be completely separate schools or sub-schools within existing schools and may practice traditional schooling or middle schooling (Chadbourne, 2001; De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005); and

3. Middle schooling refers to a set of progressive principles or philosophy that is responsive and appropriate to the developmental needs of young adolescents (Chadbourne, 2001; De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005).

According to Chadbourne (2001), middle-school philosophy, curriculum and pedagogy are based on constructivism, which suggests that “development is a function of the interaction of biological maturation and specific experiences, and can be fostered by the provision of appropriate levels of challenge and support, including opportunities for reflection, integration, and application” (King, 2009, p.1). In other words, students actively construct their own knowledge of the world based on past experiences that are then tested or reflected upon to construct new meaning or knowledge.

The underlying philosophy of middle schooling is to:

- provide a seamless transition from primary schooling, (which is seen traditionally as student centred) to secondary schooling (traditionally seen as more subject or discipline
centred) that then leads to more effective student learning, positive experiences in adolescence and a desire and capacity for life-long learning. (Pendergast, 2005, p. 4)

Hence, preparing and supporting pre-service teachers in their development as middle-school teachers requires a comprehensive and thorough study of middle-school philosophy and organisation and not merely a superficial exploration (De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005). It is suggested that for middle-school teacher preparation to be successful, middle-school philosophy and organisation should be the main elements of middle-school teacher preparation. This would involve:

- cooperative learning, collaborative teaching, authentic assessment, mixed ability grouping
- using ICT as a learning tool, the integration of theory and practice, integrated curriculum,
- higher order thinking, success for all students, participative decision making and shared leadership. (De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005, p. 15)

De Jong and Chadbourne (2005) further argue that the characteristics of middle-school teacher education programs should reflect those found in authentic middle-school communities. For example, a major characteristic of the middle-school philosophy is a focus on team teaching and working collaboratively within a small middle-school community. Here, rather than individual teachers teaching and working in isolation, four to six teachers could be working collaboratively and supporting 80-100 students. This would mean developing middle-school communities at the university level similar to those found in authentic middle-school settings, where opportunities of team teaching, dialogue and questioning are seen as a natural part of learning (De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005). Team teaching can prove to be problematic if it is not explicitly taught and practised in teacher education courses (Bryer & Main, 2004; Main & Bryer, 2004). Main and Bryer (2004) claim that “little or no emphasis has been placed on team membership skills, team process skills, or leadership skills in Queensland teacher education courses” (Main & Bryer, 2004, p. 200), rather the focus has been on pedagogy and curriculum.
Research has suggested that even with experienced teachers transferring from traditional secondary to middle-school settings, very little guidance or training is provided by the middle school’s leadership to clarify the uncertainty associated with team teaching, or indeed the underlying reasons for middle schooling.

Arnold (2000) suggests that because the middle-school classroom provides a transition point between the world of childhood and adulthood, teachers must be made aware of the unique situation they occupy. She states that apart from parents, the teachers with whom adolescents are most likely to engage with have an important role to play in offering entry to the adult world, and thus, they need to model, act and behave accordingly to adult maturity. This would provide students with ‘benchmarks’ which could “influence them more constructively than verbalised outcomes” (Arnold, 2000) and which could support adolescents voices to be heard and acknowledged. The transition from primary to secondary schooling in this sense can be either experienced without concerns or as a time of apprehension and anxiety for the adolescent (Chadbourne, 2001). However, perhaps the most challenging aspect to postgraduate teacher education courses is to provide graduate teachers with genuine middle-school learning experiences during their practicum, that is, to ensure that they are placed in authentic middle-school settings (De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005).

2.2.5 Practicum

Research studies (e.g., Bransford et al., 2003; Korthagen, et al., 2006; Lawrance & Palmer, 2003; Ingvarson, 2007; Rorrison, 2005, 2008) indicate that most pre-service teachers believe that the practicum is the most important and useful component of teacher education programs. The main reason relates to the experiences involved, such as the teaching experiences the practicum affords, getting to know the students, working alongside with the supervising teacher in the classroom setting, and being welcomed as a future colleague into the teaching community.
Knowles (1992) concludes that a positive teacher identity is most commonly developed from observation of good teachers and from positive personal teaching experiences. However, often it is beginning teachers’ unpleasant experiences with teachers that are remembered, leading to conceptions of the teacher who they do not want to be rather than a clear image of themselves as teachers (Knowles, 1992). Unfortunately the effects of prior positive experiences are likely to be overrun by negative prior experiences affecting the more vulnerable or anxious pre-service teachers in particular (Knowles, 1992).

For many pre-service teachers the reality of the practicum is one of anxiety and frustration (Alsup, 2005; Rorrison, 2008; White & Hildebrand, 2002; White & Moss, 2003), even though in theory the practicum experience is supposed to be a journey that is carefully planned, and the development of teacher identity is supported by both the university and the school (Keogh et al., 2006; Rorrison, 2008). The purpose of the practicum and the role of various people involved in the practicum--the university liaison person, course-coordinators, professional experience personnel, school deputy / principals and the supervising teacher--is to ensure that the pre-service teacher is welcomed as a future colleague and inducted into the teaching profession through an immersion into the real world of teachers’ workplaces (Rorrison, 2008).

In contrast to the traditional supervision model in the practicum that focuses on pre-service teacher socialization, a consultative mentoring model (Walkington, 2005) that acknowledges the pre-service teacher’s individuality has been found to be effective in supporting the development of teacher identity. This is particularly so since the practicum involves:

- intense and extended conversations with teachers and is based on the premise that the art of teaching, teachers’ experiences, and the choices they make, and the process of learning to teach are deeply personal matters inexorably linked to one’s identity and, thus, one’s life story. (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 120)
This does not appear to be the case for many pre-service teachers in the practicum. There are two major concerns relating to the practicum, which they consistently mention, namely: (1) the mismatch and irrelevance of theory they learned at university to the real world teachings in the classroom, and (2) the unpreparedness and / or unsuitability of the supervising teacher (Keogh et al., 2005; Rorrison, 2008; Watson, 2005). Each will be discussed in turn.

2.2.5.1 Theoretical mismatch

The most frequently cited complaints by pre-service teachers themselves relate to the mismatch or irrelevance of units taught in the teaching degree with what they experience in the classroom during the practicum (Korthagen et al., 2006; Rorrison, 2008; Watson, 2005). In other words, the general belief is that units are too theoretical and have no link to what real teachers do in real classrooms. It is suggested that because teacher education courses are theory-based many graduates are not being well equipped or prepared for the realities of the modern classroom (Korthagen, 2006; Rorrison, 2008; Watson, 2005). Watson (2005) suggests that since teacher education courses became embedded in the academic context, teacher educators have been accused of becoming more removed from the practice of teaching in schools.

However, it is not only pre-service teachers who feel this way, other stakeholders such as school supervising teachers and school principals have been found to share this view as have policy makers. In the 2005 Victorian Inquiry into pre-service teacher education, policy makers argued that teacher education courses “are too heavily based on theory and do not prepare new teachers for some to the practical challenges of working in the classroom and school community” (Parliament of Victoria, 2005, p. 105). Nonetheless, it is also argued that practicum experiences entirely on their own “simply result in pre-service teachers developing the technical skills of classroom management and effective instruction” (Watson, 2005, p. 18).

Research by Rorrison (2008) and Watson (2005) suggests that professional experience involves more than simply experiencing the norms of a typical classroom, “it involves engaging
with student learning, drawing on theoretical knowledge about teaching and learning and reflecting on how theory can inform future classroom practice” (Watson, 2005, p. 18). Hence, supporting and encouraging the pre-service teacher in the development of their teacher identity needs professional knowledge. Such knowledge needs to integrate theoretical knowledge about the “situational, emotional, cognitive, physical, cultural and organisational factors that interact and impact on students’ learning with classroom practice” (Watson, 2005, p. 18).

2.2.5.2 Supervising teacher

The second concern identified with the practicum relates to the supervising teacher (Gardner & Williamson, 2002; Keogh et al., 2005; Rorrison, 2005, 2008; Walkington, 2005; Watson, 2005). It has been recognized that professional guidance and support from the supervising teacher is especially important to those graduate pre-service teachers who have been away from school for many years and thus lack recent understanding of school cultures and experiences working with school age students (cf. Gale & Jackson, 1997; House of Parliament, 2007; Parliament of Victoria, 2005). Unfortunately, few supervising teachers have had formal training on how to best support the graduate pre-service teacher (Keogh et al., 2005). This is especially so within middle schooling (Keogh et al. (2005) note that the dilemma lies with “many supervising teachers drawing on their own experiences when they were supervised as student teachers constructing their own supervision practices” (Board of Teacher Registration Queensland, 2002, p. 9).

According to Watson (2005), supervising teachers who have outdated skills in teaching and learning are those who are least likely to welcome new or innovative approaches to teaching and learning into their classroom. This can be particularly frustrating for pre-service teachers who are encouraged to trial new ways of teaching and learning during the practicum (Rorrison, 2005). This is in line with Danielewicz (2001), who believes that pre-service teachers need to be encouraged to experiment and find their own unique identities
rather than copy their supervising teacher’s identity during the practicum. Sudzina, Gilebelhaus and Coolican (1997) found that most pre-service teachers believed that a good supervising teacher was someone who was not only good at providing constructive feedback but also willing to let them try out new ideas in the classroom. In a study by Gardner and Williamson (2002) mutual trust and support were also evident as important factors to the development of a positive teacher identity among pre-service teachers who felt comfortable to take risks and to discuss their progress honestly with their supervising teachers. A successful practicum depended on the supervising teacher’s ability to relinquish control to allow the pre-service teacher experience the realities of the classroom (Rorrison, 2005).

2.2.5.3 Fitting into the school culture

Another important influencing factor in the development of teacher identity is being recognized and welcomed as a future colleague by the supervising teacher and other school personnel rather than as a student teacher (Dobbins, 1996; Gardner & Williamson, 2002). Even so, traditional views of the pre-service teacher as a student rather than a future teaching colleague often seem to permeate schools’ cultures (even those who are seemingly sincerely welcoming of the pre-service teacher) (Dobbins, 1996).

According to White and Moss (2003), to successfully negotiate the practicum, pre-service teachers need to be able to fit into the specific school context. They need to learn and embrace the practices and traditions of the individual school as part of the inculcation into the school culture, especially if they seek to be assessed as suitable to teach by their supervising teacher. Unfortunately, many pre-service teachers are assessed on their ability to teach using standards that often ignore the school context, local issues and less measurable aspects of teachers’ work and this can have a negative impact on their developing teacher identity (White & Moss, 2003). Moreover, there is a contradictory aspect to the practicum in that the
practicum “provides the contextual arena wherein the student teacher, as part student, part teacher has the delicate work of educating others while being educated and of attempting unification in an already contradictory role” (Britzman, 1994, p. 55). Hence, the reason why there are so many pre-service teachers experiencing ‘a silent rage’ during their practicum experiences (see White & Hildebrand, 2002; White & Moss, 2003; White, 2000).

Research studies by Korthagen et al. (2006), Rorrison, (2008), Walkington (2005), and White and Moss (2003) suggest that many pre-service teachers are astounded by the lack of professionalism (recognition, support, and collegiality) amongst school personnel. Indeed, it is these kinds of negative practicum experiences that have resulted in many pre-service teachers reporting dissatisfaction with their practicum experience (White & Moss, 2003) and this has resulted in many potentially good teachers not choosing to pursue teaching as a career. Thus, it can be said that the transition from the graduate pre-service teacher’s experience as an expert learner or student to novice teacher (Shulman, 1986) can be a very disconcerting experience for the pre-service teacher. It is also clear that what they learned in their teacher education courses, in respect of curricula and pedagogy, and what they have available in resources at the university setting, can be quite different to what they come across in their practicum (Bransford et al., 2003).

In response to concerns such as those noted above relating to teacher education programs becoming instruments of ideological compliance to the logic of economic performativity (Elliot, 2002), middle schooling has the potential to contribute to the establishment of a politics of teacher education in Australia that is fitting to new times. However, successful reform in the middle years is dependent on “specialised practicing teachers capable of designing and implementing innovative pedagogies, knowledge of the needs for structural and philosophical change, and understanding the needs and abilities of
young adolescents” (Pendergast et al., 2007, p. 75). Hence, the development of such specialised teachers requires a fuller and a more accurate ontology of the teacher—and its consequent epistemology—to provide better guidance and a more appropriate basis on how to go about supporting the emergence of the good middle-school teacher identity.

2.3 PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL BACKGROUNDS (PPB).

2.3.1 Recognition of Professional Backgrounds

Teacher education has seen an increasing number of mature-aged graduate entrants coming into the teaching profession (Skilbeck & Connell, 2004). A recognition of their professional backgrounds and their interest in choosing teaching as a second career has seen the development of new models for entry to teacher education programs (Harris, 2006; House of Representatives, 2007; Skilbeck & Connell, 2004). For example, the most recent trend is to fast track graduates from mathematics, science or with special needs expertise into the teaching profession. The program involves eight weeks of intensive university study that is followed by two years internship working in a school setting with full pay (as a first year graduate) (Teach for Australia, 2009). While the intent is to attract either recent graduates or recruit professionals or career changers into teaching by offering a fast track into the teaching profession there are concerns that need to be considered:

The ‘Achilles heel’ of fast-track programs is the potential for professionals to be credentialed without adequate education and pedagogical knowledge; in particular, knowledge of student alternative conceptions and conceptual change teaching. It is imperative that fast-track models recognize these risks and ensure that the new teachers’ pedagogy matches their content knowledge and fulfils the program’s potential of providing knowledgeable and skilled science teachers. (Harris, 2006, p. 1)
It is not uncommon to find recruitment campaigns in Australia that offer graduate pre-service teachers cash payments, payment of course fees and a guaranteed placement in a school at a salary above the usual commencement level for the beginning teacher (Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, 2003). Interestingly, the recruitment campaign for teachers by the State Government of Victoria suggests some success in attracting professionals out of other careers into teaching, especially into the areas of mathematics and science teaching (Richardson & Watt, 2005). Interested applicants included qualified professionals from fields such as law, engineering, accountancy, veterinary, medicine, as well as “women who were seeking to return to work after interrupting their previous career to have children” (p. 477).

2.3.2 Recognition of Personal background

Research studies claim that an understanding of the personal background of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher can assist in addressing the attrition of highly qualified teachers and that it can also predict pre-service teachers’ future success in teaching (Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996; Klausewitz, 2005; Thornton, Peltier, & Hill, 2005). For example, research findings suggest that in addition to teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning, their personality traits relate directly to classroom effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Czubaj, 1996; Fisher & Kent, 1998). Also, being parents seems to contribute to caring relationships with students, for example, teachers’ tolerance towards students seemed to increase when they had school age children of their own (Beijaard et al., 2000; Huberman, 1993). In this sense, it is bringing the experience from the private life into the professional life as a teacher.

In addition to personality traits it is important to explore the images that mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers hold of teachers (Weber & Mitchell, 1995); they include both those images that have been influenced by personal schooling experiences and those
portrayed in the media. It is suggested that the images of teachers found in both individual and collective memories and in the media can provide “a stimulus for self-interrogation that can sharpen our professional identities as teachers by providing the contextual, historical, and political background that makes self-interpretation more meaningful and identity more complete” (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, pp.130-131).

Understanding the reasons why mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers have chosen to teach, especially in the middle years, can provide insight as to how to best support the development of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher’s positive and committed teacher identity.

2.3.3 Reasons for teaching (middle years).

A common feature in many teacher education programs (including graduate teacher education programs) in Australia is that many pre-service teachers entering teacher education programs are mature-aged, which is particularly prevalent in post-graduate teacher education programs. The reasons include seeing teaching as a good career change, particularly as it fits in with parenthood (Reid & Caudwell, 1997), and that they feel that they would enjoy working with and helping children and young people to learn (Hobson et al., 2004).

A number of studies have suggested that one of the values determining many mature-aged pre-service teachers’ choice of teaching as a career is caring for the personal development of children and developing positive relationships between the children and their teachers (Noddings, 2000; Palmer, 1998; Reid & Caudwell, 1997; Wilson & Cameron, 1996; Younger, Brindley, Pedder & Hagger, 2004). For example, Reid and Caudwell (1997) found that the two most popular reasons for 28 mature-aged undergraduate pre-service teachers (middle school) to choose teaching were based on “‘enjoying working with children’ and a ‘feeling that teaching would bring high job satisfaction’” (p. 1). In line with other research studies (cf. Bassett, 2003; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Sexton, 2004), Younger et al. (2004) found that other reasons for
choosing to teach among graduate mature-aged pre-service teachers included a passion for teaching and learning and its place in shaping society as well as the ability to make a contribution to society. In terms of subject-matter knowledge, a love for a subject (e.g., mathematics or English) and to be able to share and communicate their enthusiasm about their area of interest with young people were contributing factors as to why graduate mature-aged pre-service teachers chose to teach in the lower secondary school.

A further reason why people choose teaching is the belief that teaching is a calling (Hansen, 1995). In a study that sought to understand the identities of teachers of ‘at risk’ students, teachers were clearly oriented towards an advocacy role for children based on a strong sense of calling to the teaching profession (Friesen, Finney, & Krentz, 1999). Teaching in this sense “is the experience of being part of meaningful wholes and in harmony with super-individual units such as family, social groups, culture and cosmic order” (Boucouvalas, 1988, p. 56); in other words, it is about giving meaning or purpose to one’s own existence.

Such altruistic motives appear to underpin many pre-service teachers’ decisions to enter teacher education and in terms of teacher retention this is particularly encouraging. Research (cf. Nieto, 2003) suggests that altruistic motives are the reasons that teachers will be most likely to stay in the profession. Hence the importance of understanding, recognizing, and providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to explore and discuss their ontological beliefs about themselves as becoming teachers that involve deeply personal, intellectual, and moral dimensions (Collay, 2006). According to Palmer (1998), one way to do so is by asking “who is the self that teaches?” It is Palmer’s belief that asking such a fundamental question “can serve our students more faithfully, enhance our own [as teachers] well-being, make common cause with colleagues, and help education bring more light and life to the world” (p. 7).
2.3.4 The good teacher (and good learner).

Investigating pre-service teachers’ beliefs about the good teacher, based on personal qualities rather than only on teacher competencies, is critical in determining the extent to which teacher preparation programs can affect their developing teacher identities, and subsequent classroom practice (Doolittle, Dodds & Placek., 1993; Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler & Shaver, 2005; Hollingsworth, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, & Minor, 2001; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002).

It is interesting to note that findings from studies investigating pre-service teachers’ perceptions of the good teacher (Alsup, 2007; Whitehead, 2006; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002) suggest personal qualities and controlling the classroom are more important than subject matter knowledge. This can be noted in a study that explored 24 prospective middle-school pre-service teachers’ perceptions about the good teacher (Whitehead, 2006). The subjects in the study were 15 recent school leavers and 9 mature-aged pre-service teachers. The findings suggested that while the recent school leavers saw the good teacher as autonomous, charismatic and in control and were able to specify the characteristics of the good teachers in detail, the mature-aged pre-service teachers in contrast believed a good teacher was someone who was excited about learning and enjoyed sharing what they had learned. It was also important that the teacher had the ability to adjust their teaching style to suit individual learners, and the ability to work collaboratively with their students. The differences between the recent school leaver pre-service teacher and the mature-aged pre-service teacher in this sense related to the former being able to articulate specific attributes about the good teacher based on recent school experience, whereas for the latter integrating life experiences in teaching and being able to relate and develop relationships with students were seen to be important. It is acknowledged that “while students coming into Teacher Education directly from school bring a fresh and enthusiastic approach, mature students bring a breadth of life
experiences, and often highly appropriate skills for cross-disciplinary teaching ...a mix of such students in teacher education programs is highly beneficial for all" (Ramsey, 2000, p. 1).

There were many similarities in Whitehead’s (2006) study between the beliefs of recent school leavers and mature-aged pre-service teachers about being passionate about teaching. These similarities extended to their beliefs about the good teacher who was perceived as encouraging and caring and who in particular recognised students as individuals. Additionally, it was important that the good teacher had the ability to provide and set limits and rules in the classroom to protect and to guide their students. The bad teacher was described as someone who was irrational and not in control, that is, someone who resorted to yelling in order to control the classroom. Bad teaching was chalk and talk, worksheet after worksheet, and no creativity.

Sexton (2004) investigated 66 postgraduate pre-service teachers’ perceptions about their role as future teachers, the meaning of a good teacher and teaching practices. He found that most of the pre-service teachers saw their role as facilitator, guide, encourager, and as role models. Their perceptions of the good teacher included that a good teacher was well prepared, inspirational, versatile, thorough, self-confident, enthusiastic and someone with a good sense of humour. Good teaching was about making learning fun and pedagogy was seen as a more important skill than to have content knowledge. There were similar findings from a study exploring teacher beliefs in 112 lower-secondary teachers from Southeast Asia and from Australia (Richards et al., 2001). In this study respondents specified that a good teacher should be learner-centred, have positive relationships with students and be a facilitator, motivator and guide. A good learner was seen as independent, self-directed, and someone capable of taking responsibility for their learning.

A noteworthy study by Bain (2004), investigating what constituted good tertiary educators in the USA--and this can certainly also be applied to teacher educators--found that
outstanding tertiary educators were those who had achieved remarkable success in helping their students to learn in ways that made a sustained, substantial and positive influence on students’ thinking, acting and feeling. This meant that the outstanding teachers not only knew their subject matter extremely well, but that they were actively involved in the further development of their subject. That is, they did research, they also read extensively in other fields, and took strong interest in the broader issues of their disciplines: the histories, controversies and epistemological discussions. In short, “they did intellectually, physically, or emotionally what they expected from their students” (Bain, 2004, p. 16). In this sense, the good teacher is a transformative intellectual who defines education as fundamentally ethical and an empowering enterprise that seeks to advance and build a more equitable social order (Giroux & McLaren, 1987).

Arguably, Bain’s (2004) findings and description of what constitutes an outstanding tertiary educator can be applied to all teachers, not only those in the tertiary level. For example, in line with Bain’s description of an outstanding teacher, Palmer (1998) describes a great classroom teacher as an individual with a strong sense of personal identity who has passion for his or her subject or discipline not only because it bring contagious energy into the classroom but also because of its deeper function: “Passion for the subject propels that subject not the teacher, into the centre of the learning circle–and when a great thing is in their midst, students have direct access to the energy of learning and for life” (Palmer, 1998, p. 120).

From the perspectives of both Bain (2004) and Palmer (1998) it can be seen that while both content and pedagogical knowledge are important, “knowledge and skills acquisition is not enough to ensure skillful practice” (Dall’Alba, 2005, p. 363). In other words a focus on an epistemologically-based teacher preparation without adequate attention to the ontological formulation of what it is to be a teacher does not allow transformation of self that supports a strong sense of teacher identity.
2.4 DEFINING TEACHER IDENTITY

2.4.1 Identity

In general terms, identity is defined as a general sense of selfhood or understanding of the self that can change and vary over time depending on context (Alsup, 2006). Core identity or the “more fixed sense of self is the foundation for multiple, context-specific situated identities or subjectivities” (Alsup, 2006, p. 205) and can provide “the ability to initiate action and to register experience” (Gilligan, 2003, p. 167). The development of identity is a continuous evolving phenomenon that involves individuals experiencing “discursive tension and cognitive dissonance leading to heightened understanding (meta-awareness) of the intersections among personal and professional subjectivities” (Alsup, 2006, p. 205). Identity from a relational-ontological perspective will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 3.

Stryker and Burke (2000) note distinct usages of the term identity, for example, some use identity when referring to the culture of a people (culture is understood as a way of life of a group of people e.g., indigenous culture), some use identity when referring to common identifications with a collectivity or social category (e.g., teachers, doctors, lawyers) or in the creation of a common culture among participants (e.g., social movements such as feminists), and some use identity with reference to parts of a self that is composed of the meanings attached by persons to the multiple roles they play in societies. For example, teacher identity or the individual’s sense of self as a teacher is central to teaching (Britzman, 1991), especially since teaching involves a substantial investment of the self (Goodson, 2003). Even so, as noted by Alsup (2005), teacher education programs do not address issues of teacher identity because it is deemed difficult to discuss, and instead address issues of professional demeanour, dress and communication.

Role labels suggest meanings and expectations for behaviour that have evolved from interactions among people in social systems (Colbeck, 2008, p. 10). For example, the role labels
“pre-service teacher”, “beginning teacher” and “expert teacher” instantly suggest different set of expectations of understanding for instance, classroom management, and teaching strategies. While it can be seen that roles are externally defined by others expectations or the assigned identity as imposed by others, “individuals define their own identities internally as they accept or reject social role expectations as part of who they are” (Colbeck, 2008, p.10). Identity is constructed, maintained and negotiated through language and discourse (Alsup, 2005; Gee 2000; Varghese et al., 2006).

2.4.2 Teacher identity

To support pre-service teachers in developing a sense of personal teacher identity involves providing opportunities for them to examine the images they have of the “self” as a teacher (Ottensen, 2007). These images in general have been based on their memories of their teachers: for example, the way they dressed, their mannerisms, or they way they taught (Ottensen, 2007). In addition to the image the teacher holds of the self, and his or her personal sense as a teacher, teacher identity also involves the meanings attributed to them by others (Britzman, 1991; Beijard, 1995; Beijard et al., 2000). It is not only a personal sense of self as a teacher that makes up teacher identity but also the social aspect of being recognized as a teacher. Recognition by others, particularly from within the teaching profession (e.g., teacher educators, principals, fellow teachers and students) is a necessary component in supporting the continuous development of a positive and committed teacher identity (Carlone & Johnson, 2007; Palmer, 1998). However, it has also been noted that to be recognized by others as a teacher is not the sole dependent factor that supports the development of teacher identity, rather the determining factor is the individual teacher’s personal definition and sense of what it means to be a teacher (Gilligan, 2003). Development of teacher identity in this sense is dependent on the individual (pre-service) teacher’s personal motivations and feelings about the complexity of teaching (Thornton & Wilson, 2004).
It is suggested that teacher identity, (or the pre-service teacher’s sense of self as a teacher) that is related to their beliefs about teaching and learning, is of crucial importance to teacher education (Bullough, 1997). This is because it forms the basis for meaning and decision making in the classroom and teacher educators must begin, then, by exploring “the teacher self” (Bullough, 1997, p. 21). Even so, the development of teacher identity has been seen as at best a by-product of teacher education programs rather than a targeted outcome (Alsup, 2006; Rorrison, 2008), at least from the pre-service teacher’s perspective (Franzak, 2002). During teacher education programs many pre-service teachers often only see themselves in the role of students rather than as (novice) teachers (Franzak, 2002; Mayer, 1999; White & Moss, 2003). Mayer (1999) argues that teacher education programs must provide for an explicit focus on teacher identity and not merely on understanding the functions or the role of the teacher. Explaining the distinction between the role of the teacher and teacher identity, Mayer states that the role of the teacher:

encapsulates the things the teacher does in performing the functions required of him or her as a teacher, whereas teacher identity is a more personal thing and that indicates how one identifies with being a teacher and how one feels as a teacher. (Mayer, 1999, pp.6-7)

Hence, to be a teacher in the fuller more comprehensive sense of teaching discussed thus far, as well as function in the role as a teacher, the teacher needs not only to have a well developed understanding of subject knowledge (Calderhead, 1996; Shulman, 1986) and teaching strategies (Beijard et al., 2000), but also core beliefs about what constitute one’s teaching identity.

Helms (1998) notes that the development of our identity involves exploring how we obtain and articulate a sense of who we are and how our self has been constructed. The development of teacher identity in this sense involves the ability to “reflect on the complex and life-long process of self-discovery, a process for teachers to know themselves, their students and their subjects” (Cardelle-Elawar, Irving, & Lizarrage, 2007, p. 568), and the ability to connect all
the complex interrelated elements that make up teaching and learning so that they are intertwined (Palmer, 1998). With an increasing emphasis of identity in education it can be suggested that:

Education in its deepest sense and at whatever age it takes place, concerns the opening up of identities—exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state... Education is not merely formative—it is transformative... issues of education should be addressed first and foremost in terms of identities and modes of belonging and only secondarily in terms of skills and information. (Wenger, 1998, p.263)

Building on all this and drawing from the work by researchers such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Gilligan, (1982), Isaacs, (2005, 2007), Noddings, (1984, 2000, 2003, 2005), Stout (2001), Taylor, (1989, 1991), and Thayer-Bacon, (1995), teacher identity is embodied (one’s body is the medium of one’s being-in-the world and of engaging in the world) and it is embedded in language, relationships, culture and time with an emphasis on language and social interaction. Hence, teacher identity is continually influenced, formed and re-formed as individuals develop over time and through their interactions with others in communities they work within (Alsup, 2007; Stout, 2001; Thayer-Bacon, 1995). The process that supports the development of the pre-service teachers’ sense of a positive committed teacher identity involves conversations or dialogues with significant others (expert teacher educators, mentors, peers, etc.), conversations that support bringing forth the pre-service teachers’ own unique understandings of who they are as individuals. Making an allowance for the considerable personal investment of self in being a teacher and understanding that teacher identity involves incorporating “the cognitive, the emotional, the bodily, and the creative” (Alsup, 2006, p. 14), Alsup suggests that:

...to not allow [pre-service] student to talk about such issues, to not teach them how and why such issues are important to their teaching lives, to not give them the opportunity to speak and take the time to hear them, we are doing pre-service teachers and in-service teachers a disservice–we are leaving out, we are forgetting or choosing to forget, an
important (if not the most important) part of being a teacher: the teacher identity. (Alsup, 2006, p.14)

Hence, the development of a teacher identity from the relational perspective is the result of positive (or negative) interactions “between personal experiences, and the social, cultural and institutional environments in which they function on a daily basis” (Van de Berg 2002, p. 579).

In summary, then, teacher identity as defined in this study refers to the pre-service teacher’s unique sense of self as a (middle school) teacher that includes his or her beliefs about teaching and learning (Alsup, 2006; Stout, 2001; Walkington, 2005). Based on a relational ontological perspective, it is recognized that a personal sense of what it means to be a teacher and beliefs about teaching and learning may be influenced by the individual’s recollections of his or her prior schooling experiences, and in particular, teachers who make lasting impressions on the individual (Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Knowles, 1992; Miller Marsh, 2002).

2.5 TEACHER IDENTITY–THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Theoretical frameworks can provide lenses that illuminate certain elements and tell particular stories about life (Clark & Caffarella 1999). Exploring and juxtaposing multiple theoretical perspectives not only enhances understanding but also provides for a more comprehensive picture of teacher identity (Varghese et al., 2005). Hence, in the discussion which follows the goal is to illustrate how each of the following four theoretical frameworks can contribute and relate to the others. While there are a number of such frameworks, as noted in chapter 1 the most common approaches are: (1) developmental / psychological, (2) socio-cultural, (3) poststructuralist, and (4) relational-cultural. In what follows they are described, compared and contrasted. It can be argued that they can help to broaden the perspective of understanding adult identity development.
2.5.1 Developmental psychological perspective

Based on the traditional Western psychological view of the development of identity and the learner self, the focus of the developmental psychological perspective is on the individual (Clark & Caffarella, 1999). Advocates argue that it provides “greater awareness of self through cultivating a self which is independent, rational, autonomous, coherent, and which has a sense of social responsibility” (Tennant, 2000, p. 19). The goal is the development of individuation of self and the taking in of the outside world so as to make it one’s own (Piaget, 1963; Rogoff, 1990; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997; Wertsch, 1985).

In Australia, it has been, and still is, taken for granted that the teacher as an individual can observe and reflect *rationally* on the outside world and then has the power to bring about change (Klein, 2004). From this perspective while social influences are acknowledged, it is suggested that the goal of interaction and social relationship is that students internalize their lessons (Raider-Roth, 2002, 2005). The notion of the teacher as a rational being capable of bringing about change can be noted, for example, in a statement released by the Department of Education, Science and Training (2003) where it was suggested that teachers must ensure “that all students improve their broad understanding of the forces of change in Australian society and the importance of science, mathematics, and technology in underpinning the knowledge economy and society” (Klein, 2004, p. 145).

A number of psychological models have sought to explain the development of adult identity. They include for example, epistemological development theories such as those of Perry (1970), Belenky et al. (1986), and Baxter Magolda (1992), and the identity development theories of Erikson, (1963), Gould (1978) and Loevinger (1976). These theories are based on various sequential models of development (Clark & Caffarella, 1999). Such models are based on life events or transitions where the person is seen as an active participant who is constructing knowledge rather than simply absorbing it. They presume stages or age-phases where the
development of identity is unidirectional in nature, building on past development, and where there is an endpoint (Miller, 1993).

Epistemological developmental models have commonly built upon Perry’s “Scheme of intellectual and ethical development” (1970, 1981) work and include “women’s ways of knowing” (Belenky et al., 1986; Goldberger et al., 1996) and the epistemological reflection model (Baxter Magolda, 1992). A brief overview of each of these models will follow below.

**Intellectual and ethical developmental model**

Perry’s (1970) intellectual and ethical development model was based on a research study interviewing a cohort of white undergraduate males from Harvard to investigate their epistemological development. The findings from Perry’s (1970) study suggested four positions of knowledge development, namely dualism, multiplism, relativism, and commitment. In dualism a learner believes that all knowledge is known, knowledge is transferrable, and that there is an existence of right and wrong answers. Multiplism refers to the learner believing that most knowledge is knowable but that there are some things that could not be known with certainty. From this perspective whilst the learner may rely less on authority, personal opinion and ultimate truths are still seen as right or wrong. Relativism refers to a learner believing that knowledge is actively constructed. Absolute truths do not exist because truth is considered relative to the individual’s personal interpretations of the experiences (Brownlee et al., 2001). The final position is commitment. In this position, while relativistic thinking is still a feature, particular beliefs are more valued than others (Brownlee, et al., 2001; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997).

**Women’s ways of knowing model.**

The women’s ways of knowing model (Belenky et al., 1986) built on Perry’s (1970) scheme of intellectual and ethical development and Gilligan’s work (1982) on women’s development of moral reasoning. The model was derived from interviews with 135 women
employed in both academic and non-academic settings and suggests five positions of epistemological development, namely silenced, received knower, subjective knower, procedural knower and committed knower. The first position, silenced, referred to some women experiencing “themselves as mindless and voiceless and who saw themselves as subjects to the whims of external authority” (Whitmire, 2003, p. 129). In the second position, as the received knower (similar to Perry’s dualism), some women saw themselves as capable of receiving and reproducing knowledge but not capable of creating knowledge of their own. The received knower can be recognised in today’s classrooms as “students who sit there, pencils poised, ready to write down every word the teacher says” (Bain, 2004, p. 43). The third position was that of the subjective knower (similar to Perry’s multiplism), and referred to women who viewed truth and knowledge as personal, as subjective and / or private. The subjective knowers in today’s classrooms are recognised as students who attribute the grades they receive to the teacher’s positive or negative attitude to students (Bain, 2004). The fourth position was that of procedural knower (similar to Perry’s relativism); as procedural knowers, some women believed that knowing involved learning how to play the game of the discipline. Being a procedural knower is about knowing how to apply the objective procedures for making judgments and how to use those standards in writing reports (Bain, 2004). Interestingly, however, while the procedural learner is recognized as the intelligent student in many of today’s classrooms, their knowing does not influence how they think outside of the class (Bain, 2004). The final position was the committed learner; women who were identified as committed learners were characterised as independent learners who were both critical and creative in their thinking (Bain, 2004). These are learners who view all knowledge as contextual; they experience themselves as creators of knowledge and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing. They value the ideas and ways of thinking to which they are exposed and consistently try to use them. Moreover, as
they are aware of their own thinking, they are also able to correct their thinking as needed (Bain, 2004).

*The epistemological reflection model.*

The epistemological reflection model (Baxter Magolda, 1992) was developed in response to the gender differences in the models by Perry (1970) and Belenky et al. (1986). However, Baxter Magolda (1992) identified four similar developmental stages of knowing, namely absolute knowledge, transitional knowledge, independent knowledge and contextual relativism. Here, similarly to Perry’s (1970) dualism, absolute knowledge refers to knowledge being certain or absolute. Transitional knowledge suggests knowledge as being partially certain or uncertain and is similar to Perry’s (1970) multiplism. Independent knowledge refers to the learner beginning to question truths as explained by experts and to recognize that their own opinions are valid; this is similar to Perry’s (1970) relativism. The final stage, contextual relativism, suggests that knowledge is judged on the basis of evidence in context. That is, the learner analyses personal beliefs and experiences and theory to construct knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 1992). Significantly, the gender differences identified in Baxter Magolda’s (1992) study suggested that women’s way of knowing was relational whereas men’s mode of knowing was more impersonal or objective. Women were found to be more open, flexible, connected and responsive in their knowing than men, who were more objective and whose mode of knowing was characterised as logical (Brownlee et al., 2001).

The epistemological developmental models described above “share interactionist, constructivist assumptions and sketch similar trajectories of development” (Hofer, 2001, p. 359). In other words they all begin with an objectivist, dualistic view of knowledge, followed by a multiplistic stance as individuals begin to allow for uncertainty. They then acknowledge different points of views and the ability to distinguish the role that evidence plays in supporting one’s position. In the final stage knowledge is actively constructed by the knower,
knowledge and truth are evolving and knowing is coordinated with justification (Hofer, 2001, p. 259).

**Development of epistemological beliefs**

A common way of conceptualizing the development of epistemological beliefs is that it is a process where individuals move through stages or patterned sequences of development in their beliefs about knowledge and knowing (Hofer, 2001; Whitmire, 2003). For example, the development of epistemological beliefs among many undergraduates commencing their tertiary study begins with beliefs about knowledge as right or wrong that can be described as surface learning. Through their undergraduate experiences, both curricular and extra-curricular, the next stage is where change or a transition in beliefs begins to take place with some students beginning to see that knowledge is not necessarily right or wrong but uncertain. As the student gains in confidence and has developed a deep understanding of knowledge, the student may progress to the final or to the more sophisticated stage where there is a belief that all knowledge is relativistic in nature and needing to be evidence-based (Chai, Khine & Teo, 2006; Whitmire, 2003). However, it has also been found that the attainment of a sophisticated, deep and critically aware stance toward knowledge is far rarer than hoped (Hofer, 2001). Moreover research also notes that students may simultaneously hold a number of competing beliefs and thoughts that do not necessarily comply with the above linear developmental models (Schommer, 1990).

Most pre-service teachers’ epistemological beliefs about teaching and learning have been well established by the time they commence their teacher training (Mayer, 1999). These beliefs in general may be based on prior schooling experiences and a recollection of the teachers who taught them, and as such are particularly “tenacious and powerful” (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, p. 344) and difficult to challenge. On the other hand however, and as noted by Richards, Gallo and Renandya (2001) and Brownlee (2003), epistemological beliefs are rarely if at all addressed by teacher education courses. Thus to challenge and confront
traditional beliefs about knowing and knowledge, Bryan and Atwater (2003) state that it is important “that the process of learning to teach begins with making explicit one’s beliefs about teaching and learning” (p. 822). Indeed, Richards et al. (2001) conclude that to successfully challenge pre-service teachers’ traditional beliefs about teaching and learning, for example, they must be explicitly given the opportunity to examine, reflect and to discuss their epistemological beliefs, and in particular, to explore *how* their beliefs were developed in the first place. Moreover, they note that if pre-service teachers try out innovative approaches to teaching and learning that do not initially conform to their beliefs but that prove useful and / or successful, then the accommodation of an alternative belief is possible. However, trying out new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning does not always ensure change in epistemological beliefs. For example, a longitudinal study investigating 29 first-year Early Childhood pre-service teachers’ epistemological beliefs suggested that while the majority of the pre-service teachers became more constructivist over time in their beliefs about knowing, there were some whose epistemological beliefs did not change over time (Brownlee, 2003).

Sutton., Cafarelli., Lund., Schurdell., & Bischel (1996) investigated the epistemological development of 32 pre-service teachers at the end of their teacher education program and found that more than half of them had developed sophisticated epistemological beliefs. This is in line with studies that suggest that as pre-service teachers progress toward graduation there is a tendency toward the development of more complex epistemological beliefs (Chai, Khine & Teo, 2006; Whitmire, 2003). However, there are also studies that have found that some pre-service teachers continue to hold the belief that teaching is a simple act of transmitting knowledge (Wideen et al., 1998; Richardson, 2003).

*Stage theories*

Findings from a number of research studies (cf. Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 1993; Gooddard & Foster, 2001; Lortie, 1975; Olson & Osborne, 1991) note that to
learn to become a teacher is to go through a set of distinct stages that begin with the transition
from an unrealistic perception of teaching to a reality shock and finally to a realistic perception of
classroom management. Thus, in terms of teacher development, the classic stage theories
conceptualize teacher growth as a non-problematic progression from one stage to the next
(Grudnoff, 2007). Kagan (1992) reviewed 40 research studies to help develop a model of teacher
development that takes into account the naturally occurring stages of development. Kagan (1992)
found that during the first year of teaching, novice teachers’ main task is to develop knowledge
about their students. This knowledge is then used to reconstruct and modify their personal image
of self as a teacher (Oberski, Ford, Higgins, & Fisher, 1999). For example, pre-service teachers in
the early stages of their teacher identity development will have “basic survival needs, while
teachers in later stages of development will have needs relating to individualizing student
learning and pursuing their own professional development” (Stroot et al., 1998, p. 1). Stroot et al.
(1998) suggest that the advantage of classic stage theories is that they can be directly applied to
the experiences and concerns of all pre-service teachers as they are learning to teach. However,
“human development defies easy categorization in that it is seldom smooth, it is never conflict
free, and it is frequently characterized by backsliding” (Bullough, 1989, p. 17). As has been
noted, the intention of psychological models of adult development is to explore the internal
experiences of the individual.

Two primary categories--stage theories, that refer to a stepwise upward movement but
that is not necessarily age bound or linear (Erikson, 1963, 1978; Fowler, 1981 Howell & Beth,
2002), and age-graded models “that tie specific ages to particular tasks”--form the common
psychological models of adult development (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 312). Such frameworks
have led a number of educators to propose a link between age-appropriate tasks and behaviour
and the development of learning activities for adults (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 308). However, the
most commonly cited limitation with most psychological perspectives is their focus on the
internal experiences of the individual and a disregard of the social influencing factors on the adult person’s identity development.

Erikson’s (1963) highly influential psychosocial development model of adult development (Bee & Bjorklund, 2004) goes some way to resolving this concern. He predicated eight stages of development: (1) trust, (2) autonomy, (3) initiative, (4) industry, (5) identity, (6) intimacy, (7) generativity, and (8) ego integrity. These stages represent a series of crises or issues to be dealt with over the life span. The first five stages address issues from infancy through adolescence whereas the issues relating to intimacy, generativity and ego integrity refer to struggles common to adults. In order to move to the next stage, the person has to successfully resolve the crises or issues in each of the prior stages (Merriam et al., 2007). The way in which the individual resolves each crisis will have a lasting effect on that person’s self-image and view of society (Woolfolk, 2001, p. 64). Erikson (1963) maintains that, as adults, we may need to revisit earlier stages to cope, resolve or re-resolve conflict from earlier periods of our lives in different ways. Stroot et al., (1998), for instance, note that changing personal and professional factors will impact on the teacher’s self. For example, a teacher going to a new school may find she needs to draw on past knowledge to support her in the transition to the new school culture, or when a teacher experiences a major life crisis such as the death of a close family member (e.g., spouse, parent, sibling or child) and to cope with the crisis they may drop to a lower developmental stage while coping with the traumatic event. Nonetheless Stroot et al. (1998) caution against the assumption that a teacher’s years of experience are directly related to the teacher’s developmental stage and age, as individual teachers move through developmental stages at different rate.

For example, in terms of subject matter, research studies (see Uusimaki, 2005; Uusimaki & Nason, 2004, 2005) investigating pre-service teachers mathematics anxiety (which refers to an intense learned dislike for learning and doing mathematics) found that to challenge
mathematics anxiety successfully, individuals needed to be supported in recognizing and re-
resolving the origins of that anxiety before the successful re-learning of mathematics could take
place. This implies tracing back to the ‘when’ and ‘where’ and then to re-resolve the conflict by
verbalising what happened. The implications of not addressing mathematics anxiety to teachers’
teacher identities have resulted in many teachers teaching mathematics poorly at all levels of
schooling (Uusimaki, 2005).

2.5.2 The socio-cultural perspective

In contrast to the developmental psychological perspective, socio-cultural models claim
that identity is located both within and external to the individual and that it is developed through
social and cultural practices (Grootenboer, et al., 2006). Thus, this view rejects theories of
development based on genetically pre-determined stages and theories of development that are not
foundationally based on social interaction (Sawyer, 2002). The self can only be formed through
social practices (Sawyer, 2002), and this involves the individual learner’s internalisation of social
patterns of interaction--“an interpersonal process transformed into an intrapersonal one”
(Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Duff and Uichida (1997) argue that teachers’ construction of their own
teacher identity and practices cannot be fully appreciated without reference to their colleagues
and students who, together with them, co-construct their identity and communities of practice
(Duff & Uchida, 1997). Wenger (1998) in turn describes communities of practice as having three
defining characteristics, namely, mutual engagement and negotiation by participants,
involvement in a joint enterprise and a sharedness of repertoire. Wenger (1998) explains that
participants in a community of practice contribute in a variety of inter-dependent ways that
become material for building an identity. This material that the participants learn is what allows
them to contribute to the enterprise of the community and to engage with others around that
enterprise:
In fact, this is how most learning takes place outside the school, where it is true not only of adults, but also of children; we are all engaged in the pursuit of a socially meaningful enterprise, and our learning is in the service of that engagement. What is crucial about this kind of engagement as an educational experience is that identity and learning serve each other. (Wenger, 1998, p.271)

Wenger (1998) states that communities of practice can have a profound impact on teachers’ lives and developing identities because being part of a teaching community constitutes the sort of learning that is personally transformative. From the socio-cultural perspective, cultural norms and values influence the developing self and determine who individuals become (Baumgartner, 2001). Culture in turn affects “what people think about, what skills they obtain, when they can participate in certain activities, and who is allowed to do which activities” (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 31). As Miller (1993) states, this is because “different cultures emphasize different kinds of tools (for example verbal or nonverbal), skills (reading, mathematics, or spatial memory), and social interaction (formal schooling or informal apprenticeships) (Miller, 1993, p. 390). For example, Seah and Bishop (2002) examined the nature of value differences and conflicts encountered by a Romanian and a Fijian immigrant mathematics teacher in the Australian classroom. They found that while both teachers had experienced initial and expected dissonance in the classroom they were able to contribute to the Australian mathematics classroom, using a range of different teaching strategies to negotiate the cultural value differences/conflicts, without forgoing the values of their respective Romanian and Fijian home cultures or personal identities embedded in their teaching practices (Seah & Bishop, 2002).

This apparently contrasts with the findings of a research study by Flores and Day (2005), which investigated the way school culture shaped and reshaped the teacher identities of 14 newly graduated Australian teachers in their first two years of teaching. Their findings suggested that most of the teachers gradually adopted the values and norms of the school to fit
into the school culture although they were in stark contrast to their own personal beliefs and values. They also noted a gradual shift from initial enthusiasm for teaching to conservatism and compliance. These findings suggest that school culture and leadership played a crucial role in shaping these teachers’ understanding of teaching as well as--as was the case in this situation--hindering their professional learning and development as teachers. Findings from a research study conducted in the USA indicated that the difficulties experienced by many mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers or “career changers” fitting into school culture were the consequence of a lack of cultural orientation that so often is assumed by those attending more traditional four-year teacher education programs (Allen, 2005).

As can be seen from the above studies, the school culture acts as the catalyst for the socialization of pre-service teachers, expert or experienced teachers including the overseas-trained (cf. Hargreaves, 1995; Stanulis, Campbell & Hicks, 2002). School culture has a far stronger impact than teacher education programs on developing beginning teachers’ beliefs and values and their sense of teacher identity (Stanulis, Campbell & Hicks, 2002; Williams, 2002), hence, resulting in many beginning teachers adopting values and norms contrary to their own in order to fit in to the school culture.

Adherence to school culture norms and values has also become important in terms of teacher employment opportunities. For example, in contrast to the secular public school system, many private and independent schools that are religiously affiliated (e.g., Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Muslim), require their teachers to adhere to their underlying religious values and beliefs (Skilbeck & Connell, 2003).

In addition, socio-cultural elements such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation also influence adult identity development (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999) and impinge in turn on the development of teacher identity. These socio-cultural elements position people unequally in relation to each other and in relation to a society that is based on power and
hierarchy, for example, rewarding those who fit in with the common Western "mythical norm" that Lorde (1995, p. 285) defines as "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure" (Lorde, 1995, p. 285) and devaluing those outside this mythical norm (e.g., women, disabled, indigenous and other minority groups). Hence, perhaps the stereotypical view of the teacher who was (and still is) in the main female, “as prim with a firmly entrenched place in society and [someone] who does not challenge existing gender stratifications and social norms” (Alsup, 2006, p.6).

Socio-cultural theorists (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1994) claim that because the individual and the group are inextricably linked, they cannot be studied in isolation but rather in situated practices (Sawyer, 2002). In this sense, the concept of identity development from the socio-cultural perspective “serves as a pivot between the social and the individual, so that each can be talked about in terms of the other” (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). In this framework identity and social practices are two sides of the same coin, and people perceive themselves to be inseparable from what they do, or, and have done to them (Wenger, 1998). Holding both the individual and the social context in view affords a perspective of identity that reveals both social structure and individual agency.

However, theories with a socio-cultural perspective have been criticised for not sufficiently addressing how social structures can constrain individuals (Packer & Coicoecha, 2000). Thus Packer and Coicoecha (2000) argue that membership in a community is never an unproblematic enculturation, or a simple putting into culture. Hence, while socio-cultural theorists acknowledge pressures to social conformity, they fail to recognize the many different ways people can relate to any community, particularly since conflict is inherent in community (Packer & Coicoecha 2000). This is particularly relevant to the power differentials inherent in supervising teacher and pre-service teacher relationships during the practicum (Varghese et al., 2005). While “acceptance by and interaction with acknowledged adept practitioners legitimates
learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 100), it does so through what Packer and Coicoeacha (2000) refer to as a “complex dialectics of desire and recognition”.

### 2.5.3 Poststructuralist perspectives

Poststructuralist theories argue that the development of identity is neither an individual nor a social construct rather it is a dynamic and an unstable process. Like culture and society, subjectivity or identity is fractured, multiple, contradictory, contextual and regulated by social norms. It is produced, negotiated and reshaped through discursive practices (Foucault, 1990). Thus, discourses constitute rather than determine identity including teacher identity. Discourse, in this framework, refers to:

Different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-language stuff, such as different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing and using symbols, tools and object in the right places and at the right time so as to enact and recognize different identities and activities, give the material world certain meanings, distribute social goods in a certain way, make certain sorts of meaningful connections in our experience and privilege certain symbol systems and ways of knowing over others. (Gee, 1999, p. 13)

Poststructuralists acknowledge that “we have multiple selves, and identities that change and shift according to different discourses” (Woods & Jeffrey, 2002, p. 91). As such, identity formation is seen as a continuing process of becoming (Grootenboer et al., 2006). Development of identity in this sense is continuously constituted, never completed, never fully coherent, and never completely centred securely in experience (Foucault, 1990).

For example, the experience of stress is likely to occur when two identities with contrasting meanings and expectations are activated at the same time (Colbeck, 2008); to overcome this tension individuals most often choose the identity most salient to them (Stryker & Bourke, 2000). Salience is based on the level of commitment to each identity that is in turn is
shaped by the extensiveness or number of social connections the individual has in relation to an identity and the intensiveness of these relationships with role partners (Colbeck, 2008). Colbeck (2008, p. 12) states that “once an individual has accepted and internalized expectations for a role as part of his or her identity, that identity becomes a cognitive framework for interpreting experiences”. The concern here is when individuals are confronted with a persistent mismatch between identity meanings and perceptions of the social environment that leads them to exit the role (Cast, 2003). This can perhaps explain the exodus of new teachers from the teaching profession five years into teaching (Ewing & Smith, 2002; Goddard, & Goddard, 2006; Goddard & O’Brien, 2003; O’Brien, Goddard & Keefe, 2007; Stevens, Parker & Burroughs, 2007). Hence, the challenge that may be experienced by many mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers is how to manage and to integrate or align teacher identity with for example, previous professional identities.

One important poststructuralist theory of identity development was proposed by Ropers-Huilman (1997), using a feminist poststructural analysis. She believes this approach can reveal how these fluctuating identities are negotiated in terms of the status or authority that correlates with the construction of teacher identities. Thus, in her study investigating 22 self-identified feminist teachers’ experiences as they were constructing their teacher identities, Ropers-Huilman (1997) found that constructing classroom authority was closely linked to the identity of the teacher. For the participants, behaviour management was “closely linked to style and presentation, professional background and age, institutional affiliation and other cultural identity positions” (Ropers-Huilman, 1997, p. 337) of the teacher. Hence, she concluded that teachers’ backgrounds and status in relation to race, gender, class, and sexuality influence the ways that they are able to construct their classroom behavioural practices, for example, in terms of communication and relations between students (Ropers-Huilman, 1997).
The poststructuralist perspective also acknowledges emotion as particularly important in the development of identity. According to Boler (1999), emotions are “collaboratively constructed and historically situated rather than simply as individualized phenomenon located in the interior self” (p. 6). Understanding this is particularly useful because the move:

toward an understanding of teacher self through an exploration of emotion opens possibilities for the care and the self-knowledge of the teacher and provides spaces for his/her transformation. An emphasis on the connection between teachers’ emotions and teacher identity from a poststructuralist perspective can subvert the presumed essentialism of ‘teacher identity’ as well as traditional dichotomies between private-public in ways that other views on identity avoid to do. (Zembylas, 2003, p. 222)

However, Lather (1991) notes that there are three drawbacks to the development of identity from the poststructuralist perspective. First, there is a possibility for poststructuralism to foster inattention to the uneven distribution of wealth and opportunity in current social structures. Second, there is a danger of collapsing specific groups into a generalized otherness that negates the diversity and difference existing within or between those groups. And third, poststructural discourse is not accessible to groups and individuals existing on the margins, even those for whom this was intended. In addition another limitation of the use of poststructural theory is its opposition to the concept of individual agency that many feminist discourses insist upon. Poststructural theory suggests:

that we individuals really have little choice in the matter of who we are, for as Derrida and Foucault like to remind us, individuals motivations and intentions count for nil or almost nil in the scheme of social reality. We are constructs–that is our experience of our very subjectivity is a construct mediated by and / or grounded on a social discourse beyond (way beyond) individual control. (Alcoff, 1988, p. 268)
2.5.4 Relational-cultural perspective

As indicated earlier, a relational-cultural perspective is based on the premise that identity develops through and toward relationships which occur within and are influenced by a cultural context (Miller, 1976). It affirms voice and narratives as central elements of a relational process and is based on the notion that growth and development of self occur not in isolation but in relations with others. In this sense the concept of relationships moves away from instrumental activities that support notions of an isolated individual self. Instead, it moves toward an interactional process in which “human beings are seen as experiencing a primary need for connection and essential emotional joining” and “a larger paradigm shift from the primacy of separate self to relational being must be considered to further our understanding of all human experiences” (Jordan, 1997, pp. 20-21). Underlying the relational-cultural model are concepts of growth-fostering relationships, mutual empathy, connections and disconnections. Growth-fostering relationships are characterized by mutual empathy, authenticity and empowerment (Jordan, 1997; Miller & Stiver, 1997). Mutual empathy is perceived as mutual involvement and commitment to the relationship, authenticity is being genuine in the context of the relationship, and empowerment is the experience of being personally strengthened, encouraged and inspired to take action (Liang et al., 2007). Connection refers to the experience of relationships that are characterized by mutual empathy and mutual empowerment. Disconnection is the experience of ruptured relationship(s). Miller (1976) argues that personal growth occurs both in connection and in disconnections. Where there is an experience of ruptured relationship a re-connection can sometimes lead to a strengthened relationship and sense of confidence or alternatively to a diminished sense of self (Miller, 1976). For example, research by Martins (2006) suggested that becoming a learner / student again after years away from formal study can be quite a disconcerting experience for some mature-aged pre-service teachers and may be an experience of initial disconnection with
their sense of self. However, once the pre-service teacher begins to do well academically and to establish positive relationships with peers, lecturers and other significant persons, the reconnection to self and confidence becomes possible. Rodgers and Raider Roth (2006) argue that the establishment of quality relationships are crucial to academic achievement, motivation and engagement. They explain that “the quality of the relationship is not a frill or ‘feel good’ aspect of learning, it is an essential feature of learning”... and ...“what allows this relationship to flourish is complex and calls upon the mental, physical, emotional and relational resources of the teacher” (Rodgers & Raider Roth 2006, p. 267). From this perspective, “teaching demands connecting with students and their learning, and the health of that connection is nurtured or jeopardized by the teacher’s relationship to herself” (Rodgers & Raider Roth, 2006, p. 272), which in turn has been and is influenced by the cultural context. In this framework the development of a committed and positive middle-school teacher identity can be seen as dependent on growth-nurturing relations of mutual empowerment and empathy (Miller, 1976), not only with the self but also those from within the teaching profession, including teacher educators, school supervising teachers, mentors and other significant persons.

2.5.5 Discussion

In the previous subsections, four theoretical frameworks were reviewed and compared in terms of locus and development of identity and epistemological beliefs. The goal of this review was not simply to evaluate one theory against each other rather it was to determine how each could contribute to a better understanding of the formation of teacher identity. Exploring and juxtaposing multiple theoretical perspectives not only enhances understanding but also provides for a more comprehensive picture of teacher identity (Varghese et al., 2005). The key points identified in the review of each theoretical framework are listed in Table 2.1.
Table 2.1

*Sources of Identity—theoretical perspectives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Identity</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Socio-cultural</th>
<th>Poststructuralist</th>
<th>Relational</th>
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<tr>
<td>Locus of Identity</td>
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<td>-relational self, the “outer world”;</td>
<td>- non-agentic;</td>
<td>-relational self;</td>
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<td>-connected to;</td>
<td>- a political posture;</td>
<td>- embodied;</td>
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<td>-self, self-concept, self-efficacy;</td>
<td>-otherness;</td>
<td>-no unified self;</td>
<td>- embedded;</td>
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<td>- intra-psychic cognitive structures;</td>
<td>-embodied;</td>
<td>-all is relative;</td>
<td>- belonging.</td>
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<td>-becoming.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity development</td>
<td>-internalised;</td>
<td>-constructed and situated;</td>
<td>-interior self is populated by others;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-behavioural repertoires;</td>
<td>-communal consciousness and identification;</td>
<td>-a constant becoming;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-executive functions of the self (monitoring, choice-making);</td>
<td>-socio-cultural reproduction and framing.</td>
<td>-a function of difference;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-searching for internal integrity, autonomy and competence;</td>
<td></td>
<td>-constituted by political and institutional processes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-individual responsibility for who one is.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 2.1 the four different theoretical frameworks vary in their assumptions regarding the locus and development of identity. For example, the locus of identity from the development psychological perspective is on the individual and it is concerned with an exploration of the inner world. Development of identity from this perspective commonly occurs through stages or phases of development. Each stage or phase assumes certain behaviours or competencies that an individual need to be able to internalise and develop. The contribution provided by the developmental psychological perspective for supporting the development of teacher identity is in its facilitation for encouraging pre-service teachers to examine and to critically reflect on their individual selves, for example, their beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning and the good teacher (Merriam et al., 2007; Mezirow, 2000). The weakness of this theoretical perspective is that the main focus is placed on the individual self as separate from others; there is an assumption that everyone’s experiences (and concerns) are the same and occur at similar stages with limited attention given to the societal influences (Merriam et al., 2007).

From the socio-cultural perspective it is recognized that identity is located both within and external to the individual and that it is developed through social and cultural practices (Grootenboer, et al., 2006) (see Table 2.1). Teacher identity, as was noted by Duff and Uichida (1997), cannot be appreciated without references to the teacher’s colleagues and students who co-construct their identities within communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). However, as was also noted, the concern socio-cultural theorists have in relation to the emphasis on community relates to pressures of social conformity. There needs to be recognition that there are many different ways people can relate to any community, particularly since conflict is inherent in communities (Packer & Coicoeba 2000). This is particularly relevant to the power differentials inherent in supervising teacher and pre-service teacher relationships during the practicum (Varghese et al., 2005).
Poststructuralist theories argue that there is no unified self rather, identity is made up of multiple selves. Development of identity is neither an individual process nor a social process, but is seen as a dynamic and unstable process and is determined by discourse. Like culture and society as described by Foucault (1990), self-identity is fractured, multiple, contradictory, contextual and regulated by social norms. While this perspective recognizes that development of identity is a continuing process of becoming, the problem lies with the lack of agency, with individuals having little say who they are and who they become.

While it is important to recognize that each of the above theories contributes to an understanding to the locus of identity and to the development of teacher identity, it will be shown that the relational-cultural theory can be adapted to provide a more comprehensive perspective of understanding the development of teacher identity.

The locus of identity from relational-cultural theory (RCT) is relational in the sense that identity is embedded, embodied and storied through dialogue with others, and influenced by cultural contexts (see Table 2.1). RCT sees the development of identity as relational and dependent on the dialogical relations with others. Similarly to socio-cultural theory, it acknowledges that the development of identity occurs in relationships through interactions with others within particular cultural contexts. Connections and disconnections are viewed as natural aspects of relationships and relationship formation.

In this relational construct, the developmental marker of growth of the pre-service teacher’s teacher identity is participation in mutually empathic, “growth-fostering” or learning-enhancing relationships (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 16) with significant others such as lecturers and supervising teachers. Growth-fostering relationships are characterised by mutual engagement, empathy, authenticity and empowerment (Liang et al., 2007). Research (Liang et al., 2007, Miller & Stiver, 1997) has supported a link between these relational qualities and positive psychological growth such as a greater sense of self-worth, the validation of one’s identity, and
knowledge of self and others (Liang et al., 2007). Following this approach the development of a committed and caring middle-school teacher can be attributed to the dialogue the individual has with significant others, such as expert middle-school lecturers and other scholars including supervising teachers during practicum and students. The relational context of learning is where pre-service teachers negotiate their social interactions with the intention of creating knowledge. It is recognized that constructing and maintaining learning relationships with significant others is a complex, never-ending sense-making process of interaction and dialogue between the social, cultural and historical context (cf. Taylor, 1989, 1995).

A common misperception of relational theory is the belief that it emerges from “a dream of harmony, cohesion and community” (Ross, 2002, p. 413) that somehow skims over difference and division. Relational theorists maintain that understanding the space between individuals needs recognition of what Bateson (2002) refers to as “dynamic dissonance” (p. 30), that is, being able to negotiate “the multiple spaces between us which is a way of being in relation and working against a politics of certainty” (Ross, 2002, p. 414). In addition, relational thinking can help us to widen our scope and to pay attention to context and culture. Here, to “accept diversity to insure participation is a conviction rather than a concession” (Torres, 2001, p. 57).

2.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a review of the literature pertaining to the influencing factors determining the development of teacher identity. It began with an exploration and discussion relating to formal opportunities to learn as provided by teacher education programs and their impact on the development of teacher identity. Four main concerns common to undergraduate teacher education programs as identified by pre-service teachers were acknowledged and discussed. These concerns related to the inadequacy of time, fragmentation of units, uninspired teaching methods, and a superficial curriculum. An introduction to Graduate Teacher education programs specializing in middle-school preparation was then considered together with the
benefits this provides for young adolescents and the opportunities this presents for the development of new specialist teachers. The importance of the practicum was reviewed, noting in particular its value and applicability in supporting the development of the pre-service teacher’s teacher identity. A discussion of concerns that many pre-service teachers experience during the practicum ensued, including the theoretical mismatch between what is learned at the university and its seeming irrelevance to the practicum, the inadequate or poor supervision provided by some supervising teachers, and the lack of professional recognition of the mature-aged pre-service teacher as a future colleague by the supervising teacher, principals and other school personnel.

Following formal opportunities to learn as provided by teacher education programs, an examination of the graduate pre-service teachers’ personal and professional backgrounds and their influence on their developing teacher identity was addressed. This discussion considered graduate pre-service teachers’ professional and personal backgrounds, their reasons to teach and beliefs about the good teacher and learner. It was noted that an understanding of graduate pre-service teachers’ professional and personal backgrounds could assist in addressing the attrition of highly qualified teachers and predict pre-service teachers’ success in their years of teaching. It was suggested that the reasons why mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers chose to teach in the middle school can provide insights as to how to best support the development of their positive and committed teacher identity. A discussion about pre-service teacher beliefs about teaching and learning and the good teacher and learner concluded the section on the personal and professional factors that influenced the development of graduate pre-service teachers’ teacher identities.

A definition of identity and teacher identity was presented followed by a review of theoretical frameworks commonly used to understand teacher identity. The theoretical frameworks that were examined included the developmental psychological perspective, the socio-cultural perspective, poststructuralist perspective and the relational-cultural perspective. A
discussion on the emerging relational-ontological perspective which forms the theoretical framework for this research study will be presented in chapter 3.

At this point, the apparent tension between student concerns for greater attention to curriculum content and/or effective and relevant pedagogy as evidenced in the research literature reviewed in 2.2 and the need to support the development of teacher identity as argued in 2.4 and 2.5 above should be noted. The position taken in this study is not to discount the need for adequate pre-service preparation in the content and process of teaching. Rather it is that, as indicated in 2.3 and 2.4, there is an equivalent but largely neglected need for a more explicit support and scaffolding of the development of teacher identity in pre-service teacher education and the practicum.

This is the gap in much of the theory and practice of pre-service teacher education which this thesis seeks to address. Hence, as stressed in chapter 1, this study is concerned to ascertain those factors that significantly influence or shape the development of pre-service graduate middle-school teachers identity as successful and effective teachers and to understand how best to support their developing teacher identity during the one year pre-service Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). Hence it is necessary to identify their beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning and the teacher which in turn, relate to their own perceptions of themselves as learners, and to identify any changes that take place in these identifications during this period. Factors contributing to the development of a middle-school teacher identity can then be ascertained using a relational-ontological framework to examine and analyse the participants’ narratives of their experiences during their pre-service year.
Chapter 3  Theoretical Framework

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study investigates the factors that influenced the development of teacher identity in a small cohort of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers over the course of a one-year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). It seeks to illuminate the social and relational dynamics of their experiences as they begin new ways of being and learning during a newly introduced one-year Graduate Diploma program. This chapter presents the theoretical framework on which the study is based. It begins by contrasting dominant Western perspectives on teacher education programmes with the possibilities offered by a relational perspective.

3.2 CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES

3.2.1 Rationalist, positivist and behaviourist perspectives

Despite a number of different and progressive stakeholders (e.g., Apple & Beane, 2007; Connell 1995; Dewey, 1938; Henry, Knight, Lingard & Taylor, 1988), rationalist, and more recently, behaviourist and positivist views have been predominant in Western education since the 19th Century (Haste, 1998). The rationalist approach is based on the premise “that there is an essence that makes us human beings and that essence is rationality” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 513). To reason is to be able to think logically, to set goals, and then to deliberate about the best means for achieving those goals, and so reason “is understood ... as a conscious process that operates by universal principles” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 513). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999) the following assumptions define the classic view of rationality: rational thought is literal, logical (in the technical sense defined by formal logic), conscious, transcendent, that is, disembodied, and dispassionate. For behaviourism, however, and ignoring mental processes, human beings are basically organisms that respond to stimuli (Skinner, 1974), while in positivist
frameworks, to be valid, knowledge must be objective, obtained through the application of empirical scientific method (Crotty, 1998).

Based on the work of Locke and Kant, the rationalist perspective values personal autonomy, individual rights and universal moral principles, and, aligned with John Rawls' Theory of Justice (1971), reinforces the Kantian dimensions of impartiality and respect for persons (Wren, 1998). This is epitomised in a theory of morality interwoven with psychological processes, which then presupposes certain goals such as rational solutions based on certain principles, reasoning and judgement that are carried out by the individual (Haste, 1998). The goal of teacher education from this perspective tends therefore to focus on the training of teachers to reason competently in making impartial and autonomous judgements (Haste, 1998) that are in line with rationalist principles.

In the classical behaviourist perspective, however, with its emphasis on learning as the modification of behaviour through a process of stimulus and response or positive and negative reinforcement of behaviour, personal autonomy is inconceivable and the processes of thought and indeed rationality itself cannot be directly investigated (Skinner, 1974; Watson 1930). Rather, in this model, consciousness and the human mind can be caricatured as a ‘black box’, only to be understood in terms of its inputs and outputs (Brace, 2002). The purpose of teacher education from these perspectives is to train teachers in the best and most effective methods of ensuring desired curricular outcomes from their students (Elliott, 2002; Hogan, 2003; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000).

However, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) challenge these perspectives and argue that human reason does not fit these contrasting views of rationality. Firstly, they note how findings based on cognitive science1 suggest that reason is not disembodied; rather it is embodied. In other

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1 Cognitive science is the interdisciplinary study of mind and intelligence, embracing philosophy, psychology, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, linguistics, and anthropology (Thagard, 2005).
words, meaning and reason arise from the nature of our brains, bodies, and bodily experiences. Secondly, reason is evolutionary. That is, reason is not an essence that separates human beings from other animals; rather it places human beings on a continuum with them. Thirdly, reason is not universal in the transcendental sense. It is not part of the structure of the universe; it is, rather, a capacity shared universally by all human beings. Fourthly, reason is not completely conscious, but mostly unconscious. This means that human beings in most situations are not fully in conscious control or even aware of their reasoning. Fifthly, reason is not purely literal, but largely metaphorical and imaginative, and finally, reason is not dispassionate, but emotionally engaged (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

3.2.2 Relational perspective

A relational perspective that emphasizes language and social interaction in the generation of meaning, and considers metaphors\(^2\) in the construction of meaning has the potential to offer an alternative perspective to both rationalist and behaviourist perspectives. Charles Taylor argues that human life is “fundamentally dialogic .... we become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence defining an identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression” (1991, p. 32). Social interactions are crucial in the development of meaning. For instance, the child learns about morality through discourse and social practices in his or her relationship with family and other significant adults. This learning is both explicit and implicit. Likewise, the learning that adults experience, in contrast with the child’s dependency on family and other significant adults, arises from the context of their lives, which is tied to the socio-cultural setting in which they live (Merriam, et al., 2007). Hence,

\(^2\) Metaphors are basic to human thought, extremely productive, but also dangerous in that, unlike explicit beliefs they go unnoticed and uncriticized. They can limit or bias thought, often in fundamental ways, without our awareness (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).
“learning in adulthood is characterized by an interaction between the adult and his or her life-world and the duties and responsibilities inherent in the adult roles of worker, spouse, partner, parent, and citizen” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 428). According to Taylor (1991), persons, human beings or selves are embodied, embedded in relationships, in cultures, in language, and in time. This means that human beings are embedded in various collective social practices and in many different communities, with each community offering identity and personal meaning and where, within each community, different elements and skills are salient. Cultural narratives, stories and traditions feed directly into identity, signalling valued attributes and behaviours, and give an explanation for the past and the present. It is important that these narratives, stories, and traditions are shared by those whom we, for example, define as members of our middle-school community.

As noted earlier, the underlying assumptions in many teacher education programs have been based on a rationalist perspective that emphasizes epistemology over ontology, and where the goal is to train the pre-service teacher to think logically, to set goals and then have the ability to deliberate on the best way to achieve those goals (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). The focus in short is on knowledge and skills. However, in contrast to rationalist and behaviourist perspectives, a relational perspective with an emphasis on ontology takes the position that before the development of a positive and committed teacher identity can take place, and in addition to supporting the development of requisite knowledge and skills, it is necessary to view pre-service teachers as human beings who are embodied and embedded in language, relationships, culture and time. A lack of attention to ontology has meant that “we increasingly instrumentalize, professionalize, vocationalize, corporatize and ultimately technologize education” (Thomson, 2001, p. 244). To develop a sense of the nature of the human being and how this relates to the
teacher self, the following section will present and explore the ontological assumptions of traditionalist\(^3\) and relational perspectives.

### 3.3 ONTOLOGY

Ontology refers to assumptions about the nature of being or existence and is often linked to metaphysics (Packer, 1999; White, 2000). These assumptions will necessarily vary according to the particular perspective under consideration. For example, in a behaviourist framework, human beings are basically seen as organisms that merely respond to stimuli (see Skinner, 1974). There are also views based on cognitive science in which the way human beings make sense of the world is significantly shaped by their perceptual apparatus and the structure of their different senses (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Indeed, every learning theory is based on ontological assumptions. Every text that claims “this is what it is to be a learner” is ontological. It gives an account of what it is to be (Isaacs, 2005).

#### 3.3.1 Traditional ontology of self

Atomistic individualism associated with the traditional view of the self assumes a separate, self-directive, potentially fully conscious, shapeable subject, armed with natural rights and in pursuit of progress (Connell, 1995). The nature of the human subject, the “Teflon”, according to traditional (or modern) ontology, relates to “the assertive, disengaged self who generates distance from its background, tradition, embodiment and foreground, external nature, other subject, in the name of an accelerating mastery of them” (White, 2000, p. 6). The ontology

\(^3\) Here both rationalist and behaviourist practices are assumed under the rubric of ‘traditionalist’. While these perspectives differ in many aspects, in practice, as the discussion which follows reveals, elements of both are typically drawn on uncritically in the practice of teaching.
underlying this traditional assumption sees, for example, teaching and the teacher as individualistic and technicist⁴.

3.3.2 Relational ontology of self

A relational ontology of the self, on the other hand, sees selves as embedded, relational and interdependent in the context of agency, and the dynamics of engagement are then mediated through language encounter (Isaacs, 2005; Packer, 2001). Taylor (1989) suggests that human beings display ontological dimensions by their existence as interpretive beings, purposive beings, self-interpretive beings and users of language. Language opens up new ways of seeing, feeling, and responding in the world (Taylor, 1985). It constitutes not only our mode of being in the world and the medium of our self-expression, but also our self-realisation, our becoming in the world. Thus “our identities are partly constituted by what we value, what we aspire to, respect, care about and the certain modes of life we admire more than others” (Taylor, 1985 p. 15); in other words this takes place through the internalisation of an ideal that directly contributes to what we are like (Laitinen, 2003). These “strong evaluations”⁵ (Taylor, 1985) are also relevant in offering standards by which we evaluate who we are, and which guide what we identify with. In other words, we identify with some of our desires and feelings more than others, particularly those we evaluate strongly enough.

Moreover, self-understanding is impossible without some grasp of how the self unfolds in time, or how it constitutes a temporal totality. Hence, “self-interpretation must bring past, present and future together, a synthesis that only narratives can achieve” (Smith, 2002, p. 44). Narratives, like the life-long process of dialogue involving others, are crucial to human identity.

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⁴ While for positivism as for behaviourism, the notion of ontology is claimed to be irrelevant and without meaning (Hogan, 2003; Packer, 1999, Packer & Coicochea, 2000), it can be argued that they presuppose a metaphysical theory with accompanying ontological presuppositions (Packer, 1999).

⁵ Strong evaluations refer to qualitative distinctions concerning the worth of different desires, feelings, actions or modes of life.
Taylor (1989) maintains that our moral ontological background forms sources of the self that has and is developed in dialogue with others, and argues that too often ontological concerns are left implicit rather than opened to examination and question. For instance, the implicit underlying current ontology in teacher education programs in its attempt to answer the question, ‘what is a good teacher’, is not only very thin but also weak in two very important ways. Goodness in regards to the teacher today has been interpreted through the lenses of rationality where rather than ‘virtue’, goodness means having good knowledge and skills. And secondly, it does not take on board seriously the collaborative, collective, interrelated and interdependent nature of teaching as part of a collective or social practice; hence, the importance of examining these ontological concerns so that “we can live this identity more fully” (Taylor, 1989, p. 504). In particular there is “the threat to teacher identity under performativity, which brings further urgency to the need for such examination and questioning, if loss of self and identity is to be avoided” (Mackenzie, 2004, p. 2). Currently, what is lacking is space in teacher education programs where pre-service student teachers can talk about moments of frustration in learning and teaching, or discuss the meaning of goodness and its relation to knowledge and skills (Noddings, 2003). The positive sense of self assurance, the positive sense of confidence, the ability to take on challenges and not be overcome by them, to take risks, depends on a sense of self-esteem that does not come out of knowledge and skills. Rather, it comes out of positive constant affirmations from one’s collaborators, mentors, lecturers, and teachers.

The ontology of the self, from the rationalist perspective, sees the teacher self as an atomistic individual who is able to succeed in becoming a good teacher through acquisition and assimilation of rational knowledge and procedure. From a behaviourist perspective, the teacher self is arguably one who has been taught to be an efficient and effective mechanistic manipulator of positive and negative stimuli in teaching situations. By contrast, a relational perspective sees the teacher self as embodied, embedded and relational. This perspective suggests that the
formation and learning of the good pre-service teacher self is dependent on the development of a socially attuned, socially sensitive and socially oriented set of practices that allows for development of confidence and self-esteem and where pre-service teachers feel valued.

In the following section, an epistemology of learning and teaching will be presented and explored from both the rationalist perspective and the proposed relational perspective.

3.4 EPISTEMOLOGY

Understanding the nature of knowledge and how we have come to construct knowledge affects how teachers pass on this knowledge in the form of teaching. According to Hendrichsen, Smith, and Baker (1997), epistemology is concerned with the origin and the nature of knowledge, of which there are four different kinds, namely:

1. **Authoritative knowledge**, which is based on the information received from people, books, a Supreme Being and so forth. The power of this knowledge depends in turn on the strength of these sources.

2. **Logical knowledge** is that which is arrived at by reasoning, for example, from a generally accepted “point A” to new knowledge or to “point B”.

3. **Empirical knowledge** is based on demonstrable, objective facts which are determined through observation and/or experimentation.

4. **Intuitive knowledge** is based on feelings (faith, belief) rather than hard, cold facts.

3.4.1 Traditional epistemology

Three characteristics drawn from the legacy of Descartes define traditional epistemology: (a) a quest for certainty, (b) a clear delineation between subject and object, and, (c) a view of progress that is always forward moving toward a unified system of knowledge (Connell, 1995). This progress is seen as a “movement towards a single, absolute truth by revealing universal principles obtained by a unified method of science” (Connell, 1995, p. 2). It is
the link between rationality and science that is a primary feature of the traditional, modern liberal tradition (Connell, 1995). In this quest for certainty, traditional theories assume an objectivity that relies on technical rationality as characterized by Schon (1983). That is, objectivity can be achieved by delineating between subject and object. Traditional theories assume that the inquiring subject is separate from the world and is capable of consciously influencing an independent human will (Connell, 1995). Connell states that traditional theories of knowledge commonly focus on how an atomistic individual or group of individuals who are empowered by scientific reason solve problems and order an objective world. In other words, science developed from traditional epistemology seeks objectivity through carefully controlled procedures aimed at preventing interests, desires and values from influencing outcomes (Connell, 1995). As such, traditional epistemology tends to ignore the historical, the cultural and the social differences of the selves of learners (Russell, 2001). Knowledge from kindergarten through university, according to traditional schooling, then, is lodged in textbooks, experts, and people with more experience (National Academy of Education, 1999). This knowledge comes in the form of rules, definitions, information and facts that are to be remembered, practised and applied. The teacher’s role is to pour this knowledge into the ‘empty vessel’, the learner, who in turn, is meant to learn the rules and know to apply them appropriately (National Academy of Education, 1999).

3.4.2 Relational epistemology

Knowledge from a relational epistemological perspective is the product of human beings who are in relation with each other (Thayer-Bacon, 1995). Hence, a relational epistemology in line with Taylor’s perspective sees “knowledge as something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other” (Thayer-Bacon, 1995, p. 6). Knowledge is the product of engaged, embodied agency, or the outcome of embodied existence and experience (Taylor, 1989). Taylor notes that “the way we encounter the world cognitively is shaped and constrained by the fact that we are bodies...”
and this is what gives us our “initial perceptual orientation to the world that reflects the relative position of our sense organs, both in and out bodies vis-à-vis the world” (Taylor, 1989, cited in Abbey, 2004, p. 3). Unlike traditional epistemologies, a relational epistemology considers being (ontology) as directly connected to knowing (epistemology), thereby effectively highlighting the interactive connection between social beings and ideas. Moreover, relational epistemology includes qualities of knowing, qualities commonly associated with women such as feelings, emotions, and intuitions that traditional epistemologies have viewed as detrimental or distracting to the obtaining of knowledge.

Human beings develop both a sense of self through interactions with each other and the construction of knowledge through language that begins with early infantile experiences and child-rearing (Estola, 2003). For instance, it is through dialogue or conversations that meaning is transferred to children. And, in contrast to adults, children internalize their parents’ socially constructed reality through the language they learn. That is, “the child does not internalize the world of significant others as one of many possible worlds. He/she internalizes it as the world, the only existent and only conceivable world, the world tout court” (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 134).

To some degree, then, a relational perspective is similar to the social constructivist perspective, where meaningful knowledge according to Driver, Asoko, Leach, Mortimer, and Scott (1994) is:

constructed when individuals engage socially in talk and activity about shared problems or tasks. Making meaning is thus a dialogic process involving persons-in-conversation, and learning is seen as the process by which individuals are introduced to a culture by more skilled members. (Driver et al., 1994, p. 7)

Learning from a constructivist perspective basically means that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is about how people make sense of their experience (Merriam et al.,
People then, cannot be understood as individuals alone but must be considered in relation to their wider social frameworks. In fact educationalist John Dewey (1916/1944) recognised that understanding was grounded in experience that had both a personal and a social dimension (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Dewey’s work has often been seen as the foundations for constructivist epistemology that acknowledges the relation between knowledge and action. Indeed, all forms of constructivism\(^6\) understand that learning is an active rather than passive endeavour. That is, learning “occurs through dialogue, collaborative learning, and cooperative learning” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 292).

Dewey rejected the quest for certainty and the notion of absolute objectivity, and instead proposed a transactional epistemological perspective (Connell, 1995). A transactional epistemological perspective influences conditions for inquiry by: (a) the need for communication; (b) an interest in change and indeterminacy; (c) a consideration of context; (d) recognition of the connection between theory and value; (e) a redefinition of subjectivity and objectivity that acknowledges values, interests and beliefs; and (f) a focus on practice (Connell, 1995). Thus, as with a relational perspective, the major focus of a transactional view is on possibility, understanding, and meaning through inquiry rather than certainty, prediction and capturing reality through science (Connell, 1995). In this sense, a transactional or relational perspective can bring more unity to human beings and their world. For example, science becomes a study of nature which includes human and cultural influences and the study of humanity and culture that includes bio-physical factors commonly reserved exclusively to the sphere of science (Connell, 1995).

In summary, it can be seen that traditional views about school knowledge rest on this knowledge being found only in experts, textbooks and others with more knowledge. Moreover, it comes in the form of rules, definitions and facts that are then to be remembered, practised and

\(^6\) i.e., radical, social, physical, evolutionary, post-modern constructivism, social constructivism and cybernetics (Heylighen, 1993; Merriam, et al., 2007; Prawat, 1996; Steffe & Gale, 1995)
applied. In contrast, a relational epistemology in line with Taylor’s perspective sees knowledge as socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with one other.

How pre-service teachers engage in teacher education programs reflects who they are as learners. Moreover, how they reflect as learners is further embedded in the practice of teacher education programs that in turn are embedded in a deep cultural history and tradition. In the following section, learning and teaching are explored from the traditional and the relational perspectives.

3.5 LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.5.1 Traditional teaching

It has been well established that the influence of behavioural orientations on the educational systems in the Western world has been profound (Merriam et al., 2007). For example, traditional teaching is equated with behaviouristic theories approaches such as telling, in which only reasoning processes that lead to correct answers are appreciated; this in turn commonly leads to rote learning with a reliance on memorization (Cooney, 2001). Based on the work by behaviourist theorists such as Watson, Thorndike, Tolman, Guthrie, Hull and Skinner, there are three underlying assumptions that underpin the learning process (Merriam, et al., 2007). Firstly, observable behaviour rather than internal thought process is the focus and learning is manifested by a change in behaviour. Secondly, there is an assumption that what one learns is determined by the elements in the environment and not by the individual. Thirdly, to explain the learning process, two principles are involved, “contiguity (how close in time two events must be for a bond to be formed) and reinforcement (any means of increasing the likelihood that an event will be repeated)” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 278). Hence, it can be suggested that traditional teaching of any subject educates the learner in two ways. Firstly, it provides the learner with access to what Schon (1983) calls technical knowledge, and secondly, the learning process is also
a learning outcome, whether that outcome is learning by reasoning or learning by imitation (Cooney, 2001).

Similarly, learning and teaching according to the traditional rationalist perspective tend to be objective, absolute, linear and predictable. Advocates of the technical rationality model believe that, for instance, teaching is simply about transmitting the required knowledge to students, and learning is about acquiring this knowledge that is then memorized (Hildebrand, 1999). Knowledge as such is viewed as “an object which is separate from and which must be apprehended by the learner” (Davis et al., 2000). The assessment of what has been learned is summative with the purpose of determining those students who have been successful in acquiring the knowledge, with little or no regard for students who have not been as successful in acquiring and mastering that knowledge (Hildebrand, 1999). Hence, the knowledge acquisition is seen as external to the person. As such, the learner is “merely an animal to be socialized, a computer to be programmed, or a unit of production to be harnessed and utilized, a consumer to be won” (Sloan, 2005, p. 27). This instrumental kind of learning can be associated with the following kinds of learners that can be linked to epistemological development (see section 2.5): (a) the received knower, (b) the subjective knower and (c) the procedural knower / learner (Bain, 2004). The received knower sees truth as something that is external and generated by outside experts and learning as the process of accessing and memorizing the right knowledge or the correct information. For the subjective knower, truth is a matter of opinion or feelings. The right answer for this learner is that which is in accordance with how the teacher or lecturer sees or feels about things. Successful learning involves giving the lecturers what they want. The procedural learner’s perspective of being a good learner is to quickly master the strategies or appearances of what is set as the objectives or standards of inquiry: expression, argument or presentation (Bain, 2004).

The technical rationality model of teaching assumes that effective teaching is comprised of a value-free set of technical acts that can be implemented by teachers in a variety of classroom
settings (Elkind, 1997). The goal of the university lecturer is to create effective and experimentally validated teaching methods (‘best practice’?) that prospective teachers in turn can easily follow without critiquing or reflecting their validity. Teaching in this sense, is seen as instrumental, “something that is done to students, it is assumed that there is a linear translation between skills taught, ‘proper’ preparation and classroom (social) practice” (Klein, 2004, p.3). In a technical rationality model of teacher education, if reflection does occur, it focuses on whether pre-service teachers follow the research-based instructional methods provided in their university classes. That is, pre-service teachers are trained to reflect on whether they are following prescribed instruction plans designed by researchers, not whether the plans are necessarily effective, relate to the lives of their students or support the development of individual students and teachers. This is in line with the atomistic approach that (a) uses rules and procedures, (b) gives supporting details, (c) focuses on one topic at a time, (d) approaches topics in a step-by-step manner, and (f) develops specific hypotheses. It is suggested that teacher education programs that follow this technical rationality model create docile, obedient, learners capable of delivering the curriculum prescribed by university researchers (Cuban, 1984).

To challenge behaviourist and rationalist approaches to teaching and learning there has been a surge of different learning theories and none more prevalent than constructivist theories. However, Paavola, Lipponen and Hakkarainen (2002) warn that while many current approaches to teaching and learning claim to present themselves as constructivist, in fact they may often be traditional. This is in the sense that they lack specific theoretical ideas and rely on methodologies that fail to facilitate investigation of actual processes of creating knowledge. Paavola et al. (2002) argue that to provide meaningful learning, active engagement and knowledge-building is to go beyond constructivism by examining the following metaphors of learning and their relations: (1) the acquisition metaphor, (2) the participation metaphor, and (3) the knowledge-creation metaphor.
Learning as knowledge acquisition suggests a view where learning is mainly based on a process of developing well-organized structured knowledge that allows for selecting the relevant aspects of problem situations. Learning from this perspective, for example, is individualistic. This acquisition metaphor relies on a ‘folk theory’\(^7\) of mind where the mind is represented by a container of knowledge, and learning is a process that is required in order to fill the container and implanting the knowledge (Bereiter, 2002).

The participation metaphor examines learning as a process of participating in different cultural practices and shared learning activities (Sfard, 1998; Wenger, 1998). Learning from this perspective is seen as a process of becoming a member of a community, that is, learning to communicate and function according to its social norms and, in doing so, developing a corresponding identity (Paavola et al., 2002). Whilst the participation metaphor provides important resources for learning, Paavola et al. (2002) argue that advancement of knowledge is not a process of gradually mastering experts’ (traditional) knowledge and skills. Rather it is a going beyond the acquisition and participation metaphors to that of knowledge-creation.

The knowledge-creation metaphor has similarities to the participation metaphor in that it emphasizes taking part in a particular kind of social practice. It differs from the participation metaphor in that its purpose is to advance learning / knowledge and as such it goes beyond mere information and skills acquisition (Paavola et al., 2002).

**Social Cognitive learning**

From research fields such as cognitive science, developmental psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, and research on learning in subject matter areas such as mathematics, science, and history, it has been found that cognitive changes in the learning self do not result from acquisition of information but are due to processes involved in conceptual

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\(^7\) Folk theories are what people believe in the absence of scientific theories. In ancient times folk theories were all there were. Then came science, and now most people have adopted scientific theories (Bereiter, 2002)
reorganization (Bransford, et al., 1999). Cognitive science research in particular has enabled a deeper understanding of how learners develop a knowledge base of how they learn. Understanding the structure of the development of knowledge provides guidelines for teachers to help learners develop their knowledge base. To understand how human beings come to learn and understand the world, Nunez, Edwards and Matos (1999) claim that human cognition is bodily-grounded or embodied within a shared biological and physical context and that it allows for “a deep understanding of what human ideas are, and how they are organized in vast (mostly unconscious) conceptual systems grounded in physical, lived reality” (Nunez et al., 1999, p. 50). An embodied perspective however does not constitute a prescription for teaching subject matter in a ‘concrete’ way, nor is it concerned with contextualization or situatedness in subject matter teaching.

3.5.2 Relational perspective

A relational perspective comes from the view that teaching and learning have always taken place within embedded social contexts that do not just influence, but determine the kinds of knowledge and practices that are constructed (Dall’Alba, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Noddings, 2003; Nunez et al., 1999; Rogoff, 1990). According to Ross (2002), relational theory admits affect into the teaching, learning and research process, particularly affect stemming from the pain of power and the desire to contain or redirect it toward self-understanding and critical analysis (Ross, 2002).

A relational perspective is also similar in some degree to social learning theory in that the latter sees learning taking place within social contexts and in dialogue with others. This means that people learn from one another and it includes concepts such as conversations, observational learning, imitation, and modelling. Learning can thus be described as “a process that brings together cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in one’s knowledge, skills, values and world views”
(Merriam et al., 2007, p. 277). According to Taylor (1991), understanding or knowledge of the
world is brought forth through language, and is dependent on a context of others. It is through
dialogue we come to understand knowledge and, as such, it is relational. Taylor notes that
without a context of others, human beings could not have learned the languages which they use to
understand the world, and without their continual interactions with others they cannot expect to
advance these understandings. It is from this perspective of understanding learning that identity
and its development are placed at the heart of the learning process:

Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience
of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information but a process of
becoming—to become a certain person or, conversely to avoid becoming a certain
person. Even the learning that we do entirely by ourselves contributes to making
us into a specific kind of person. We accumulate skills and information, not in the
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**Transformative learning**

Transformative learning is about changes in the way we see ourselves and the world in
which we live and transformational learning is about “changing what we know” (Merriam, 2007,
p.130). That is, learning “does not just affect what you know; it can transform how you
understand the nature of knowing” (Bain, 2004, p. 42). For transformative learning to take place
the learner needs to be committed to learning (Bain, 2004). A committed learner, according to
Bain, is independent, critical and creative in their thinking, someone who values the ideas and
ways of thinking to which they are exposed. Whilst the committed learner is critical in appraising
the ideas they are being exposed to, they are also creative in applying them. Most importantly a
committed learner understands that learning is a process of self-transformation, it is a way of
understanding the world and of seeing oneself and, being in that world it is motivated by knowledge, freedom, creativity and curiosity; it is emancipatory.

Embedded within transformative learning is the notion of individual development, which is both inherent in and an outcome of the process. To be able to think critically is mandatory to effect change and is itself developmental. Taylor (2000) discusses changing how one knows in developmental terms. She explores this movement along five dimensions:

1. Firstly, learners move “toward knowing as a dialogical process” (p.160). They learn how to construct knowledge and they reconstruct knowledge in light of new experiences and reflections.
2. Secondly, “learners move toward a dialogical relationship with one-self by learning who they are and that they can choose to be another way” (p.163). They become aware that learning is up to them.
3. Thirdly, individuals move towards being “continuous learners” (p.163). They become aware that learning is lifelong.
4. Fourthly, learners move “toward self-agency and authorship where they increasingly recognise their responsibility for their actions, choices, and values and for the decisions they may make based on those values” (p. 163).
5. Fifthly, they move “toward connections with others” where they learn in community but retain their individuality (p.163).

Thus, and similarly to what was noted by Dewey (1944), learning is a lived participatory activity, it is not a passive spectator phenomenon. Like teaching, learning is always an engagement between the learning self and others. Thus, the social aspect is implicit in the dialogical, interpersonal, inter-relational, or inter-cultural contextual notion of learning. In regards to teaching:
many of its goods are relational, such as the feeling of safety in a thoughtful teacher’s classroom, a growing intellectual enthusiasm in both teacher and student, the challenge and satisfaction shared by both in engaging new material, the awakening sense for both that teaching and life are never-ending moral quests. (Noddings, 2003, p. 249)

Hence, from the relational perspective to become a good teacher involves a committed engagement to teaching that takes teaching as a practice beyond the notion of engagement (Bain, 2004). Further, to be a good teacher is a particular way of being. That is the teacher is embedded in a way of being with distinct forms of commitment and love for teaching that involves not only valuing other disciplines but valuing students and their learning (Bain, 2004). In this sense, teaching like learning is also about transformation, a form of learning anew with others, with the caring and responsible teacher encouraging particular kinds of understandings, and the development of particular worldviews, as well as modes of perception (Hogan, 2003; Smith & Emigh, 2005). According to Bain (2004), a good teacher is someone who can achieve noteworthy success in helping students to learn in ways that make a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how they think, act and feel.

Teaching then is about fostering the development of the whole person, and whilst subject matter knowledge is important, broad cultural knowledge is an internal mark of excellence in teaching (Noddings, 2003). Both Bain (2004) and Noddings (2003) believe that it is teachers’ respect for other subjects and interests that serves what Noddings refers to as “an invitation to all students to explore widely” (p. 250). She states that subjects of themselves do not induce critical thinking; rather, it is the ways in which they are taught and learned. In addition, to meet the responsibility for the development of students as whole persons, it is relations of care and trust that form a foundation for the good teaching of both general and specialised knowledge (Noddings, 2003). In other words the teacher needs to see his or her student as a veritable image
of becoming, of possibility, poised to reach towards what is not yet known, and towards a
growing that cannot be predetermined or prescribed (Greene, 1996). This suggests that a teacher
needs to allow students to take risks, to ask their own questions, and to experience a world that is
shared.

Hence, it can be suggested that learning and teaching is, was, and always will be
relational:

The process of learning has an entirely different quality for students in the being
mode of relatedness to the world… Instead of being passive receptacles of words
and ideas they listen, they hear and most important they respond in an active and
productive way… their listening is an alive process. (Fromm, 1979, p.38)

All this implies a relational pedagogy (Baxter Magolda, 1996) in pre-service teacher
education that includes the following principles: (1) respect for the individual graduate pre-
service teacher as a knower, (2) provision of learning opportunities that relate to the graduate pre-
service teacher’s personal and professional experiences, (3) facilitation of a constructivist
perspective of knowing and learning, and (4) provision of opportunities to access and discuss
with expert teacher educators and peers perspectives to promote (re)construction of personal
epistemological beliefs (cited in Tickle, Brownlee & Nailon, 2005). The next section will explore
the middle-school teacher identity from both the rationalist and the relational perspective.

### 3.6 TEACHER SELF / IDENTITY

The personal identity work to be found in current teacher education programs is
designed to meet the instrumental purposes of accountability (Woods & Jeffrey, 2002) rather than
working from an understanding of identity. Goodson (1991) suggests that in “understanding
something as intensely personal as teaching, it is critical that we know about who the person the
teacher is” (p. 69). This means exploring how we obtain and articulate a sense of who we are,
how our self has been constructed, and how we acquire a sense of being or a sense of self (Helms, 1998). Another way to understand the development of identity, Lave and Wenger (1991), Lemke (2000), and Dinsmore and Wenger (2006) suggest, is that it occurs in lived relations within a community of practice. This is in common with a situated and social constructivist perspective in which learning is an active and social process, and is situated in circumstances and settings that both impact on and are impacted by the learner (Bown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Cooper & Olson, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; O’Connor, 2001). These perspectives, according to Luehmann (2007), share the following common characteristics: identity is socially constituted, identity is continuously being formed and reformed, and it is multifarious.8 Similarly, identity according to Palmer (1998, p. 13) is:

an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic makeup, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others, and to myself, the experience of love and suffering—and much, much more. In the midst of that complex field identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human.

Taylor (1991) suggests that identity refers to a person’s understanding of who they are and of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being. As does Palmer, Taylor states that we define our identity in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. Even after we outgrow some of these others, for example, our parents, and they disappear from our lives, the conversation with them continues within us as long as we live.

8 Luehmann explains multifarious as “consisting of a number of interrelated ways where one is recognized as a certain kind of person, participating in social communities” (Luehmann, 2007, p. 6).
3.6.1 Teacher identity

A subfield of identity theory that has emerged in teacher education is the notion of teacher identity. A definition of teacher identity offered by Thornton and Wilson (2004, p. 3) is, “the teacher’s motivations for, and feelings about, the complexity of teaching”, that is, the value and importance teachers place on teaching and learning. Luehmann (2007) defines “teacher professional identity” as being recognized by self or others as a certain kind of teacher (e.g., science teacher, mathematics teacher and so on). She suggests that an identity developmental framework where the following four principles are considered can offer support and reform in science teacher preparation programs:

1. People approach learning situations with core identities in place that need to align with the new identity being considered.
2. Trying on a new identity within a community of practice involves risk.
3. Not all forms of participation and engagement are equal with respect to learning potential.
4. Learning as identity work occurs in the interpretation, narration, and recognition of that participation (by self and others).

For Gaudelli (1999), to understand teacher identity is to see the relationship between teacher’s personal identity and pedagogical choice. For instance, when Gaudelli investigated how personal identity affected pedagogy in fourteen teachers, he found that their gender, religious backgrounds, family history, athletic backgrounds and ethnic identities greatly influenced their teaching:

Teachers, due in part to their [personal] identities taught differently specifically with regard to how they selected content, the amount of time and emphasis placed on topics and how they characterized course content related to their [personal] identity. (Gaudelli, 1999, p. 4)
Thus, and as Barty (2004), agrees, “Pedagogy is intrinsically linked to teacher identity formation” (p. 1). Understanding that pedagogy is closely linked to teacher identity is of vital concern to teacher educators, particularly since pedagogy forms the basis for pre-service teachers’ meaning and decision-making (Bullough 1997).

From a relational perspective, teacher identity is understood herein as being embodied and embedded in language, relationships, culture and time with an emphasis on language and social interaction (Isaacs, 2007). This is similar to the social constructivist and situated perspective that sees teacher identity as being continually influenced, formed and reformed as individuals develop over time and through their interactions with others. The development of teacher identity, Miller Marsh (2002, p. 454) suggests, is “a process of social negotiation” that is shaped by our experiences as students and rooted in historical and contemporary constructs of power. She notes that:

… the various discourses that define what it means to be a particular type of student or teacher in this particular moment in the United States [and this can be applied equally to the Australian context] are rooted in the social, cultural, historical, and political contexts in which schools are situated in this country. These discourses of schooling shape what and who schools, teachers, children and families can become. The social practices that are embedded in discourse have very real material consequences for the groups of individuals that are located within them. (Miller Marsh, 2002, p. 460)

Miller Marsh concludes that one way to work towards social transformation is through helping teachers to make visible the power in the discourses they use and illustrating these discourses to the teachers so that they can make “some choices about their own identities and the social identities of the children in their care (p. 257).” Hence, being a middle-school teacher involves expressing the unique essence of the self, of one’s beliefs, values, aspirations and hopes
for the future. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor (1989) argues that our sense of self and our moral senses are inseparable and that locating ourselves in a moral and ethical space enhances our sense of self. In other words, who we are is determined in large part by what matters to us and where our values are positioned in relation to others.

### 3.6.2 Reasons to become a teacher

As already discussed in Chapter 2, a common feature in many teacher education courses in Australia is that many pre-service teachers entering teacher education programs are mature-aged. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly crucial to know the background and characteristics of the pre-service student teachers (Hartsuyker, et al., 2007). The reasons why many mature-aged persons choose to become teachers include seeing teaching as a good career change, particularly as it fits in with parenthood (Reid & Caudwell, 1997), and that they would enjoy working with and helping children and young people to learn (Hobson et al., 2004). A number of studies have suggested that one of the values determining many pre-service teachers’ choice of teaching as a career was caring for the personal development of children and developing positive relationships between the child and his or her teachers (Bain, 2004; Wilson & Cameron, 1996). In a study by Reid and Caudwell (1997), the two most popular reasons for 28 pre-service secondary teachers to choose teaching were based on ‘enjoying working with children’ and a ‘feeling that teaching would bring high job satisfaction’. Another reason why people choose teaching is the belief that teaching is a calling (Hansen, 1995). Teaching in this sense “is the experience of being part of meaningful wholes and in harmony with super-individual units such as family, social groups, culture and cosmic order” (Boucouvalas, 1988); in other words, it is about giving meaning or purpose to one’s own existence. Interestingly, such altruistic motives appear to underlie many pre-service teachers’ decisions to enter teacher education, and in terms of teacher retention this is particularly encouraging. Research (e.g., Nieto, 2003) suggests that altruistic motives are reasons why teachers most likely will stay in the profession, hence the importance of providing
opportunities to have pre-service teachers’ sense of purpose, involving deeply personal, intellectual, and moral dimensions, fully recognized and brought forth (Collay, 2006). For Palmer (1998), one way to do so is by asking, “who is the self that teaches?” It is Palmer’s belief that asking such a fundamental question “can serve our students more faithfully, enhance our own well-being [as teachers], make common cause with colleagues, and help education bring more light and life to the world” (p. 7).

3.6.3 Traditional teacher identity

The strongest mark of traditional teacher identity, based on functionalist frameworks, is the social construction of individualism which can be, and tends to be, reinforced through the organizational structure and culture of the university and school (Dinez-Pereira, 2003). As noted previously, the technical rationality model that can be found presently in many teacher education programs in Australia sees the role of the primary and middle-school teacher as an autonomous rational agent (Elliott, 2002), or as utilitarian functionaries or underlings (Hogan, 2003), rather than “exploring the complexity of being a teacher in the 21st century” (Graham & Phelps, 2003, p. 3). From this traditional perspective, the teacher is seen as an atomistic, individualistic self, who succeeds through the acquisition and assimilation of rational knowledge and rational procedures. The limiting effects of such a technical discourse are that:

(it) maintains a set of structures and embodies a cluster of ideologies which encourage a constricted view of teacher intellect through emphasis on teaching as technique, an extreme form of individualism, teacher dependence on experts, acceptance of hierarchy, a consumer or ‘banking’ view of teaching and learning (teacher is banker; learning is consuming), a limited commitment to the betterment of the educational community, and a conservative survivalist mentality among novice teachers. (Bullough & Gitlin, 1991, p. 38)
The traditional Western psychological view of the development of the “learner self” suggests that the “goal of interaction and social relationships is the internalization or ‘appropriation’ of the lessons” (Raider-Roth, 2005). Raider-Roth notes how the goal is the development of individuation of self and the taking in of the outside world so as to make it one’s own (cf. Piaget, 1963; Rogoff, 1990; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertch, 1985). Klein (2004) states that in Australia it has been, and still is, taken for granted that the teacher as an individual can observe and reflect rationally on the outside world and then has the power to bring about change. This is also reflected in a statement released by the Department of Education, Science and Training (2003) that notes how teachers must ensure “that all students improve their broad understanding of the forces of change in Australian society and the importance of science, mathematics, and technology in underpinning the knowledge economy and society” (Klein, 2004, p. 145). However, a focus on supporting only the development of cognitive understandings and skills of the pre-service teacher does not provide the pre-service teacher with ways of understanding the necessary relational side of teacher learning and change.

3.6.4 Relational teacher identity

Knowledge of self in teaching is crucial (Hoveid & Hoveid, 2004; Huntley, 2003; Turner-Bisset, 2001) and a relational perspective is particularly useful as a guide pertaining to questions relating to the self. A relational perspective considers the development of self/identity as dependent on the dialogical relations with others—that is, a self who is connecting and developing skills in constructing and maintaining learning relationships. It is relational, and as such, is a complex, never-ending sense-making process of interaction and dialogue between, in this case, the pre-service teacher and the social, cultural and historical context (cf. Taylor, 1989, 1995). According to Taylor (1995), a crucial feature of human life is that it is fundamentally dialogical in character, in other words, “the genesis of the human mind is not monological, not something people accomplish on their own, but dialogical” (p. 79). In this relational construct, the
developmental marker of growth of the pre-service teacher’s teacher identity is the participation in mutually empathic, “growth-fostering” or learning-enhancing relationships (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 16). The development in becoming a middle-school teacher takes place through dialogue with significant others, such as expert lecturers and supervising teachers during practicum and continues in collaboration with prospective students. The relational context of learning is where pre-service teachers negotiate their social interactions with an intention of creating knowledge:

In this context, [pre-service] students come to know their teachers and peers and discern what interactions will sustain these social connections and which will undermine them. Building connections with their own knowledge and ways of knowing is another fundamental feature of the relational context. (Raider–Roth, 2005, p. 589)

The relational perspective suggests that the connection between trusting relationships and trusting self and knowledge is deeply rooted (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1996; Jordan, 1995). Importantly, the relational perspective does not ignore pre-service teachers’ individuality or their need to assert and construct their own meaning of their experiences. Rather this approach acknowledges that an individual’s construction of meaning is embedded in a web of relationships, while Gilligan (2003) describes the individual ‘core sense of self’ as a voice, the ability to initiate action and to register experience” (p. 169). Thus, learning to teach and the development of teacher identity in this sense is not something that occurs in isolation; rather it is relational and hence, dependent upon dialogical relations with others and most importantly it is life-long.

3.7 SUMMARY

As has been noted identity is partly shaped by the recognition of others or its absence. In contrast to the positive growth and development in self-esteem of the developing teacher identity,
the misrecognition of a person or group of people can mean they suffer real damage or distortion
“if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or
contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor, 1995, p. 1). Likewise, from a sociological
perspective it is suggested that the ways in which people define themselves should be explored
from the role played by social forces and the dialectical nature of self-construction (Helms, 1998).

Accordingly it can be suggested that the ideal development of a teacher identity requires
both a commitment to teaching and learning as a distinctive way of being human and an
appreciation of the teacher as being someone in particular. Such a teacher is a committed teacher,
who understands that being a teacher is about being embedded in a certain way of life that
involves a commitment to a shared democratic vision of society that involves doing or acting
(e.g., teaching and learning) and critiquing.

As has been noted, from the rationalist perspective the role of the teacher is that of an
autonomous rational agent where the teacher is seen as an atomistic individualistic self who
succeeds through the acquisition and assimilation of rational knowledge and rational procedures.
In contrast, the teacher from the relational perspective is dependent on dialogical relations with
others, and the development toward teacher identity is a complex, never-ending sense-making
process of interaction and dialogue. Indeed, some research studies suggest that the construction of
teacher identity is a highly personal and ultimately internal process (Bullough, 1997; Gaudelli,
1999), while others suggest that identity is predominantly constructed by larger external
influences (Cooper & Olsen, 1996; Miller Marsh, 2002; Danielewicz, 2001).
Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 provide a comparative summary of both the rationalist and the relational
perspectives and their underlying assumptions about ontology, epistemology, teaching and
learning and the teacher self.
Table 3.1

*Underlying Assumptions about Ontology and Epistemology*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontario – analysing questions relating to the nature of being and often seen as linked to metaphysics.</th>
<th>Liberal rationalist/modernist. Teacher self is an atomistic--separate, self-directive, potentially fully conscious, shapeable subject armed with natural rights and in pursuit of progress (Connell, 1995).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology – issues relating to the origin and nature of knowledge.</td>
<td>I think therefore I am (cf. Descartes) (a) Quest for certainty, (b) Clear delineation between subject and object, and, (c) View of progress that is always forward moving toward a unified system of knowledge (Connell, 1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phenomenology &amp; cognitive sciences perspective see the teacher self as embodied, embedded, relational (Lakoff &amp; Johnson, 1999, Taylor, 1989).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our thinking arises from acting–Merleau-Ponty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our thinking arises from meaningful engagements with the world (Taylor, 1989).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge is mediated through dialogical engagement with others and is significantly collaboratively constructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge is the product of engaged, embodied agency (Taylor, 1989).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 3.2  
*Underlying Assumptions about Teaching and Learning, and the Teacher*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Relational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching and Learning</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge is lodged in textbooks, experts, and people with more experience. Students learn the rules well and know to apply them appropriately (Cooney, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Teacher as an autonomous rational agent (Elliott, 2002), an atomistic individualistic self who succeeds through the acquisition and assimilation of rational knowledge and rational procedures. The teacher thus is seen as utilitarian functionary or underling (Hogan, 2003).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, the traditional rationalist perspective assumes the individual is detached from their bodies, others, nature and emotions. It is becoming a being of autonomous rationality that enables the individual with the freedom to follow the requirement of reason. The relational perspective, in turn, notes that human beings’ primary status from birth has been as doers and thinkers, whose knowledge of the world is through engagement with the world, and where it is recognized that much of the learning is tacit. Moreover, in the sense that human beings engage with the world they are embodied beings, they are embedded in relationship with others and, in time, that in turn shape their interactions. The actualization or creation of the self, thus, is one of constant negotiation and encounters through our bodies with the natural world, but more in particular with other people in a condition of temporality.
3.8 RELATIONAL-ONTOLOGICAL THEORY REVISITED

A relational-ontological perspective, as developed within the larger ambit of relational theory within this study, sees the self/identity as dependent on dialogical relations with others (Taylor, 1989). This is an embodied self who is connecting and developing skills in constructing and maintaining learning relationships with significant others—that is, it is equally a self who is socially and contextually embedded. It is ontologically relational, and as such, is a complex, never-ending sense-making process of interaction and dialogue between the social, cultural and historical context (Taylor, 1995). Theories of identity in a relational-ontological perspective (cf. Noddings, 1984, 2000, 2005; Miller, 1976; Packer, 1999) are situated in a narrative of care and draw from:

feminist approaches to the study of schooling, human relationships, and development that are critical of rational-choice perspectives on human motivation and that encourage being-in-relationship through inclusive, multilateral and generative approaches to power and respect. (Ross, 2002, p. 411)

Here, as noted above, the development of a self is dependent on dialogical relations with others (Taylor, 1989). Indeed, human life is fundamentally dialogical in character. In other words, “the genesis of the human mind is not monological, not something people accomplish on their own, but dialogical” (Taylor, 1995, p. 79). This human self is intrinsically relational, connecting and developing skills in constructing and maintaining learning relationships. Its development is a complex, never-ending sense-making process of interaction and dialogue between, in this research study, for example, the graduate pre-service teacher and their the social, cultural and historical context (Taylor, 1989, 1995).

Embedded within the relational perspective is the notion of life story, which according to Linde (1993) is a social unit that is exchanged between people. A life story “constructs a narrative context for the construction, maintenance, and transformation of identity” (Linde, 1993,
p. 4). Narrative storying is more than just the stories that people tell, because it takes into account the relationship between those stories, and the discontinuity of telling them in separate pieces over time (Allen, 2005). In this sense the telling of the story makes the meaning and identity real (Allen, 2005). Connelly and Clandinin (1999) believe that “our identities are composed and improvised as we go about living our lives embodying knowledge and engaging in our contexts” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). Hence, the creation of teacher identity is constantly negotiated and re-negotiated. Seen from a relational perspective the development of teacher identity is embodied and embedded in language, relationships, culture, and time with an emphasis on language and social interaction (Isaacs, 2005).

In this relational construct, the developmental marker of growth of the pre-service teacher’s teacher identity is the participation in mutually empathic, “growth-fostering” or learning-enhancing relationships (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 16) with significant others such as lecturers and supervising teachers. Growth–fostering relationships are characterised by mutual engagement, empathy, authenticity and empowerment (Liang et al., 2007). Research (Liang et al., 2007, Miller & Stiver, 1997) has supported a link between these relational qualities and positive psychological growth such as a greater sense of self-worth, the validation of one’s identity, knowledge of self and others (Liang et al., 2007). In this approach the process of becoming a committed and caring middle-school teacher can be attributed to the dialogue the individual has with significant others, such as expert middle-school lecturers and other scholars including supervising teachers during practicum and students. The relational context of learning is where pre-service teachers negotiate their social interactions with an intention of creating knowledge.

A common misconception of relational theory is the belief that it emerges from “a dream of harmony, cohesion and community” (Ross, 2002, p. 413) that skims over difference and division. However, relational theorists maintain that understanding the space between individuals requires recognition of what Bateson (2002) refers to as “dynamic dissonance” (p. 30). It is
crucial to be able to negotiate “the multiple spaces between us which is a way of being in relation and working against a politics of certainty” (Ross, 2002, p. 414). Most importantly, relational thinking can help to widen the individual’s scope to pay attention to context and culture, and to “accept diversity to insure participation is a conviction rather than a concession” (Torres, 2001, p. 57). Indeed, one of the purposes of education is to sustain complexity in an increasingly complex world, hence, “effective teachers, students, and researchers are those who endure teaching, learning, and studying in what often seems a perverse world” (Ross, 2002, p. 427).

This chapter has elaborated the conceptual framework of relational-ontological theory, its epistemological consequences, and their expression in teaching, learning and the continuing construction of teacher identity. It has stressed the on-going and two-way interaction between self and context. In that setting, the notion of a life story, a continually developing narrative of the self, has been introduced. These elements provide the basis for and justify the methodology and methods which now follow in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4  Research Methodology

4.1  INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the factors that influenced the development of teacher identity in 12 mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers as they took part in a one-year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). This research study was based on a revised version of relational-cultural theory, with a focus on illuminating the social and relational dynamics of these pre-service teachers’ experiences as they began to negotiate new ways of being and learning during a newly introduced one-year Graduate Diploma program. There were three questions that underpinned this study.

1. How do students undertaking a one year pre-service Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) identify as teachers and what changes in those identifications take place across the duration of the program?

2. During the pre-service program, what factors shape the development of a middle-school teacher identity?

3. How might a relational-cultural theoretical framework be extended to support the development of graduate pre-service teachers’ middle-school teacher identity?

This chapter begins with a discussion of the case-study research methodology within which this research project is framed, followed by a discussion of narrative research as a method or tool to document the way teacher identity is shaped and negotiated in discursive environments such as pre-service courses, prior experiences, classroom settings and the practicum. The section that follows provides an outline of the Graduate Diploma program, the participants, and the data that was collected. The data included student narratives, student email written reflections, and focus group dialogue. The procedure of the research study is
then described followed by the strategies involved in the analysis of the data. Narrative analysis provided the strategy for analysing student narratives and the focus group discussion, and the Listening Guide was used as the second strategy for analysing student email written reflections.

4.2 CASE-STUDY

Case-study research method as defined by Merriam (2002) is “an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution or community” (p. 8). A case study in general should “focus on a bounded subject / unit that is very representative or extremely atypical” (Burns, 2000, p. 460):

Unlike quantitative methods of research, like the survey which focus on the questions of who, what, where, how much, and how many… and archival analysis, which often situates the participant in some form of historical context, case-studies are the preferred strategy when how or why questions are asked. (Palmquist, 2005, p. 9)

Thus a case-study approach was appropriate for this study, where the focus was on a small group of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers and their developing teacher identities as middle-school teachers, and where answers were sought to questions relating to why the mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers in this study chose to teach and why they chose teaching in the middle years as opposed to early childhood.

Again, a case-study can be illustrative or descriptive, exploratory, cumulative, or based on the study of specific critical incidents (Kerlin, 2002). While the purpose for a case-study research inquiry “is to examine and develop a deeper understanding of specific phenomenon within the broader context or environment of the individual or group” (Kerlin, 2002, p.1), the aim of case study research is not to make generalizations about the phenomenon in question. Rather,
the aim is to uncover, examine, and disclose specific nuances that otherwise might escape attention (Kerlin, 2002). Hence, there is an emphasis on exploration and description. To do this effectively the case-study approach requires multiple research methods and the collection of data from multiple sources using a variety of strategies, for example, interviews, surveys, observations and documents (Jones, 2008). A case-study methodology is similar to field study in that each takes place in a natural setting. The observations, for example, of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers in this study took place in the natural settings that allowed for a more holistic interpretation of the situation under study (Palmquist, 2005). These settings included the university lecture theatre/ room/ tutorial room, workshop situations and in classrooms where pre-service teachers conducted the practicum component of their course.

Case-studies typically examine the interplay of all variables that allow for as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible (Palmquist, 2005). Palmquist notes that to be able to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of an event or a situation, a process known as ‘thick description’ is utilized. Thick description in contrast to a superficial description is concerned with a gaining a deeper understanding of the context. This involves an in-depth description of the entity being evaluated, the circumstances under which it is used, the characteristics of the people involved in it, and the nature of the community in which it is located. Moreover, thick description involves interpreting the meaning of demographic and descriptive data such as cultural norms and mores, community values, ingrained attitudes and motives (Palmquist, 2005). In this sense case studies tend to be relational and holistic, where the “focus is on relationships and processes in a natural setting to discover interconnections and interrelationships and how the various parts are linked” (Jones, 2008, p. 315).
In summary, the case-study method was preferred because it places a contemporary focus on a real life context. The researcher in this study did not take on the role of lecturer or tutor but rather the role of interviewer, observer and mentor. By being actively involved as an observer, interviewer and mentor the researcher was able to glean more in-depth appraisals from participants, shape more probing follow-up interview questions and thereby add the desired richness to raw data, resulting in what Palmquist (2005), lauds as “thick description”. Like narrative, case-study is a story; “it presents the concrete narrative in detail of actual, or at least realistic events, it has a plot, exposition, characters, and sometimes even dialogue” (Boehrer, 1990, p. 43).

4.3 NARRATIVE RESEARCH

Subsumed within the case-study approach was the use of narrative research which affords a powerful tool to document the way teacher identity develops in discursive environments (Zembylas, 2003). The word ‘narrative’ means an organised account or sequence of events (Colbley, 2001), and was particularly suitable in this research to describe the mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers’ accounts of their experiences during the graduate diploma program. Here:

Narrative research refers to any study that uses or analyses narrative material. The data can be collected as a story or in a different manner. It can be the object of the research or a means for the study of another question. It may be used for comparison among groups, to learn about a social phenomenon or historical period, or to explore a personality. (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998, pp. 2-3)

Human beings are inherently storytellers and storytelling, according to Kohler-Riessman (2002), is especially powerful in that it is through personal storytelling that (teacher) identities are formed. Moreover, research has also established that an examination of teachers’ narratives or stories of their experiences provides an important method of understanding their thinking, culture
and behaviour (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Estola & Syrjala, 2001; Feuerverger, 1997; Zembylas, 2003). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and expanding the earlier definition of the term, narrative is the study of the ways humans experience and understand the world. From this perspective two integrated processes are at work: narrative as the phenomenon in terms of the story and narrative as inquiry in terms of method (Hooley, 2007). Being concerned with specific, concrete events in a person’s life, narratives give an account of a person (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Hence a narrative approach offers an interpretive reconstruction of parts of a person’s life through the construction of personal philosophies, images and narratives. Kohler-Riessman (2002) provides the example of psychotherapists who through their work encounter narratives of personal experiences everyday and use them to change their patients’ lives by “retelling and constructing new and more fulfilling ones” (Kohler-Riessman, 2002, p. 219).

How individuals recount their histories—what they emphasize and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story established between teller and audience—all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives. Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one’s life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned. (Rosenwald & Ochber, 1992, p.1)

Zembylas (2003) notes how narrative research has become an important means for understanding teachers’ culture, a culture that involves teachers as knowers of themselves, of their particular situations, of subject matter and of learning (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). According to Holstein and Gubrium (2000), “considering the self in terms of narrative practice allows us to analyse the relation between the hows and whats of storytelling”, that is, “analysis centres on storytellers engaged in the work of constructing identities and on the circumstances of narration, respectively” (p. 104). Narrative forms an integral part of identity and human experiences because it allows individuals to position themselves in a particular way within the
social context. This way of researching identity is a move away from traditional questions of who one is to new questions of when, where, and how one is (Zembylas, 2003).

Narrative research is particularly useful as it alerts both the researcher and the pre-service teacher to explore teacher identity formation as articulated through talk, social interaction and self-presentation (Zembylas, 2003). This is achieved by highlighting the ‘situatedness of self’ or in other words, narratives developed through communication with others in response to situations, practices and available resources. Conversation is a meaning-making activity and as such is a key element of educative communities–communities that function for the benefit of all the participants (Friesen et al., 1999). It is within these communities of choice (Friedman, 1992) through relations with others where stories are told and retold that individuals begin to transform; in other words it is “a process of becoming” (Wenger, 1998, p. 215) where they become a certain person or, avoid becoming a certain person.

### 4.4 LISTENING GUIDE

To assist in exploring the relational context of the emerging teacher identity, the study employed a modification of the Listening Guide (Gilligan et al., 2002) as its method of analysing the interview data and the narratives constructed.

The listening guide is a voice-centred relational method of data analysis developed by Brown and Gilligan (1992) and based on Gilligan’s (1982) work on identity and moral development. This method is of particular interest to this study as it “holds at its core the idea of a relational ontology in which conceptions of separate, self-sufficient, independent, rational ‘self’ or ‘individual’ are rejected in favour of notions of selves-in-relations or relational beings” (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 422). In other words, human beings are seen as interdependent rather than independent and who are embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations.
The method consists of four steps with the intention to tune into the polyphonic voice of another person and is particularly attractive to this illuminating study on development of teacher identity as it is designed to open a way to know the inner world of the pre-service teacher. This method does so by drawing on voice, resonance, and relationship and sees these as “ports of entry into the human psyche” (Gilligan et al., 2006, p. 253). Gilligan et al. (2006) state that the psyche, like voice, is contrapuntal (not monotonic); in other words, voices are simultaneously co-occurring. These voices “may be in tension (or in harmony) with one another, with the self, with the voices of others, with who the person is in relationship, and the culture or context within which the person lives” (Gilligan et al., 2006, p. 253).

The listening guide differs from traditional methods of coding “in that one, listens to, rather than categorizes or quantifies, the text of the interview” (Tolman, 2001, p.132). Also, the researcher’s voice is considered in the process as it is recognized that the researcher cannot be totally neutral or objective in his or her analysis (Morawski, 2001).

The listening guide as a method shares assumptions about the human world that can be found in relational psychologies (e.g., Aron, 1996; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976; Tronick, 1989), for example, the idea that human development occurs in relationship with others and “our sense of self is inextricable from our relationships with others and with the cultures within which we live” (Gilligan et al., 2006, p. 254). The listening guide as a method has been commonly used by researchers interested in the human psyche, in relationships and in the analysis of a range of phenomena, such as girls’ and women’s experience with anger (Brown, 1998; Jack 1999), and women’s experiences of motherhood and postnatal depression (Mauthner, 2000). There are four steps in the listening guide to assist the researcher in the analysis of complex interview data,

1. Plot
2. I Poem
3. Contrapuntal Voices
4. Summary

An example of these steps applied to the analysis of student email responses is presented in Section 4.6.2

The plot

The first step in the listening guide begins with (a) a reading/listening for the plot, the context, (b) an evaluation of the perspective of the listener or the listener’s response to the interview and (c) how the researcher’s position as the listener differs and affects their interpretation and response from the interviewee--in other words, where we as readers connect or disconnect with the interviewee.

I Poem

The second step in the listening guide focuses on the construction of what have been termed as “I poems” by Elizabeth Debold (1994). This is done by subtracting everything but “I” (and for this thesis, its cognate forms—me, my, we, us etc.) from the transcript and following the use of the first-person pronoun.

The purpose is to listen to the participant’s first-person voice “to pick up its distinctive cadences and rhythms and secondly to hear how the person speaks about him or her self” (Gilligan et al., 2006, p. 259) or to elicit a sense of how the interviewee voices their reality. This in turn, can help facilitate hearing potential variations in the first person-voice that may include different themes, harmonies, dissonances and shifts. This step is crucial to the relational method in that the listening and tuning in to what the participant knows and thinks of themselves prevents the researcher(s) from distancing from the participant in an objectifying way (Gilligan et al., 2006).

Contrapuntal voices

The third step is iterative and involves listening for contrapuntal voices that allow the analysis to be brought back into relationship with the research question. In other words, this third
step offers a way to listen for the counterpoint in the text we are analysing, or the multiple facets of the story being told (Gilligan et al., 2006). This step provides the opportunity to identify, specify, and sort out the different aspects in the interview that may speak to the research question. Particularly, since it is the researcher’s questions that shape this listening, the questions may have been based on the theoretical framework guiding the research, on questions raised by previous listenings or indeed both.

Summary

The fourth step is about summarizing what has been learned about the person in relation to the research question and a description of the process. Hence, the overall purpose of the listening guide is to hear “collectively of different voices” (Gilligan et al., 2006, p.157) of the interviewee and to allow the interviewee’s interpretation or meaning to be heard without the interfering biases and differing perspectives of the researcher.

4.5 THE CONTEXT

4.5.1 Graduate Diploma in Education

The rationale for the course structure (Figure 4.1) of the Graduate Diploma in Education (Middle Years) was to allow graduates to obtain their first teaching qualification. Further, the one-year graduate diploma program in education was developed to align with one-year graduate diploma programs offered by other Australian states (Education Queensland College of Teachers, 2005; McMeniman, 2004; Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2003). The graduate entry course was offered in flexible mode that gave the opportunity to complete the course in one year full-time, or alternatively over two years part-time study. The course could also be completed online. Entry into the course was based on successful completion of an undergraduate degree which had not led to teacher registration. Selection was based on a primary criterion of course grade-point average achieved in the undergraduate degree. Each year, cut-offs or the minimum selection rank or OP are in the main
determined by the number of places available in a course, the number of applicants who apply for the course and the standard of those applicants.

To provide the context for the study, the course structure of the specific Graduate Diploma in Education with a focus on the Middle Years at a major metropolitan university in Eastern Australia undertaken by the students in this study is presented in Figure 4.1.

![Course structure](image)

*Figure 4.1 Course structure of a Graduate Diploma in Education (Middle Years)*

As can be seen in Figure 4.1 there are eight individual units comprised of a mixture of subject specific units, curriculum studies and field studies that make up the Graduate Diploma in Education (Middle Years) (a unit description for each of the units can be found in appendix C). In Semester 1, graduate pre-service teachers spent nine weeks at the university completing the units for their first semester, followed by 22 days of practicum in a primary school setting. After the completion of the required unit in Semester 2, pre-service teachers completed the remaining 33 days of practicum in a primary school setting.

### 4.6 PARTICIPANTS

Convenience sampling was the preferred sampling method in this study based on the time and the availability of participants (Merriam, 1998). Convenience sampling refers to the “reliance on available subjects” (Babbie, 2002, p. 172); in other words it is often used when there...
are difficulties accessing participants. While a convenience sample may provide participants and data for research projects, it is recognized that generalisations to the wider population are not possible (Babbie, 2002; Cresswell, 2002; Merriam, 1998).

A cohort of 56 mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers enrolled as both full-time and part-time students in a newly developed one year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) was invited to take part in the study. Out of this group, eighteen mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers volunteered to participate in the study. However, due to time constraints and the perceived heavy workload that was to encompass the one-year graduate diploma program, six mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers chose to discontinue with the graduate diploma program. Hence, twelve mature-aged (approx. 24 - 55 years of age) graduate pre-service student teachers, nine female and three male, took part in the research study. Three of the participants were part-time students who were not required to complete the practicum component until their second year. One of the participants, whilst completing both pre- and post- practicum interviews and the practicum component of the program, did not attend any of the weekly workshops offered in the research project because of a conflicting commitment. She had selected to take part in an immersion program offered by a nearby school with an authentic middle-school program and where graduate pre-service teachers were given opportunities to spend one day a week in a supporting role to the classroom teacher in addition to the compulsory practicum. The data these three participants provided for the research project was important to include not only because they completed two of the four compulsory units as offered by the graduate diploma program but also because of their participation in a weekly workshop program. The pre-service teacher who completed the immersion program in the middle-school setting had from the outset been especially interested in participating in the research project based on her personal passion for advocating and supporting middle schooling. All participants were provided with written information about the nature of the research project and what their participation would involve.
They were made aware that they could withdraw from the project at any time, and to protect their identities all participants were provided with pseudonyms.

4.7 COLLECTION OF DATA

The following instruments were used to collect research data:

1. Semi-structured pre- and post-interviews.
2. Student (email) written field experience reflections
3. Workshop program
4. Focus groups / Student narratives
5. Observations

The development and theoretical underpinnings each of these instruments and their purpose are discussed below.

4.7.1 Semi-structured pre- and post- enactment interviews.

The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is on someone’s mind, to understand how they see things, finding out from individuals those things that cannot be directly observed (Patton, 1990; Taschereau, 1998). Hence, interviewing involves developing rapport and trust with the interviewee, thus the interviewer needs to be trained in listening and interpersonal skills (Taschereau, 1998). This means allowing the interviewee to speak without interruptions and having the ability to be empathetic to any concern raised by interviewee.

Semi-structured interviews are more flexible than structured interviews (e.g., surveys and questionnaires) (Burns, 2000). Their advantages include providing opportunities for participants to describe detailed personal information (Creswell, 2002) and allowing the researcher to probe interesting points more deeply. Some of the disadvantages of semi-structured interviews are that they can be time-consuming and that interviews only provide information filtered through the views of the participants (Creswell, 2002).
For this research study, pre- and post-interview questions were developed to specifically elicit participants’ beliefs, understandings, opinions, and attitudes (Sproull, 1988) about teaching and learning as well as their emerging teacher identities. The pre-interview recorded data was collected at the beginning (week 1) of Semester 1 of the Graduate Diploma Education program. This data was analysed to identify participants’ personal and professional backgrounds, their perspectives about the good teacher and learner, teaching and learning, teacher identity and their reasons for choosing to teach middle years. They were also asked about what they expected from the one-year Graduate Diploma Education program. This pre-interview data informed the selection of the particular activities that were chosen and provided for in the six week workshop program. The post-interview recordings took place at the end of Semester 1 and after participants had completed their first practicum experience. This interview data was analysed to ascertain any changes that may have occurred in the participants’ previous perceptions about the good teacher and learner, teaching and learning, teacher identity and whether their initial expectations of the graduate diploma program (Middle Years) had been met.

Two additional components, namely, the six-week two-hour workshop program and the practicum, were used to ascertain whether any changes had occurred to participants’ perceptions about their choice of teaching middle school. The collection of this data provided an opportunity for participants to bring to light and to clarify any concerns (Creswell, 2002).

The semi-structured pre- and post- interview questions were developed around the following three themes:

1. Teacher identity
2. Teaching and learning
3. The Graduate Diploma program
Two additional themes formed the semi-structured post-interview questions:

1. The six week two hour workshop program
2. The practicum

Teacher Identity

The following questions related to examining participants’ ontological perspectives about identity, teacher identity and the middle-school teacher as well as establishing an understanding of their reasons to teach in middle years. These questions were mainly derived from research conducted by de Jong and Chadbourne, (2005), Dehli and Fumia, (2002), Mackenzie (2004), Noddings (2000, 2003), and Taylor (1989, 1995):

1. Why did you choose to become a teacher?
2. Why did you choose to become a middle-school teacher?
3. When you hear the term “teacher identity” what comes to mind?
4. Is a teacher identity important to you? Why? Why not?
5. What is a good teacher?

Teaching and learning

To gain an understanding about participants’ beliefs about teaching and learning the following questions were derived from the literature by Bain (2004), Helms (1998), Klein (2004), Noddings (2003), Palmer, (1998), Taylor (1989, 1991):

1. What is teaching?
2. What is learning?
3. Describe a good learner?
4. What do you expect from your students?
5. How do you think you will treat your students?
6. Do you think teaching is an isolated practice / profession?
7. Are you familiar with teaching standards? If so, what do you think is the purpose of the standards and will they be important to you?

Workshops

To get a sense whether and how the six-week two-hour workshop program supported their developing sense as middle-school teachers, the semi-structured post-enactment interview questions regarding the workshop experiences were derived from Bain (2004), Isaacs (2007), and Wenger (1998) and included the following questions:

1. How did you find the workshops?
2. In what ways do you think the workshops supported you in your development as a teacher?
3. Was there a particular session that you found useful or not so useful?
4. What were some of the highlights of the workshop experience?
5. What were some of the lowlights of the workshop experience?

The Graduate Diploma program

To provide insights into participants’ expectations in regards to the Graduate Diploma program focusing on the middle-school strand the participants were invited to reflect on the following questions that were derived from the literature on middle schooling by Chadbourne (2001), De Jong & Chadbourne, (2005), Korthagen et al. (2006), Pendergast, (2005):

1. What are your expectations from the graduate diploma course (middle years)?
2. Is there a subject you are looking forward to studying or is there a subject you think will be challenging?
practicum

The following questions were developed to better understand participants’ experiences in the practicum component of the graduate diploma program, and how this experience influenced their personal sense of selves as developing middle-school teachers. These questions were derived from the following literature: Chadbourne, (2001), de Jong & Chadbourne (2005), Elkind, (1997), Enyede, et al. (2006), Pendergast (2005), Rorrison (2005, 2008), and Walkington (2005):

1. How was your practicum experience?
2. In what ways do you think the practicum has supported you in your choice to teach?
3. How supported did you feel during your practicum?
4. What were some of the highlights of the practicum experience?
5. What were some of the lowlights of the practicum experience?

4.7.2 Students’ written reflections about their practicum experiences

The practicum component has been recognized as being highly influential in supporting the development of teacher identity (Dobbins, 1996; Enyede, et al., 2006; Franzak, 2002; Graham & Phelps, 2003; Webb, 2005). Participants were encouraged and invited by the researcher to respond to purposefully developed questions that focused on their everyday lived experiences (Schostak, 2003) during their first practicum placement. The personal reflections provided a perspective about their personal feelings and observations in relation to the role of their mentoring teacher, the school culture, and their students. Participants were encouraged to document both positive and negative issues and concerns that they encountered in the process of working together with their supervising teacher. These were emailed to the researcher on a weekly basis. However, it was recognized that some of the participants were not comfortable providing weekly written feedback but rather preferred the face-to-face and/or telephone support
that was provided by the researcher during their practicum experience. The participants were also given the opportunity to re-visit their thoughts about their field experience and to articulate these personal reflections in their post-interviews, and in the focus group situation.

The following questions were developed from the literature (Rorrison, 2005, 2008; Schostak, 2003; Walkington, 2005) to provide space for critical reflection as well as providing possibilities to “gain insight into the experiences, concerns, interests beliefs, values, knowledge and ways of seeing, thinking and acting of the other” (Schostak, 2003, p.10), in this case the participant pre-service teacher. The questions developed for the email narratives were:

*Observation: Day two of the practicum.*

1. How did the teacher greet her/his students? Was there a ‘roll call’ what did the teacher do?
2. How did the teacher introduce the lessons? How much of the lessons was teacher directed, group work, pair work or individual work?
3. How did the teacher introduce you? How included did you feel as a pre-service teacher? What about in the staff room?

*Week 1 practicum questions:*

1. What was the best thing that happened during your first week of practicum and what was the worst thing that happened?
2. Do you still think teaching is for you or have you changed your mind?
3. How have you found your supervising teacher approach to teaching and learning?
4. Have you felt included in the classroom activities? Have you been able to assist the teacher with the class?
5. Have you had an opportunity to teach a lesson?
6. How many times have you felt anxious during your first week of practicum?
Week 2 practicum questions:

1. Has anything happened during the past week to change your mind about whether or not you will continue teaching?

2. What was the best thing that happened during your second week of practicum, and what was the worst thing that happened?

3. In what ways have you been able to support your teacher this week in the classroom?

4. How has your supervising teacher demonstrated his or her support to you as a beginning teacher?

5. Give a couple of examples of how you were able to support the students in your class?

6. How did the students in your class demonstrate their support for you?

Week 3 practicum questions:

1. Thinking back on week 3, how often during the third week of your practicum did you take time out to just enjoy your experience? What did you do?

2. How many times did you and the students have a good laugh together during the last week? What happened?

3. What was the best thing you learned from your students?

4. What was the best thing you learned about yourself teaching the students?

5. What was the one thing you know to do to help yourself keep being positive?

Week 4 practicum questions:

1. Thinking back in what ways could your practicum experience have been improved?

2. What aspects of your practicum have had positive (negative) influences on your choice to teach?
3. How supported have you felt during your practicum?—supervising teacher, other teachers at the school, University Liaison person or other University personnel?

4.7.3 Workshop

The six week two hour workshop program that was part of the research study was based on a relational pedagogy (Baxter Magolda, 1996) that included the following principles: (1) respect for the individual graduate pre-service teacher as a knower, (2) provision of learning opportunities that related to the graduate pre-service teacher’s personal and professional experiences, (3) facilitation of a constructivist perspective of knowing and learning, and (4) provision of opportunities to access and discuss with expert teacher educators and peers perspectives to promote (re)construction of personal epistemological beliefs (cited in Tickle, Brownlee & Nailon, 2005).

This reciprocal approach supports development of teacher identity and builds on the realization that we know in relationship to others. To support the emerging middle-school teacher identity it was critical to make room for a safe and non-threatening learning environment, where the pre-service teachers together with experienced academics, teachers and principals collaboratively shared, reflected, and explored their ontological and epistemological concerns about their developing middle school teacher identities (Rorrison, 2008). As Franzak (2002) notes, teachers and students are “co-voyagers on a journey in which all are learners and teachers and students who are cognizant of their evolving roles reflect openness to transformational experiences and willingness to explore, change, and reveal their identities” (p. 261). Consciously-raising is a participatory process where participants are encouraged to share openly their experiences and thoughts in relation to teacher identity, teaching and learning, teacher standards, middle schooling, and in particular issues concerning adolescence with others in a regular group processes.
The six week two hour workshop program involved the following topics: philosophy of teaching and learning, teacher identity, middle-school principles and philosophy, development of scholarly community in school settings, teaching standards, and OZ Teacher online networking. The researcher’s role in the workshop program was that of changing participant observer (Cresswell, 2002) (see section 4.7.4). Participants were encouraged to provide written reflections via email to the researcher about their experiences in the six week workshop sessions before commencing their first practicum. However, participants were also given the opportunity in a similar manner to their practicum experiences to revisit their thoughts about their experiences in the workshop sessions in their post-interviews as well as in their focus group discussion. The following is a brief description of each of the six workshop sessions:

Week 1. Philosophy of teaching and learning and teacher identity.

This workshop session involved a presentation and introduction to the relational perspective to teaching and learning and to the notion of teacher identity. This session provided participants opportunities to reflect and to examine their perceptions about teaching and learning as well as teacher identity and how this related to who they were as developing middle-school teachers.

Week 2. Introduction to Middle School.

This workshop session was facilitated by a middle-school principal who introduced participants to the principles underlying the philosophy of middle schooling. This was followed by a presentation based on recent research about concerns specifically relating to adolescence.

Week 3. Development of a scholarly community in a school setting.

This workshop session was facilitated by a school principal from the Independent sector who introduced participants to a relational model used in his school that supports the development of a scholarly community in a school setting.
Week 4. Understanding teaching standards.

This workshop session’s facilitator was a senior executive from Education Queensland who introduced participants to the newly introduced teaching standards. The focus of the presentation was to provide participants with an overview of the standards and opportunities for questions.

Week 5. Introduction to OZ Teachers’ on-line networking.

This workshop session introduced participants to OZ Teachers on-line networking and to some of the advantages of belonging to on-line communities. This was facilitated by a PhD student and lecturer in Information Technology.

Week 6. Reflections on the workshop program.

In this final and informal workshop session, participants were invited to come together to reflect and to discuss their experiences in the workshop program. During this workshop session participants were also provided with opportunity to discuss their upcoming practicum and the weekly email narratives they were to provide for the study. They were also provided with an invitation to partake in a focus group at the end of the one year Graduate Diploma program that would be followed by a celebratory luncheon.

4.7.4 Focus group / Student narratives.

Participants were invited to take part in a supplementary focus group at the end of their one year degree with an independent interviewer not connected to the research project. The purpose for the focus group was to encourage participants to openly discuss their experiences in the one year graduate diploma program and how these experiences had influenced their sense as middle-school teacher identities. These whole group discussions were based on participants’ experiences as postgraduates in the graduate diploma program, their experiences as beginning teachers, and their experiences in the PhD research study. These discussions were audio recorded and transcribed.
The following open-ended questions formed to guide the focus group discussion

1. What were your overall conceptions about the graduate diploma program?

2. How did the experiences in the graduate diploma program influence your emerging teacher identity?

3. How did you experience your participation in the research project (e.g., workshop program, pre-and post enactment interview)?

4.7.5 Observations.

The purpose of observations is to provide information about participants’ experiences and behavioural patterns by observing them in the variety of research sites (Cresswell, 2002, p. 199). The unstructured observational data consisted of observing and taking field notes from a variety of settings (Cresswell, 2002). The role of the researcher in this research study was that of changing participant observer (Cresswell, 2002). This role provided the researcher flexibility to adapt to situations as either participant observer or non-participant observer. For example, as a participant observer, the researcher took an active part in the workshop activities whilst observing the social and relational dynamics and interactions that were later recorded after each workshop. As a non-participant the researcher was invited to observe each participant teaching one lesson in the classroom situation during their practicum. The observation notes were shared via email and personal communication with each participant to support them in their learning and development as teachers.

4.8 PROCEDURE

As can be noted in the timeline presented in Figure 4.2 there were three phases involved in the research study: Phase 1 involved identification of personal and professional factors influencing participants’ developing middle-school teacher identities. Phase 2 involved identification of the in-course experiential influencing factors on participants’ developing middle-
school teacher identity. Phase 3 involved an independent assessment of participants’ experiences in the graduate diploma program. A description of each of the three phases is provided below:

| March-May 2005 | Phase 1. Identification of pre-ontological and epistemological beliefs. | 1. Development and administration of semi-structured pre-enactment interview questions.  
2. Identification of Pre-service teachers’ initial conceptions.  
3. Administration of workshop program and commencement of unstructured observations. |
| July 2005 | Phase 2. Identification of changes in ontological and epistemological beliefs. | 1. Development and administration of semi-structured exit post-interview questions.  
2. Administration of exit post-interview questions. |
| October 2005 | Phase 3. Independent assessment of the pre-service teacher’s experiences in the graduate diploma program and in the research project. | 1. Focus group session. |

*Figure 4.2 Timeline 2005.*

4.8.1 Phase 1: Identification of pre-ontological and epistemological beliefs.

To ascertain participants’ personal and professional factors that influenced the development of their teacher identity involved the development of the following three steps:

1. Development and administration of semi-structured pre-enactment interview questions.
2. Identification of pre-service teachers’ initial conceptions about their expectations of the one-year graduate diploma program about teaching and learning in general and about their conceptions about the good teacher.

3. Administration of a workshop program.

Step 1. Development and administration of semi-structured pre-enactment interview questions.

Twelve mature-age graduate pre-service teachers were invited to attend a 30-minute semi-structured interview to ascertain their personal perceptions about teacher identity, teaching and learning as well as their expectations of the one year graduate teacher education program. All questions were derived from the literature. The purpose of the research study was explained to each participant and permission was sought from the participants to audio-record the interviews. Participants were assured that any information they provided would remain confidential and that their identities would be protected. Transcripts of each interview session were made in order to facilitate the process of analysis of data.

Step 2: Identification of pre-service initial conceptions.

This step involved identifying and analysing pre-service teachers’ initial interview responses regarding the following: their beliefs about teacher identity, teaching and learning, and why they had chosen to teach middle school as well as their expectations of the one year graduate diploma program. Their responses informed the development and implementation of some of the topics that were presented in the six week workshop program (e.g., philosophy of teaching and learning, teacher identity, middle-school philosophy, teacher standards etc).

Step 3: Administration of the workshop program.

This step consisted of the establishment of the six week workshop program. The workshop program had two purposes: The establishment of a scholarly learning community and consciousness-raising to support the development of teacher identity. As noted previously, the workshop program included the following topics: philosophy of teaching and learning, teacher
identity, middle-school principles and philosophy, development of scholarly community in school settings, teaching standards, and OZ Teacher online networking. A number of carefully selected guest speakers were invited to speak on the various topics offered.

4.8.2 Phase 2: Identification of changes in ontological and epistemological beliefs

To determine any changes that may or may not have occurred to pre-service teachers’ perceptions of teacher identity, teaching and learning as well as to their perceptions about the one-year graduate diploma program, post-interviews were conducted at the end of Semester 1. The two components involved in this process were:

1. Development of semi-structured exit interview questions;
2. Administration of the exit interview questions.

With the exception of the additional exit interview questions relating to the pre-service teachers’ experiences in the workshop program and in the practicum, the exit interview questions administered to the pre-service teachers were derived from the analysis and synthesis of the research literature and were based on those questions outlined during their pre-enactment interviews.

4.8.3 Phase 3: Independent assessment of the pre-service teachers’ experiences in the graduate diploma program and in the research project.

To get a sense of the impact of their experiences in the graduate diploma program and in the research project on each participant’s developing teacher identity, an independent assessment of their experience in the research project, as well as their experiences in the one year graduate diploma program, was conducted. This provided valuable insights particularly pertaining to their developing teacher identities. A researcher of Applied Ethics was selected for this role. The independent assessment involved inviting all participants to a focus group session at the end of their second and final practicum with the researcher. Eleven out of twelve participants attended this focus group. One participants’ declined the invitation to attend due to work commitments.
4.9  ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.9.1  Analysis of pre- and post- enactment interviews that include workshop and focus group reflections

A narrative analysis is used as a strategy that recognises the extent to which the stories we tell provide insights about our lived experiences. According to Thorne (2000), it is through analytic processes that we are helped detect the main narrative themes within the accounts people give about their lives and that we discover how they understand and make sense of their lives. Indeed, it is in putting experience into words, whether we do this verbally, in writing, or in thought, that transforms the actual experience into a communicable representation of it. As noted by Thorne, “speech forms are not the experiences themselves, but a socially and culturally constructed device for creating shared understandings about them” (Thorne, 2000, p. 1). A view through the eyes of the pre-service teacher is an important aspect to understand the personalized and contextualized journey of learning to teach (Walkington, 2005). This is particularly so, since the process of learning to teach is based initially upon “the core beliefs and experiences the learner brings to the situation” (Walkington, 2005, p. 56). The analysis of the pre- and post-enactment interviews involved re-storying, which is “the process in which the researcher gathers the stories and analyses them for key elements (e.g. time, place, plot and scene) and then rewrites the story to place it in a chronological sequence” (Creswell, 2002, p. 528). This also involved coding data into major themes to provide deeper understandings and insights into participants’ lived experiences. The analysis of the pre- and post-enactment data proceeded in the following way:

1. Transcription of pre- and post-interviews.

2. Reading and a familiarizing with the transcribed interview data.
3. Coding the data of the stories into themes. This involved identifying the stories being told, the direction and contradictions that emerged as well as identifying commonalities and differences among participants.

4. Documenting / Re-telling the story

4.9.2 Analysis of student email responses / narratives

The Listening Guide (Gilligan et al., 2002) was the preferred analysis tool used on the email response narratives. As noted earlier, the listening guide as a method involved four steps: (1) reading for the plot that included the researcher’s response, (2) development of “I” poems, (3) reading for contrapuntal voices, and (4) a summary or an interpretation. What follows is a brief example of how each of these steps were utilized in the listening to the account of one participant, Debra, regarding her practicum experience as was communicated via her weekly emails.

Step 1- A first listening–Reading for the plot and researcher’s response

The first reading begins with the reading of Debra’s email narrative by the researcher, listening for the significance of the social relational context, or the plot and an evaluation of the researcher’s response to the email narrative. The reason for this first listening was to give attention to the narrative being told, the images and themes and the context of the whole transcript (Balan, 2005).

For example, in listening to Debra’s email narratives it was clear that her first week and initial experience meeting with both the school principal and her supervising teacher were fraught with unease, frustration and anger. The lack of courtesy, as was displayed by her supervising teacher by not introducing Debra to the students as a beginning teacher, was experienced by Debra as inappropriate. Surprisingly, from listening to Debra’s email narrative this lack of courtesy and indifference toward the pre-service teacher seemed to be part of the school culture. It was interesting to note how this led her to take the initiative to introduce herself to teachers and staff at the school, rather than wait passively for introductions that were not forthcoming. This
initiative proved to be an empowering experience for Debra, particularly after some teachers at the school began to make Debra feel both valued and welcome. Unfortunately, according to Debra, she still felt ignored by the majority of the staff.

Step 2- The “I” poem.

This next section will present a snap-shot of Debra’s “I” poem derived from her email narrative when she first met with her supervising teacher, students and the school principals. The reason for the “I” poem is that it picks up on the stream of consciousness of the first person voice and may change in voice or meaning that is not explicitly stated (Gilligan et al., 2002). The “I” poem was created by underlining and selecting every first person “I / me / my / we / us” within the transcript and any accompanying words that seemed important. The sequences in which the phrases appear in the text are maintained. However, to make the poem easier to understand and readable an additional phrase was added to give it continuity to the flow and plot (Balan, 2005).

My first visit was just an introductory meeting. She (supervising teacher) did not introduce me to the students at all. The second day I went on the excursion to the Historical Village, she still did not introduce me. By the second observation day I was waiting for an introduction to students and still I did not get an introduction at all. I was surprised by this oversight--I thought it was very rude and no way to treat those 31 kids! I did not feel very welcome as a student teacher.

– the Principal did not bother to introduce himself to me despite passing me several times around the school. Finally, I took the initiative after a staff meeting--at which time no effort was made by the Principal or Deputy to make mention of any of the student teachers in the room. Mostly we were ignored (by the school staff), but some staff did make the effort to introduce themselves, after a couple of weeks it is much better.

Drawing out Debra’s “I” statements from the above excerpt and creating an “I’ poem enabled an unobstructed view of Debra’s reaction:
My first visit …She did not introduce me …I went on the excursion… She still did not introduce me …I was waiting…I did not get an introduction at all…I was surprised…I thought it was very rude …I did not feel very welcome…

The Principal did not bother to introduce himself to me despite passing me several times around the school…

Finally, I took the initiative..

We were ignored   (after a couple of weeks it is much better.)

*Step 3- Contrapuntal voices*

The third step involved listening for contrapuntal voices, which refers to more than one voice occurring simultaneously. The reason for this listening is to allow the analysis to be brought back into relationship with the research question and a summary (the fourth step) about what has been learned in relation to the research question and a description of the process. These voices are now addressed in turn.

*Voice of frustration*

In listening to Debra’s ‘I’ poem a voice of frustration can clearly be noted. This voice is directed at her supervising teacher’s lack of courtesy and the indifference that she had demonstrated towards Debra by not introducing her to the students. Debra’s surprise and unease extended also to the school principal who it seems did not make any effort to make Debra or any of the other pre-service teachers welcome to the school.

*Voice of resistance*

However, there is a shift that takes place with a second voice emerging and the voice that can be heard here is the voice of resistance. This voice resisted the indifference that was afforded by the principal and supervising teacher and saw Debra take control over her situation by introducing herself to other teachers at the school. This initiative proved empowering, particularly after some teachers at the school began to make her feel welcome. Unfortunately, as
part of the graduate pre-service teacher cohort at the school, she still felt they were ignored by the majority of the staff.

**Step 4- Summary**

The lack of support, courtesy and welcome that was afforded to Debra, a post-graduate, mature-aged person and a professional in her own right, by her supervising teacher and the school principal was clearly a confusing as well as a disempowering experience. The indifference demonstrated by both the supervising teacher and the principal suggested a traditional perspective toward the supervision of beginning teachers. A traditional perspective is one where a hierarchal model of supervision is seen as most appropriate. Such a model sees the pre-service teacher as a ‘student’ not as a future colleague or as a professional person in her or his own right but one who is best supported by making sure he or she ‘knows their place’. This example illuminated negative factors that may contribute to Debra’s sense of teacher identity. However, this example also illuminated her strong sense of self as a professional and mature-aged pre-service teacher capable of negotiating an unfavourable situation to her advantage.

4.10 EVALUATING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

4.10.1 Validity / Trustworthiness / Reliability and Researcher Bias

The terms validity and reliability are commonly related to quantitative rather than to qualitative studies (Johnson, 1997). Quantitative data analysis involves statistical analysis (Creswell, 2002) while qualitative research is based on “a set of interpretive, material practice that make the world visible and that transform the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 4). Smith (1984) argues that the basic epistemological and ontological assumptions of quantitative and qualitative research are incompatible. Kohler-Riessman (2002) agrees with Smith (1984), suggesting that the traditional criteria of validity and reliability are not relevant to qualitative research. Validity and reliability in quantitative research rely on realist assumptions or assume an objective reality, and as such are irrelevant to qualitative study such as narrative research (Kohler-
Riessman, 2002), since “a personal narrative is not meant to be read as an exact record of what happened nor is it a mirror out there” (Kohler-Riessman, 2002, p. 257). In other words, there is no reason to assume that an individual’s narrative will, or should be, entirely consistent from one setting to next. Thus, qualitative researchers not only interpret findings differently but acknowledge that their findings represent secondary accounts of others’ experiences (Neuman, 2000). Hence, qualitative researchers when referring to validity refer to “research that is plausible, credible, trustworthy, and thus defensible” (Johnson, 1997, p. 160). The narrative approach as was applied in this research context provided the depth of data needed to understand the nature of the mature-aged pre-service teachers emerging teacher identities and experiences both in the graduate diploma program and in the six-week workshop program. The use of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), where all participants were provided with opportunities to view a transcript of their interview data, enabled the mature-aged pre-service teachers’ active participation in the development of research data and construction and verification of stories about their personal experiences.

Reliability is based on the assumption that the study can be repeated, and that two or more individuals can have the same experiences (Burns, 2000, p. 417). However, studies undertaken in natural settings such as those in this qualitative research study (e.g., workshops, tutorials, classroom situations) are particularly vulnerable and difficult to replicate. A study of critical incidents for example, such as a pre-service teacher from a culturally and linguistically diverse background experiencing racial discrimination cannot be replicated because the exact event cannot be reproduced. A more appropriate approach is when informed others, reading the study’s accounts, analysis and conclusions, reach similar conclusions from following the steps taken in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

However, it should also be clearly recognized that research is never a value-free endeavour, regardless whether that research falls within a qualitative or a quantitative paradigm.
and as such researcher bias is inevitable (Mehra, 2002). Mehra (2002) argues that, especially in qualitative research, the researcher is important and “the researcher can't separate himself or herself from the topic/people he or she is studying, it is in the interaction between the researcher and the researched that the knowledge is created. So the researcher bias enters into the picture even if the researcher tries to stay out of it” (p. 1). To address the issue of researcher bias, Mehra (2002) suggests that the researcher(s) must be aware of personal subjectivities and should have the ability to continuously reflect on how the self influences and is influenced by the research study.

4.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter, a rationale for the use of case-study methodology and narrative research as well as the Listening Guide as a method of analysis was presented. This was then followed by the provision of the rationale for the Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years), the selection process of mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher and the various components that made up the study. The rationale for the data collection such as the pre- and post-interview data that also included workshop reflections (post-interview data), written (email) reflections, and student narratives were presented followed by an explanation of the procedure of the study. The methods that were used in the analysis of the data, such as narrative research strategy was then presented, followed by a discussion on evaluating qualitative research, which provided the conclusion for this chapter. In the next chapter, these processes are applied to the analysis of participants’ experiences during the one-year graduate diploma program that included the intervention workshop and their practicum experiences.
Chapter 5  Findings

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study investigates the factors that influenced the development of teacher identity in a small cohort of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers over the course of a one-year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). It was guided by the following three questions:

1. How do students undertaking a one year pre-service Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) identify as teachers and what changes in those identifications take place across the duration of the program?

2. During the pre-service program what factors shape the development of a middle-school teacher identity?

3. How might a relational-ontological theoretical framework support the development of graduate pre-service teachers' middle-school teacher identity?

The findings of the research study are presented in three chapters. This chapter answers the first question, chapter six responds to the second question, while the third question is most appropriately addressed in the final chapter of the thesis.

In this chapter, nine out of the 12 participants are introduced, accompanied by a brief outline of each participant’s story. Debra, Julie and Fran (see pp. 207-268), the three participants who are not introduced in this chapter, will be introduced and discussed in depth in chapter 6. Their accounts, including the findings from their pre- and post-enactment interviews, are drawn
on in an examination of the factors shaping the development of the middle-school teacher identity.

In this chapter the analysis commences with the identification in these stories of four themes or common elements about how these graduate pre-service teachers identify as teachers. The first of the four themes that have been extracted from participant pre-enactment interview data relates to participants’ reasons to teach, how they identify with and understand teaching and learning, as well as their perceptions about the good learner and the good teacher. The second theme relates to their conceptions of teacher identity. The third theme is about their perceptions of whether teaching is an isolated profession and the fourth theme relates to their perspective of the teaching standards. Changes in or modifications to these themes across the one year graduate diploma program are mapped from these stories. A larger collective story of their changing identifications as teachers across the duration of the program is then constructed around these four themes from the participants' accounts.

5.2 PARTICIPANTS’ PRE-ENACTMENT INTERVIEW NARRATIVES

There were twelve participants in this research study: Melinda, Jean, Sarah, Katherine, Jane, Fran, Tina, Julie, Rolf, Debra, Ron and Simon⁹. In this section each participant is introduced together with the findings from the pre-enactment interview data. As noted above the stories of three participants’ namely, Debra, Julie and Fran, have been omitted from this chapter. Their stories or identity portraits will be presented in chapter 6.

5.2.1 Melinda’s pre-enactment interview data

Melinda is a fulltime graduate pre-service teacher in the Graduate Diploma program. A mother of three boys, she has a background in Business Commerce and has chosen to teach because it has been a passion since she was very young. She chose to teach middle years because

⁹ All names are pseudonyms.
of her personal experience with her two older boys going through this period, and that is about to
start again with her youngest boy. In particular, she believed that she understands the problems
and challenges that boys in particular face in middle years, which Melinda believed is “a very
fragile time for kids”. She expected the year-long graduate diploma program to be “full on and
hands on” but she was looking forward to it. In terms of a challenging subject, this, according to
Melinda was going to be the practicum because "classroom kids are different from teaching
adults".

**Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)**

In her pre-enactment interview response to what was meant by teaching and learning
Melinda stated that teaching is "giving knowledge or helping other people gain knowledge"
whilst learning is about "taking the knowledge you got, apply it, restate it and understand it".
Thus, a good learner according to Melinda is "someone who can take the knowledge, listen and
then apply those skills elsewhere". It is about “building on the knowledge you already have and
take on new ideas and apply these to other problems and then extending this into the real world
and to share it with the class”. To support students in their learning Melinda expects her students
"to participate, to share and be involved” and she sees her expectations will “increase as the year
progresses”. She also expects her students to be “polite, respectful and try really hard as well as
to ask for help when they need it”.

A good teacher to Melinda is someone who has a positive attitude towards kids and can
"engage children across the spectrum of personalities". Being a good teacher is to have the
ability:

To listen and understand kids to cater for all the differences in your class, to be on the
ball, to be ready, get to know your kids quickly where they are at so you can devise your
lessons to cater for all the different needs and to be really well organized.

**Teacher identity**
Melinda stated that understanding teacher identity was “about developing my persona as a teacher [and] it is the same as maths teacher identity”. Teacher identity is important because “a good teacher is who you are as a teacher, your identity or persona as a teacher also a maths teacher identity is important especially with kids who are struggling”.

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Prior to her practicum Melinda expected that teaching was about collaboration with other teachers and she “could not imagine doing it all by herself”; she also imagined that this meant “getting together after school with other teachers to swap ideas and discuss children and issues”.

**Teaching standards**

Melinda did not know enough about the teaching standards to comment.

### 5.2.2 Rolf’s pre-enactment interview data

Rolf is a part-time graduate pre-service teacher and is not completing the practicum component of the graduate teacher education program (Middle Years) until his second year. Rolf is the father of two young boys and has a Bachelor of Ministry and Masters of Outdoor Education. He has chosen to teach because of his current involvement working with at-risk young people and because “this (the teaching degree) opens up other options for later on in case I want to teach in a classroom”. Rolf has chosen to teach middle years because this is the age group he is currently working with, and because he does not have prerequisite discipline subjects to be able to teach in secondary school. He is doing the one year graduate diploma program over two years and expects to have the ability to teach effectively in the classroom. His concern in relation to the subjects that were offered by the graduate diploma program was middle-school mathematics, an area he admitted to not being confident about.
Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)

For Rolf teaching is to help young people discover things about life and acquire knowledge and "learning is when you understand something, how something works and why". Rolf believes that a good learner is "someone who discovers something for themselves and then understands how something works". He also believes it is someone "who is inquisitive, who asks questions and wants to listen". Rolf expects that his students "would enjoy learning" and that they "have a willingness to put in an effort". He expects to treat his students with respect and "for them to feel free to have a go without feeling someone will jump on them for failing or for making mistakes".

For Rolf a good teacher is supportive and someone who is well versed in both content and pedagogical knowledge. In particular, a good teacher is someone who is “able to organize and run a lesson that students are engaged in and are enjoying what they are doing”. Rolf believes that good teaching qualities involve "the way you treat them [the students], run the class, organize yourself with them or the way you deal with situations either gain or lose their respect. The trick is to relate to them on their level".

Teacher identity

Rolf did not know nor did he have any idea as to what teacher identity was or what teacher identity referred too.

Teaching as an isolated practice

Rolf did not view teaching as an isolated practice as he saw himself able to “utilize his surroundings, and to be a good teacher is a team effort".

Teaching standards

Rolf did not know enough about the teaching standards to comment.
5.2.3 Jean’s pre-enactment interview data

A love and a fascination for children was the major motivating factor that prompted Jean, a mother of two and a former hospital trained nurse with a Bachelor of Arts in Modern Asian Studies, to become a teacher. Like Melinda, Jean has chosen middle years because of her children being in this age group. She has also been inspired by her children’s teachers whose skills she would like to learn; skills such as how to "communicate, inspire and engage kids in learning and to keep them happy”. Jean is a part-time student studying the graduate diploma program over two years. As with Rolf, she was not required to complete the practicum component of the graduate diploma program (Middle Years) as was required by those enrolled fulltime in the program. Jean expects that the graduate diploma program (Middle Years) will provide her with “a solid understanding of how to teach and have her students engaged in her classes”. A challenging subject in the course will be the Middle Years mathematics subject because she feels she does not have a solid understanding of mathematics; the other challenging subject will be Engaging Diverse Learners.

Teaching and learning–(the good learner and the good teacher)

To Jean teaching is about providing a safe and nurturing learning environment where children can feel that they “can learn and acquire knowledge to the best of their ability”. It is also about allowing children to become engaged in their learning. Jean likes the idea of “the teacher reflecting on her own teaching”. Learning for Jean is about gaining new knowledge--"discovering new ways of doing things that you have done before and being excited about new things". A good learner is someone who "can manage to achieve or get knowledge". A good learner is also someone who is engaged, motivated and willing to learn.

Jean expects "co-operations and respect" from her students as well as a "willingness to be engaged". She in turn promises to treat her students with respect and is "mindful to model all the behaviours" she wants to see in her students. Jean would also treat her students with a lot of
interest and thinks that "there is no set recipe as they are all individuals and full of life" and she hopes she will "just appreciate and value each one".

Jean believes a good teacher can demonstrate “patience, tolerance, understanding, kindness, consideration in your thought whilst at the same time be fun and enthusiastic”. Another important teacher quality is the “ability to listen, because it allows you to be aware where each of your students are at in their own learning and where they are struggling and where they need help”.

**Teacher identity**

Teacher identity to Jean is about the teacher "involved within the classroom moving around freely, engaged on the same level physically on the same level with the children on the floor or beside with them on the blackboard". She also has noted "how caring and nurturing the teachers are” and sees them “almost an extension of the family, unit the family".

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Jean hopes that teaching is not an isolated practice. She likes to think that when she sees teachers interacting with each other in her children’s school and where parent involvement is welcomed that it would be the same in other schools. She imagines teachers working in pairs and so teaching for Jean is more of a team effort.

**Teaching standards**

Jean was not sure enough about what was meant by teaching standards to comment.

5.2.4 **Katherine’s pre-enactment interview data**

Katherine, whose mother is a teacher, is a young mother of a two year old girl, and has a double degree in Arts and Humanities. She believes teaching provides her with a ‘purpose’ and that she will be proud to work as a teacher. Katherine is a part-time graduate pre-service teacher and like Jean is not completing the practicum until in her second year. She expects to “cram in an
awful lot of new knowledge as well as getting some help and support from the uni” during her two years as a part-time pre-service teacher.

**Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)**

In her pre-enactment interview response, teaching to Katherine was more about learning. Learning, according to Katherine, is both about acquiring knowledge and ways of understanding, "it is to learn to do something not just the knowledge”; in other words “teaching is about learning with the kids and it is less telling”. She believes that a good learner is “open, attentive, motivated, someone who is challenged and takes the challenge and sees gaps in knowledge and tries to work out different answers or comes up with different ways of looking”.

Katherine has high expectations from her students and expects them to be open to new ways of learning and new knowledge "regardless if they are interested or not or had any prior knowledge". However, she also expects that her students will not take anything she says “at face value”. She thinks it is important for students to “connect to all subjects, topics, disciplines to really open their eyes to see how interconnected the world is”. She expects good behaviour and that her students will appreciate learning and knowledge. Katherine believes that she will be treating her students “fairly nicely and with respect as she would expect them to treat her”. She recalls her mum’s reminding her how "every student in her class is someone else's baby, angel".

A good teacher is someone who can develop “rapport with his or her students... a person who can connect to the kids, who is patient, able to motivate them and who wants to be there”. A good teacher is also open-minded and generous and who shares his or her resources with their colleagues and students. Good teaching qualities include “being open, innovative, to be able to draw students in, encourage an excitement for learning, do lots of hands-on exercises”. Katherine also believes that a good teacher "is to be able to make use of all resources that you have regardless if what you have is nothing, you use whatever material and get your kids engaged in the process".
**Teacher identity**

For Katherine teacher identity is the role that she “as the teacher has in her classroom as separate from who she is but joined in so many ways--but it is a new identity, a new person I am developing into”. Teacher identity is important in order to understand the role of a teacher. It is a new way of looking at the world. To be a good teacher “is to know the subject matter well and to be able to explain and understand students’ questions”. Katherine believes that "you must have confidence and be familiar enough with your subject and to be creative in your approach teaching". She also believes it is important to have "the kids engaged to allow them to learn for themselves as well as understand their learning".

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Teaching is collaborative and not an isolated practice according to Katherine because "you always will have someone you can talk to". However, she believes teaching in many ways can be seen as an isolating practice because “education is undervalued and teachers tend to stick together isolating themselves”.

**Teaching standards**

Teaching standards to Katherine is about “the government determining how you must teach”.

5.2.5  **Sarah’s pre-enactment interview data**

Sarah is from Germany and has a Bachelor in Media and Communications and Master of Media Arts and Production from the University of Sydney. She was quite perplexed and “quite scared with how easy it was to get into the teaching degree”. She explained how a teaching degree in “Germany takes six years with another two years when you work as an intern and the pay is very poor and then someone from the Government comes in to review you to see if you are ready to teach”.
**Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)**

The reason for Sarah wanting to teach is that she “likes to be around children and engage with them” and because she has been told that she is “really good with children”. Sarah’s choice to teach middle years was that she believes it would provide “better options to find work”. She is a fulltime graduate pre-service teacher in the Graduate Diploma program. For her, the challenging subjects in the graduate diploma program (Middle Years) would be the mathematics subject and the multi-literacy subject.

Sarah hopes to learn from the one year graduate diploma program “strategies how to engage all kinds of learners, and how to motivate students”. She hopes to incorporate lots of creative ideas from her media and communications background and she is particularly interested in group work. She believes that it is important to keep students interested by allowing for a variety of different learning tasks during a lesson as she feels “students cannot focus more than 15 minutes at a time”. Teaching to Sarah is “showing students how to access knowledge”. As a teacher her role is to “explain that learning is something you do every day, it is inherent in everyday life, it is a life-long process”. Learning “is life-long, it is taking on, reconsidering it, and re-evaluating it, maybe that is learning”. She sees a good learner as “someone who is open-minded, organized, and who can apply their learning as well as explain concepts” and someone who keeps on re-evaluating what they learned.

Sarah expects students in her classroom to “listen, to engage, be open minded and to ask a lot of questions”. A good teacher is someone who is enthusiastic and accepting as well as really well “prepared to deliver content to students that is relevant in the real world context and to give them examples and to model things as well as to teach them to learn”. Sarah hopes that her enthusiasm for learning can in turn ‘enthuse’ her students to learn, and hopes that her students will feel confident to approach her when they experience difficulties.
**Teacher identity**

Sarah believes that teacher identity refers to a teacher who has a certain kind of personality and a love for subjects. Teacher identity is important because “you choose to be a teacher” but she notes “just because you love a subject does not mean you will be good teaching it”. Significantly, a mathematics teacher identity is different from a general teacher identity because a mathematics teacher is “very studious and very nerdy”.

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Sarah does not think teaching is isolated because she “has read somewhere that students are used to help with teaching technology”.

**Teaching standards**

Sarah did not know enough about teaching standards to comment.

5.2.6 Jane’s pre-enactment interview data

Jane is a full-time graduate pre-service teacher who comes from Wales and has a degree in Geography and Italian; like Katherine she was influenced by her mother to become a teacher. She felt that her teaching experience in Italy where she worked as a teacher’s aide helped her in her choice to teach in middle years rather than in secondary. She admitted to not being confident teaching the “bigger kids”. Her expectation of the one year graduate diploma program was that it would be very hard but expected that the program would prepare her "more than 80% to become a quality teacher".

**Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)**

Jane sees teaching as a profession where she is “helping people to learn and about developing relationships with her students”. Her reason for choosing to teach middle school was based on “a fear of kids bigger than herself” and the fact that she does “not feel confident working with younger kids”. Jane was not sure what was meant by learning whilst feeling that it was something that she had done "a lot of' in her past and that learning related to "building on
blocks and just building more blocks". She believed that a good learner is someone who is enthusiastic, open-minded, has a willingness to take risks and who wants to learn. She remembers some ‘kids’ from her teaching aid experience in Italy:

I knew kids in Italy who did not want to learn and that was very, very hard, there was a lack of enthusiasm for learning. If you really try even if it is not inherent in everybody, you as a teacher got to work on developing enthusiasm not only in yourself but also in the kids and you can work on that.

Jane expects students to respect her, and to listen to her when she is talking. She also expects from her students an understanding of what learning is. She does not like patronizing her students and likes to treat them like adults. A good teacher is enthusiastic and has a passion for teaching and learning. Jane remembers how “the times I learned the most was when the teacher’s been really enthusiastic him or herself”. A good teacher also needs to be prepared and it is important that the teacher "can help the whole group learn not just the very bright ones or the ones who are a little bit behind". A good teacher "knows what your subject is for a start and knows exactly what it is you are trying to teach for that subject". Jane believes she will be quite strict as a teacher because "I get very upset when I see disobedience and children who have no respect for their elders".

**Teacher identity**

Jane believes that the term teacher identity refers to the way that "the teacher teaches the students, the way they act, and the way that they are". She believes that they have to have "a different way of interacting with students because in normal situations they interact with adults". She suggests that “a teacher identity has a lot do with the way you interact with your classes and how your personality shapes your teaching”. Teacher identity is important to Jane because "you need to have your own identity in all aspect of life and to know you cannot be like someone else and that you need to develop an identity".
**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Jane does not think teaching is isolated because "you are surrounded by other teachers".

**Teaching standards**

Jane did not know enough about the teaching standards to comment.

5.2.7 **Tina’s pre-enactment interview data**

Tina is a fulltime graduate pre-service teacher in the program. She has a degree in International studies and has chosen to teach because she wants “to help young people”. The reason for Tina’s choice to teach middle years is her belief "that the senior year kids probably have formed their ideas and their decisions" whereas she wants "to help young people to develop their own personas and where they are going". She expected to learn “how to teach” from the one year graduate diploma program and believed that the challenging subject in the course would be middle year’s mathematics because she has “not done maths in a long time”.

**Teaching and learning–(the good learner and the good teacher)**

Tina believed that teaching is about “helping young people to learn new things, to help them develop their ideas and to encourage them to research, investigate and to follow through with their ideas”. Learning "is a life time thing meaning you are always learning something new" and a good learner is someone who is "open to ideas” and is “a good listener”.

Tina believes that a good teacher is someone who is a good listener, respects students, encourages individuality, and is open to new ideas as well as encouraging group work. To Tina, "a good teacher can relate to the students and to their world, it is someone who cares about them who know what they are interested in”. A good teaching quality she values is collaboration with other teachers and she hopes to "encourage other teachers to teach my classes so that kids are getting it from all aspects".
**Teacher identity**

In her pre-enactment interview, teacher identity to Tina refers to individual teachers and she believes "all teacher identities are important".

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Tina does not see teaching as isolated as "you bring into the classroom the kids’ life experiences as well as your own".

**Teaching standards**

Tina was not familiar enough with teaching standards to comment.

### 5.2.8 Ron’s pre-enactment interview data

Ron is a fulltime graduate pre-service teacher in the Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). He is a grandfather of a young toddler, comes from a finance banking background and has a Bachelor of Science and an Applied Psychology degree. He has had experience both as a mentor and trainer of staff in his previous employment that he found highly enjoyable and to teach is something that he has thought about “for some time”. Ron’s preferred choice would have been to teach at the secondary level and not middle years but the lack of prerequisite discipline subjects in his previous degree did not allow him to teach in the senior years. Further, he did not feel comfortable teaching very young children. Rather he sees himself better suited “teaching older children who were more self-sufficient and who had some knowledge that could be built upon”. Ron's expectation from the one year graduate diploma program is to be able to get a job as a classroom teacher, and he expects that the degree will provide him with "sufficient knowledge and ability to go out and do a reasonable job as a first year teacher". He also expects to be supported with the necessary resources and people he can contact when and if he needs to.

**Teaching and learning– (the good learner and the good teacher)**

In his pre-interview Ron saw teaching as helping children to “learn skills and to provide them with information that was relevant to their age, stage in life and where they came from”. He
believed that the environment in which children learn is an important “aspect for teaching”. Ron believes that learning is both “relevant and useful” and believed it to be something "he has been doing all his life and sees as a continuing process". Learning, Ron hopes, "is something that students are doing when I am teaching". Learning "is imparting information that is relevant to them that they can understand and relate to other knowledge they have and then to build on".

A good learner to Ron is someone "who is prepared to stand up and admit not knowing the answer”. It is also someone who is “prepared to ask questions, put in the effort and to take risks that may involve failing” but they can also "pick themselves up and try till they feel confident in what they know and then apply it". Ron expected his students to "put in a reasonable effort, that they were honest and that they were respectful to others, including their teachers". As their teacher he believed he would treat them both fairly and honestly.

Ron believes to be a good teacher “is to be very, very aware of the world and the world in which the students live in--you have to become part of the kids’ world”. A good teacher quality to Ron is "to be able to get the knowledge to the students so that the students know what they are doing". He believes this involves "respecting the students and recognizing that you as the teacher do not always know or have the answer and to admit that to the students and then suggest to them to find out the answer together".

**Teacher identity**

Ron believes that "teacher identity is about individual identity but it is also about the wider community’s perception about the teacher". He notes how as the teacher "you are there to facilitate learning to help children behave in a decent and respectful manner".

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Ron does not see teaching as isolated. Teaching he believes is “being part of the wider community, the nation, the world”. He feels strongly that teachers are "accountable and their job is to educate people, to get them to a certain level of knowledge so that they can move on. The
nation is paying for our kids’ education through tax–so it is only reasonable that students can expect some value for their money so teaching is not isolated at all”.

**Teaching standards**

Teaching standards do “not phase” Ron as he sees them as “guidelines teachers must have to operate within and are necessary to keep teachers on track”.

**5.2.9 Simon’s pre-enactment interview data**

Simon is a fulltime graduate pre-service teacher in the Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). He is a father of three teenagers and has a degree in Anthropology and Archaeology. He has a number of years of experience running a small business together with his wife. Simon believes that he has “something to offer to teaching and education and it is a good career”. His choice to teach middle years is that it offered the “broadest employment opportunities”. He believed that the one-year graduate diploma program was going to be "the hardest thing he would have done" whilst also being "academically rewarding". To Simon "all units [subjects] would be challenging" particularly since "just the change in my perspective would be challenging".

**Teaching and learning–(the good learner and the good teacher)**

Teaching according to Simon is about "transferring knowledge, social skills, and understanding culture" whilst learning was about "develop[ing] the ability to think and analyse". He describes a good learner as "someone who recalls facts and data but also knows how to use their previous experience to interpret the data and to come up with solutions".

Simon did not have any expectations from his students nor did he want to have any and how the students wanted to be treated “depended very much on the students themselves”. However, he believed that "he would treat them like anybody else, like adults, but also allow for that they do not have the life experiences of an adult and are going to make mistakes".
A good teacher is someone who has the ability to engage students in learning and “to get them to respond” because "any kind of response is better than having a bunch of kids staring at the wall". A good teacher must have "the ability to develop student interest by relating to the students and their understanding of what they are learning". To do this well Simon believes that the teacher has to "have energy".

**Teacher identity**

Teacher identity to Simon refers to the "persona the teacher takes on in the classroom". Teacher identity is important because to be able to "successfully engage the students in learning, you need that persona”. Simon believes that "if you have the wrong identity or wrong persona you are not going to convey the message that you are trying to convey". He firmly believes that teacher identity is important because to "teach successfully you need a certain identity or personality".

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Simon does not think teaching is isolated as there are teachers in the school and other staff to talk to.

**Teaching standards**

Simon did not know enough about the teaching standards to comment.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS’ PRE-ENACTMENT INTERVIEW DATA

5.3.1 Personal and Professional Backgrounds

Based on the findings most of the participants came into the one year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) with a sense of both professional and personal selves and with well considered reasons why they wanted to teach middle years. The preliminary findings also indicated that their choice in selecting the university involved an expectation of professional support and welcome to a middle-school community and culture. This is in line with research (cf. Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991) that suggests a sense of community among
graduate pre-service teachers can foster learning and discourage the intellectual and professional isolation of teachers. Moreover, personal contact and support offered by university lecturers and course-coordinator are factors that support the development of positive teacher identities (cf. Boling & Martin, 2005).

Participants came from a variety of professional backgrounds such as journalism, nursing, banking and finance, accountancy, librarian, and small business. Some were parents of adult children or had grandchildren. Others were parents of either or both very young children or children in adolescence. In line with the literature (cf. Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Thornton et al., 2005), understanding their personal and professional background provides opportunities for supporting participants in developing their teacher identities that in turn may assist in addressing the attrition of highly qualified teachers.

5.3.2 Reasons to teach

Seven reasons for becoming a teacher emerged from the analysis of all participants’ responses with respect to their decision to become a teacher:

- Passion to teach (Melinda);
- A love and a fascination for kids (Jean and Sarah);
- Helping or caring (Katherine, Jane, Fran and Tina);
- Prior experience working in a school setting (Julie and Rolf);
- Transferring skills (Debra);
- Previous work experience as trainer of adult learners (Ron);
- A good career (Simon).

Many of these reasons are in line with earlier studies (see Allen, 2005; Beijard et al., 2000; Hobson et al., 2004; Noddings 2000; Reid, 1997; Wilson & Cameron, 1996), which outline why mature-aged pre-service teachers in particular choose to become teachers. Some participants in this research study chose teaching because of altruistic values such as wanting to care and help
young people in their journey toward adulthood. In turn, for others, teaching provided a sense of purpose while for others it was a good career change. Prior experiences working with children and opportunities to transfer prior skills were also reasons cited as to why some of these participants had chosen teaching. The reason why some participants chose to teach middle years in particular was based on personal experiences such as being parents or experience working with children in this age group (see Beijard et al., 2000). For example, some of the participants had well-developed understandings of some of the sensitive issues experienced by early adolescents, and those concerning boys. Other influencing factors in choosing teaching as a career included participants’ own family and parental influences. For these mature-aged participants, a commitment to teaching and their sense of care for young people is evident in the above responses, suggesting a relational orientation to teaching (Noddings, 2000). According to Merriam et al. (2007), the benefits and the importance of knowing the participants and their reasons for participating or undertaking the teaching degree allow teacher educators to understand how to better serve the mature-age learner.

5.3.3 Conceptions of teaching and learning before practicum including conceptions of a good learner and a good teacher

While it was common in participants’ pre-enactment interview responses to find traditional views about teaching such as teaching is something that is done or given to students (Cooney, 2001; Elkind, 1997; Klein, 2004), there were also responses that suggested that they perceived teaching as a relational endeavour (Dall’Alba, 2005; Noddings, 2003, 2005; Nunez et al., 1999; Rogoff, 1990). That is, some of the participants were of the view that teaching was connecting, sharing and having relationship with their students. For instance, according to Jane, a former taxation officer and teacher’s aide, “teaching is having a relationship with a learner, so a one-on-one relationship, and in a group and helping them to learn to acquire knowledge and skills”. Teaching was also about teamwork. For example, Jean, a former nurse, believed that
teaching “is about being part of the team but the buck stops with me as a teacher”, suggesting that the teacher is accountable for what is happening in the classroom. There was a shared view among all participants that teaching was about helping students that in turn relates to notions of the caring teacher (Bain, 2004; Noddings, 2000, 2003; Palmer, 1998). Moreover there was a strong consensus amongst participants that the teacher must provide a safe learning environment where both individual engagement and collaboration is encouraged (cf. Richardson et al., 2001; Sexton, 2004).

Participants’ conceptions about learning, as opposed to teaching, suggested a mixture of traditional and relational views. While learning for most of the participants was based on traditional conceptions about learning as an individualistic endeavour, they also believed a good learner was self-motivated, organised, enthusiastic, open-minded and prepared to reflect on their learning. Whilst this learner is able to recall information and be a good listener, to be a good learner was also about collaboration and communication (cf. Merriam et al., 2007). Findings suggested that whilst for most participants subject matter knowledge was important, for one of the participants it was also about understanding what has been learned about the subject, and then to have the ability to apply what has been learned in real life situations and to be able to use the knowledge to help others. Hence, learning is predominantly a social rather than a solitary task that involves commitment and an intention of helping others. Learning then does not only involve mastering certain strategies or cognitive capacities as purported by the traditional perspective. Instead, it is also intensely collaborative (Taylor, 2000)--it is about trying to learn, making mistakes and learning again in a supportive and positively encouraging environment. Risk-taking is an important part of the learning process and according to Ron a learner (student) needs to be:

prepared to stand up and say ‘I don’t know about this’ and is prepared to ask questions,
prepared to put the effort in and prepared to I guess, take a risk that they might stuff
things up initially before they get to the stage where they are quite proficient at what they are doing.

There was a consensus amongst the participants that learning is a life-long process, that is, learning is something you do every day, and that does not only apply to students at school but also to teachers. A summary of participants’ conceptions about teaching and learning can be seen in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1
*Traditional versus relational conceptions about teaching and learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional–Teaching and Learning</th>
<th>Relational–Teaching and Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge as given;</td>
<td>Connecting;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic;</td>
<td>Sharing;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive–mastering cognitive tasks;</td>
<td>Relationship;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-matter knowledge;</td>
<td>Teamwork collaboration;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitary.</td>
<td>Risk taking;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Conceptions of a good learner*

The analysis of the participants’ pre-enactment interviews revealed two dimensions in relation to the good learner, the cognitive dimension and the non-cognitive social-relational dimension. Participants’ expectations of their students suggested they would enjoy learning and try really hard. Some participants expected their students to be open-minded and willing to help each other. Therefore, there clearly was a cognitive dimension to their conception of a good student, namely that a good student/learner needed to be self-motivated, organised, enthusiastic, open-minded and prepared to reflect on their learning (Richards, et al., 2001).

In addition to a cognitive dimension, the participants’ conception of a good student also included the non-cognitive, social-relational dimension. Indeed, while most of the participants
when asked about their conceptions of a good learner spoke about the expectations they had of their students, such as they expected their students to listen, memorize, understand and apply the information they are given, some participants felt that collaboration among their students was more important than the cognitive dimension. There were other participants, such as Tina and Simon, who did not believe that it was a good idea to have such ‘high’ expectations of either students or of oneself as beginning teachers. Tina, for example, thought that “you can place too many expectations on yourself [as a teacher] and you will be disappointed, you will have lots of failures and you fall down”. This can perhaps best be related to Tina’s unfamiliarity with and inexperience of being in a classroom situation. However, it could also be indicative of her own sense of self or self-esteem, which impacts her teaching, her interpretation of the practicum, her ability to cope and her interaction with others (Dobbins, 1996). Here developing confidence lies in Tina’s ability to negotiate personal space in her practicum to reflect. This will allow her to manage the personal pressures that she has placed upon herself and that commonly derive from the dual and stressful role of being part student and part teacher, which requires support not only from the supervising teacher but also other school personnel. Participants’ conceptions about the good learner are summarized in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2
Conceptions about the good learner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptions of the good learner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive—Self-motivated, self-directed, organised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conceptions of a good teacher

From the analysis there were nine attributes that were identified in terms of what made the good teacher. There were many similarities in participants’ pre-enactment interview responses
about the personal characteristics of the good teacher. For example, all of the participants agreed that a good teacher was caring, and one who in particular, cared for the whole young person, and not just about the curriculum. A good teacher was also approachable and treated students with decency (cf. Bain, 2004; Noddings, 2000, 2003; Packer, 1999; Palmer, 1998). For instance, treating students with care was particularly important for Rolf who sought to treat his students “with respect and for them to feel free to have a go without feeling someone will jump on them for failing or making mistakes.”

There was a consensus amongst all participants that a good teacher can inspire students to learn, is fair, accepting, respectful, organized, fun and has an ability to bring out the best in students by listening to them. For Sarah it was important that a good teacher was also:

kind and friendly— that they are fair, they have rules and follow through, and explain everything that they do so the students know exactly what is asked of them they also have a great sense of humour— have a bit of a laugh with them.

In addition to being fun, most participants agreed that it was important that a good teacher knows how to relate to their students and create trusting relationships. Hence, and most importantly, according to most of the participants a good teacher has a relational orientation to his or her students. Such a perspective is of particular importance to students, since the fundamental relationships of school shape the ways that students learn to see themselves as effective (or ineffective) participants in the learning process. This means that the teacher must have the ability to trust that their students have the capacity to develop their own ideas, and that they can then articulate these ideas, as well as participate in collective thinking. Indeed, “the ways that students learn to trust their relationships in school is integrally linked to the ways they learn to trust what they know” (Raider-Roth, 2005, p. 623).

Interestingly there was no discussion among participants of the cognitive dimension of good teaching (e.g., teaching strategies) other than that most of the participants agreed that it
was important that as a professional the teacher must have a good knowledge and understanding of pedagogy and curriculum. In addition to this it was also important to be accepting of change that was part of the realities of teaching and learning (Palmer, 1998). This is line with Hooley’s (2007) definition of a professional as someone who undertakes regular professional updates, is a member of a professional organisation, someone who reads and contributes to the professional journal and acts in a professional manner. Table 5.3 presents a summary of participants’ conceptions about the good teacher.

Table 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Conceptions of the good teacher</th>
<th>Relational Conceptions of the good teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content focused.</td>
<td>Relational orientation to students-- promote sense of community belonging;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring--treats students fairly, respectfully with decency, inspirational;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good listener;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approachable, friendly, accepting;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fun, sense of humour, energetic;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintains knowledge base.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.4 Teacher identity

To assist in the development of teacher identity, according to Weber and Mitchell (1995), it is important to explore the images that we hold of teachers. They note that, for example, the portraits of teachers found in both our individual and collective memories and in the media can provide:

a stimulus for self-interrogation that can sharpen our professional identities as teachers by providing the contextual, historical, and political background that makes self-
interpretation more meaningful and identity more complete. (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, pp.130-131)

Hence, it was interesting to note the participants’ perplexity when they were first introduced to the term teacher identity (see Table 5.4). For some of the participants, the term teacher identity was a strange term, while others saw it as a role they took on in the classroom situation. For others, teacher identity related to a traditional perspective of the role of the teacher. This was exemplified by Jean, who related the term teacher identity before her own children began their schooling with:

The teacher standing at the front of the classroom talking to children and giving information to them to learn, and that they somehow absorb, repeat and memorize.

However, after a number of years of positive experiences with her children’s teachers, Jean had come to transform her traditional view of teacher identity to a more relational perspective where the teacher is “almost as an extension of the family unit”. There was also a consensus among most participants that it was important to have a positive teacher identity. Jean explains why she believes this to be so:

If you have a poor identity well then it will be a battle each day and I would expect it to be a horrible, horrible battle. A poor identity would be the idea of a teacher who does not respect their children is not nurturing or kind--they don’t care about the emotional state of children.

This is in line with research by Knowles (1992) who believes that it is important for the pre-service teacher to have a clear and a positive image of his or her self as a teacher. The development of a positive teacher identity, according to Knowles, is most commonly constructed from observing good teachers and based on positive personal teaching experiences. Knowles notes for example, that often it is the unpleasant experiences with teachers that are remembered leading to conceptions of the teacher we do not want to be rather than a clear image of ourselves
as teachers. Knowles also found that the effects of prior positive experiences were likely to be overrun by negative prior experiences affecting in particular those more vulnerable or anxious pre-service students. It was particularly interesting to note suggestions by some of the participants that teacher identity related to a new way of becoming and looking at the world, suggesting that identity formation is a continuing process of becoming.

Table 5.4

*Teacher Identity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Interview response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strange term–Don’t know;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A role–Teacher standing in front of the classroom and giving information to students;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual teachers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A certain kind of personality;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way they teach, act and are different to how they normally are;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating to the development of the teacher;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of the family;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New way of becoming.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.5 Teaching as an isolated practice

Most participants did not think about middle-school teaching as an isolated practice, rather they revealed a consensus in seeing teaching as collaborative with other teachers in schools. This is in line with a relational perspective (Dall’Alba, 2005; Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006; Miller Marsh, 2002; Noddings, 2003; Nunez et al., 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990) and with the underlying characteristics of middle-school philosophy (cf. De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005).
5.3.6 Teaching standards

In their pre-enactment responses most participants were not familiar enough with the teacher standards to comment on these. However, for Ron it was important that the newly introduced teacher standards were seen as guidelines: “I think the teacher standards are fairly good guidelines and we have to have guidelines to operate within”.

5.4 PARTICIPANTS’ POST-ENACTMENT INTERVIEW RESPONSES

In this section participants’ post-enactment interview responses will be presented to determine changes in their identification as teachers. Their stories around four themes are then followed by an analysis and discussion of the findings, concluding with a comparison with their pre-enactment interview responses. The first of the four themes relates to participants’ reasons to teach, how they identify with and understand teaching and learning, and their perceptions about the good learner and the good teacher. The second theme relates to their conceptions of teacher identity. The third theme is about their perceptions of whether teaching is an isolated profession and the fourth theme relates to their perspective on the teaching standards.

5.4.1 Melinda’s post-enactment interview data

Melinda was happy about her choice to be part of the one year graduate diploma program (Middle Years) and in particular to have had the opportunity to take part in an immersion program that was offered at the local middle school. As part of the immersion program she was able to spend each Friday throughout the one-year graduate diploma program in a Year 6 classroom. However, this meant that she did not take part in the workshop program as offered by the research study. Melinda’s overall experience of the year in the Graduate Diploma program was a feeling of “rushing a lot, being a mum and running a family”, as she would like to have had more time to read around the various subjects that had been offered. However, she was very excited about what she had been learning and knows she will go on learning “forever”, as
she feels she is "just touching around the edges". She admits to being more passionate about her decision to teach after her participation in the immersion program and the practicum.

Melinda mentioned feeling “apprehensive” about getting work as a classroom teacher after completing the one-year graduate diploma program. She was concerned about the accuracy of rumours circulating among the graduate pre-service teachers such as “how one-year grad dips are not well regarded by school principals, that they know nothing and that they cannot learn how to teach in a year”.

**Immersion program**

Melinda highly recommends the immersion program and while she felt that it was “hard work, it is well worth it as you can apply that what you learned at uni straight away”. Melinda valued her experience in the classroom and found Year 6 “definitely a very happy culture”. She also enjoyed the culture of the school which she described as “a real melting pot with diverse learners and abilities”. Melinda did find teaching middle years challenging at times and felt that whilst she had “no problems teaching subjects” she was “struggling with behaviour management”. She recalls her “joyfulness” when she made a connection with a particular difficult child--“feeling really high”. However, there were days when she “felt like not turning up to teach as the kids were just little horrors”. She was comforted noting how the experienced teachers at her school also had similar experiences and “used the staff room to vent their feelings... while they still loved teaching”. She noted teachers meeting regularly in the staff room during breaks to talk and swap ideas and they were very supportive of the other pre-service teachers. Melinda felt very included throughout her immersion program and the practicum at the school and believed that the teachers were very happy to have “an extra body in the classroom to help out”.

**Teaching and learning--(the good learner and the good teacher)**

In line with her pre-enactment responses about teaching and learning being teacher-directed Melinda believes that there is a place in the classroom for teacher-directed teaching and
learning strategies. That is, teaching was and is to some extent traditional in the sense that it is transferring or transmitting knowledge to the students (Hildebrand, 1999). However, she also believed that teaching also involved “getting kids to share ideas, to learn new ideas to improve skills and knowledge--sometimes teaching can be just getting through the day”.

Melinda emphasized the ability to teach children the skill of listening because as she explains, it is “not so much about being a good learner than being a good listener, and so it is about teaching a child to listen and understand what the goals of learning are”. Melinda believed that she had treated her students “softly” during her practicum but is confident that she will get tougher with more experience. She believes that she is learning to “treat them (students) as equals with a touch of authority so that they know they cannot step over the boundary”. A good teacher is someone who "does not give up on the kids and makes sure the kids understand the lesson, a good teacher makes a difference". Melinda believes a good teacher understands the importance of setting her class rules, personal goals, behaviour management policy at the beginning of the year so that students know where they stand and what is expected from them.

Teacher identity

Similarly to her pre-interview response Melinda believed that "her teacher identity is her as a person”. However, this also involves “her as a mum who will go into the classroom cranky and all when the kids are not doing the right thing". In this sense being a teacher is intimately connected to her personal sense of self as a mum (Gaudelli, 1999). Reflecting on other teaching styles she had observed during her graduate diploma program Melinda noted one of the mathematics lecturers, Tim, being more like a coach than a traditional lecturer / teacher because he made "it (the subject) so much fun, so simple and he has such a great personality". Melinda's recalls struggling with mathematics during her personal schooling experiences until she had a teacher who like Tom made mathematics fun and “who helped her develop her maths understanding to a distinction level”. From the above two examples it can be noted that the
merging of Melinda’s personal experiences as a mum and as a past struggling student of mathematics was influencing not only her sense of developing teacher identity but also her teaching style. Her growing confidence in managing student behaviour (based on being a mum) and teaching mathematics (by making it fun) allowed Melinda a sense of self as a teacher. This is in line with the idea that a positive teacher identity is dependent on the individual teacher’s personal motivations and feelings about the complexity of teaching of any subject (cf. Thornton & Wilson, 2004).

*Teaching as an isolated practice*

In line with her pre-interview response teaching to Melinda was about collaboration. She experienced team teaching and enjoyed collaboration during her practicum but believes that teaching in some schools "can be isolated as teachers are mostly teaching by themselves". That is with teachers keeping to themselves, teaching behind closed doors rather than seeking support from fellow colleagues.

*Teaching standards*

Melinda was not present at the workshop presentation on the teaching standards, and hence not able to offer comments on the teaching standards.

**5.4.2 Rolf’s post-enactment interview data**

Overall Rolf is happy with the two subjects he has completed in the Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) even though he found the mathematics subject hard. He believes that he has "learned a lot" and in particular enjoyed "the practical hands-on how to teach maths".

*Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)*

In line with his pre-enactment interview responses, Rolf believes that teaching is about “helping students to acquire knowledge” and learning is about “getting information, understanding the information and hopefully being able to apply it”. His post-interview responses were also in line with his earlier perceptions about the good learner, being “inquisitive, who is
asking questions, who listen, and willing to put in the effort”. Rolf believed the outcome of what students are learning or have learned determines the quality of the teacher. Building on his pre-interview responses about good teachers, Rolf believes that a good teacher supports students to be independent in their learning and is ‘real’. Based on his experience working with ‘at-risk’ students, Rolf believes that "teachers have to be ‘real’ with students; they have to be able to gain the respect of their students and that means the teachers have to know what they are doing”. He also believes that a good teacher is someone who "allows students to think for themselves--that knows when and how to hold back and not intervene to support the students to encourage them to figure things out for themselves".

**Teacher identity**

Similarly to his pre-interview responses Rolf did not relate to teacher identity or what this may have referred to.

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Rolf did not see teaching as an isolated practice as he would "utilize his surroundings and to be a good teacher is a team effort". Rolf’s response seeing teaching as a team effort can be because of his work with at-risk students and where it is common to be working in a team situation or close collaboration with others youth workers.

**Teaching standards**

Rolf was not present at the workshop presentation on the teaching standards, and hence not able to offer comments on the teaching standards.

**5.4.3 Jean’s post-enactment interview data**

Being a part-time graduate pre-service teacher and after completing the two compulsory subjects as was required, Jean was disappointed in the Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). She explains, “… because I have not finished with the prac and I have only done the two
subjects I think it is still very early days for me and so I am still in that period of not really feeling I got a lot out of it I am not even really half way there yet”.

**Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)**

Jean confirmed her initial perceptions about teaching and learning as well as about the good learner and the good teacher that she provided in her pre-enactment interview responses. For example, she believes in the importance of providing a safe and nurturing “learning environment for students and ensuring that you capture those students that you provide them with the best opportunities for them to learn”. Learning is about “acquiring new knowledge, discovering new ways of doing things that you have not done before, I think it is being excited about new things, a bit of joy there”. A good learner is “someone who is engaged with what they are doing and properly a bit motivated… someone who is willing to learn is a good learner”. A good teacher is someone who listens and it “is to be aware of where each of your students are at in their own learning and where they are struggling where they are striving where they need assistance and I guess that comes to listening to them”. These responses are similar to her pre-enactment interview responses that suggest the good teacher and learner continues to be influenced to some extent by her personal and (daily) observations of her children’s classrooms and teachers rather than the two subjects that she has completed thus far in the graduate diploma program.

**Teacher identity**

In contrast to her pre-interview response teacher identity where she related teacher identity as being part of a team, Jean began to see “the notion of the teacher as an individual--I don’t think I really understood that when I began. I really saw the teacher as one of a team with lot of support even decisions within the classroom often being valued of a much more of a systemic rules that you followed that were very straight-forward and there was a lot of rigidity
with what you could do. I thought it was all very structured—I thought teachers do everything the same like in nursing but with individual personalities…” Nonetheless, to Jean teacher identity related to a sense of self (Alsup, 2005) and is important since “understanding yourself is important, hmm, you will not be able to your job properly if you don’t know who you are”.

Teaching as an isolated practice

As with Melinda and Rolf, Jean did not see teaching as an isolated practice as she ‘hoped’ teaching would be collaborating with other teachers. As noted above Jean is studying part-time in the middle-school graduate diploma program and is yet to complete a practicum.

Teaching standards

After her attendance at the workshop seminar on Teaching Standards Jean viewed the teaching standards as important in that they “make teachers responsible and accountable”. She also believes that they provide clear guidelines to what is required from a teacher whilst allowing for “a lot of freedom in the framework”. In this sense the standards represent a guide to teaching.

5.4.4 Katherine’s post-enactment interview data

Katherine, a part-time graduate pre-service teacher feels the Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) has been a lot better than what she had expected and feels that she has “come out a stronger person”. However, one of the criticisms she has in regards to the graduate diploma program is the short duration allowed for every topic:

to a degree I feel a whole lot of resentment that it is a one year degree because I think that you can do so much more if you had more time and obviously not four years but even if it was two years you have more time—every topic each week in the undergraduate program is a whole subject and we haven’t had a chance to look at each topic in depth—-we had to stick to one topic for the three assessment items and I know that is one of the criticisms from a lot of students what they wrote online on the feedback.
In line with the literature (cf. Ingvarson, 2007), feelings of resentment for not being provided with sufficient time to investigate subjects in depth are especially a common concern among one-year graduates.

*Teaching and learning--(the good learner and the good teacher)*

In her post-enactment interview Katherine explained that she felt more passionate about teaching middle school now that she has "a deeper appreciation to what goes into teaching and I have a heightened sense of value of it". Similar to her pre-enactment interview responses learning is lifelong and about growth, it is about “developing a new perspective, new ways of looking at the world” and “its processes” and hence, “there is no stop to it; is a continual process”. A good learner is someone who is motivated, who accepts challenges and “who sees gaps in knowledge and tries to work out different answers or comes up with different ways of looking”. To Katherine:

> it is really important that students learn how to connect all subjects, all topics, all discipline areas in a way that--I would expect them to see knowledge in the scheme of the whole world--that is something I have been thinking about in the last couple of months expecting students not just to learn maths is maths, not just learn English because it is English but to really open their eyes how interconnected the world is.

From this response, it can be seen that Katherine has begun to form an understanding and appreciation of the importance of an integrated curriculum and its interrelatedness to the world that is a major part of middle schooling (de Jong, 2005; Pendergast, 2002, 2005).

Also in line with her pre-enactment interview response regarding the good teacher Katherine believes that “very good teachers have the ability to connect to kids and to get them motivated to learn”. These teachers are open- minded, patient and generous with their resources both with their students and with other teachers.
Teacher identity

Being a teacher is “very special” to Katherine who as a result of her participation in the workshop program has a renewed and more profound respect for teaching: "it is something you take with you every part of your day--teacher identity is an all absorbing thing, it is part of life, it is not separate". Katherine feels that she has changed having found herself immersed in the subjects. She felt that participating in the workshops was developing her sense of teacher identity and feels that she has developed a sense of responsibility towards education.

Teaching as an isolated practice

Like Jean, Katherine did not see teaching as an isolated practice as she too viewed teaching as collaborative. This is in line with the literature on middle-school teaching as collaborative (de Jong & Chadbourne, 2005; Pendergast, 2005).

Teaching standards

Katherine’s pre-enactment interview response stating that teaching standards was about “the government determining how you must teach” did not change in her post-enactment response suggesting perhaps Katherine’s uncertainty about her own autonomy and decision making capabilities in the classroom.

5.4.5 Sarah’s post-enactment interview data

As a full-time graduate pre-service teacher, after completing the four subjects first semester Sarah admits to having felt overwhelmed learning each of the subjects in such a short time. She found the middle-school mathematics subject really hard as she was not clear about the expectations. Another subject titled Engaging Diverse Learners she felt was difficult because of the amount of reading she had to complete in such a short time-frame. She believes that the most she has learned about ‘becoming a teacher’ was from her practicum experience:

I think the most things I have learned is from prac and I have got background information from the uni I felt it really is a short time to learn--yeah teaching for a whole week on prac
has helped me with confidence. I think I am much more confident now even though I
don’t know everything in maths and stuff but it’s stuff I can easily understand I am
always really well prepared and I think I can improve all the time. All the teachers told
me they learned a lot after they finished uni on the go.

Like Katherine, Sarah too experienced feelings of being rushed and overwhelmed by the
amount of material that was covered in the short time-frame. For example, Sarah did not think
that the nine weeks that was the allocated time to learn about teaching middle years mathematics
was enough. Similarly, the time and material that was covered in the subject, Engaging the
Diverse Learner was insufficient to get an in-depth understanding of the complex issues involved
in the topic. Sarah attributed her increasing confidence in teaching to being organised and was
reassured by other teachers during her practicum that her teaching would continue to develop
after she had completed the graduate diploma program. This in line with literature about teaching
and learning as lifelong that continues long after the completion of teacher education programs
(Palmer, 1998).

**Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)**

For Sarah, teaching is about “preparing yourself really well to deliver content to students
that are [sic] relevant in the real world to make connections” and learning is on-going: it is
“reconsidering and re-evaluating” what has been learned. A good learner is open-minded and has
an ability to “reflect on their experiences and their learning”. This is in line with a relational view
of learning where teaching and learning is about connecting and reflecting on the learning
experience that in turn does not just influence, but determine the kinds of knowledge and
practices that are constructed (Dall’Alba, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Noddings, 2003; Nunez
et al., 1999).

After completing her first practicum Sarah believed that she had treated her students
fairly and with respect. Whilst she expected her students “to give it a go, to try really hard to
listen and to have respect for her”, she was somewhat disappointed with some students in her classroom who she felt “did not want to learn” and who had the “I don't care attitude”.

A good teacher quality Sarah values particularly after her first practicum is “to be fair, to treat students the same, give positive feedback”. She believes that the good teacher is someone who is “kind and friendly with a great sense of humour; they have rules and they follow through and explain everything to the students who then will know exactly what is asked of them”. She learned from her practicum that a good teaching strategy was to set up the rules from the beginning together with the students, to support different learning styles and to develop a non-intimidating learning environment.

**Teacher identity**

In her post-enactment response and after completing her practicum, Sarah noted some of the teachers at the school demonstrating such passion and love for teaching, that to her, “teacher identity is about a life-long passion for teaching. It is a passion not for the money but because they, the teachers, want to help”. Teacher identity, Sarah believed, is part of one's philosophy, that is, “it is about who you are in the profession; it is about re-evaluating yourself as well”.

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

In contrast to her pre-enactment response of seeing teaching and learning more as a collaborative experience where she worked closely with her students than with other teachers Sarah changed her perspective suggesting that teaching “is isolated a lot of the time--but it does not have to be--but that it depended on the person”. Sarah’s response is reflective of some novice mature-age pre-service teachers whose years of absence from schools make them especially vulnerable in their attempts to fitting in to the school culture (cf. Allen, 2005). This can be especially challenging for pre-service teachers who seek to work in authentic middle-school settings but who find themselves in traditional school settings where team teaching or integrated curriculum is not part of the school culture (Pendergast et al., 2007).
**Teaching standards**

Sarah was not sure about the teaching standards but knew they were important to know. This uncertainty about the newly introduced teaching standards was understandable considering that most of the participants in the study were not familiar with the teaching standards, yet all considered them to be important to the teaching profession.

5.4.6 Jane’s post-enactment interview data

After completing the graduate diploma program and the four subjects Jane felt disappointed with the graduate diploma program. She found that some of the subjects had been “really hard and difficult to engage with as well as frustrating”. A subject that Jane felt particularly disappointed with because of very little face-to-face contact was Engaging Diverse Learners. She felt particularly frustrated with her marks as she was used to getting good marks in her prior studies as an undergraduate. For many graduates returning to study as pre-service teachers can be a frustrating experience especially when the university offerings are not aligned to their expectations (Allen, 2005). Jane expected that as an internal pre-service teacher she would be enjoying face-to-face interactions with her lecturers who she could openly approach and to seek clarifications of any concerns she may have with her study.

**Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)**

Jane felt that being on practicum was very useful to her preparedness to teach, and in fact "more useful than if she had sat in uni the whole year". She became more passionate about teaching as something that she wanted to pursue after her practicum experience:

… because before I was not really OK—I knew I wanted to be a teacher but did not know whether it would be right for me. I did not know whether I would be the right kind of person because in the past I have always kind of shied away from contact with children but now I am really happy that I got in there and so it’s just fine.

She found her practicum experience highly enjoyable:
I really enjoyed it—it did not matter that in my last week I lost my voice that was a good experience—to work with silence. I really enjoyed teaching middle years as it is the age that I am really happy with—I really don’t fancy the early years and the seniors are bigger than me—so I am really happy with the middle years.

In her pre-enactment interview response Jane was convinced that students knew what was meant by learning. However, after her practicum experience she found to her surprise that students in "Year 5 and Year 6 needing a lot of scaffolding" and was surprised at how much scaffolding she in fact needed to do. However, and in line with her pre-enactment interview responses a good teacher would know how to support learning through scaffolding. A good teacher to Jane was also patient with her students as well as firm with her students as needed. Learning for Jane was about acquiring knowledge and skills that then could be applied to in the real world.

**Teacher identity**

In line with Jane’s pre-interview response, teacher identity refers “to the way you interact with your classes and how your personality shapes your teaching”. Teacher identity is “how you use your personality and skills to help the students learn and understand the subjects”. This is in line with literature (Hoveid & Hoveid, 2004; Huntley, 2003; Turner-Bisset, 2001) that suggest knowledge of self in teaching is crucial. Recognition as a teacher (Carlone & Johnson, 2007; Palmer, 1998) is also important to Jane, “because you are not cloned off anybody else and you have to work it out your own way and again use your own personality and not everybody is the same and it is important for your students to realize that”.

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Teaching in the classroom is not an isolated experience to Jane who sees "her relationship with her class is that of a big sister". This is an interesting response and a response that perhaps suggests her reason for teaching. By aligning herself with the students, teaching in
this sense “is the experience of being part of meaningful wholes and in harmony with super-
individual units such as family, social groups, culture and cosmic order” (Boucouvalas, 1988, p.
56); in other words, it is about giving meaning or purpose to one’s own existence.

Teaching standards

Jane believes the teaching standards are positive in that they "are a way of helping
teachers to work out what they need to concentrate on in their professional development" and she
believes that "all teachers should strive to reach them". Her perspectives of the teaching standards
may be seeing them more as guidelines to what can be achieved.

5.4.7 Tina’s post-enactment interview data

Tina was disappointed with the one-year Graduate Diploma program after she had
completed the second half of the program. Tina explains that “as a whole the course was
disorganized and the university was disorganized even with things like printing. I don’t know if
maybe my expectations may have been too high--the university I went to before was very good–
field studies was really good, engaging diverse learners was a waste of time--I mean we just read
a textbook, yeah the whole course was disorganized”. On the positive side Tina found both the
mathematics subject and field studies subject good.

Teaching and learning–(the good learner and the good teacher)

In her post-enactment interview and after her practicum experience, teaching for Tina
was in line with her pre-enactment response in that teaching is about "helping kids to think for
themselves and to analyse, so that they can perform their own investigation”. A teacher facilitates
this “by presenting them with materials and allowing them to do the work and develop their ideas
rather than overt teaching”. Tina was disappointed by the amount of “overt teaching” that she
experienced during her practicum and believed that the students were not learning. She also
expressed a number of expectations she would be asking from her future students, such as that
they need "to cooperate with each other, help each other, learn from each other, respect each
other, to learn to question and not to feel afraid. To understand that there is not always a right answer”.

Tina believed that she had treated the Year 7 students as "as adults, acknowledging that they are young but treating them as people capable of learning". She felt strongly about not treating students "as stupid or inferior as they were treated by their teacher", who she described as "very autocratic". Tina believes that a good teacher knows the "subject and enjoy teaching it--make it fun". Other good teacher qualities included being "open to ideas and appreciate ways kids learn. Encourage them to develop their own methods".

**Teacher identity**

In her post-interview Tina believed that a teacher identity "is about someone who works hard and puts in a lot of hours into planning". She explains that teacher identity "is about myself as a teacher, who is respected but not always respected because parents might not agree and students can respect or disrespect you". Teacher identity is important because you become "conscious about what you are doing and what you may look like when you run into students". Tina believes that “students' perception of her as their teacher is important, not only outside but also inside the school”; this is especially so because "teachers are important people who have a big role to play in the community".

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

After her practicum experience Tina believes teaching can be isolated. As she says, "you can hide in the classroom all day and choose not to socialize with other teachers”. Tina felt that many of the teachers she came across "didn't seem to venture outside their comfort zone and all they talk about is the kids”.

**Teaching standards**

Teacher and teaching standards according to Tina "relate to the minimum you need to know in order to teach" and she hopes to meet the standards.
5.4.8 Ron’s post-enactment interview data

Halfway through the one year graduate diploma program (Middle Years), Ron feels that his expectations have been met. He admits to having been “living outside his comfort zone”, however he believes that this is what he expected. Mathematics was the most challenging unit because of his "mental block and negative mindset". Whilst he admits he "still has a mountain of stuff to learn" he has realized that what he once thought was mathematics he no longer believes mathematics to be. For instance, using the fairytale story of Cinderella to teach mathematics during his practicum clearly shows that "maths is not something that lives in isolation". Ron also felt that being in front of the classroom after such a short time (nine weeks at university) allowed him the time “to be sure if teaching was what he wanted to do”. After completing his first practicum Ron felt he himself in particular had “learned an awful lot”. He felt he may have been "too soft" with the students during his prac and believed the reason for this was his "background working with adult learners who he did not need to tell to sit down, be quiet, do this or that etc". He realized after the first week on prac that if he was to survive he needed to "toughen up in that area and learn to give very clear directions to the students, and when students were misbehaving to tell them immediately that they were misbehaving, what was expected of them and why what they were doing was unacceptable".

Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)

In contrast to Ron's pre-enactment interview response, his conception of teaching in a classroom situation quickly changed after he noted that teaching children was not the same as teaching adults in a professional staff development seminar or university lecturing where "the university lecturer [is] standing in front of the class with all this information to be passed on". Ron found that as a classroom teacher he had to quickly change his structured teaching style to adopt a more flexible teaching style because of the continuous changes and interruptions that took place throughout the day, "with children having to be pulled out for music, other extra-curricular
activities or the whole class to be pulled out for assembly”. To be able to teach well Ron did not think it is necessary to know everything but believed it was important "to be well prepared with your lessons and to have in store a number of different behaviour management tricks to manage the classroom". Similar to his pre-enactment response, learning is about “getting information that is relevant to them [students], providing to them with a method that they can understand that they can relate to other knowledge they have”. A good learner is the person who then knows to "use that knowledge to help other people". Ron believed that the better learners in his classroom were those who were able to "demonstrate that they were listening by answering questions and even if they got the answers wrong they in fact were taking some notice and making an effort to learn". He had some concerns regarding the academic levels of some of the students in his classroom and felt some of them were in for "a rough time" as they moved on to secondary levels of schooling. His future expectations from students included for them to "display manners, to be courteous and not to disrupt lessons so as to distract others from their learning".

Good teaching qualities, Ron felt, meant to be organized, give clear directions to the students and to recognize the diversity in learning styles in the classroom. In line with his pre-enactment interview response Ron believed that to be a good teacher, they had to connect with their students and the teacher "had to make life interesting for all of those people, give them tasks that challenged them but not make it impossible for success". He also believed that teachers need to “respect the student as an individual and to recognize student differences and then to work on those differences”. During his practicum he had noted a student who regularly seemed to make the choice of not wanting to participate in the classroom activities. However, "after chatting and building a relationship with the boy" the student began not only to engage in the lessons but Ron also noted a marked change in the student’s attitude towards him as the classroom teacher.
Teacher identity

In addition to his pre-enactment interview response where teacher identity was not only determined by the individual but also by the wider community, after completing his first practicum, Ron also came to the view that teacher identity must involve "how the student sees me as a teacher". Ron wants his students to see him as a teacher “who is the sort of person who is going to maximise their [students] learning because they know I am fair and reasonable and I will help them and I will not be harshly judging and criticizing and humiliating them--trust me, I've seen teachers do that". Similar to his pre-enactment interview response Ron thought that there are "lots linking teacher identity and maths teacher identity" but still maintained that "having a maths teacher identity is to some extent separate from your own identity". This he believes may have to do with his previous thoughts about what a mathematics teacher is "a bloke with no hair teaching a subject that is dry as sawdust almost bordering on nerdy". Nonetheless after completing the middle years mathematics subject Ron came to appreciate the interrelatedness of mathematics to other subjects and its relevance to the real world.

Ron did not see mathematics teacher identity as any more important than a Science teacher identity or English teacher identity but thought that "most people perhaps would still think about the maths teacher as someone a normal conversation would be difficult to have with".

Teaching as an isolated practice

Ron does not see teaching as isolated. Teaching he believes is “being part of the wider community, the nation, the world”. He feels strongly that teachers are "accountable and their job is to educate people, to get them to a certain level of knowledge so that they can move on. The nation is paying for our kids’ education through tax--so it is only reasonable that students can expect some value for their money so teaching is not isolated at all".
**Teaching standards**

Teacher and teaching standards do “not phase” Ron as he sees them as “guidelines teachers must have to operate within and are necessary to keep teachers on track”.

**5.4.9 Simon’s post-enactment interview data**

Simon expressed disappointment in the subjects that had been offered that far in the first semester of the Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) and believed his expectations had not been met. He expressed concern over how a couple of the subjects in the program were "really badly designed and irrelevant to the area we are teaching". One of the subjects called Engaging Diverse Learners "failed miserably engaging the student teachers, nor did the subject’s method of teaching respect the student teachers’ ideals or how some of them wanted to be taught especially internal students". However, Simon believed that the most challenging subject was the mathematics unit, "because of the enormous amount of stuff involved, it was very condensed".

**Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)**

Similar to his pre-enactment interview response, teaching for Simon “is transferring knowledge but it also [means] transferring social skills understanding culture and those sorts of things”, while learning is about the ability to “accept new ideas and then to incorporate different ideas to generate concepts”. A good learner to Simon is "someone who is willing to evolve has an open mind and questions new ideas” and can "show respect as well as show proper and correct behaviour". During his practicum he experienced a couple of challenging students--one student "just switched off every now and then" and the challenge for him was to keep the student on task, while the other student "did not seem to have mathematical ability at all and was reliant on the teacher". This student "had a very pretty book because a lot of time was spent on colouring in to mask the fact that there was no real content in it".

Similar to his pre-enactment interview response, Simon believed that he had treated the students during his practicum "as people and fairly"; he felt it important "to be socially just". As
their teacher he believed he had to "respect their differences, diversities, problems or issues and to treat them individually and not as Year 7". He explained that "when at first I went into the classroom he looked at them all as Grade 7 but after a week I noticed that they weren't Grade 7--there was Jack and Sam and so on--they were all individuals".

After Simon's prac he believed that a good quality teacher is someone "who is open to inquiry and discussion, someone who allow students the opportunity to think for themselves and to make them feel free expressing themselves as long as it is relevant". A teaching strategy he found particularly useful at prac was "getting students to participate in the teaching, getting them to demonstrate in front of their peers on the blackboard and encourage them to take ownership of their own learning". Simon felt that the students in his classroom appreciated this.

**Teacher identity**

To Simon teacher identity refers "to the person you are when in front of the class" and he believes that "teacher identity does not have to be separate from your own identity outside the classroom". In particular he believes that "if a teacher does not have a firm identity they can lose their way and lose control of the class because there are some students who at 12 or 13 years have quite strong personalities". Simon did not believe that there is a difference between a teacher identity or a mathematics teacher identity "apart from maybe in high school with an English teacher who can use more different strategies to get things across". A good teacher needed to have patience and "a range of strategies that you can then use to explain concepts and ideas to the students".

**Teaching as an isolated practice**

Simon did not find his practicum experience to be an isolating experience but acknowledges that it can be--"it depends on your personality you could make it as isolated as you like I found that there was quite a lot of support at that school especially grade 7 teachers--they were always approachable--when you are in the classroom you are isolated in terms of what you
are doing but in terms of being out of the classroom there is plenty of opportunity to talk to other people”.

**Teaching standards**

To Simon teaching standards are “guidelines developed in the best interest of the students and to some extent teachers as well, but it’s students mainly I think and I think they have to be seen as guidelines not as law and they have to be adapted and moved around as required by individual teachers--so teachers in different areas are going to take the guidelines and use them in different ways”.

**5.5 ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS’ POST-ENACTMENT INTERVIEW DATA**

**5.5.1 Conceptions of teaching and learning before practicum including conceptions of a good learner and a good teacher**

While participants’ conceptions about teaching and learning were quite similar to their pre-enactment responses, findings suggest that after their practicum experiences a shift toward seeing teaching and learning as a relational endeavour had occurred. For example, some of the participants who had earlier mainly viewed teaching from a traditional perspective where teaching was about the transference of knowledge to students, had began to view teaching as connecting, sharing and having relationships with students (cf. Noddings, 2003, 2005; Smith & Emigh, 2005). Melinda, who earlier saw teaching as “giving knowledge” to her students and who still believed that teaching was at times the transference of knowledge, began to see teaching more as sharing and having relationships with her students. Likewise Ron’s initial perception about teaching as merely telling also changed to see teaching as connecting to students and believed it was important “to become part of the kids’ world”. Ron believed that to support student learning clear and explicit directions were equally as important as connecting with his students.
There was a mixture of comments about the teaching styles they had observed and the effect they had on their own teaching. For instance, Jane had been allocated two supervising teachers, one of whom was very imaginative, using classical music to set the background atmosphere in her creative writing classes. Whilst she felt this teaching style was inspiring, it was not a teaching style that she felt comfortable imitating. In contrast, Jane’s second supervising teacher, who was more traditional in her teaching style using direct teaching as her preferred method, had a teaching style Jane admitted to feeling more comfortable with. Sarah described her supervising teacher’s teaching style as both fun and inspiring. Sarah was particularly impressed with how her supervising teacher “was always very calm” and “never raised her voice in the classroom even when the students were overly unruly”. Likewise, Ron was impressed with his supervising teacher’s caring teaching style, especially since his supervising teacher “never did anything to humiliate the students or make them feel that they have failed. She was very encouraging and forthcoming with praise for effort and improvements”. However, according to participants like Tina and Simon, the traditional teaching styles they had observed and described as being old fashioned, autocratic, humiliating, inflexible and rigid, were disappointing. Tina, for example, noted how her supervising teacher’s teaching style involved belittling students by “speaking down to them”. Nonetheless, despite their supervising traditional ways of teaching, these participants had begun to transform their ideas to seeing teaching as a more relational endeavour (Noddings, 2003). That is, they began see teaching as connecting, sharing and relating with their students. Table 5.5 summarizes participants’ conceptions regarding teaching and learning. As can be seen, to most participants in their post-enactment responses, teaching and learning suggest a relational orientation where teaching and learning are connected to each other.
Table 5.5

*Traditional versus relational conceptions about teaching and learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional–Teaching and Learning</th>
<th>Relational–Teaching and Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of knowledge;</td>
<td>Connecting;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring knowledge;</td>
<td>Scaffolding;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting information.</td>
<td>A life style;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing, life-long;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connected to teaching;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Conceptions of the good learner*

Findings from participants’ post-enactment responses suggested a number of similarities to their pre-enactment responses where a good learner is someone who is motivated to learn, someone who can listen and memorize information. A good learner is also someone who is curious, self-directed, reflective and disciplined, is willing to collaborate with others, and has the ability to connect with subjects. These responses suggest a conception of the learner as a mixture of the received knower commonly associated with the traditional learner and the committed learner associated with a relational-oriented learner (Bain, 2004). The received learner relies on the expert teacher’s knowledge, whereas the committed learner understands and values the ideas shared by the expert teacher but is able to critically evaluate and use the information creatively to form new ideas or “solutions” (Bain, 2004).

Findings indicated that according to most participants one of the most important factors that influenced their teaching and learning whilst on practicum related to student behaviour. All participants noted that one of their future expectations would involve students being able to show
respect, respecting not only the teacher but also each other. This was particularly highlighted by Ron who expected students:

> to display manners and courtesy … I think it is all very fine for students to realize that they have rights but they must also recognize that other people have rights too and that they don’t have the right to disrupt a lesson or to stuff something up so that the other children can’t learn.

Summarized in Table 5.6 are participants’ conceptions of the good learner. As can be seen participants responses indicate a mixture of cognitive and non-cognitive elements as to what constitute a good learner.

Table 5.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive conceptions of the good learner</th>
<th>Non-Cognitive conceptions of the good learner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive–Listen, memorize, self-motivated, self-directed, disciplined, reflective, curious.</td>
<td>Non-cognitive–social relational, collaborative, teamwork, willing to help others, learn from each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect with subjects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conceptions of the good teacher

Findings from the post-enactment interview responses regarding participants’ conceptions of the good teacher indicated they were based on a relational perspective. This relational perspective views teaching as sharing and having a relationship with the students and that involves establishing relations of both care and trust with the students (Noddings, 2003). In particular, this also means that the teacher understands how to relate to their students and to their students’ worlds (Bain, 2004; Noddings, 2000, 2003; Whitehead, 2006). This was especially important for both Ron and Tina. Tina, for example believed that:
a personal quality is to relate to the students and to their world. Someone who cares
about them, and who knows what they are interested in, someone who they can talk too.
Some of the kids I encouraged to critically engage—they loved my lessons, they loved
learning.

Findings clearly indicated participants’ commitment to developing caring relationships
with their students. This was exemplified by comments about the good teacher as someone who
did “not give up on the students”, “knows when to hold back, and not intervene--allow the
students to figure out things for themselves”, and make sure to “follow through with rules”. This
is in line with literature (cf. Sexton, 2004; Whitehead, 2006) suggesting that many mature-aged
pre-service teachers most often see the good teacher as facilitator, guide, encourager as well as
role model (Sexton, 2004).

The findings indicated that the major source of satisfaction that supported the
participants’ sense of self as a good teacher was seeing the students whom they taught during
their practicum achieving socially and academically. However, they also had a strong need for
recognition and affiliation with other teachers at the school and for some this aspect of the
practicum had been disappointing as it did not occur. For example, Tina felt very little support
from her supervising teacher. She explains, “Whenever I tried to implement something she (the
supervising teacher) undermined me which to me goes completely against like how she is going
to help me.” Such behaviour was a reminder to Tina of her low status as pre-service teacher (part
student and part teacher); in consequence, negotiating space for herself within the classroom
situation and in the school environment in particular was a very uncomfortable process for Tina.
According to Rorrison (2005), who notes how “the current practicum seldom delivers what it
promises and does not give pre-service teachers the space to develop as teachers, nor does it
continue the conversations begun at university” (p.18), such negative practicum experiences are
unfortunately the reality for many pre-service teachers.
While most participants believed that they treated their students fairly, respectfully, individually, equitably and honestly during their first practicum experience, some of the participants noted contradictory realities between how students were treated by their supervising teachers and how they themselves would treat them. This was exemplified by Tina, who wanted to treat her students:

As adults—I know that they are obviously young but I treat them as people. As people capable of learning. I don’t teach them as they are stupid or inferior to me—they were spoken down to by their teacher—the teacher was very traditional autocratic, authoritarian and I was horrified when I first went in there on my first Friday with the students having to write lines for not doing things correctly. I was just flabbergasted. I was blown away by it all and they just had to sit there and had to listen to her and you can see them fiddling—they were not engaged they were bored and then they wondered why the kids don’t understand.

As she explained, Melinda found that imitating her supervising teacher’s authoritarian style when students misbehaved during her practicum was problematic:

this teacher raised her voice a lot and I found myself copying her and by the end of the day I am thinking that is not the teacher I want to be—I spend a lot of time watching how other teachers control the class with their voice now because that is something I want to learn how to do properly. I’ve got a soft voice, and I can raise it if I need to but I don’t want to have to be that type of teacher.

These views are in line with the literature (Danielewicz, 2001; Rorrison, 2008) which notes the importance of encouraging pre-service teachers to experiment with new ways of teaching and learning and to find their own and unique teacher identities rather than copying their supervising teacher’s teaching style.

A summary of participants’ conceptions of the good teacher can be seen in Table 5.7. The table suggests a mixture of both traditional and relational conceptions of the good teacher.
Whilst it is recognized that a good teacher needs both knowledge and skills, a good teacher also needs to have a relational orientation to not only teaching but to their students.

Table 5.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Conceptions of the good teacher</th>
<th>Relational Conceptions of the good teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian; Strict; Content focused; Knowledge of subject.</td>
<td>A good teacher makes a difference; Relational orientation to students; Relate and understand students’ world; Generous, caring; Fair, positive feedback; Develop non-intimidating learning environments; Follow through with rules; Make life interesting and fun; Does not give up on their students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5.2 Teacher Identity

In their post-enactment interviews after their practicum experiences, the participants’ ideas about teacher identity had begun to reflect their own emerging identities as teachers. For some participants, it was important how their students saw them in their roles as teachers and about fitting into the school community. For instance, Ron believed that “identity as a teacher is to some extent how you fit into the school community and how you see the school community, but it also comes down to how the students see me”, while to Sarah, middle-school teacher identity “is part of one’s philosophy because it is about one’s identity and who you are in the profession”. She also believed that “it is about re-evaluating yourself and it is very much linked”.

Table 5.8 provides a summary of the participants’ definition of teacher identity and as can be noted most of the participants’ initial conceptions of teacher identity suggested a mixture of traditional or individualistic ideas to the meaning of teacher identity (Klein, 2004). There were
also some participants who suggested that teacher identity related to a new way of becoming—that is, it is a process of personal transformation (cf. Bain, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Merriam, 2007; Palmer, 1998). In the participants’ post-interview responses, it can be noted that their responses are more comprehensive and detailed. What can be clearly noted is the emergence of a more relational and reflective understanding of teacher identity (Hoveid & Hoveid, 2004; Turner-Bisset, 2001). This is where they came to see teacher identity as being about connectedness that included not only a relational orientation to their students but to the whole community. Moreover, as can be noted their definitions of teacher identity are more comprehensive and detailed.

Table 5.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher identity</th>
<th>Pre-Interview response</th>
<th>Post-Interview response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strange term–Don’t know;</td>
<td>Positive identity;</td>
<td>Fitting into the school community;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A role–Teacher standing in front of the classroom and giving information to students;</td>
<td>Fitting into the school community;</td>
<td>Part of one’s philosophy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual teachers;</td>
<td>Who you are and how you feel about yourself;</td>
<td>Who you are in the profession;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A certain kind of personality;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re-evaluating yourself;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way they teach, act and are different to how they normally are;</td>
<td>People wearing jeans and Sloppy Joes;</td>
<td>Ways you interact with your students and how your personality shapes your teaching—you are not cloned;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating to the development of the teacher;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students’ perceptions of teacher-self important;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of the family;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Passion for teaching, want to help;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New way of becoming.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Firm personality;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Someone who works hard and puts in long hours into planning;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Myself as a teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.3 Teaching as an isolated practice

In their pre-enactment responses all participants believed that teaching is not an isolated practice; rather, teaching, and middle-school teaching in particular, was seen as relational. However, there was a change in their post-enactment responses after their practicum experiences. Participants such as Simon and Tina who had earlier held the belief that teaching is relational came to see teaching as an isolated practice, but this “depended on the individual teacher’s personality”. In part, this can be attributed to the schools that they had been allocated for their practicum, which did not have a middle-school structure nor had implemented any of the principles associated with middle schooling. There was a general agreement amongst most participants that in a classroom situation, teaching is isolated “because what you do is your business” and many times you will be without opportunities to consult with other teachers. As noted earlier this is in line with the literature that suggests that both isolation and a lack of time to collaborate are typical features of most traditional teaching environments (Dinham & Scott, 2000). There was also a sense among some of the participants that there is a barrier between the teacher and the wider community where people, both parents and others in the community did not know how to talk to a teacher. This suggests that teaching as a practice is isolated from the wider community including parents.

Hence, findings suggest that some participants’ agreed as presented in Table 5.9 that classroom teachers’ experience isolation at three different levels:

- Isolation in the classroom
- Isolation from parents
- Isolation from the wider community

However, for one of the participants, Ron, teaching was still very much relational in that he believed that as a teacher, it was important to be able to relate to his students. To do so:
You got to be part of the world–part of the kids’ world and I must admit I am not totally tuned into 12 year olds at this stage because I don’t know exactly what they do.

Table 5.9

Conceptions--Teaching as an isolated practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching as an isolated practice</th>
<th>Teaching as a relational practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other teachers;</td>
<td>Social relational;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents;</td>
<td>Collaborative;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider community.</td>
<td>Relate to students and their world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5.4 Teaching standards

It was not until participants were introduced to the requirements of the teaching standards during one of the workshop sessions by a guest speaker from Education Queensland that they were able to reflect and to comment on the relevance and usefulness of the standards, and to reflect on how they would affect their developing teacher identity. Findings suggested that overall the teaching standards were positively received by most of the participants. They came to view the teaching standards as representing particular skills that needed to be achieved in order to be seen as a good teacher, and thus important to their emerging teacher identities. This was exemplified by Jean’s response:

I think they [teaching standards] are really important for the profession–I think again teaching has such a long history and it’s gone from being teachers college into university, being professionalized. I think it is pretty similar to nursing. I think it is parallel and I just think that as a profession they need to recognize that they are actually very important. I was looking them up when I was preparing something and I just think they are quite relevant--I find them quite realistic, achievable and quite valuable--they are a guide a benchmark.
Table 5.10 presents a summary of participants’ conceptions in regards to the teaching standards.

Table 5.10

Conceptions about teaching standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptions about teaching standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Useful;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievable;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter the findings and analysis relating to the research question, *how do students undertaking a one year pre-service Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) identify as teachers and what changes in those identifications take place across the duration of the program?* were presented.

The chapter began with a presentation of a brief outline of nine participants’ stories (Three participants’ stories are to be presented in chapter 6.) This was then followed by an analysis in relation to the four themes that were drawn from participants’ pre-enactment interview responses relating to their reasons to teach, their conceptions about teaching and learning, the good learner and teacher and teacher identity, and their perceptions of teaching as an isolated practice and teaching standards.

Following the pre-enactment analysis a presentation of participants’ post-enactment interview data was provided. An analysis and discussion to determine any changes in participants’ conceptions in relation to the seven themes concluded the chapter.
Based on the findings from the pre-enactment interview data, most of the graduate pre-service teachers came into the one year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) with a strong sense of personal and professional self and with well considered reasons why they wanted to teach Middle Years. The findings suggested that their choice in choosing the university involved an expectation of support and welcome to a middle-school community and culture and an expectation to know how to teach effectively.

In relation to participants’ conceptions about teaching and learning, the good learner and the good teacher, their findings from their pre-enactment interview data revealed a mixture of traditional and relational perspectives. Findings from the participants’ pre-enactment interview data suggested that while most participants saw teaching as collaborative, as a relational rather than an isolated practice, their post-enactment interview data revealed how most participants began to see that teaching can be an isolated practice, but that this was dependent on individual teachers.

Findings suggested that from the outset most of the graduate pre-service teachers did not have a clear sense of themselves as middle-school teachers. However, as was noted in the post-enactment analysis and discussion, their sense of selves as middle school teachers changed across the duration of the one year graduate diploma program.

Participants’ sense of selves as middle-school teachers changed across the duration of the one year graduate diploma program. Findings indicated that a catalyst for change for most graduate pre-service teachers occurred during the workshop program based on a relational-cultural framework (Miller, 1976). The workshop program will be discussed fully in chapter 6.
Chapter 6  Findings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, in response to the first research question, ‘How do students undertaking a one year pre-service Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) identify as teacher’s?’ and ‘what changes in those identifications take place across the duration of the program?’, participants’ changing perceptions of their teacher identity were addressed. In this chapter the findings and analysis of the second research question, ‘What factors shape the development of a middle-school teacher identity during the pre-service graduate diploma program?’ are presented.

Based on the participants’ pre-and post-enactment interview responses, and drawing in particular on three participants, this chapter will review and address the effects of the major factors identified during the Graduate Diploma program that influenced the development of their emerging middle-school teacher identity. They were the organisation, content and processes of the graduate diploma program within the university, the school-based or practicum component of the program and the workshop provided for the participants alone. The chapter concludes with the participants’ focus group discussion about their experiences in the graduate diploma program. This discussion took place after they completed their final practicum.

The chapter begins with an in-depth presentation of the identity portraits of three participants, Debra, Julie and Fran, who were not included in the analysis in chapter 5. They are presented here as three case studies of the way the Graduate Diploma shaped and modified the development of teacher identity. Here it should be noted that there were a
number of similarities among all twelve participants; for example, they were all mature-aged graduates who came into the program with a strong sense of personal and professional selves and life experiences. They were all committed and passionate about teaching and or helping young people transform. They came into the program with well thought-out reasons for why they wanted to become middle-school teachers. They were clear in their expectations of the graduate diploma program (Middle Years). It became evident after the practicum and the workshop program that the learning experiences they experienced during the graduate diploma affected their emerging middle-school teacher identities and their ontological and epistemological perspectives.

Within those overarching commonalities, the identity portraits of Debra, Julie and Fran were selected because of their contrasting experiences in the Graduate Diploma Program. Their preferred learning styles reflected their epistemological perspectives and how they saw the teacher reflected the ontological perspectives that impacted on their developing middle-school teacher identities. Thus Debra was selected because she held a preference for a procedural learning and teaching style (Bain, 2004), identified in both in her pre- and post-enactment responses. As a graduate pre-service teacher (Middle School) it was more important for her to master the necessary course requirements to graduate as a teacher than to deeply understand the required material. Adopting this position, she was able to successfully negotiate a practicum experience that had begun as a negative and a frustrating experience. Julie was selected as she was the participant with the most recent experience of schools, having worked as a school health nurse in secondary school settings. She also revealed a deep respect for teachers and strong commitment for caring for students (cf. Bain, 2004; Noddings, 2003; Palmer, 1998), suggesting a relational orientation to teaching and learning. Fran was selected as she was the least likely candidate to pursue a classroom teaching career, although
like most of the participants in the research study she was passionate about teaching middle years. Her reasons for not pursuing teaching after her first practicum included her disillusionment with the role of the classroom teacher as an administrator and the politics of the school. Ironically, from the beginning of the research study she exemplified the committed learner (Bain, 2004), being independent, critical but also creative in her thinking, and she valued the ideas of her students.

It was evident that the learning opportunities in the Graduate Diploma program did not align to most participants’ ontological or epistemological beliefs about the ‘good’ middle-school teacher identity or middle-school teaching and learning. Even though it is recognised in the literature (cf. Alsup, 2007; Rorrison, 2008; Walkington, 2005) that the practicum has a significant impact on pre-service teachers emerging [middle school] teacher identities, the lack of careful design and preparation of the practicum component was found problematic by the participants. For example, Debra’s experience of initial isolation during her practicum may have been a positive experience if she had been provided with an understanding (not tricks or playing the game) of different school cultures (e.g., traditional / managerialist/ progressive), and the impact this may have on their teaching and student learning outcomes. In addition to experiences of isolation during her practicum, Julie’s criticism involved experiencing a sense of unpreparedness to teach seven and eight year old students rather than the middle years students she had expected to be trained for. Fran in particular was opposed to the managerialist model that she experienced during her practicum and the lack of professionalism of her supervising teacher. These experiences may have influenced the emerging teacher identity that resulted in her rejection of classroom teaching.

The practicum had been a challenging experience for all participants and significantly impacted on their emerging teacher identities. Even so it confirmed their
commitment to and passion for students and their learning as was evident in their joy at seeing their students succeed in their learning. Being able to connect and to establish relationships with their students allowed the realization that teaching and learning is relational; it is not, nor should it be experienced as an isolated practice.

It can be suggested that the workshop program may have acted as catalyst for change in participants’ ontological and epistemological perspectives. It offered not only Debra, Julie and Fran but all participants opportunities to critically reflect, voice their concerns and participate in the development of a professional middle-school community, a community where they were affirmed and recognized as emerging middle-school teacher identities.

As noted previously, in order to analyse and critique the factors that influenced these participants’ developing teacher identities across the period of the program, it was first necessary to trace the development of these identities through analysis and discussion of pre- and post-enactment interview data. It is then possible, drawing on the relational-ontological framework presented in Chapter 3, to present the narrative of each participant’s ‘journey’ through the program and to gain a critical understanding of how these factors supported or hindered the development of their teacher identity.

6.1 Identity Portraits

This section begins with an introduction to each of the three participants, followed by an analysis of the pre-and post-enactment interview data that relate to their reasons to teach, how they identify with and understand teaching and learning, and their perceptions of the good learner, the good teacher, teacher identity, teaching standards and teaching as an isolated profession. This will be followed by an analysis of the identified factors during the graduate diploma program that shaped their emerging teacher identity. A theoretical model developed from the relational-ontological framework presented in Chapter 3 will be applied to summarize
their journey through the first semester in the graduate diploma program. The model provides an overall understanding of the critical influencing factors that supported and or hindered the development of their emerging teacher identities.

6.1.1 Debra’s identity portrait

This section begins with a presentation and analysis of Debra’s reasons to teach, her understanding about teaching and learning, and her perspectives on the good teacher and the good learner and teacher identity. Debra’s perspectives about teaching as an isolated practice and teacher standards conclude this section. From this foundation, a more effective examination of the factors that shape the development of her middle-school teacher identity during the pre-service graduate diploma program is then possible.

Personal and professional influencing factors.

Debra is a mother of six children and a former Librarian, with degrees in Women's Studies. Teaching is something that she has always wanted to do and she would like to transfer her skills as a librarian to that of teacher librarian. Her choice to teach middle school is “because students theoretically can read and write, they can be taught stuff”. What Debra means when she refers to teaching students “stuff” becomes clearer in the following section in her pre-enactment interview when probing her beliefs about teaching and learning in general.

Teaching and learning--(the good learner and the good teacher)

In her pre-enactment interview Debra believed teaching was about "standing in front of a class and teach about life skills where kids learn how to be successful adults" while they were also taught about "history, reading, writing and maths". She gave an interesting response when describing a good learner, that whilst everyone has the potential to be a good learner “there is no such thing as a good learner only a good teacher”. Yet, she offered the following definition of a
good learner, as someone who “listens and pays attention and gets something from the lesson you are presenting”.

Such a perspective to teaching and learning highlights a traditional understanding about the role of the teacher and learner (cf. Bain, 2004; Elkind, 1997; Klein, 2004; Sloan, 2005) where students are the mere recipients of information as provided by the expert teacher. The good learner in this situation can be described as a procedural learner (or knower) (cf. Bain 2004), that is, someone who quickly can master the strategies or appearances of what is set as the objectives by the teacher, and in such a situation the development of the good learner is reliant on the good teacher.

The good teacher

According to Debra, a good teacher is a confident teacher because "kids pick up on that" and “kids respect a confident teacher” in contrast to a teacher who is not confident. According to Debra a teacher who is not confident will find that students will very quickly take advantage of him or her and "play up”. She describes a confident teacher as someone with “presence” who can connect with the students (cf. Rodgers & Raider Roth, 2006), and who can teach any subject. A confident teacher is also enthusiastic, approachable, creative, fair, organised, flexible, inclusive and mindful of students’ backgrounds. This is consistent with research findings (cf. Sexton, 2004; Witcher et al., 2001) about pre-service teacher descriptions of the good teacher. In her post-enactment interview and after she had completed her first practicum, in addition to being a confident teacher, Debra felt that a good teacher is also a “strict” teacher but one who can also make “learning fun and inspires students to learn”. She believed that such a teacher can "connect to students and to pull out different things" and she found it “really surprising” how much teaching was about “connecting”. Debra’s realization that teaching is about connecting is in line with a relational perspective (cf. Noddings, 2003, 2005; Smith & Emigh, 2005). Such a
perspective views teaching as sharing and having a positive relationship with the students and hence involves establishing relations of both care and trust with them. Moreover, it was interesting to note that after her first practicum, Debra came to recognize that students’ family backgrounds, peers and the wider community could be factors that both support and hinder the development of the good learner. Suggesting a change in perspective, where she previously had held the teacher responsible for the development of a good learner, she now came to see that perhaps other factors such as the student’s family background and environment were also responsible for supporting or hindering the development of the good learner. It was important to Debra that as a good teacher she would welcome parental involvement in the classroom, for example, helping with students’ reading, to promote the development of a sense of community in the classroom and school.

Teacher identity

The term teacher identity when introduced initially in the pre-enactment interview did not mean anything to Debra personally. Rather, she suggested that it “could be about how teachers perceived themselves”. However, in her post-enactment interview Debra felt that teacher identity referred to “who you are as a person”, because:

Identity is based on who you think you are and how you feel about yourself and being able to impart that--and a bit of that is to be able to draw those things out of kids--like if they got low self-confidence and draw that out of them.

To further explore her understanding of teacher identity Debra was questioned whether she believed that, for example, a mathematics teacher was somehow different from other teachers:

Maths teacher is in a way a different sort of identity but still having that overall identity--hmm--but it does not really matter--I mean--it is just another subject that you teach and
that really it is just about being a good teacher—it is just a tool that you use if you are teaching maths or English or teaching whatever—you put your own spin on it.

The tension that can be observed between Debra’s sense of self and fitting into a role as a teacher is characteristic of the pre-service teacher’s teaching experience (Franzak, 2002). It is interesting to note how she initially sees teacher identity and mathematics teacher identity as different and then as not different. This could suggest that she is grappling with understanding her own emerging sense of self as a teacher and what this means, in terms of her teaching and learning self, for teaching subjects such as mathematics. Indeed as Miller Marsh (2002) notes, it is important for pre-service teachers to understand teacher identity as it helps “teachers to make visible the power in the discourses they use and illustrating to them that they can make some choices about their own identities and the social identities of the children in their care as one way to work towards social transformation” (p. 257). Also, to understand teacher identity is to know that our identities are continuously reformed and improvised as we go about living our lives embodying knowledge and engaging in our contexts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

Teaching as an isolated practice

In both her pre- and post-enactment interviews Debra was very adamant in her belief that teaching is not an isolated profession, particularly since she has a network of “friends who are teachers and who I can go for help” and also because she believes that “you can do a lot of collaborative work with other classes”. Such comments suggest that to Debra teaching is a relational endeavour. However, after her practicum she became aware that through what she described as “personal choice”, some teachers chose to isolate themselves from collaborating with other teachers. Nonetheless, she did not feel that her practicum was an isolating experience with her “supervising teacher watching” her, nor did she feel that her sense of developing teacher identity was threatened by being “watched” by her supervising teacher. Debra’s confidence in
herself as a beginning teacher can be attributed to her being accustomed to the classroom environment through her many years of experience helping out with reading in the classrooms of her children.

**Teaching standards**

In her pre-enactment interview, Debra stated that she was not familiar with teaching standards. However, in her post-enactment interview, and after hearing a guest speaker from Education Queensland speak about the teaching standards at one of the workshop sessions held for participants in the research study, Debra came to view the standards as useful:

- if you are a good teacher I think you will properly instigate most of them or use them anyway--but I think maybe for some people who are struggling it is a good place to start.
- If I am having difficulty maybe I need to look at the standards to see where I am deficient.

Hence, from the above excerpt, it can be suggested that Debra has a belief about what is meant by a good teacher as someone with particular skills as set out in the standards. Development of teacher identity is thus dependent on what is set out in the standards. This is highlighted by her response suggesting that to overcome deficiencies in teaching “all one needs to do is to look at the standards”, thus highlighting an “instructional-technician who unquestioningly implements the policies and programs of others” (White & Moss, 2003, p. 2). In addition this further confirms that Debra’s preferred learning style is that of the procedural knower (Bain, 2004). A concern with this learning style is that it may prevent her from critically questioning the standards and future policies relating to the profession. This is in line with a traditional perspective, where the teacher is seen as an atomistic, individualistic self, who succeeds through the acquisition and assimilation of rational knowledge and rational procedures.
6.1.2 Influencing factors during the graduate diploma program (Middle Years)

In relation to the second research question, the following section presents the factors that influenced Debra’s development of teacher identity during the graduate teacher-education program.

In Debra’s pre-enactment interview, she stated that she had expected the graduate diploma program to be a busy year, especially as she also had six children to care for. However, studying was not a new or novel experience for Debra who had previously been able to successfully complete a number of degrees in Women’s studies. In fact what seemed to help her in her pursuit to become a teacher was to think about the Graduate Diploma program in terms of an “end product”. This suggests the position of the procedural learner (Bain, 2004), whose main concern is mastering the objectives to achieve the end result (end product) as set out, in this case, by each of the graduate diploma program’s unit coordinators. Debra’s preference for a procedural learning style was later confirmed in her post-enactment interview after her practicum and after she had completed the four subjects in the graduate diploma program. It was here that it became evident that Debra was disillusioned with the graduate diploma program:

I don’t really care about it (the graduate diploma program) I just want to get it finished. I seriously don’t care--I am just here to do it so I don’t really care about it or how they structure it--I have been doing fairly well academically because I know the academic stuff so well so I don’t care about it.

In terms of concerns with particular subjects in the graduate diploma program Debra identified the middle-school mathematics subject in her pre-enactment interview as the only subject that she was not confident about. However, in her post-enactment interview she found to her own surprise that she had enjoyed the mathematics subject:

I did actually think that the Maths unit was quite good and I am pleased we did that first semester because most of us (on our practicum) from what I understand got dumped with
maths—we just got dumped with it and I did two full maths units and couple of other lessons and I was pleased although it was also a bit airy-fairy—I was not ever sure when the concrete was relevant—for me it is always relevant because that is how I am with maths.

Elaborating on her uncertainty in the mathematics unit, Debra did admit at times to getting a bit frustrated with the lecturer, “especially whenever he got off on tangents” and she was “left wondering about understanding the maths content”. Debra felt that whilst the lecturer clearly loved mathematics and would get excited about what he was teaching, he went "too quickly on to new things". Nonetheless, she felt that the mathematics unit helped her develop more confidence about teaching mathematics at the Year 5 level. She felt this was evident in her mathematics teaching during her practicum where she introduced fun games that the students seemed to have enjoyed. However, Debra still felt "pretty dodgy" about her understanding of mathematics and the teaching of mathematics, particularly were she to teach Year 7 or Year 9 which the course qualified her to teach.

Debra’s emerging teacher identity was initially threatened by a lack of confidence in her own ability as a learner of mathematics. However, her experience in the mathematics unit, and in particular her practicum where she had experienced success in her mathematics teaching, provided her with the necessary confidence in her ability to teach mathematics at Year 5 level. Debra’s lack of confidence or feelings of unpreparedness (feeling “pretty dodgy”) to teach subjects such as, for example, mathematics, is similar to other graduate pre-service teachers experiences of feeling unprepared. A number of research studies (e.g., Ingvarson, 2007; Louden & Lohr, 2006; Rorison, 2007), suggest that graduate pre-service teachers’ feelings of unpreparedness to teach subjects such as mathematics and science are commonly based on the inadequacy of time provided for the learning of content knowledge and pedagogical skills in the one-year graduate diploma program.
Another subject of concern to Debra related to the Field Studies unit that she believed had not been aligned to teaching and learning in the classroom situation:

One of the things that we were led to--there was a lot of talk especially in the field studies unit how we are going to do a lot of collaborative group work--we are going to do pair work but we had a small sized class--it was a sardine can with 31 kids in it--how could you do collaborative group work in that class--you just could not--impossible.

Debra’s struggle with the discrepancy between what was taught at the university and what she experienced in the classroom situation is in line with research studies (cf. Korthagen et al., 2006; Rorrison, 2008; Watson, 2005), that indicate pre-service teachers’ teachers confusion about the lack of clear links between subjects and pedagogy.

6.1.3 Workshops

An influencing factor that supported and empowered Debra’s sense of emerging teacher identity was her participation in the workshop programs. Debra believed that being a participant in the workshop program “in hindsight gave all participants an added advantage” over other graduates in the graduate diploma program. She believed that the development of the middle-school learning community was important to her personally and to her emergent teacher identity. Her sense of becoming a teacher, or her sense of developing teacher identity, was affirmed during the workshop programs. She recalls thinking at one point, "how lucky we were to have witnessed another perspective of what being a teacher and teaching meant", with the various carefully selected guest speakers invited to the workshops. These workshops offered her a space where she felt both a sense of belonging to a community and where her thoughts and beliefs were recognized and valued. Thus the workshops effectively provided Debra the positive social and relational dynamics necessary to support her in her developing teacher identity. This is in line with research (Franzak, 2002) that suggests that to support the emerging middle-school teacher identity it is critical to make room for a safe and non-threatening learning environment, where
pre-service teachers together with experienced academics, teachers and principals collaboratively share, reflect, and explore issues of concern to the development of middle-school teacher identity. It was also during the workshop programs that Debra began to see the interrelatedness between her becoming a teacher, and the knowledge required for her to become a teacher. This connection or interrelatedness between ontology and epistemology was later confirmed to Debra during her practicum experience. It was during her practicum experience when she found to “her surprise” that being a teacher and to teach were intimately connected to the development of relationships with her students. The only concern raised by Debra was the day of the workshop program because of family commitments being a mother of six children and the day of the workshop was the only day she did not have other university lectures or tutorials to attend too.

6.1.4 The practicum experience

This section presents an interpretation of the practicum component as communicated by Debra via her weekly emails. The interpretation of these emails has been facilitated by employing the listening guide methodology (cf. Gilligan, 1982). The four steps that were involved in the analysis of Debra’s email narratives began with the reading and interpretation of the transcripts. The second stage involved the development of Debra’s “I poem” that illuminated her thoughts about herself (Gilligan et al., 2002). The “I” poem was created by underlining and selecting every first person “I / me / my / we / us” within the transcript and any accompanying words that seemed important. The third step was listening to the contrapuntal voices to allow the analysis to be brought back into relationship with the research question and to provide a description and a summary (the fourth step) about what has been learned in relation to Debra’s emerging teacher identity.

Practicum dilemma

It was clear from Debra’s email narratives that her first week and initial experience meeting with both the school principal and her supervising teacher had been fraught with unease,
frustration and anger. Not being introduced to her students by her supervising teacher and ignored by the school principal were both unsettling experiences to her self-esteem and her developing teacher identity. Her coping strategy to negotiate and navigate the traditional school setting was to disregard the disrespect shown toward her at the school, and to debrief her negative experiences with her peers and with her mother who was also a Teacher’s Aide.

This assault on her sense of identity not only as a post graduate pre-service teacher and a mother of six children but also to her sense of professionalism could perhaps be seen as the catalyst to the action taken by Debra. Her decision to take the initiative to introduce herself to teachers and staff at the school, rather than wait passively for introductions that were not forthcoming, proved empowering to her sense of worth, particularly after some teachers at the school began to make her feel both valued and welcome. Unfortunately, she still felt ignored by the majority of the staff. This initial negative experience is not an isolated experience among pre-service teachers. According to research studies (cf. White & Hildebrand, 2002; White & Moss, 2003; White, 2000), there are in fact a number of pre-service teachers who experience what White and Moss (2003) describe as ‘a silent rage’ during their practicum and who are astounded by the lack of professionalism (support, collegiality) amongst school personnel. These kinds of negative practicum experiences have resulted with many pre-service teachers reporting dissatisfaction with their practicum experience (White & Moss, 2003) and that has resulted in many potentially good teachers not choosing to pursue teaching as a career.

The school’s traditional and structured approach to teaching and learning was also reflected in the traditional classroom setting that was informed by a transmissive pedagogy. Debra’s description of her supervising teacher as “superficial, shallow, old-fashioned, very rigid, very structured and inflexible” in her teaching can be seen as a reflection of the traditional school culture (cf. Hargreaves, 1995; Stanulis et al., 2002). In particular, Debra found it disconcerting to see her supervising teacher congratulating and rewarding students who got 100 per cent in their
answers / tests while deliberately ignoring students who were struggling or who needed to be extended in their learning. However, and despite her frustration with her supervising teacher and the rigid and structured school culture, Debra believed her practicum experience was a highly valuable experience about how not to teach. This can be problematic since it is the unpleasant experiences with teachers that are remembered leading to conceptions of the teacher we do not want to be rather than a clear image of ourselves as teachers (Knowles, 1992). Most importantly, Debra was relieved that her own children were not attending this school.

Resolution to practicum dilemma

It was important for Debra to pass her practicum component with an S1 rating or the highest rating afforded to a pre-service teacher. To do this she had to find a way, a strategy to connect with her supervising teacher:

So we had to do a piece of academic writing for our supervising teachers and I suspected that she thought I was dumb so I did it in such a way that showed her that I was very clever and also fairly academic in its approach but I also congratulated her on what a great critical environment she was creating which she wasn’t but I said that she was and a whole lot of crap about how she used a whole lot of critical thinking.

Drawing out Debra’s “I” statements from the above excerpt and creating an “I’ poem provided the following view of Debra’s reaction:

So we had to do a piece of academic writing

For our supervising teachers

I suspected

that she thought I was dumb

So I did it in such a way

That showed that I was very clever

but I also congratulated her
on what a great critical environment she was creating

which she wasn’t

but I said that she was

and a whole lot of crap

In this re-presentation of the text, the shift in what might be termed the “locus of control” (Rotter, 1976) from the administration and the teacher to Debra is even clearer. The pre-service teachers (“we”) are given a compulsory task to perform for their (“our”) supervising teachers. Authority and control manifestly resides in ‘the system’. Judgement would seem to be the prerogative of the supervising teachers. In what follows, however, Debra strategically changes the negative judgement of her own supervising teacher with a successful conclusion. The counterplay of the first (“I”) and third (“she”, “her”) person pronouns in association with the actions (verbs) indicated in the ‘I poem’ is significant in indicating the shift in the locus of control from the system and the supervisor to Debra. Thus, note the change from the compulsion in the initial “we had to do..for our supervising teachers” to the critical point where “I suspected that she thought I was dumb”--and hence prejudged--to “so I did it in such a way that showed her that I was very clever”—and here the pre-service teacher, as subject, takes control of the action, with the supervisor as the object, the passive recipient—and this seizure of authority extends and is legitimated in an ascription of [unwarranted?] professionalism to the supervisor: “I also congratulated her...and a whole lot of crap”, “but I said that she was”.

Playing the game

In the above excerpt it is interesting to note Debra knowingly writes a paper that deliberately sought to ‘pander’ to her supervising teacher and her teaching style even when this was at odds with her own philosophy (cf. Bain 2004). It is also interesting to note how Debra uses the word “dumb” in describing herself and assuming that this is what her supervising teacher
thought of her, suggesting perhaps a past where she was described as dumb by significant others in her life (such as parents, teachers or other significant others) that she had come to internalise.

The turning point in the previously strained relationship between Debra and her supervising teacher occurred after her supervising teacher had read and approved the written assignment, which deliberately was pitched to pander to her. From then on, Debra found herself relaxing in her practicum. She also began to develop a positive and a collegial relationship with her supervising teacher. It can be suggested that in this particular instance, Debra’s action was in line with a procedural learner (cf. Bain, 2004), someone who quickly masters the necessary requirements in order to pass her practicum.

Development and emergence of teacher identity

For the remaining three weeks, Debra found her teaching practicum fun and an enjoyable experience. In particular, she enjoyed watching how the students learned and getting to know them personally and their personal likes and dislikes. The ability to connect to students is a very important part of teaching, and this suggests that Debra is a caring and committed teacher (cf. Bain 2004, Noddings, 2005).

In terms of classroom behaviour strategy, to resist the traditional and archaic behavioural management strategy of her supervising teacher using a ‘bell’ (cf. Pavlov, 1927) whenever students became too noisy, Debra instead incorporated a “hands on heads” behavioural management strategy to calm students in the classroom.

With a sense of freedom to teach in ways that Debra felt comfortable with, she began to develop confidence in herself as a beginning teacher that in turn saw the beginning of positive comments about her teaching from both her supervising teacher as well as the classroom’s teacher aide. At the end of her teaching practicum and after receiving an excellent report from her supervising teacher, Debra complimented her supervising teacher in her email narrative for
allowing her the freedom to teach the way she wanted even if this was in contrast to her supervising teacher’s old fashioned teaching style:

…my supervising teacher for all her faults was pretty good in the traditional sense—when I was a kid she would have been considered a good teacher—she let me have a lot of freedom… I basically did what I wanted and she did not care—I never pre-planned or pre-warned her I just used to arrive and said I am doing this today and she’d go OK. I was though mindful about it being her class—I mean it is in your own interest—it is a game—you have to get a good rating and in order to get a good rating you got to impress—so you have to teach the way she would expect you to teach.

Drawing out Debra’s “I” statements from the above excerpt and creating an “I’ poem enabled an unobstructed view of Debra’s reaction:

my supervising teacher was pretty good

in the traditional sense

when I was a kid she would have been considered a good teacher

she let me have a lot of freedom

I basically did what I wanted

I never pre-planned or pre-warned her

I just used to arrive

And said I am doing this today

And she would go OK

I was though mindful about being in her class

I mean it is in your own interest

you have to get a good rating

to get a good rating you got to impress

so you have to teach the way she would expect you to teach
A re-representation of the “I” poem notes that the locus of control is now shared between the supervising teacher and Debra. In a sense Debra now acknowledges the limits within which she can safely manoeuvre, and wisely and consciously chooses to operate within them. She is playing the game. The ‘I’s signifies her sense of confidence in herself as a good pre-service teacher who accepts the importance of following the requirement as set out by the system. For example a good rating is necessary for pre-service teachers (you) to secure employment in the ‘system’. To secure this good rating is dependent on the judgment by the representative of the system the supervising teacher. Here, in this last section of the extract, Debra justifies her actions with the use of a generalised and apparently more comprehensive and ‘objective’ ‘you’. The implication would seem to be that all reasonable persons in similar circumstances would have seen the wisdom of acting in such a way.

Voice of confidence

From this excerpt it is evident that the positive relationship Debra had been able to establish with her supervising teacher by “playing the game” (cf. Bain, 2004) provided her with a sense of confidence as a beginning teacher. Nonetheless, even with the freedom she was given to teach the way she wanted to, she remained aware of her position as a pre-service teacher. This positive relationship meant that at the end of her practicum Debra could genuinely compliment her supervising teacher for the support which allowed her to teach the way she wanted even if this was in contrast to her supervising teacher’s old fashioned teaching style.

Overall summary of Debra’s identity portrait

It is interesting to note the shift that was occurring in Debra’s perception of the good teacher and learner toward the end of her first practicum. In her pre-enactment interview she described the good teacher and learner based on a traditional perspective. In her post-enactment interview, while still grappling with the traditional perspective, Debra had begun to transform her
perspective. Through her own sense of growing confidence and emerging teacher identity, she began seeing the role of the teacher and particularly teaching and learning as a relational engagement. That is, she began to view the good teacher as someone who was not only confident in her teaching and learning, but in particular knew how to connect to her students. Also, from initially seeing the development of a good learner as being solely dependent on the teacher, Debra came to see other influencing social factors such as the student’s own family background, peers and the wider community impacting on the learner’s knowledge building. Further evidence of her relational orientation was her firm belief in developing connections between the school and the wider community and one way of doing this according to Debra was to welcome parental involvement in her classroom. Unlike her children’s teachers, who welcomed parental involvement in the classroom, Debra’s supervising teacher did not encourage or welcome parental involvement in her classroom.

The shock of experiencing a negative initial introduction to her practicum was initially disempowering to Debra’s sense of developing teacher identity. However, the lack of support and welcome afforded by Debra’s supervising teacher and school principals is not an isolated experience (Rorrison, 2008; White & Moss, 2003). Rather this approach suggests a traditional orientation toward the training of pre-service teachers where it is important that the pre-service teacher develop and master the necessary technical skills of classroom management and instruction quickly by imitating the supervising teacher. Furthermore, to best support the pre-service teacher is to make sure that they know their place, after all they are still students and not as yet fellow teachers (colleagues). A further observation of the school where Debra was completing her practicum suggests that the underlying power dynamics at play at the school, determined by the school’s leadership, namely the principal(s), influenced the overall school culture. The traditional leadership style in turn influenced ways in which pre-service student teachers were affirmed and welcomed, or alternatively as in Debra’s case, ignored. Debra being a
graduate, a mother of six children, a professional, and with a strong sense of self, acknowledged
the underlying negative power dynamics at play and by recognizing the traditional school culture
and the impact this had on her sense of self she was able to take charge of her situation by
compromising her identity in ‘playing the game’, thus becoming empowered by the negativity
that was being targeted toward her. Most importantly it can be suggested that Debra’s
commitment to teaching and sense of care for her students provided her with the necessary focus
to ensure the successful completion of both the practicum and her first semester of the graduate
teaching program.

The critical moments that challenged Debra’s beliefs about her perception of the good
teacher, the good learner, teaching and learning also occurred during her first practicum
experience. As noted previously, initially she was especially frustrated and highly critical of the
old fashioned and rigid teaching style and mannerism of her supervising teacher. However, she
was able to overcome this frustration by changing her negative perspective and seeing this as a
valuable lesson on how not to teach. In order to successfully pass her practicum with the highest
rating necessary to ensure employment as a teacher, Debra resorted to ‘playing the game’ by
choosing a procedural learning style favoured by traditional teachers and teacher educators.
Interestingly, her learning style as a procedural learner saw her also successfully negotiate the
necessary graduate course work. Unfortunately, Debra’s sense of disappointment in the course
work was evident in her post-interview where she stated that she did not care for the program and
just wanted it to be over and done with.

6.1.5 Summary

The factors that shaped Debra’s emerging teacher identity through her journey in the
graduate education program can be seen in Figure 6.1: Debra’s relational theoretical model. This
study confirms the review of the research literature which indicates that the development of a
committed (middle school) teacher identity is dependent on the following three inter-related
factors: Level 1: *Sources of self: Professional and personal backgrounds and ontological and epistemological beliefs.* Level 2: *Opportunities to learn: Graduate diploma program* (Multiliteracies, Engaging the diverse learners, Middle School Mathematics, Practicum unit, workshop program); and Level 3: *Emergence of the developing teacher identity.*

Key: Level 1= Sources of self
Level 2= Opportunities to learn
Level 3= Emergence of teacher identity
Green line = Positive experiences
Red line = Negative experiences

*Figure 6.1. Debra’s Relational Theoretical Model.*

The factors that form *Sources of the self* in Level 1 include Debra’s ontological and epistemological perspectives on her own being and her beliefs about knowing and the knower that were influenced by her own unique historical and socio-cultural background. They formed her perceptions about the good teacher and about teaching and learning. She entered the Graduate Diploma Program with traditional ontological and epistemological perspectives about
being a teacher and the nature of knowledge and the knower. This perspective viewed the teacher as the expert and teaching as about transmitting knowledge that is then acquired and memorized by the students. However, at the completion of the Graduate Diploma Program while she still was grappling with her traditional perspective to teaching and learning she had begun to change seeing teaching and learning as interrelated and acknowledging its dialogical / relational nature.

The next level involves factors that formed the Opportunities to learn as provided by the University Graduate Diploma Program (Middle Years) during semester one. These included the practicum and the four graduate diploma units. In addition and as part of this research project a workshop program was offered to all participants to explore and make explicit their ontological and epistemological concerns about their developing teacher identities. Here it should be explicitly acknowledged that that the workshop program was not part of the formal Graduate Diploma Program (Middle School), and indeed provided to some degree an alternative ontological and epistemological framing from which the Graduate Diploma Program and the process of teaching could be re-constructed.

The factors that influenced the emergence and development of a positive (or negative) teacher identity (Level 3) are dependent on the interrelationship between Levels 1 and 2. The emergence of teacher identity is possible when the learning opportunities as provided in the graduate diploma program (Level 2) are aligned or linked to the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher (Level 1).

There are two colours that are used to depict the pathway of the graduate pre-service teacher’s journey; a green line suggests a positive unproblematic pathway whilst the emergence of a red colour line suggests critical incidents or dilemmas in the graduate pre-service teacher’s pathway. The merging of both colours suggests a mixture of both positive and negative experiences (e.g., the workshop program, the practicum, or the university units). Lines tracking back to Level 1 suggest the participant’s reconsideration and reflection about their personal
ontological and epistemological beliefs and their relationship to the experiences offered in the graduate diploma program.

In Debra’s model it can be seen that her pathway through the four individual units as offered by the graduate diploma program was a mixture of both positive and negative experiences with the red and the green lines merging, whilst her pathway in the workshop program was unproblematic. The emergence of the red line that re-emerges again as a green line through level 2 and level 3 in the practicum component of the graduate diploma program suggests a critical incident that Debra was able to resolve successfully.

As noted previously the critical incident during the practicum related to Debra’s initial experience of isolation and disconnection from her supervising teacher, the school principal and other school personnel, an experience not dissimilar to the practicum experiences of other pre-service teachers in traditional school settings (cf. Dobbins, 1996; Gardner & Williamson, 2006). Recognizing the traditional school culture, Debra took control and successfully resolved the dilemma by ‘playing the game’. The strategy of game-playing involved acting out Debra’s preferred learning style as the procedural learner (Bain, 2004) that in her previous undergraduate studies had served her well. This chosen strategy, as already noted (see section 6.1.6), proved successful in connecting with and developing positive relations with her supervising teacher. Whilst it seemed that Debra outwardly accepted the prevailing traditional school culture it was only during private conversations with her peers and others outside the school environment that she was able to voice her reservations and concerns. It can be suggested that the impact of this critical incident experience empowered Debra. Playing the game provided her with a way to connect with her supervising teacher without having to surrender her own ontological and epistemological beliefs in the process. The change for Debra as a result of the critical incident was the realization that teaching and learning are relational, they involve connecting with their
content, students and other school personnel as well as with parents and such a perspective is in line with a relational-ontological perspective.

In addition to the critical moment during her practicum it can also be seen that Debra’s pathway through the four individual units as offered by the graduate diploma program was a mixture of both positive and negative experiences. The red and the green line as two separate but parallel lines suggests that her epistemological beliefs about teaching and learning were not aligned to the learning experiences provided by the various subjects in the program. For example, as already noted, she found that the subjects that were taught in the graduate diploma program did not support the real life teaching and learning experiences of the practicum.

Debra’s negative thoughts about the four subjects in the graduate diploma program had a negative impact on her sense of a developing middle-school teacher identity. Even so it can be suggested that her confidence in her emerging teacher identity and her ability as a procedural learner (Bain, 2004) provided her with the necessary self-assurance to see through the remaining four subjects of the graduate diploma program even if they did not align to her ontological and epistemological beliefs.

It can be suggested that the catalyst for Debra’s changed perspective seeing teaching and learning as relational may be based on her participation in the workshop program. The uncomplicated pathway as noted in Level 2 and that emerged in Level 3 is indicative of the alignment or agreement of her ontological and epistemological beliefs about teaching and learning, the teacher and learner, with the experiences provided in the workshop program, hence the uncomplicated pathway through the workshop in Level 2 and that emerges in Level 3.

Debra’s fragmented sense of development as a middle-school teacher identity is presented in Level 3. The notion of fragmentation, which is tied to traditional epistemology suggests an objective understanding of the world; keeping everything separate from the self (Ermine, 1995). As seen above as a procedural learner it was important for Debra to play the
game in order to pass her practicum. The positive influencing factors such as the workshop program contributed to her sense of development as a middle-school teacher identity while the contributing negative factors such as individual units and the practicum clearly hindered that process. As can be noted in Figure 6.1 and in Level 3 of the model, the paths that ideally should be merging to make up the emergence of Debra’s developing teacher identity are not interrelated but represent individual and isolated pathways, suggesting that she saw them as distinct components rather than as coming together or as interrelated entities. Hence her sense of middle-school teacher identity was not fully realized during the course of the first semester of the graduate diploma program.

While individual information about Debra’s experiences in her second semester was not available, the intention of the focus group discussion that was held at the end of the second semester and after the completion of the final practicum was to provide insight into these participants’ overall experiences in the graduate diploma program. These findings will be presented later in this chapter.

6.1.6 Julie’s identity portrait

In a similar manner to the presentation of Debra’s identity portrait, this section begins by presenting the personal and professional factors that influenced Julie’s developing middle-school teacher identity. To summarize her journey through the first semester a relational theoretical framework (see Figure 6.2) concludes the section. This model provides an understanding of the critical influencing factors that supported and or hindered the development of her emerging teacher identity.

*Personal and professional influencing factors.*

Julie’s background working as a school health nurse for the past eight years was a deciding factor in her choice to teach. Julie is a mother of adult children and her choice to teach middle years was influenced by her experiences working with students in the high-school setting
where many adolescents seemed to experience bullying, cigarette smoking and lack of self-esteem. She believes teaching in middle years offers her a place where she can better assist students to cope with their developmental issues in their journey towards adulthood. Julie believes that teaching is very “special” and she has “high regard for both teaching and teachers”.

**Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)**

In her pre-enactment interview, teaching from Julie’s perspective was described as “a broad term” that included “giving knowledge to someone and encouraging them to learn”. Learning on the other hand was about “gaining knowledge and expanding on your capacity about taking in knowledge”. Like Debra, Julie’s response initially indicated a traditional understanding of teaching. In other words, the teacher is the expert who provides the skills needed to think and analyse, and this in turn provides the learner with access to what Schon (1983) deemed as technical knowledge. The learning process is also a learning outcome, whether that outcome is learning by reasoning or learning by imitation (cf. Cooney, 2001).

Julie’s description of a good learner as "someone who is interested, committed, focused, yes, someone who is really keen” can be associated with a mixture of both what Bain (2004) refers to as the received knower, that is commonly associated with the traditional learner, and the committed learner. That is, the received learner relies on the expert teacher’s knowledge, whereas the committed learner understands and values the ideas shared by the expert teacher but is able to critically evaluate and use the information creatively to form new ideas or “solutions”. This mixture of beliefs is in line with the multidimensional perspective found by Schommer (1990) where beliefs are more or less independent in nature, rather than organized into positions or stages and maturing in synchrony.

In her pre-enactment interview Julie believed that whilst she would have high expectations of students she would be treating them “respectfully, individually and recognize the diversity of their needs”. Her familiarity with the diversity of adolescent issues, based on her
experiences as a youth health nurse, is indicative of her sense of care for her students (cf. Noddings, 2003).

In her post-enactment interview, and after completing her first practicum, Julie explained how her previous thoughts about teaching as transmission of information began to change. In particular, she came to see that teaching “is not just about giving information across to students” rather, “it is a whole lifestyle, it becomes a lifestyle between 9am and 3pm, with not just the students but the whole school community”. She also noted a connection between the school community and the wider community in that “they mirror each other and yet, the school community function quite independently within themselves… an interesting culture”. Her recognition of the separation and interrelationship between the school community and the wider community suggests an understanding of the fundamental feature of the relational perspective where the social contexts not only influence but determine the kinds of knowledge and practices that are constructed in schools (cf. Nunez et al., 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990).

Julie’s initial thoughts about teaching and learning from a traditional perspective changed to a relational perspective after her first practicum. Thus, she stated:

Learning I don’t think is the opposite to teaching, I think there is a connection there--we learn in so many different ways it is not just about the teacher teaching especially students that are aged seven and eight--I think they are learning just by being.

From the above statement it can be suggested that Julie saw teaching and learning as connecting, and particularly in regards to her young students learning that was not just about the teacher teaching them but was also about learning and developing through just being. Julie’s awareness and sensitivity to understanding the development of these young students’ sense of self as learners as a process of “becoming” that is socially embedded and hence, relational can perhaps be attributed to her life experiences and professional experiences as a school health nurse. In other words, a learner (or a teacher) is a way of being in the world, and a way of
becoming a learner (or a teacher) is to be immersed and socialized into the culture and community (Bain, 2004), thus highlighting the interrelation between ontology and epistemology where knowledge is the product of human beings who are in relation with each other. That is, knowledge “is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other” (Thayer-Bacon, 1995, p. 6). As such it can be suggested that the relational nature of teaching and learning is closely linked to the identity of the teacher (Enyedy et al., 2006).

In her post-enactment interview and after her experience teaching in the Year 3 and Year 4 composite classroom, Julie admits to a lack of confidence teaching students so young. She had been expecting to be placed in a middle-school setting teaching older students. Nevertheless, she believed that her experience teaching that the children in the Year 3 and Year 4 composite classroom was a good learning experience, and found to her surprise the students were quite sophisticated in their learning styles. She was especially impressed by their level of questioning and curiosity.

Julie believed that she treated her young students during the practicum both "respectfully and carefully”. She was careful in recognizing each child’s individuality, and believed that the students this age are “very vulnerable in lots of ways” and it was important for her “to be aware of that”. This response is indicative of the importance Julie place on teaching as relational and as a caring profession (cf. Noddings, 2003) that she believes needs to correspond to teachers’ interpersonal traits, such as being respectful of students’ needs and issues, as well as being fair.

It was interesting to note that in Julie’s pre-enactment interview, a quality teacher was “not so much about the expert teacher but a teacher who has a really high ability to teach”. In her post-enactment interview, however, a quality teacher was someone who is a “true professional” and “who maintained her own knowledge base and professional development and was prepared to change with evidence based knowledge”. In addition, Julie believed that a good quality teacher
was someone "who just really cares about what they do, and cares about the students". She found that the comments from some of the teachers during her practicum were very sad, stating that, “with so much litigation around and so much about child protection we don’t go near kids anymore--very sad”. For Julie, “the bottom line is that there is a young person who needs to be cared for and nurtured”, not only the whole mind but the whole of the young person. Her response clearly indicates a strong sense of a relational approach to teaching where the notion of care is important (Noddings, 2003).

In both Julie’s pre- and post-enactment interviews, an important teaching quality a teacher must have was the ability to understand the developmental needs of young people and the way they learn. Understanding where the students are at both academically and socially suggests a commitment to her students (cf. Bain, 2004; Noddings, 2003). For Julie, it was also important for the teacher to “be professional, and to expect change, to recognize change, as well as to value change”, suggesting that being a teacher is a continuous life-long journey of self creation and change.

Teacher identity

In Julie’s pre- enactment interview responses, teacher identity was about “seeing oneself in the role of being a teacher”. However, in her post-enactment interview the identity of being a teacher comes with “being connected to the teaching profession and to the wider community”. She believed that understanding teacher identity is important because teacher identity:

- Encompasses what one says, is, and have, it is also important in that teacher identity is also about the thoughts of the greater community, families and students.

This comment suggests a relational perspective to understanding teacher identity as embodied and embedded in language, relationships, culture, and time. Interestingly, mathematics teacher identity to Julie was not separate from teacher identity; for her, teacher identity was “not
separate from who you are (as a person) or who you are as a teacher”, rather it was about connectedness with the profession, which relates in turn to the teaching standards. She notes:

Teacher identity is about connectedness with the teaching profession, because I think there is very much…not camaraderie but just, yes, connectedness with the teachers…teaching subjects and ways of teaching…the teaching standards.

Hence, whilst teacher identity to Julie is a relational endeavour she also recognizes that teacher identity encompasses the necessary skills and competences found in the standards that form the “connectedness” with the teaching profession.

Teaching as an isolated practice

In Julie’s pre-enactment interview, teaching was “an isolated profession”. She explains:

I think that schools are communities on their own; there is still in the community in society a barrier between the teachers and the wider community. I have people saying they don’t know how to talk to a teacher--so they are a community on their own and it shouldn’t be…I mean they should be working collaboratively and integrating into the community.

This comment suggests that whilst schooling is isolated from the wider community, for Julie it is also a system of relations and communications embedded in the wider social system and as such is relational.

In her post-enactment interview, Julie’s thoughts about teaching being an isolated practice / profession had not changed because, as she noticed during her practicum, “what you do is your business, your choice” as a teacher. Her pre-enactment response about schools needing to be “working collaboratively and integrating into the community” is indicative of a relational perspective to teaching and learning. That is, teaching and learning are not an isolated practice but have always taken place within embedded social contexts that determine the kinds of knowledge and practices that are developed (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Noddings, 2003; Nunez et al., 1999;
Rogoff, 1990), and building connections with [our own] knowledge and ways of knowing is a fundamental feature of the relational context (Raider-Roth, 2005). Importantly, Julie’s response indicates her recognition that learning to teach and the development of teacher identity is not something that occurs in isolation; rather it is relational and hence, dependent upon dialogical relations with others such as parents, and others in the wider community and most importantly it is life-long.

Teaching standards

In her pre-enactment interview, like Debra, Julie was not aware of the teaching standards. However, in her post-enactment interview, and after a presentation by a guest speaker from the Queensland Education Department about the teaching standards in one of the workshops, she believed that the teaching standards are "really important for the teaching profession". She found the teaching standards “quite realistic, achievable, and quite valuable” and believes they should be seen as “a guide” that provides “a good benchmark for the teaching profession”. Her response acknowledges that embedded in teaching are skills and competencies necessary to the development of the good teacher. However, in contrast to Debra who believed that to overcome any lack of skills in being a teacher all one needed to do is to look at the standards, thus highlighting an “instructional-technician who unquestioningly implements the policies and programs of others” (White & Moss, 2003, p. 2), Julie believes that the standards should be seen and used as a guide to teaching.

6.1.7 Influencing factors during the graduate diploma program (Middle Years)

In relation to research question 2 the following section presents the factors that influenced Julie’s development of teacher identity during the graduate teacher education program. In her pre-enactment interview, Julie expressed concern about the one year graduate diploma program and
explained that to “walk out as a teacher” after twelve months of study would be both unrealistic and a “huge expectation”. She states:

I think because I have great respect of teachers, to walk out and to feel that I am now a teacher is pretty unrealistic. I imagine that there is a lot of learning that will start at the end of the twelve months and while the next twelve months will be challenging I think for me as a person I will restart my learning at the end of that twelve months in the classroom.

This extract suggests that Julie acknowledges that development of her own teacher identity will be an on-going life-long process. In her post-enactment interview and after her practicum, she expressed disappointment and concern about her experience in the one year graduate diploma program. She felt that she had not acquired the necessary skills to teach, nor did she feel empowered to teach. She explains:

I think I had this overwhelming feeling when I was doing my prac in the school--of me coming out of the street and calling me in--a person off the street and said, “Could you come and teach this class?” I felt I had no skills, I felt I did not feel the first semester had empowered me or given me anything at all--I just feel that while we bring a lots of transferable skills and we bring maturity and we bring lots of things with us I think the twelve months course has to be so carefully planned and presented that we get the optimum out of it--for me it was not a good experience.

This excerpt suggests that whilst Julie did not expect to have developed into a professional teacher in one year she did expect to have been better prepared for the practicum and been assisted acquiring a deeper understanding of the complex practices that are involved in middle years teaching. Unfortunately, her experience of the learning opportunities that were provided prior to her practicum did not provide the necessary preparation she would like to have had. It appears that the experience of feeling unprepared for her first practicum influenced Julie’s negativity to the graduate diploma program. The other reason why Julie was disillusioned with
the practicum component was that she was allocated to teaching a class of seven and eight year old students rather than the middle years students (between 11 and 14 year olds) she had enrolled to be trained to teach.

6.1.8 Workshops

Julie believed that the mini-seminars that were provided in the workshops "offered support and were thought provoking and quite valuable”. Whilst the workshop did not explicitly prepare participants for their practicum it provided opportunities for them to discuss issues relating to the middle school with guest lecturers from within the middle-school sector. Julie felt that “when you got to school you had a sense of familiarity and comfortableness and I felt people who did not get to share that missed out”. She particularly enjoyed the talk by one of the guest speakers, a principal from a middle school, on issues that were directly adolescent-specific and that Julie was familiar with. It can be suggested that the positive social and relational dynamics based on trust, honesty and respect experienced by Julie during the workshops contributed to her sense of self as a middle-school teacher identity. It was during the workshop program that her sense of self was affirmed and she felt welcomed as a future colleague by the various speakers and lecturers rather than a student.

6.1.9 The Practicum Experience

This section presents an interpretation of Julie’s practicum experience as communicated via her weekly emails. As in the case of Debra, their interpretation was facilitated by employing the listening guide methodology.

A great learning experience

Like Debra, Julie highly enjoyed observing her supervising teacher teach even though she found observing quite challenging, especially since she was not sure about agreeing with her supervising teacher’s teaching style. Julie described her supervising teacher as a no-nonsense male teacher who was “totally passionate about teaching”. She had parents tell her how “fantastic
he was as a teacher and how everyone wanted him” as their child’s teacher. However, she was not convinced about the effectiveness of the “no-nonsense” teaching style of her supervising teacher. For Julie, good teaching was about supporting and building students’ self-esteem, yet she found at times that her supervising teacher made quite “inappropriate and unnecessary comments that humiliated students in front of their peers”. It can be inferred that, influenced by her professional background as a school health nurse and in line with the relational perspective, Julie considers care and understanding the ethics of care as particularly important in teaching. Nonetheless, as a “student” pre-service teacher Julie felt supported by her supervising teacher who included her in all teaching activities. Although she had expected to be placed in a middle-school setting working with older students she found the students in the Year 3 and Year 4 composite class that she had been allocated to were “wonderful”:

The kids are just wonderful. I think their honesty, their openness and wonderful sense of humour has been enough to tell me a teacher has a huge responsibility and yet a huge joy in being involved in their lives. I have felt very blessed to be at this school. It is a very humbling experience at my age to be a student yet very special.

Drawing out Julie’s “I” statements from the above excerpt and creating an “I’ poem enabled an unobstructed view of Julie’s reaction:

*I think their honesty,*

their openness and wonderful sense of humour

*has been enough to tell me* a teacher has a huge responsibility

and yet a huge joy

*I have felt very blessed* It is a very humbling experience *at my age* yet very special
In this representation of the “I” poem the locus of control of the students’ welfare and learning lies with the teacher / student (Julie). She acknowledges ‘a huge responsibility’ of care for her students as she recognises these young students’ vulnerabilities. Julie’s respect and awe (she is ‘humbled’ but ‘blessed’) for teaching these students is evident as is her experience of being a ‘student’ at her age.

Voice of wonder

Whilst Julie had initially expressed disappointment at not being placed in a middle-school classroom she found to her surprise that she was enjoying teaching the young students she had been allocated to. She found their enthusiasm, openness and sense of humour wonderful. In recognizing their vulnerability Julie came to appreciate the teacher’s responsibility and joy in teaching such young children. She was especially humbled by the opportunity to have experienced being a pre-service teacher at her age in a classroom with such young students.

Practicum dilemma

It became evident that whilst Julie enjoyed the welcome she received from her supervising teacher she herself felt totally unprepared to be in a classroom. For example, she was asked by her supervising teacher to explain triangular numbers to her students when she had “never heard about triangular numbers”. On the following day her supervising teacher asked her to give a lesson on narrative and asked whether she knew the phases of narrative, to which Julie’s reply was a “big no”. Her unpreparedness to teach either of these lessons to the Year 3 and Year 4 students added to her sense of frustration as a “student teacher”. This feeling of unpreparedness is a common factor found in graduate pre-service teachers (cf. Rorrison, 2008). Julie also found that whilst her supervising teacher was both nice and welcoming he “sometimes came across just little vague and changed plans constantly”. She felt uncomfortable “stepping in” when there were behaviour management issues in the classroom, knowing and respecting that “it was/is his class”. Nonetheless, she was quick to acknowledge her supervising teacher for his vast experience:
he (supervising teacher) has been teaching for 30 odd years and I have been in a classroom for two weeks... So I know my theories may be unrealistic... I am there to learn from him and I respect that. I have felt totally included in the classroom. Often he asks me to work with Year 4 while he takes Year 3’s. They have been doing a lot of worksheets/workbooks so I have just wandered about answering students’ questions and helping as needed.

Drawing out Julie’s “I” statements from the above excerpt and creating an ‘I’ poem enabled an unobstructed view of Julie’s reaction:

I have been in the classroom
for two weeks
So I know
my theories may be unrealistic
I am there
to learn from him
I respect that
I have felt totally included
Often he asks me
to work with Year 4
while he takes Year 3’s.
so I have just wandered about
answering students’ questions
and helping as needed

In the above re-presentation of the ‘I’ poem text, the control of the classroom lies with the supervising teacher (‘Often he asks me to work with Year 4’; ‘I have just wandered about... helping as needed). Pre-service teacher knowledge is not trustworthy (‘I know my theories
may be unrealistic’). The role of the pre-service teacher is that of an apprentice (‘I am there to learn from him’). Teaching and learning in the classroom is based on a traditional rationalist perspective (cf. Bain, 2004; Elkind, 1997; Klein, 2004; Sloan, 2005) that is, it is objective, absolute, linear and predictable (‘they have been doing a lot of worksheets/workbooks’).

Learning anew

Julie’s uncertainty both as a learner and pre-service teacher in the Year 3 and Year 4 classroom is evident by the way she speaks of herself in this excerpt. Based on a traditional perspective it can be suggested that the supervising teacher saw his role to help mould Julie to fit in with his view of the good teacher and school environment (cf. Walkington, 2005). Hence, the socialising contexts of professional placement in this case still relied on an 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975), and, as was earlier illuminated by Debra’s experience, this can be a problematic landscape for many graduate pre-service teachers to negotiate. Such a traditional perspective and approach is in turn, in stark contrast to a relational and collaborative model where support and trust are central in promoting the development of a positive teacher identity in the beginning teacher (Noddings, 2000).

Julie found the isolation she experienced and the low status as a pre-service teacher that was afforded to her by other teaching staff at the school disturbing. For example, she explains how during some mornings in the staffroom, teachers would be discussing inappropriate matters in front of her a virtual stranger:

I think to them I was a student, and I was invisible, and I had no relevance, as pre-service teachers we were made feel invisible. [This is in contrast] …coming from a nursing background where in a huge hospital anyone can walk into any table and sit down and be welcomed and feel very inclusive--you don’t need to know the person to feel included…

Drawing out Julie’s “I” statements from the above excerpt and creating an “I” poem enabled the following view of Julie’s reaction:
I think to them I was a student

I was invisible

I had no relevance

we were made feel invisible

[Whereas] in a huge hospital

anyone can walk into any table

and sit down and be welcomed

and feel very inclusive

you don’t need to know the person

In the above ‘I’ poem the locus of control in the school resides with the system (them), the teaching staff. The pre-service teacher is rendered invisible with no relevance. The contrast between teaching and nursing is evident in terms of the social-relational nature of each profession. In a hospital situation being welcomed and included is not dependent on one’s status within the profession, whereas in a school, pre-service teachers are located in a strange situation, being teachers to their students but students to their supervising teachers who will judge their performance as ‘student-teachers’.

Voice of isolation

As can be seen above Julie’s experience of isolation and irrelevance did not support her development of a positive and committed teacher identity. This may suggest that perhaps the school culture, had lost the sense of how important the positive, the affirmative, and the interpersonal dynamic of support and commitment is to the development of a positive teacher identity and to a successful practicum outcome (cf. Rorrison, 2008).

Resolution to practicum dilemma

It can be suggested that Julie’s strong sense of personal identity contributed to her recognition of some of the “fundamentally different beliefs” about teaching and learning held by
her, her supervising teacher, and other teaching staff at the school, a recognition that enabled her to negotiate her practicum experience successfully. To ensure a successful practicum it was necessary that Julie, like Debra, establish and maintain a professional relationship with her supervising teacher. From this then it can be noted that the complexity of the relationship between the pre-service teacher and supervising teacher cannot be undervalued even in situations where goodwill exists between the supervising teacher and the pre-service teacher (Dobbins, 1996; Rorrison, 2008).

Development and emergence of teacher identity

Overall, despite these challenges, by the end of her first practicum, Julie’s final report indicated substantial improvement in her experience and her acceptance in the school:

I have enjoyed my last week...Knowing the students, the teacher and the school in general has made it easier... I think developing an understanding of the culture of the school takes some time. Once this has happened it is much easier to relax and get on with being a student teacher. Unfortunately I have been told that there is no place next semester for student teachers at this school, so [I] will have to move on to another school. Just settling in to a new environment is daunting knowing our ranking will depend on our performance. However, that’s the way it is and I do appreciate the opportunity I have had.

Drawing out Julie’s “I” statements from the above excerpt and creating an “I” poem enabled the following view of Julie’s reaction:

I have enjoyed my last week

I think developing an understanding of the culture of the school

takes some time

Unfortunately I have been told there is no place

so [I] will have to move on

knowing our ranking will depend on our performance
I do appreciate the opportunity I have had

In the above ‘I’ poem the shift in the locus of control from the system to the pre-service teacher provided Julie with an enjoyable practicum experience. However that control remains contingent. The move to another school is especially threatening to Julie since there is a need to learn anew to fit into a different school culture. The locus of control is thus ultimately with the system and the judgment of pre-service teacher ranking remains with the supervising teacher.

Voice of concern

In the extract above, Julie’s concern relates to being moved to another school and hence to adjusting to a new school culture. It is suggested by White and Moss (2003) that to successfully negotiate the practicum, pre-service teachers need to be able to fit into the specific school context. Moreover, they need to learn and embrace the practices and traditions of the individual school as part of their inculcation into the school culture. However, and as Britzman (1994) notes, there is also a contradictory aspect to the practicum. She notes that the practicum “provides the contextual arena wherein the student teacher, as part student, part teacher, has the delicate work of educating others while being educated and of attempting unification in an already contradictory role” (p. 55).

Overall summary of Julie’s identity portrait

Julie’s initial response indicated a traditional perspective of teaching and learning where the teacher was seen as the expert who provides information to the ‘good’ learner. The good learner she described as interested, focused and committed to learning. As a consequence of her experience in her first practicum, Julie’s perception about teaching and learning changed to a relational perspective. Her identity as a teacher now extended to “being a teacher both professionally and in the wider community”. A good teacher, she described, was someone "who just really cares about what they do, and cares about the students”. In this sense Julie’s commitment of care not only involved supporting her students in their intellectual development
but also a commitment to establish connections with her students that clearly indicated a deep and emotional commitment to teaching (cf. Palmer, 1998).

In both her pre- and post-enactment interview responses and based on her experience working as a school health nurse in a secondary school settings, for Julie the reality of teaching was isolated practice. This became obvious during her practicum where in contrast to feeling welcomed and affirmed by her supervising teacher, she felt a sense of isolation from other school personnel. The low status that she experienced and found disturbing included feeling invisible and being treated as irrelevant. However, Julie does not believe that teaching should be an isolated practice, rather there should be a closer relationship developed between teachers, schools parents and the wider community.

To Julie, teaching standards represent a guide or a benchmark that she believes teachers can find quite valuable. In terms of the graduate diploma program Julie believed this had been an disappointing experience and whilst she had not expected to come out as a fully developed teacher she had expected to be better prepared particularly for the practicum component of the degree.

From her own account Julie ultimately enjoyed her first practicum and had felt both supported and welcomed as a graduate pre-service teacher by her supervising teacher. She felt that her supervising teacher had been very inclusive by providing her with opportunities to participate in all teaching and learning activities. She also enjoyed teaching and forming friendships with her young students, suggesting a commitment to an ethics of care for young people.

Julie’s confidence as an emerging teacher became evident towards the end of her practicum placement, as she felt she had gained a deeper understanding of the school culture and in particular the developmental needs of her young students. However, she was concerned about
being placed in a new school for her final practicum where she would have to negotiate a new school culture.

In a similar manner to Debra, Julie believed that the workshop program provided her with the positive social and relational dynamics necessary to support her in her developing teacher identity. The workshops had also provided her with a sense of comfort and preparedness for her practicum.

6.1.10 Summary

Figure 6.2, Julie’s relational theoretical model, illuminates the factors that influenced her emerging teacher identity through her journey in the graduate education program. The review of the research literature indicates that the development of a committed (middle school) teacher identity is dependent on the following three levels of inter-related factors: Level 1: Sources of self: Professional and personal backgrounds and ontological and epistemological beliefs. Level 2: Opportunities to learn: Graduate diploma program (Multiliteracies, Engaging the diverse learners, Middle School Mathematics, Practicum unit, workshop program); and Level 3: Emergence of the developing teacher identity. Julie’s development can be understood using this sequence.
Key: Level 1 = Sources of self

Level 2 = Opportunities to learn

Level 3 = Emergence of teacher Identity

Green line = Positive experiences

Red line = Negative experiences

Figure 6.2. Julie’s Relational Theoretical Model.

The factors that form sources of the self in Level 1 include Julie’s ontological and epistemological perspectives of her own being and her beliefs about knowing and the knower that were influenced by her own unique historical and socio-cultural background. These ontological and epistemological perspectives formed her perceptions about the good teacher and about teaching and learning. Entering the program, her mixed traditional and relational ontological and epistemological perspectives changed after her participation in the Graduate Diploma Program to a relational-ontological perspective. She developed an awareness of how the continuous formation of the self as a learner (or as a teacher) is a process of “becoming” that is socially embedded and hence, relational. She noted that a learner (or a teacher) is a way of being in the world, and a way of being a learner (or a teacher) in a classroom is about being supported by others, it is about being immersed and socialized into a culture and community.

Level 2 involves factors that formed the opportunities to learn as provided by the University Graduate Diploma Program (Middle Years) during semester one. These included the practicum and the four graduate diploma units. In addition and as part of this research project a workshop program was offered to all participants to explore and make explicit their ontological and epistemological concerns about their developing teacher identities. Here, as noted earlier, the workshop program was not part of the formal Graduate Diploma Program (Middle School), and
indeed provided in some part an alternative ontological and epistemological framing from which the Graduate Diploma Program and the process of teaching could be re-constructed.

The factors that influenced the emergence and development of a positive (or negative) teacher identity (Level 3) are dependent on the interrelationship between Levels 1 and 2. The emergence of teacher identity is possible when the learning opportunities as provided in the graduate diploma program (Level 2) are aligned to the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher (Level 1).

As noted earlier, there are two colours that are used to depict the pathway of the graduate pre-service teacher’s journey: a green line suggests a positive unproblematic pathway whilst the emergence of a red colour line suggests critical incidents or dilemmas in the graduate pre-service pathway. The merging of both colours suggests a mixture of both positive and negative experiences in the pathway (e.g., the workshop program, the practicum, or the university units).

As can be seen in Julie’s skewed model, her pathway through the four individual units as offered by the graduate diploma program and the practicum component was problematic. As was the case with Debra’s experiences, the learning opportunities provided in the graduate diploma program and the practicum component (Level 2) were not aligned to Julie’s relational-ontological beliefs about being a teacher or her epistemological beliefs about knowledge as created and embodied in relation with others. In particular this can be seen with the red line receding back in both cases to Level 1 and where the red lines emerge into green lines. Lines tracking back to Level 1 suggest the need for Julie to reflect and to rethink her personal ontological and epistemological beliefs and how they align to her journey in the graduate diploma program. As already discussed in section 6.1.9 the learning opportunities that were provided in the graduate diploma program prior to the practicum were disappointing for Julie. Her sense of disappointment in these subjects related to her experiences of feeling unprepared for teaching in
the Year 3 and Year 4 composite class that she had been allocated to by the university. The subjects that were taught by the university prior to her practicum did not address curriculum areas suited for the Year 3 and Year 4 composite class. Hence, her disappointment was understandable—after all she had enrolled in the graduate diploma program to become a middle-school teacher and had assumed she would be teaching students in middle years (between Years 5 and Years 10).

Julie’s pathway though the workshop program (see Level 2) suggests a positive and an empowering experience. It was during the workshops that she experienced being welcomed into a middle-school community of scholarly learners where her professional background and life-experiences were taken into account and brought into the conversation. It was during the workshops that Julie, in collaboration with the other participants in the study and the guest lecturers, was encouraged to critically question, examine and reflect on her perspectives about teaching and learning, teacher identity and what it meant to be a middle-school teacher. It is suggested that the workshop experience was a catalyst for change in her previously held traditional perspectives about the teacher, teaching and learning to a relational-ontological perspective (cf. Bain, 2004; Noddings, 2003; Palmer, 1998). Nonetheless, and despite her positive experiences in the workshop program as presented in Level 3, Julie’s sense of development as a middle-school teacher identity suggests a fragmented sense of teacher identity. Whilst the positive influencing factors such as the workshop program contributed to her sense of a middle-school teacher identity, the contributing negative factors such as the four individual units and the practicum hindered this process and suggest that her sense of development as a middle-school teacher identity was not realized during the course of the first semester of the graduate diploma program.

While individual information about Julie’s experiences in her second semester was not available, the intention of the focus group discussion that was held at the end of the second
semester and after the completion of the final practicum was to provide insight into these participants’ overall experiences in the graduate diploma program.

6.1.11 Fran’s Identity portrait

In a manner similar to that of the previous two identity portraits, the following section will begin by presenting the personal and professional factors that influenced Fran’s developing middle-school teacher identity. Her journey through the first semester will be interpreted through the relational-ontological theoretical framework. This model provides an understanding of the critical influencing factors that supported and hindered the development of her emerging teacher identity.

Personal and professional influencing factors.

Fran has a Business degree majoring in Journalism and comes from a family of teachers. Her choice to move from working in the public sector to that of teaching was influenced not only by her family and her experience teaching adults but also by the frustration that she felt whilst working for the public service sector. She explains that her previous work involved:

huge investment of energy but very little outcome and often it is three years on before you see an outcome, so actually being in a classroom and seeing the light go on would be incredibly rewarding.

Fran initially chose to teach middle years because she felt that it offered better employment opportunities. However, after her first teaching practicum, she is no longer certain that teaching is for her and is reassessing her decision.

Teaching and learning—(the good learner and the good teacher)

In both her pre- and post-enactment interviews Fran was consistent in her views that teaching was about “helping people change and to help them make the most of their skills”, whereas learning is “a life-long process” from where “one’s experiences will hopefully,
translate into wisdom”. This suggests that she perceives both teaching and learning as relational (Noddings, 2003) and her commitment to teaching and learning is in line with Bain’s notions of the good teacher (Bain, 2004). In other words, the good teacher is embedded in a way of being with distinct forms of commitment and love for teaching that involves not only valuing other disciplines but valuing students and their learning (Bain, 2004). A good learner, according to Fran, is someone who is “teachable and has the humility to know he or she has not all the answers”. It is someone who is willing to try different methods, is self-directed, disciplined, motivated and curious. Fran’s response is interesting in a number of ways. Firstly, perhaps she is referring to herself when she describes the good learner as someone who is teachable and who has humility to know they do not have all the answers. Secondly, her descriptions of the attributes of a good learner strongly suggest a preference to the committed learner (Bain, 2004).

In her pre-enactment interview Fran admitted that she had high expectations of her students prior to her practicum, believing it was important to gain their respect rather than to expect it. In her post-enactment interview and after her practicum experience, her expectation of her students was to “learn and not disrupt others who are learning”. As their teacher, she in turn hoped she had provided “engaging lessons” and been able to inspire them to continue learning. Like Julie, Fran also felt that being caring was important; that is, it was important for her to treat her students fairly and as young people who are learning and exploring the world. She saw the role of the school and the teacher as one that sought to assist young people in becoming responsible, contributing, and confident adults.

In her post-enactment interview and after her practicum, Fran still felt that treating her students with respect was important. As a teacher, she also found it important to be able to identify where they were academically and in their social development. She found it relatively
easy to identify and respond to the students’ academic abilities and needs but not their social
development. She explains:

I am certainly not their mum, and I am not their best friend. I did not quite treat them like
my nieces and nephews but they got a degree of leeway. No, I was not that strict with
them. I tried to treat them with respect and to recognise where they were at—and that was
a tricky part—where they were at, why they were behaving like this, and why they kept
dobbing on each other, and kick and hit? That was the tough bit.

These comments suggest a disparity in Fran’s beliefs about her role as a teacher. To
understand her belief about the role of the teacher it is helpful to turn to her pre-enactment
interview response regarding a good teacher. In line with the relational perspective, for Fran a
good teacher knows how to “bring the best out in students both in relation to their academic skills
and their social skills”. In addition, a good teacher also has the “ability to engage children in
learning, to be curious about them, an ability to communicate with students at their level” as well
as, to know a range of behaviour management strategies:

…you are moulding lives rightly or wrongly and whilst I don’t want to be a de-facto
parent but in point of view you are. To me teaching strategies are easier than behaviour
management strategies.

Thus teaching is not only concerned with identifying adolescents’ learning needs and
academic abilities, engaging them in learning experiences that require communication skills, but
also with an understanding of issues that specifically relate to their social development. In line
with the research literature (cf. De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005; Pendergast, 2005) an
understanding of issues that relate specifically to adolescents needs is also a necessary
requirement to teach well in middle school.

*Teacher identity*
When Fran initially heard the term teacher identity in the pre-enactment interview, she felt it was "a strange term". However, in the post-enactment interview and after her practicum, she related the term teacher identity to teachers “wearing jeans and Sloppy Joes”. Whilst dress standards may seem “somewhat superficial to some people” Fran believed that how you dress does impact on peoples’ perception of you as the teacher, and on the teacher profession. She felt that teacher identity is important in terms of a personal identity but not if it was “referring to some generic” or common identity, where teachers are all alike. Like Debra, Fran also felt that having confidence in all subjects was crucial to teacher identity. She notes:

It is important to have confidence in teaching whatever, whether maths or science--if you are teaching as an authority you damn well better know it.

Fran elaborated on her understanding of teacher identity by describing a mathematics teacher identity, for example as being someone with personality and passion for mathematics and who, with clarity, could explain mathematics in different ways and its value to society. Whilst Fran’s notion of self as a teacher, is important it is her passion and confidence in teaching the subject that is paramount to her sense of teacher identity (cf. Bain, 2004; Palmer, 1998). Thus, in addition to a sense of self as a teacher the development of teacher identity is also influenced by one’s understanding and knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge. Importantly, the relational perspective does not ignore pre-service teachers’ individuality or their need to assert and construct their own meaning of their experiences.

*Teaching as an isolated practice*

Fran did not feel isolated during her practicum with her supervising teacher there for support though she did admit feeling uncomfortable with her supervising teacher “watching” her teach. She did believe that working at the primary school as a teacher “with over 1000 students would make you feel quite isolated".
Teaching standards

In her pre-enactment interview, Fran stated that she was not familiar with the teacher standards. However, in her post-enactment interview, unlike both Debra and Julie, Fran was especially critical of the standards that she described as “a load of twaddle”. She felt they were “part of an over-regimentation with everyone wanting their fingers in the pie as to what the standards are”. She explains:

You got all these policy documents and standards no one reads or does not read because it is too much--it is like you are reading the telephone book. Pointless, you know teacher standards by and large should be something fairly simple and not accompanied by a load of …. Yeah, it is way too much paperwork in the whole teaching profession.

It can be suggested that Fran’s critical position about the standards was influenced by her previous negative experiences working within the public sector where she saw similarities to teaching. For example, within the public sector (and similar to her practicum experience) Fran found that trust had been replaced with accountability and this was a major reason for leaving her previous place of employment. This is in line with research literature (cf. Mackenzie, 2004) suggesting that the threat to the development of a positive and committed teacher identity under performativity is not only a threat to a loss of self but a threat that may see the pre-service teacher not enter the profession.

6.1.12 Influencing factors during the graduate diploma program (Middle Years)

In relation to research question 2 the following section will present the factors that influenced Fran’s development of teacher identity during the graduate teacher education program. Her pathway through the four individual units as offered in the first semester of the graduate diploma program presents a mixture of positive and negative experiences. To get a sense of her experiences during her first semester in the graduate diploma program it is necessary to refer to both her pre-and post-interview narratives.
Initially Fran “freaked” about the one year graduate diploma when asked about her expectations in her pre-enactment interview, but “calmed down as she noted lecturers putting a philosophical framework in place”. For example, some lecturers in their introductory lectures openly acknowledged the limited time available for in-depth study of subjects and instead suggested to students “where to go for further information--what would be covered was learning some basic skills as well as there was an encouragement for students to be involved in the development of a professional community”. However, in her post-enactment interview, Fran admits to “not being a huge fan” of the one year graduate diploma program and in fact was “shocked at the teaching standard of the university”:

I think that they were scrambling when we came in--and yeah, we have been very much guinea pigs. I think the staff are overworked and so they are probably doing the very best they can--the point of facts is, that they are the professionals, the experts. I think it is shocking the standard of teaching, by and large, at the university.

Beginning her course, Fran felt some units would be challenging particularly those that were self-directed and not face-to-face, which was her preferred way of learning. She felt that the mathematics unit would be fun as well as interesting. Having completed the first semester units, she was highly critical of the subjects offered, finding some of them appalling, with some being badly marked, badly set, and the quality of the material very poor. The Mathematics unit on the other hand was “reasonably good, as the developers of the unit seemed interested in making it better” as was seen through the request of feedback.

6.1.13 Workshops

Interestingly whilst Fran attended all workshops she did not share other participants’ enthusiasm for the workshop program. She found the workshop relating to teacher identity as particularly “boring”. She found that the emphasis that was placed on teacher identity during the workshop session confusing. However, after she had completed her practicum she came to
understand why there had been such emphasis on teacher identity in the workshop session that so had bored her. To Fran teacher identity related to teachers’ sense of self as a professional that included their sense of dress. She particularly related the importance of professional attire and mannerism as a way that demand respect from the wider school community such as parents. She had found during her practicum very little respect afforded to teachers by parents and attributed this to the poor and unprofessional sense of dress by the teachers at the school who in main wore “jeans and sloppy joes”.

6.1.14 The practicum experience

This section presents Fran’s practicum experience as communicated via her weekly emails. As with Debra’s and Julie’s email narratives, the interpretation of these emails has been facilitated by employing the listening guide methodology.

Practicum dilemma

Fran’s first practicum experience had a negative impact on her developing teacher identity and she is no longer convinced that teaching is for her. She was particularly concerned over how classroom teaching seemed to be more about “admin” and “politics” than about teaching. She was also unsure whether she wanted to teach middle years where she found such disparity in student learning, for example, the mixed abilities of the students in her Year 6 class with some students operating on Year 3 levels in mathematics and literacy.

A major contributing factor to Fran’s feelings of uncertainty was her dislike of being observed and judged by her supervising teacher. Also, like Julie, the experience of not being provided with clear expectations about what was anticipated from her as a pre-service teacher, affected her sense of self. It is interesting to note that she does not mention feeling anxious or uncomfortable with other teachers (e.g., supply teachers) observing her. Fran’s disappointment is evident when she was advised in Week 3, by her supervising teacher, that she would not be graded above a ‘suitable’ because she was a one year graduate. Hence, it is apparent that her
supervising teacher did not see her role as one of supporting Fran’s growth in practice (Croker & Wilder, 1999):

Week three was yucky--I basically got my interim report and [I] got told that because I was a one year graduate on her first prac I wouldn’t be graded above a suitable. This was highly un-motivating because no matter how hard I worked--I was still going to end up with an average rating.

I did not enjoy myself and for couple of days [I] couldn’t be bothered putting in my best effort to planning and teaching. After a couple of days I shook off this attitude and [I] decided that it was important that I do my best for the students and for my own personal satisfaction.

Drawing out Fran’s “I” statements from the above excerpt and creating an “I’ poem enabled an unobstructed view of Fran’s reaction:

*I basically got my interim report…

[I] got told

because I was a one year graduate on her first prac

I wouldn’t be graded above a suitable

no matter how hard I worked

I was still going to end up with an average rating.

I did not enjoy myself

[I] couldn’t be bothered putting in my best effort to planning and teaching

I shook off this attitude

and [I] decided

that it was important I do my best for the students

and for my own personal satisfaction
In this excerpt the locus of control (Rotter, 1976) initially resided firmly with the supervising teacher in terms of grading the pre-service teacher. The misuse of the supervising teacher’s position of power based on assumptions about the readiness of the one year graduate pre-service teacher resulted in the pre-service teacher feeling powerless at first. The successful shift in the locus of control from the supervising teacher to the pre-service teacher can be noted with the pre-service teacher making the choice (‘I decided’) not to let the unfair grading stand in the way of her doing her best (‘my best’) for the students and for her own (‘my own’) personal satisfaction.

Resolution to practicum dilemma

It was unfortunate that the supervising teacher had made such comments regarding Fran’s suitability rating, and understandably, this was a very demoralizing experience, in particular for her sense of self as a pre-service teacher. However, Fran’s confidence in her own ability as a beginning teacher, her commitment to teaching and her students, helped her “shake off” her disappointment. She also felt that the support she received from her students affirmed her own sense of development as a good teacher. They demonstrated their support through the numerous drawings and small gifts they gave to her. Most importantly what mattered to her was seeing her students succeed in their learning. For instance, the following example of student writing provided her with evidence of her own worth of self as a ‘good’ teacher:

One of the boys who has learning difficulties wrote an absolute corker of a news report based on a fractured fairytale--“Goldifox Outfoxed!” and it had me belly laughing!

Several of the other reports have been very amusing.

Development and emergence of teacher identity

It was apparent that Fran was most relaxed and enjoyed teaching when the supervising teacher was not present. Her commitment and her passion for teaching were also evident even though early in her practicum she expressed some concern related to catering for such mixed abilities amongst students, such as teaching students at Year 3 level mathematics and literacy in a
Year 6 classroom. However, towards the end of her practicum, she expressed surprise at the students’ knowledge. It was also clear that in the beginning whilst Fran was able to identify where her students were academically, she had difficulty understanding their social and developmental needs. However, for Fran understanding her students seemed to be a matter of getting to know them and having more time in the classroom. There are a number of wonderful descriptions of her students demonstrating their support for Fran by drawing pictures and sharing their personal stories with her. Even with such positive experiences in the classroom at the end of her practicum, Fran still was not sure teaching was for her, though she was not entirely giving up on teaching per se and was considering tutoring as an alternative:

[I’m] Not sure that teaching is for me. I am fairly independent and [I] dislike being told what to do. In some ways it would be a pain in the neck to be tied to a particular curriculum. The kids were generally nice but the size of the class and mixed ability means that the teacher can't give the students the individual attention they need. Perhaps I'll look at tutoring instead. Also, I think the administrative/political context is not for me.

Drawing out Fran’s “I” statements from the above excerpt and creating an “I’ poem enabled an unobstructed view of Fran’s reaction:

[I'm] Not sure that teaching is for me

I am fairly independent

[I] dislike being told what to do

Perhaps I'll look at tutoring instead

I think the administrative/political context is not for me

Voice of independence and uncertainty

While Fran’s I poem suggests an uncertainty about working as a classroom teacher, nonetheless she is not quite prepared to give up on teaching altogether and is wondering about tutoring instead. Her concerns that relate to a dislike being told what to do, a dislike for the administrative
duties and the politics involved in classroom teaching, suggest her desire to remain in control of her personal situation, in other words, an autonomous or independent form of teacher identity. In this framing her consequent uncertainty reflects her commitment to student learning rather than the bureaucratic and standardized nature that she experienced teaching had become.

Overall summary of Fran’s identity portrait

For Fran teaching was about helping and learning as a life-long process, suggesting that she perceives both teaching and learning as relational (Noddings, 2003). It became evident that treating her students fairly and with respect were important factors determining a good teacher as was having the ability to identify students’ academic levels and where they were in their social development. While Fran initially thought of teacher identity as strange term, after completing her practicum and relating it to “wearing jeans and sloppy joes”, it became clear that teacher identity was important to her in terms of a personal identity but not if it was “referring to some generic identity” or common identity.

Fran did not view teaching as an isolated practice as she related it to her practicum experience where she had been observed by her supervising teacher and other teachers. Further she did not conceive teaching as an isolated practice in a school with a student population of over 1000. This impersonal view of teaching may be viewed as a confirmation of Fran’s sense of disappointment in classroom teaching that to her had become too standardised and politicised. For instance, teaching standards according to Fran should be fairly simple to understand rather than part of what she referred to as “an over-regimentation with everyone wanting their fingers in the pie as to what the standards are.”

Initially Fran expected that the graduate diploma program would provide a framework that would provide the graduate pre-service teacher the necessary knowledge as to where to access information, learn some basic skills and support the development of a professional middle-
school community. However, after her experience in the first half of the program she admitted disappointment and to “not being a huge fan” of the program.

The overwhelming feeling of desperately wanting to do well in her practicum was indicative of Fran’s commitment to become a good teacher, as well as an indication of her perception about the practicum being a test to be passed rather than an experience of learning (Dobbins, 1996). It was evident that the anxiety she experienced whenever she was observed, evaluated and judged by her supervising teacher coupled with the power her supervising teacher had over her regarding her suitability rating, were major influencing factors to her negative experience. It was clear that receiving the demoralising news regarding her grading suitability impacted greatly on her sense of self as a developing teacher. However, her decision to shake off the negative feelings was associated with a commitment to herself, her students, and teaching.

Fran’s disillusionment with the role of the classroom teacher was also clearly evident. She was particularly disillusioned with the amount of unnecessary paper work and daily interruptions that were taking away from teaching time. She was also disillusioned by “the politics that were played out in the school” and the “disrespect toward the teachers by the parents”. Based on these observations, it can be suggested that Fran’s reasons for leaving the public service sector are similar to why she no longer wants to pursue a classroom teaching career. Research (cf. Woods and Jeffrey, 2002) notes that the control of teachers, most recently through teacher standards, has been become tighter through the codification and monitoring of processes and practices previously left to teachers’ professional judgement, suggesting that accountability has replaced the notion of trust, which is at the heart of a relational approach to teacher work. However, despite the negative experiences during her practicum relating to her supervising teacher, and Fran’s disillusionment with the administrative duties and politics of being a classroom teacher, her confidence in her own developing teacher identity, or her sense as
a beginning teacher, had grown. Hence, as an alternative choice to that of classroom teaching she was considering pursuing tutoring.

### 6.1.15 Summary

The review of the research literature indicates that the development of a committed (middle school) teacher identity is dependent on the following three levels of inter-related factors: Level 1: Sources of self: **Professional and personal backgrounds and ontological and epistemological beliefs.** Level 2: Opportunities to learn: **Graduate diploma program** (Multiliteracies, Engaging the diverse learners, Middle School Mathematics, Practicum unit, workshop program); and Level 3: **Emergence of the developing teacher identity.**

![Figure 6.3. Fran’s Relational Theoretical Model.](image)

**Key:**
- Level 1 = Sources of self
- Level 2 = Opportunities to learn
- Level 3 = Emergence of teacher identity
- Green line = Positive experiences
- Red line = Negative experiences

*Figure 6.3. Fran’s Relational Theoretical Model.*
The factors that form sources of the self in Level 1 include Fran’s ontological and epistemological perspectives about her own being and her beliefs about knowing and the knower. These factors formed her perspectives about a good teacher and about teaching and learning. Fran’s ontological beliefs about being a teacher suggested a relational way of being that was influenced by her unique and special historical and socio-cultural background. To Fran being a teacher was about relating and connecting with her students that allowed for the development of trust. Fran’s epistemological perspective in line with her ontological perspective suggested that to her knowledge and knowing was about transformation. In other words, she believes that students’ growth or transformation occurs within and are influenced by the cultural context of the classroom and school. These factors formed her perspectives about teaching and learning.

The next level involves factors that formed the opportunities to learn as provided by the University Graduate Diploma Program (Middle Years) during semester one. These included the practicum, and the four graduate diploma subjects. In addition and as part of the research project a workshop program was offered to all participants to explore and make explicit their ontological and epistemological concerns about their developing teacher identities.

The factors that influenced the emergence and development of a positive (or negative) teacher identity (Level 3) are dependent on the interrelationship between Levels 1 and 2. The emergence of teacher identity is possible when the learning opportunities provided in the graduate diploma program (Level 2) are aligned to the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher (Level 1).

There are two colours that are used to depict the pathway of the graduate pre-service teacher’s journey; a green line suggests a positive unproblematic pathway whilst the emergence of a red colour line suggests critical incidents or dilemmas in the graduate pre-service teacher’s pathway. The merging of both colours suggests a mixture of both positive and negative experiences in the pathway (e.g., the workshop program, the practicum, or the university
subjects). The tracking back of the lines to Level 1 suggest a reconsideration and reflection of the participant’s ontological and epistemological beliefs in relation to the offerings from the graduate diploma program.

It can be seen from Fran’s skewed model (Figure 6.3), which is similar to that of Julie, that her pathways through the four individual subjects as offered by the graduate diploma program and the practicum component were in the main negative experiences. Interestingly, whilst she participated in all workshop sessions she did not mention whether she found the workshop program a negative or a positive experience in her post-interview, hence the lack of a pathway through the workshop program.

Fran’s journey through the individual subjects began in a positive way where the continuing green line in Level 1 continues in part of Level 2, but then transpires as a red line. The red line suggested a number of critical incidents (see section 6.1.15) that were not aligned to Fran’s ontological and epistemological beliefs and hence impacted negatively on her sense of developing middle-school teacher identity. As already noted in Fran’s pre-enactment interview data (see section 6.16), she was clearly excited about being enrolled in the subjects that were offered by the graduate diploma program (Middle School). Her belief related not only to an expectation that they (the graduate pre-service teachers) would be provided with well developed philosophical frameworks that would guide and support their developing understanding of middle schooling but also to an expectation that they were going to be provided with an opportunity to participate in a professional middle-school community. Unfortunately, as noted in her post-enactment interview (see section 6.16) Fran’s expectations were not met. As with Julie’s criticism of what had been offered in terms of the subjects, Fran was highly critical of the standard of teaching by the teacher educators and the development of the subject materials. This negative experience is seen as the red line in Level 2 that then recedes back to Level 1 and emerges as a green line. The emergence of the green line in Level 1 suggests that Fran’s strong sense of self in
becoming a teacher and her approach to learning (ontological and epistemological perspectives) did not change as a result of the subjects. However, Fran’s well established and strong sense of self as a good teacher was at odds not only with the learning opportunities provided by the various subjects in the graduate diploma program (Middle Years) but also with the practicum.

As with Debra’s and Julie’s journeys through the practicum, Fran’s journey through the practicum proved a disappointing experience. Nonetheless it was clear that she had been excited about teaching in the Year 6 classroom that she had been allocated to, and her passion and commitment to teaching was evident (see section 6.1.18). Fran was adamant in her belief that both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are important factors in the development of the good middle-school teacher. She also came to recognize the value of the social-relational aspects of teaching and learning.

Fran’s negative experience during her practicum related to her supervising teacher’s advice that she was not going to receive an above average rating regardless of how successful she was as a teacher. This experience impacted on her sense of fairness and to overcome her disappointment she drew from her own sense of confidence as being a good teacher. Whilst this incident may have had some impact on Fran’s emerging teacher identity, her apparent rejection of classroom teaching as a career related to the seemingly unwarranted emphasis placed on the administrative role of the teacher rather than on the teacher helping students to learn and to transform. In addition she found the informal dress (jeans and sloppy joes) at the school unprofessional and believed this may reduce the level of respect and rapport with parents.

It can be suggested that the learning opportunities as provided in the graduate diploma program and the practicum (Level 2) were not aligned to Fran’s ontological and epistemological perspectives. In other words, to Fran teaching and learning is relational and knowledge is the product of human beings who are in relation with each other (Thayer-Bacon, 1995). Thus, her
sense of development as a middle-school teacher identity as presented in Level 3 was not realized.

6.2 SUMMARY

In this chapter three identity portraits were presented: Debra, Julie and Fran. The in-depth presentation included an analysis and description of the factors that influenced their emerging teacher identities during the graduate diploma program. To illuminate their individual journeys through the postgraduate diploma program and the factors that either hindered or supported their developing middle-school teacher identities, a visual representation was provided that was based on the relational-ontological theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3 from the literature review.

Findings indicated that while all three participants were committed to their development as teachers there were differences in approaches to teaching and learning based on their ontological and epistemological perspectives. Thus it appears that Debra entered the graduate diploma program with a traditional perspective about teaching and learning and her personal learning style was that of the procedural learner. Julie entered the graduate diploma program with a mixed perspective about teaching and learning as both traditional as well as relational and her learning style also suggested a mixed approach. Fran entered the graduate diploma program with a relational perspective to teaching and learning and her learning style was in line with the committed learner. Overall, beliefs about teaching and learning became more prominent in their post-interviews after their experiences during the practicum.

The following section will provide an overall analysis of all 12 participants’ experiences in the first Semester of the Graduate Diploma Program (Middle Years) including the practicum and their experiences in the workshop program.
6.3 INFLUENCING FACTORS DURING THE GRADUATE DIPLOMA PROGRAM (MIDDLE YEARS)

The following influencing factors that emerged from the analysis of data were the conceptions of all the participants’ about the:

1. Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years)
2. Workshop program, and
3. Practicum

6.3.1 Graduate Diploma Program

As noted in Chapter 5 and in participants’ pre-enactment interview responses, their expectations regarding the one year Middle Years Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) varied. Some expected the year to be busy, that it would be hard work but they also expected getting support and help. Others expected to get a solid understanding of teaching and how to teach.

In their post-enactment interview, and halfway through the graduate diploma program (Middle Years), most participants reported that the one year graduate diploma program had been a disappointing experience thus far. Some felt that they had not been provided with the necessary learning opportunities that would allow them to teach with a sense of confidence in the classroom. Most expected to have been better prepared and supported, especially for the practicum component of the program. This is in line with the literature suggesting that “anything less than a carefully scaffolded, learner-focused, authentic [middle school] practicum experience, supported by quality mentoring that is the responsibility of both the schools and the university would be leaving teacher preparation to chance” (Rorrison, 2008, p. viii). Furthermore, and in line with the literature (cf. Carlone & Johnson, 2007; Gardner & Williamson, 2002; Palmer, 1998), mutual trust, support and recognition by others from within the teaching profession (e.g., teacher educators, principals, fellow teachers, and students) as a future colleague rather than as a student are important factors that support the development of confidence as well as a positive and
committed teacher identity. The duration of the one-year graduate diploma program was identified and agreed by most of the participants as problematic. Katherine explains:

to a degree I feel a whole lot of resentment that it is a one year degree because I think that you can do so much more if you had more time and obviously not four years but even if it was two years you have more time–every topic each week in the undergraduate program is a whole subject and we haven’t had a chance to look at each topic in depth we had to stick to one topic for the three assessment items.

This is in line with the literature (cf. Alsup, 2005; Ingvarson, 2007; Rorrison, 2008), suggesting the inadequacy of time allocated to the various subjects as provided in a one-year graduate diploma programs have been and are of concern to many post-graduate pre-service teachers and course designers alike.

The most useful component of the one-year graduate diploma program according to some of the participants was the practicum. For example, both Jane and Sarah believed that it was during the practicum component of the one-year graduate diploma program that they learned the most about teaching and becoming a teacher. Sarah explains:

I think the most things I have learned is from prac and I have got background information from the uni I felt it really is a short time to learn--yeah, teaching for a whole week on prac has helped me with confidence--I think I am much more confident now even though I don’t know everything in maths and stuff but it’s stuff I can easily understand--I am always really well prepared and I think I can improve all the time--all the teachers told me they learned a lot after they finished uni on the go.

Here, in line with research studies (cf. Bransford et al., 2003; Korthagen, et al., 2006; Lawrance & Palmer, 2003; Ingvarson, 2007; Rorrison, 2005, 2008), there is a belief among many pre-service teachers, classroom teachers, school principals and policy makers that the practicum
component is more useful in terms of teacher preparation than what is offered in university teacher education programs.

While the expectations of most participants were less than satisfactory halfway through the one-year graduate diploma program there was an exception amongst the participants, one of whom, Ron, believed that his expectations from the one-year graduate diploma program had been met:

Yeah, I think they have (expectations have been met). It is very easy to oh, say that there is so much work and I have not got the time to do it. And yeah, but I mean that is what I expected, and I suppose what I appreciated was the fact that you know within a matter of, you know was it about eight or nine weeks or something when suddenly we are in front of the classroom. This is where the rubber hits the road. This is where it happens. This is what it is all about, and it gave me the chance to find out early whether I was really suited to teaching.

From the above excerpt it can be suggested that Ron’s belief about his own suitability as a classroom teacher was more important and dependent on his experiences in the classroom situation than about learning the middle-school curriculum at the university. Nor did he disregard the graduate diploma program as irrelevant to his learning as a teacher and he had been well aware from the beginning of the limited time available to learn the required course work. Hence, Ron’s expectations had been met on two accounts, not only being provided with the necessary skills but more importantly through his practicum being provided with a growing sense of confidence in his own developing teacher identity. For Ron, learning to be a teacher is more a relational than a traditional endeavour.

The subjects

The findings indicated that most of the participants believed that the subjects that were provided in the Graduate Diploma Program needed further improvement. Subjects that caused special
concern among the participants were the Field Studies subject that was a preparation for their practicum, and the subject titled, Engaging the Diverse Learner. This subject is concerned with integrating and applying current perspectives, issues and theoretical frameworks of inclusion and diversity in the classroom. The main concern with both subjects related to the seeming mismatch between the assumptions of the university and the real life expectations in classrooms. For example, as noted earlier, Debra explains:

there was a lot of talk especially in the field studies unit--how we are going to do a lot of collaborative group work, we are going to do pair work--but we had a small sized class room--it was a sardine can with 31 kids in it--how could you do collaborative group work in that classroom--you just could not--impossible.

This is in line with the literature (cf. Ingvarson, 2007; Rorrison, 2008), that notes how feelings of being misled by the university commonly occur when pre-service teachers teach in someone else’s classroom, producing someone else’s lesson, which is to submit to prescribed lesson content and classroom management techniques that are counter to what is taught at the university.

Simon’s comment is indicative of many criticisms of the subject, Engaging the Diverse Learner:

It was called engaging diverse learners but it did not engage us as students--it was taught in a manner that spoke from one aspect for the whole semester from what they were trying to teach but it did not respect our ideals or how we wanted to be taught as internal students--it was just all given over the internet and a very dodgy textbook.

Most teacher educators expect pre-service teachers to know how to engage and motivate their future learners yet the participants’ responses indicated that many teacher educators themselves lacked understanding of how to motivate and engage the pre-service teacher in the various course subjects (cf. Ingvarson, 2007).
For most participants the most useful subject was the nine week mathematics unit. Most of their responses to this unit suggested that it had been both challenging and rewarding, although it was also rushed and at times confusing. For example, Sarah explains why she felt that the subject was confusing:

Hmm--I think they (the lecturers) were all very passionate about it--but the content was squashed and really tricky--it was confusing--I said that also in my evaluation of the course--Tim he prepares so well, he knows so much, he wants to give us all this information but then he kind of, “we don’t have enough time for this so let’s skip through this, and oh that is not really important”--and that really confused me and made me insecure. It was kind of inconsistent--I would have preferred something highly structured.

This view is in line with the literature (cf. Uusimaki 2005, Uusimaki & Nason, 2004, 2005), that indicates the need to provide mature-aged pre-service students extra time to process new ways of learning and teaching mathematics in non-intimidating learning environments, where they can openly share and discuss and their developing mathematical understandings or confusions. This is particularly important for those pre-service teachers who have been absent for many years from formal mathematics teaching and learning and who may feel less than confident in their ability to understand what is required to teach middle-school mathematics teaching and learning. Thus, accounting for these affective responses is a necessary component in ensuring their successful mathematical learning and teaching outcomes (Uusimaki, 2004).

Not all participants found the mathematics unit challenging. For instance, Jean highly enjoyed the mathematics unit:

I loved it--everyone else was whingeing away--I thought it was fantastic because I was left to just explore and work it out and take on something that I always was hopeless at and all of this was making so much sense--I was so satisfied because I actually learned something and I also learned something about my own previous perception of myself--I thought I
could not do maths and I did not have an understanding at any level and now it is not a scary thing and now I really enjoy maths.

Interestingly, the mathematics unit was singled out by the majority of the participants as one that was done very well in the one year teaching program. In particular, many of the participants noted that the combination of having straightforward access to mathematics curriculum documents and then being offered some practical, hands-on strategies for teaching the curriculum left them feeling far more comfortable with mathematics than before. Indeed, one participant, Ron, noted that his confidence in maths had paradoxically increased (given a previous reluctance about the subject) while his confidence in other subjects had diminished (even where he had been previously interested and confident in that subject matter). He attributed this to the way in which the mathematics unit was taught in comparison to the other units. Many agreed that receiving very hands-on or practical information about a subject was central to increasing their confidence as teachers of that subject. Indeed, the increase in confidence helped most participants during their practicum experiences to be able to identify what mathematical concepts students had problems with and to understand the basics of how to help students to value mathematics. Tina’s excerpt is an example of their perceptions of the applicability and usefulness of knowledge gained from the mathematics unit during their practicum experiences:

It helped me with the kinaesthetic experiences in prac because I knew how important that was and also the fact that you need to, they need to do this, play with things a very long time. And don’t push the symbols and the formulas and whatever. I think that is what is lacking in schools they are rushing them through, and the kids are obviously not consolidating the knowledge.

Tina’s confidence in teaching mathematics to her students can be attributed to how she was introduced to mathematics teaching and learning in the mathematics unit. It can also be
suggested that because of her confidence in teaching mathematics, this allowed her to recognise and to be sensitive how to best accommodate her students’ preferred ways of learning.

6.3.2 Summary

A lack of support and recognition was seen as problematic by most of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers participating in this study. The lack of recognition of their personal and professional experiences and how this could benefit in their learning was disappointing to most of the participants. The learning opportunities that were offered by the Graduate Diploma Program in terms of some of the subjects that were offered were found to be problematic by most of the graduate pre-service teachers and as such did not contribute positively to their growth and development as middle-school teacher identities. The most useful, challenging but also a somewhat confusing subject, was the mathematics subject. While the negative comments related to it being too rushed and too condensed, the positive comments clearly suggested a sense of confidence as developing mathematics teachers (Middle School).

6.3.3 Workshop program

Teacher identity

One of the major factors influencing participants’ emerging teacher identities was the workshop program, which as noted previously, was provided particularly for this group. Findings indicated that the experiences provided during the workshop program influenced most of the participants’ perceptions to seeing middle-school teacher identity as a “new way of being and becoming”, and where their sense of emerging teacher identities were affirmed. Moreover, the evidence suggests that it was during the workshop program that becoming a middle-school teacher was seen by most of the participants as a relational endeavour (Noddings, 2003). That is, becoming a middle-school teacher was seen to be dependent on collaboration with teacher educators, principals and other significant persons concerned with their personal understandings and their beliefs about the meaning of being a teacher, teaching and learning and the good teacher...
Hence, based on participants’ post-enactment interview responses the underlying purpose of the workshops--to enrich the participants’ conceptual repertoires to allow them to engage in wide-visioned, rather than narrow reflective practices, about teacher identity, Middle School philosophy, Middle School teaching and learning, and issues relating to adolescents--was met. A major aspect of the workshops that was welcomed in particular was the opportunities they provided for all the participants to reflect about what it meant to each of them personally to ‘be’, to ‘become’ a middle-school teacher and to their sense of an emerging middle-school teacher identity.

**Development of a scholarly community with a middle-school focus**

Findings from participants’ post-enactment interview responses indicated that the workshop program offered participants a space where they felt both a sense of belonging to a community and where their thoughts and beliefs were recognized and valued. Thus, the workshops provided participants the positive social and relational dynamics necessary to support them in their developing middle-school teacher identities. For example, one of the participants, Simon, believed that the workshops "were very good because it [sic] allowed the development of a community of people to call on, share ideas and talk to--people who seem to have a lot in common with same goals and aspirations". The intent of the workshops, then, was to provide mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers a place to come together in collaboration with other highly qualified professional persons to voice concerns, reflect, and raise issues and ideas about middleschool teaching and learning as well as to form a community of learners (cf. De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Raider-Roth, 2005).

Most participants found the workshops thought-provoking, interesting and useful. In particular, some of the participants (Julie, Debbie, Melinda, Katherine and Jean), made a
connection between what they learned in the workshops and how they understood what it meant to teach in middle schooling. This occurred in at least two ways. Firstly, most participants felt motivated, encouraged or inspired by the speakers who presented the workshops. One participant noted that they were “hand-picked” very well. It was felt that their passion for being a teacher was clear in their presentations and that this, in one participant’s words, helped her feel that “it made sense to be a teacher”, that it was good to be a teacher. Secondly, many participants agreed that the topics covered gave them useful information not readily available in the Graduate Diploma program itself. One mention in particular was the workshop that was presented by a middle-school principal who covered the philosophy underpinning middle schooling and some of the issues relating to the needs of adolescents. This is in line with the literature which emphasized the importance of providing an understanding of the philosophy underpinning middle schooling and some of the issues that relate to the transition young people go through during this period (De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005). In addition, other characteristics of middle-school teaching and learning that support development of middle-school teachers include topics on teaching an interrelated curriculum, team teaching and collaboration (De Jong & Chadbourne, 2005; Pendergast, 2005). Team teaching and collaborative aspects of middle schooling were presented by a principal from the private sector who spoke about the importance of developing a scholarly school community where there was an emphasis on collaboration and team teaching among teachers, other school personnel and students.

Another topic that was perceived as being useful and already discussed in Chapter 5 (see section 5.5.6) included the notion of teaching standards which, while mentioned previously in the course itself, they were able to make better sense of when talking with someone from the field. For example, Ron’s response, suggesting that teaching standards are “guidelines teachers must have to operate within and are necessary to keep teachers on track”, exemplified most of the participants’ responses.
On the whole, it seemed the workshops encouraged the participants to consider the bigger picture of teaching middle years. This was in contrast to the specific focus on smaller chunks of information in each subject in the Middle School Graduate Diploma Program which tended to fragment the broader picture of being and becoming a middle-school teacher.

Nevertheless, there was not unanimous agreement on the value of the workshops and as already discussed in the identity portraits both Fran and Debra expressed concerns in regards to the workshop program. For Fran, in particular, the workshop on teacher identity “bored the socks off” her until she had experienced time on her practicum. There were other participants who agreed that the focus on “teacher identity” was a bit perplexing until they too had experienced time on placement. In addition Debra felt that coming into university on an extra day added a burden to her and her family, despite the rewards of doing so.

6.3.4 Summary

The following excerpts drawn from participants’ experiences in the workshops suggest its value to pre-service teachers’ emerging teacher identities:

With the workshops–I think that something like that should be happen every semester–where it is not formal learning in terms of academic outcomes and assignments but because it was more about developing teacher identity. I felt so inspired every time, and afterwards hearing other people being so enthusiastic and I think not feeling isolated. There was such common ground. We all shared a whole lot of common things. I think that was really important. That was really great (Katherine).

I found them very interesting and informative and relevant to middle years. There are a lot of passionate people out there who want to make things better and I enjoy listening to people who want to change things and make things better. The Friday sessions were good because we got together and I am definitely one of those persons who needs to be part of a group (Jean).
I think that the people who did not get involved in them have missed out on quite a bit because a lot of the information, a lot of it is stuff that we would not cover in the course. It’s relevant to what we do and what we will be hopefully doing full-time—so I mean if we take the school as part of the community. I suppose I have not really thought about that, but you kind of know, in a sense that, yeah okay, that the school’s out there and is in there in the community, but some of those things you need somebody to speak to you to bring it into focus or get you even thinking about it. And when they do, you occasionally do have the light bulbs go off—“Oh that’s what it is about” or “Yeah I haven’t thought about that” and that is relevant. So yeah, the workshops were relevant (Ron).

Participants’ sense of becoming teachers, or their sense of developing teacher identities were affirmed during the workshop programs. These workshops offered them a space where they felt both a sense of belonging to a community and where their thoughts and beliefs were recognized and valued. Thus effectively the workshops provided participants with the positive social and relational dynamics necessary to support them in their developing teacher identities. For example, it was during the workshop programs that most participants began to see the interrelatedness between their becoming a teacher, and the knowledge required for them to become a teacher.

### 6.3.5 The practicum experience

All participants agreed that the most critical and useful component of the Graduate Diploma program was the practicum. This is in line with literature (Carter & Doyle, 1996; Rorrison, 2008), where the practicum component of teacher education programs is often seen as an essential and highly influential feature to the development of pre-service teachers’ teacher identities. This is particularly so, since the practicum involves:
…intense and extended conversations with teachers and is based on the premise that the art of teaching, teachers’ experiences, and the choices they make, and the process of learning to teach are deeply personal matters inexorably linked to one’s identity and, thus, one’s life story. (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 120)

The first practicum placements as experienced by the pre-service teachers in this study can best be described as intense affective and cognitive experiences. The experiences according to the participants suggested a mixture of highly enjoyable and fun experiences as well as being at times both tiring and frustrating. Some of the participants enjoyed their relationship with their supervising teachers (in contrast to other participants in the study). These particular supervising teachers demonstrated empathy, valued their collaboration, and welcomed the pre-service teachers’ ideas as well as provided non-judgemental feedback on their teaching (cf. Murray-Harvey et al., 1999). Below are some of the participants’ positive excerpts from their post-enactment interviews about their first practicum experiences:

Very good, I loved it, lots of fun–I had the best supervising teacher I think–I did not realize there was so much stress, but I enjoyed it a lot (Sarah).

I'm having a great time, my supervisor Audrey is very supportive and maintains a very flexible approach in order to maximise my learning experience (Ron).

I really enjoyed it–in my last week I lost my voice but that was a good experience to work with silence, and really I enjoyed teaching middle years--it is the age that I am really happy with. I really don’t fancy the early years and the seniors are bigger than me–so I am really happy with the middle years (Jane).

It is suggested by White and Moss (2003, p. 4) that to successfully negotiate the practicum, pre-service teachers need to be able to fit into the specific school context. Moreover, they need to learn and embrace the practices and traditions of the individual school as part of the
inculcation into the school culture. However, and as Britzman (1994) notes, there is also a contradictory aspect to the practicum. She notes that the practicum “provide[s] the contextual arena wherein the student teacher, as part student, part teacher has the delicate work of educating others while being educated and of attempting unification in an already contradictory role” (p. 55). Another concern, as noted by White and Moss, involves pre-service teachers being “assessed on their ability to teach using standards that ignore the school context, local issues and less measurable aspects of teachers’ work”. The excerpt below provides an example of a negative first practicum as experienced by Tina:

It was okay. I think I could have had a better prac and I think it was because my teacher supervisor was un-approachable. Hmm, I mean I enjoyed it while I was there. It is like Julie was saying. It was just getting through each day because there was so much work to do so that was ok but now looking back I really want another school next semester. I am not going back to that one because my teacher was unapproachable, she undermined me in a lot of ways and she said to me about my behaviour management of the class and when I tried to implement something she undermined me which to me goes completely against... like how she is going to help me.

The reality of the hierarchical nature of that relationship rather than authentic equality, suggests that traditional attitudes can be still found in some schools. These traditional attitudes were encountered by several of the participants, typically in the form of covert messages about the low status of being a pre-service teacher rather than being seen as a future colleague. For example, as Julie explained, and as already noted in her experience (see section 6.1.8), during some mornings in the staffroom, teachers would discuss inappropriate matters in front of her, a virtual stranger.
The problem in both Tina’s and Julie’s situations was that their gradual growth towards the development of a positive teacher identity was not being supported by their supervising teachers, and as noted in Julie’s case, by other teaching staff. This may suggest either a lack of understanding about the influential role of the supervising teacher and their impact on the pre-service teacher’s developing teacher identity, or that perhaps, as was reflected in Julie’s case, the school culture seemed to have lost the sense of how important the positive, the affirmative, and the interpersonal dynamic of support and commitment is to the development of a positive teacher identity and to a successful practicum outcome.

It was interesting to note that for most participants in their pre-enactment responses, teaching was seen as a relational and a collaborative endeavour rather than something that occurred in isolation. This was particularly highlighted by participants with children who had been influenced by personal experiences such as seeing teachers at their children’s schools work in pairs or in teams and being supported by the principal and other parents. Thus, these participants saw themselves working in close collaboration with other teachers and principals whom they supported and who supported them in return. This collaboration extended not only to the teachers, the principals and the parents but also to the wider community. Indeed, to suggest otherwise was, as Jean noted, unimaginable:

Within a school, teaching would have to be collaborative. I could not imagine doing this all by myself.

However, in their post-enactment responses, some of the participants who had earlier believed that teaching is relational came to see teaching as an isolated practice. Julie noted particularly after her practicum that:
there is still in the community, in society, a barrier between the teachers and the wider community … I have people saying they don’t know how to talk to a teacher.

Interestingly, for most of the participants after completing their practicum experiences, teaching as an isolated practice seemed to have become dependent on the individual teacher’s personality rather than on the culture found at the school. There was also an agreement amongst most participants that in a classroom situation, teaching is isolated “because what you do is your business” and without opportunities to consult with other teachers. This is in line with the literature that suggests that both isolation and a lack of time to collaborate are typical features of most teaching environments (Dinham & Scott, 2000). That in turn, suggests limited opportunities for practitioner discourse with colleagues (Smyth, 1998).

However, for one of the participants, Ron, teaching was still very much relational in that he believed that as a teacher, it was important to be able to relate to his students. To do so:

You got to be part of the world–part of the kids’ world--and I must admit I am not totally tuned into 12 year olds at this stage because I don’t know exactly what they do.

6.3.6 Summary

It can be suggested that for the majority of the participants, learning in the practicum was a highly complex relational process. It was a process that involved not only personal and professional concerns and or issues associated with their “being a pre-service teacher”, but also the affective and cognitive demands of the experiences that directly impacted on their sense of self and developing teacher identities.

While individual information about participants’ experiences in their second semester was not available, the intention of the focus group discussion that was held at the end of the
second semester and after the completion of the final practicum was to provide insight into the participants’ overall experiences in the graduate diploma program.

6.4 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

To illuminate participants’ experiences more fully in the one-year Graduate Diploma Program (Middle Years) as well as their experiences participating in the research project, an independent report was sought to conclude the analysis. This analysis was conducted after participants had completed their second and final practicum at the end of the one-year Graduate Diploma program. Apart from one participant most participants were able to attend the one hour long focus group discussion, where the questions related to the second research question about the factors that shaped the development of their middle-school teacher identities during the graduate diploma program. The following five key themes emerged from the focus group discussion with regards to participants’ experiences in the Graduate Diploma Program:

1. Overwhelmed
2. Structure and design of the Graduate Diploma
3. Assessment
4. Content and
5. Postgraduate identity

6.4.1 Overwhelming

Many of the participants indicated that the reality of fitting a significant amount of content and practical experience into a one year course inevitably led them to feel both overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them as well as disgruntled at some of the perceived shortcomings of the structure and content of the course. For one of the participants it was a “roller-coaster” and many agreed that the quantity of work, both in learning and assessment, along with the requirements of fitting in practical placement, left them feeling swamped and
needing to juggle competing expectations (e.g., finishing assessment while preparing for and participating in practicum). There was a general feeling that there was a misfit between the amount of information that was required to be covered and the amount of time available in which to do it. It was noted that this, in particular, made it hard to digest all that they were learning. This seemed to be confounded by a perception that little support was provided by the middle-years coordinator throughout the year. It was noted that other universities have an earlier start date and it was agreed that an earlier start date/longer semester would help alleviate the juggling of time and tasks that led to them feeling overwhelmed. Participants’ suggestion for more time in the graduate diploma program is a shared concern among most pre-service teachers whether they complete postgraduate or undergraduate teaching degrees (cf. House of Common, 2007; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTA), 1996). Participants’ feelings of being overwhelmed and lack of adequate support are also a common occurrence among many mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers (Colbeck, 2008). The concerns that relate to some pre-service teachers being overwhelmed and feelings of not being supported during their teacher education programs have been reasons why some pre-service teachers have opted out from teaching altogether (cf. Alsup, 2008; Rodgers & Raider Roth, 2006).

6.4.2 Structure and design of the Graduate Diploma

Discussions of workload inevitably led to a fairly enthusiastic critique of the structure and design of the Graduate Diploma itself. Perhaps it is important to note at the outset that the participants agreed that the Graduate Diploma course was certainly good in parts. For instance, they thought that one year was sufficient for a graduand and were happy to have the university assessments finalised before practicum so that they were able to concentrate on their practicum experience. Almost all participants agreed that the practical placement component of the course was the most useful part of the degree.
However, they also noted some things that they were unhappy with. A dominant theme that emerged was to do with the structure of the course and the fit of the different units within it. For instance, they were critical of the usefulness of some of the units and expressed a desire to have longer with other units. This left them with a feeling that the course hadn’t been very well designed or organised. Another example of this was the way in which the lectures were timetabled. Rather than having a lecture scheduled every day, there was a feeling by some that having more lectures on each day could leave space in the week for dealing with assessment and other matters. Feelings of unpreparedness is not uncommon among graduands (cf. House of Representatives, 2007; Ingvarson, 2007; Louden & Rohl, 2006; Skilbeck & Connell, 2004), and many mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers from one year graduate diploma programs have reported feeling unprepared to teach based on the inadequacy of time provided for the learning of content knowledge and pedagogical skills feelings that in turn influence negatively on their sense of self as developing teachers.

6.4.3 Assessment

Participants noted that some of the assessment across the units was very similar and argued for greater collaboration between the unit coordinators in the course to avoid unnecessary repetition. Almost all participants were critical, at some point, of some of the teaching styles within the units, particularly when it came to assessment. For some, their concerns were that they only found out about the assessment a week before it was due, while many of them expressed frustration that they were not given models or exemplars for some assessment so that they could better understand what was being asked of them. Among other concerns, many agreed that the handling of online learning was inadequate and felt that this was not an optimal learning tool.

Some concerns raised about assessment have already been noted; however, this was a dominant theme that was raised a number of times. For instance, many noted that there was too much assessment and that it all seemed to come at the same time. This tied in with their
expression of the need for greater collaboration among the unit coordinators. Also, to reiterate the above point, the lack of models or exemplars was raised a number of times as an issue for many of them and it was argued that this made it very difficult to work out what to do, or have some idea of what the end product should look like.

6.4.4 Content

Some concerns were raised about the balance between theory and practice. Many agreed that they felt the course was weighted too heavily towards theory with not enough time for seeing how this might play out in a practical example. Some, although not all, were left with the impression from their practicum placement that much of the theory was irrelevant and instead good behaviour management techniques were more important. Indeed, one participant recalled a conversation with another teacher on her practicum saying to her, “It all starts here; you learn nothing at uni”. There were also concerns raised with the lack of coverage of how to manage assessment as teachers, and other more specific, related topics like how to mark. Again concerns relating to the content are common among many mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers (AEU, 2006). The inadequacy of time for more in-depth study on topics such as assessment practices in schools or the need of behaviour management techniques are areas that are understandably important for pre-service teachers to know before commencing practicum. It is acknowledged that inadequate preparation does influence negatively on pre-service teachers’ sense of self as a beginning teacher and can cause friction between the supervising teacher and pre-service teacher (cf. Rorrison, 2008).

6.4.5 Postgraduate identity

Another theme that emerged from the discussion concerned negotiating the postgraduate student identity. Despite the fact that they were doing a postgraduate course, many felt as though they were being treated “as children” by the lecturing staff and felt demeaned by this. For some, they felt there was little recognition of their previous lives as professionals in other areas before
returning to study. This created a conflict for them when moving from this particular, imposed student identity to the challenge of taking up a responsible teacher identity whilst on practicum. They also grappled with instances of getting poor results as postgraduates where they had been high achievers as undergraduates and found this particularly demoralising. A unit that focused on library skills was singled out in this discussion as one that didn’t recognise that they were postgraduate students with a history of university attendance already. In general it was largely agreed that while they had initially perceived that the year was inevitably going to be a real “push” to get through, they felt that it didn’t have to be as much of a push as it was. Indeed, the sentiment here was that this could be changed with better course design and better choice of units. Most participants seemed to agree that, should they grade the course according to the university’s grading scale, they would give it a 3 (pass conceded).

6.4.6 Participants’ experiences working with researcher and PhD project Workshop program

Almost unanimously, the participants felt that the researcher had taken an interest in them, and supported them. They felt that she was available if they needed help, was consistently concerned about them, gave advice and offered to help when she met with them. Both email and telephone support was made available throughout their practicum. The email support provided the necessary reflection on action that “assists in the development of the functional role of a teacher and also provides strategies to nurture the ongoing development of a teacher identity” (Walkington, 2005, p. 59). It was noted by one participant that this support differed from that received in the group itself. Indeed, it seems it was important to talk to somebody who wasn’t a student of the Graduate Diploma.

Many noted in particular the researcher’s interest in them as emerging teachers and were grateful for the feedback provided on their teaching when the researcher visited them in their practicum placements. One expressed concern about the possible isolation experienced by
remaining Graduate Diploma students (not involved in the project) and how their studies would have been negatively impacted by not having such a supportive presence. Many of the participants felt that the researcher was very professional in her dealings with them. They mentioned that she was organised, had clear goals, followed through with what she said she would do, and that they therefore knew what to expect from their involvement in the project from the outset.

### 6.4.7 The project itself

Considering their time with the researcher specifically also clarified some of their experiences of being a part of the project itself. Being part of the research project influenced participants’ understanding of teacher identity as well as of teaching. One participant noted that being part of the research project made her think about teacher identity in a way that she hadn’t before; while others agreed that issues to do with teaching were raised that they hadn’t previously thought about. Many agreed, reiterating an earlier observation that, although other lecturers had talked about professional identity, the researcher treated them and acknowledged them as professionals.

Significantly, the participants noted that the project should be foundational to the wider course and accessible for all students. Many agreed that being involved in the project had helped them make sense of the course and not the other way around. While many believed that issues of teacher identity should be considered early in the Graduate Diploma, they worried that the specifically supportive, professional and caring environment set up by the researcher would be lost if run formally by the university. Here, it was noted that the voluntary aspect of being involved in the project was important and that they may not have got the same things out of it if attendance had been mandated by the university. Importantly, many agreed that their involvement in the project wasn’t just one way. Indeed they felt that they had not only helped the researcher but that had received a significant amount back from her.
To close the focus group, the participants were asked to sum up their experience working with the researcher in her research project by offering one word or phrase that described a highlight and one word or phrase that described a lowlight of their involvement. Each response is summarised in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1

Experience in Research Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highlight</th>
<th>Lowlight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>supportive and worthwhile</td>
<td>took up limited time that might have been useful for working on assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support; networking; have made friendships</td>
<td>time–even 15 minutes extra impacts on the whole family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that will continue next year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support; networking; use of time was</td>
<td>time–didn’t want to go home and work on assignments afterwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also a kind of “time out”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>networking and collegiality; helped to discuss</td>
<td>time–started too early on Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thoughts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meeting Liisa; saw her as a mentor</td>
<td>not on prac so couldn’t have her look at her professionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enthusiasm contagious; supportive; writing</td>
<td>making the effort to write; starting the reflections was hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made her reflect on her experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunity to vent</td>
<td>effort–the effort it took to do anything; reservoir’s empty at the end of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>brain dead by Friday morning; doing reflections–hard to find time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings to the following research question: What factors shape the development of a middle-school teacher identity during the pre-service graduate diploma program? The analysis began with the presentation of the learning opportunities that were provided by the Graduate Diploma Program (Middle Years). These learning experiences
included the graduate diploma program (e.g., subjects), the practicum component of the graduate diploma program and the workshop program. Each of these contributed to the development of participants' negative or positive sense as emerging middle-school teacher identities.

The intention of the workshop program was to provide the catalyst for participants to reflect on what it meant to be a teacher and a learner in the 21st Century. Findings indicated that the workshop program in particular provided the necessary space for participants to consider the bigger picture of teaching rather than focus on the smaller chunks of information in each unit that the grad dip program provided. For example, the workshops provided participants with a space where they could freely question, reflect, and discuss their beliefs about teaching and learning and how these interrelated with teacher identity. In addition findings indicated that the workshop provided the necessary space where participants came to feel valued and supported as future colleagues rather than students. The findings indicated that their connection with the graduate diploma program and the middle years strand could be attributed to the various guest speakers who were invited to speak on selected topics. For example, a principal from a middle school was invited to talk about issues relating to adolescent youth. A principal from a private school was invited to speak on the development of a learning community in a school setting whilst to make sense of the new Teaching Standards a guest speaker from Ed QLD was invited to present them to participants.

It was clear from listening to the participants that their time in the Graduate Diploma had provided them with significant challenges. They were strongly critical of many aspects of the course, and while they wouldn’t have extended the course longer than a year, felt that the year could have been used a lot more wisely. It is not possible to get a sense of how they experienced their involvement in the PhD research project and how they experienced the researcher herself, without acknowledging their broader experience of the course. As this chapter and the previous chapter have indicated, the course, in turn, provided a benchmark of sorts for assessing some of
the successes of their involvement in the project. On the whole, it was clear from the various stories and sentiments expressed by the group that some things were fundamental to having a positive experience of developing a teacher identity. These included: being treated well and professionally by the university and practice teaching staff; having supportive and collegial interest shown in them and their progress; being clear about the relevance and usefulness of the activities they were involved in; and having a collegial and supportive group to which they could belong and share their experiences over the year. It was clear from the participants’ stories that, despite the challenges offered by the course itself, they received these positive experiences from their involvement with the researcher and her PhD project.
Chapter 7  The Final Question

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study investigated the factors that influenced the development of teacher identity in a small cohort of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers over the course of a one-year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years). The research study was guided by the following three research questions.

1. *How do students undertaking a one year pre-service Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) identify as teachers and what changes in those identifications take place across the duration of the program?*

2. *What factors can be identifiable in the development of a middle-school teacher identity?*

3. *How might a relational-ontological theoretical framework support the development of [these] graduate pre-service teachers’ middle-school teacher identity?*

The first two questions have been addressed in the two previous chapters. Because they provide the necessary foundation from which to address the final research question, *How might a relational-ontological theoretical framework support the development of graduate pre-service teachers’ middle-school teacher identity*, they will be revisited in this chapter and their implications are addressed in further detail. Following the discussion and analysis of the final research question, the limitations of the study and the implications for further research will be considered. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings of this thesis and
recommendations for future research in the field of middle-school teacher education and the development of middle-school teacher identity.

7.2 THE NEED TO ADDRESS TEACHER IDENTITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Conversations about teacher identity in teacher education programs are central to the advancement of the teaching profession (cf. Alsup, 2005; Beijard et al. 2000; Britzman, 1991; Korthagen, 2004; Noddings, 2005; Ottensen, 2007). Teacher identity or the teacher’s personal sense of self as a teacher is reflected in their classroom teaching and decision-making (Bullough, 1996). However, and as noted in the research (cf. Alsup, 2005; Beijard et al. 2000; Korthagen, 2004; Noddings, 2005; Ottensen, 2007), teacher education programs do not address issues of teacher identity because it is seen as too difficult and messy to discuss (Alsup, 2006). Instead, when referred to in teacher-education programs, teacher identity has in general related to teachers’ role, professional demeanour, dress, or communication (Alsup, 2006).

Based on a relational-ontological perspective, in this research study, teacher identity is perceived as embodied and embedded in language, relationships, culture and time with an emphasis on language and social interaction. It is continually influenced, formed and re-formed as individuals develop over time in and through their interactions with others in communities they work within (Alsup, 2007; Stout, 2001; Thayer-Bacon, 1995). From this perspective teacher identity is a complex, never-ending sense-making process of interaction and dialogue between, in this case, the pre-service teacher and the social, cultural and historical context (cf. Taylor, 1989, 1995).

In this research study, to understand and support the development of middle-school teacher identity it was necessary to explore and to get a sense of the mature-age participants’ personal selves and in particular their reasons for choosing middle-school teaching. This involved understanding their personal and professional backgrounds, how they articulated what it meant to be and to become a good teacher and what it meant to learn.
The notion of teacher identity in this research study was first introduced to the participants during their pre-enactment interviews and not surprisingly some were initially baffled by this ‘new term’. For others the idea of teacher identity related to the role of the teacher (cf. Franzak, 2002; Mayer, 1999; White & Moss, 2003) or it referred to a traditional image of the teacher (Elliott, 2002). Yet, there were also those who felt that teacher identity offered new ways of becoming, as in the case of Katherine, for whom teacher identity was about “a new person I am developing into”.

In their post-enactment interview responses and after they had participated in the workshop program as well as in their practicum, most of the participants’ understandings of teacher identity began to reflect a more relational perspective. That is, they had begun to view teaching and being a teacher as “connecting” not only with their students, peers, and other school personnel but also to the wider community. A relational perspective comes from the view that teaching and learning have always taken place within embedded social contexts that do not just influence, but determine the kinds of knowledge and practices that are constructed (cf. Dall’Alba, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Noddings, 2003; Nunez et al., 1999; Rogoff, 1990). They had begun to embrace teacher identity as a part of who they saw themselves as being and becoming with others from within the teaching profession. Moreover, their post-enactment interview responses reflected a relational-ontological perspective where teacher identity was viewed as an ongoing and transformative process. These responses indicated that some of the participants had come to see that teacher identity is continuously influenced by and dependent on the dialogical relations with others from the middle-school community such as expert teacher educators and lecturers, and supervising teachers during practicum, and that it continues in collaboration with prospective students. In this sense teaching to most of the participants was not an isolated practice.
In line with other research studies (cf. Goodson, 2003; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1998), findings from this study confirmed that most of the mature-age graduate pre-service teachers who participated in this study came to the graduate diploma programs with “a clear set of goals” together with a strong “sense of themselves that their cumulative life experiences have shaped” (Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1998, p.177). Their expectations included graduating as middle-school teachers, being recognised as professionals with transferable skills they hoped to bring to middle-school teaching, and being provided with opportunities to be introduced to a scholarly and professional middle-school community. Most of the participants came to the graduate diploma program with such well-considered reasons for choosing middle-school teaching as opportunities to help and support young people in their transition towards adulthood. Such altruistic reasons were especially encouraging since research clearly suggests that altruistic reasons have been found to be a major factor influencing graduate teachers to stay in the teaching profession (Nieto, 2003).

Similar to other research studies (cf. Holt Reynolds, 1992; Knowles & Holt Reynolds, 1991), the findings from this research suggested that most participants came to the graduate diploma program with traditional beliefs about teaching and learning and the good teacher and learner, and that these beliefs were based on and influenced by their personal schooling experiences and as school and undergraduate students. It was not surprising then that they associated teaching and learning with behaviouristic approaches such as telling and memorizing. However, findings also indicated that some of the participants, especially those with children in primary school settings, saw teaching and learning as a relational endeavour. To them teaching is inherently determined by the relationships they establish not only with their students but also with others from within the school community. Their experiences had involved seeing teachers collaborate and team teach; they were caring people who both encouraged and welcomed parental involvement in their classrooms. The collaborative and dialogical nature of the relational
approach is related to middle schooling and the constructivist perspective that underpins middle-
school philosophy, curriculum and pedagogy. Significantly, while findings from the participants’
pre-enactment interview data suggested that while most saw teaching as collaborative or as a
relational rather than an isolated practice, their post-enactment interview data revealed how most
had begun to see that teaching *can* be an isolated practice. According to participants, the main
reason for some teachers experiencing teaching as an isolated practice was based on individual
*choice*, and in some cases dependent on the culture of the school.

As was noted in Chapter 6, the findings from this study suggested that there were
aspects of the Graduate Diploma Program itself that inhibited and others that supported the
development of participants’ middle-school teacher identity. Inhibiting aspects included a lack of
recognition and support of participants’ professional and personal backgrounds and, for some
participants, being treated as children by some university lecturing staff. This may suggest a
traditional view of the pre-service teacher as a student rather than a future teaching colleague
(Dobbin, 1995). While most participants agreed that one year was sufficient time to become
familiar with what is involved in becoming a teacher, there was some disappointment with the
limited time spent on some subjects and / or the irrelevance of other subjects. This is not an
uncommon finding among pre-service teachers (cf. Education Queensland, 2000; Louden 2008;
Walkington, 2007). Not surprisingly and in line with other research (e.g., Bransford et al., 2003;
Korthagen, et al., 2006; Lawrance & Palmer, 2003; Ingvarson, 2007; Rorrison, 2005, 2008) the
practicum component was identified as the most useful and enjoyable of the learning
opportunities provided by the Graduate Diploma Program. Nonetheless, some participants
expressed concerns over not being adequately prepared for the practicum experience. However,
most acknowledged that the practicum provided them with an understanding of teaching and
learning that influenced their emerging teacher identity as well as helped them to recognize that
learning to teach is a deeply personal matter linked to their teacher identity (Carter & Doyle, 1996).

According to most of the participants in the research study, aside from the practicum experiences, their most positive experiences during the one-year Graduate Diploma Program related to the workshop program. Most participants found that the workshop program offered them a sense of belonging to a middle-school community and it provided them with the opportunity to consider the bigger picture of teaching rather than the smaller chunks of information in each unit that the graduate diploma program provided. They enjoyed the non-intimidating and welcoming environment where they were encouraged to freely discuss, question, reflect and voice their concerns in regards to issues relating to middle-school teaching and learning, teacher identity and professional teaching standards with established professionals from within the teaching profession. While it was not officially part of the Graduate Diploma Program, the findings from this study suggest that most of the participants viewed the workshop program as complementing the learning opportunities provided by the Graduate Diploma Program.

7.3 WHAT SHOULD BE DONE AND HOW IT SHOULD BE DONE—INTRODUCING RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY

Findings from the first two research questions provided the foundation for addressing the final, critical question. That final question, How might a relational-ontological paradigm support the development of graduate pre-service teachers' middle-school teacher identity? sought to examine how a relational-cultural identity theory of identity that was applied during the workshop program might have been the catalyst promoting the development of the participants’ middle-school teacher identities. Further, how might a relational-ontological perspective benefit the design of future Graduate Diploma Programs (Middle Years) such as the one utilized in this research study, and indeed could such a framework be extended to provide an adequate and
As already noted, findings indicated that the development of a socially attuned, socially sensitive and socially oriented set of practices such as what was offered during the workshop program allowed for development of confidence and self-esteem among the mature-age graduate pre-service teachers (cf. Isaacs, 2005; Merriam et al., 2007; Noddings, 1997; Taylor, 1989). Participants came to recognise that becoming a middle-school teacher is a dynamic ontological process of identity formation. Furthermore they recognized that the growth and the development of a positive and committed middle-school teacher identity is dependent on the authentic recognition and affirmation of the pre-service teacher self as a human being embodied and embedded in language, relationships, culture, and time (Isaacs, 2005; Taylor, 1989). Moreover, most of the participants’ initial traditional ontological and epistemological perspectives, which assumed knowledge as separate from the world and capable of consciously influencing an independent human will, seemed to have changed after their participation in the workshop.
program. It can be suggested that through their connectedness to each other they began to recognize that knowledge is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who exist in relation to and with each other. That is, the development of knowledge comes from meaningful engagement with the world, where knowledge is mediated through dialogue with others and as such is the product of engaged, embodied agency (cf. Taylor, 1989).

As already noted (e.g., Elliott, 2002; Hildebrand, 1999; Ingvarson, 2007; Klein, 2004) many teacher education programs to date have been based on a traditional, rationalist perspective that seeks to train the pre-service teacher to think logically, to set goals and then to have the ability to deliberate on the best way to achieve them (cf. Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Findings from this research study suggested that to challenge this traditional rationalist perspective, a relational-ontological paradigm may be more conducive to assist with supporting the development of pre-service teachers’ emerging middle-school teacher identities. In support of a relational-ontological perspective, findings suggested the importance participants placed on being offered teaching and learning opportunities that were relational, where lecturers, mentors, and pre-service teachers were co-learners and where collegiality was encouraged. Such findings may be indicative of the promise that a relational-ontological paradigm offers as a basis on which to provide graduate teacher education programs with a middle-school focus. They suggest that perhaps a new way forward is to make explicit and acknowledge that the learning and formation of middle-school teacher identity is socially embedded, it is relational, and it is continual—a life-long process. From a relational-ontological perspective, exploring who the teacher is as a person provides the necessary platform to support knowledge and skill acquisition while affirming their personhood. Learning is not only epistemological or skills-oriented, it is also first and foremost ontological because “coming to know is part of a larger process of coming to be a particular kind of person” (cf. Packer, 2001, p. 504). The pre-service preparation of a middle-school teacher is not only about the provision of educational theory and practice units and curriculum methodology units,
there is a need to provide them with ongoing experiences that focus on their becoming a middle-school teacher. As this study indicates, a way forward is to embed the relational-ontological perspective in the overarching program throughout the duration of their pre-service teacher education program, so that the relational perspective supports learning and the continuing discussion about the formation of the good middle-school pre-service teacher self.

*Teaching and Learning*

The findings noted in the post-enactment interview data (see Chapter 5) suggest a change in some of the participants’ traditional perspectives about teaching and learning to a more relational-ontological perspective where teaching and learning are socially embedded, relational, continual and a life-long process (cf. Dall’Alba, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Noddings, 2003; Nunez et al., 1999; Rogoff, 1990). It was also found that after their practicum most participants came to view teaching as connecting, sharing and having relationships with students that involved a commitment and an intention to help. This is exemplified by Julie’s observation that “learning, I don’t think is the opposite to teaching, I think there is a connection there” and that “they [students] are learning just by being”. Further, the notion of care for their students was embedded in participants’ responses. For example, Tina’s comment about how “a personal quality is to relate to the students and to their world. Someone who cares about them, and who knows what they are interested in, someone who they can talk to” is in line with the relational perspective where teaching is intimately associated with the notion of care (cf. Andersen & Chen, 2002; Gilligan, 1982; Jordan & Hartling, 2002; Miller 1976; Noddings, 2000, 2003, 2005; Smith & Emigh, 2005), that involves establishing relations of both care and trust with the students. There was a consensus among all participants about the importance of creating a safe and nurturing learning environment, where both individual engagement and collaboration were encouraged, and where risk-taking and making mistakes were seen as being part of the learning process (cf. Bain, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Palmer, 1998). In addition there was an agreement that learning
was a life-long process that has the power to transform the nature of one’s being (cf. Bain, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Miller, 1976; Packer, 2001).

In short, the overall findings of the research study indicated that a relational-ontological perspective could be invaluable to teacher education programs seeking to support the development of a positive and committed mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher’s middle-school teacher identity.

7.4 LIMITATIONS

Given that this research study was conducted with a cohort of twelve participants from one institution, any generalisations should be approached with caution, giving due weight to context and situation for degree of applicability. Nevertheless, where there is a lack of attention, either explicit or implicit, to the fostering of teacher identity across the period of any pre-service teacher education course, the issues raised in this study merit consideration.

Again, it should be noted that this was the first time the one year Graduate Diploma program (Middle Years) was offered. In consequence, the course was experiencing the usual issues and adjustments in such situations which might well have been remedied in future iterations. It is possible that these issues may have influenced participants’ accounts.

A further limitation of this study, certainly appropriate in more quantitative research formulations, was the lack of a control group that did not participate in the workshop program to compare and contrast the findings with respect to teacher identity. As was noted earlier, this limitation was caused by pragmatic considerations of time and student access. Because this was a newly introduced one-year Graduate Diploma Program (Middle School) with an intake of 58 graduates in its Middle School program and participation in this research project was voluntary, there were not enough students for a treatment and control group as would indeed have been expected were this study a more positivistic research approach.
7.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Recommendations for future study include:

1. A further study and comparison across the full extent of the Graduate Diploma Program (Middle School) of a cohort of mature-age graduate pre-service teachers who experienced a workshop program similar to that offered in this study with those who do not. This would further test the effectiveness of the workshop program in supporting the development of the mature-age graduate pre-service teacher’s middle-school teacher identity.

2. A follow up study after graduation which compared these two groups in terms of such factors as securing teaching positions as middle-school teachers, the effect of the wait to secure middle-school teaching positions on the sense of self, and the impact of the school culture on teacher identity.

3. Further research to ascertain teacher educators’ knowledge and understanding of the mature-age graduate pre-service teacher as learner. While this is arguably a sensitive issue, it could be useful for teacher educators and course designers alike who seek ways to enhance the mature-age graduate pre-service teachers’ teaching and learning experiences at the university.

4. A more detailed and comprehensive investigation of the factors that influence the development of teacher identity. For example, the findings of this study could be implemented with a large cohort of students partitioned into learning communities of approximately 15-20 students where each learning community would engage in face-to-face workshop situations, focus group situations and on-line collaboration similar to those experienced by the participants in this study. Certain aspects of each community’s experience could be made unique.
7.6 IMPLICATIONS

This research study indicates a possible lack of training and understanding among teacher educators about the professional and personal backgrounds of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teacher and relating to their needs during the graduate diploma program.

At the overall program level, there appears to be an evident need for a support structure that is based on a relational-ontological perspective to be built into the overall course structure to support the development of teacher identity. This relational support structure could be provided in part by the development and inclusion of non-intimidating workshops where post-graduate pre-service teachers are provided with opportunities to openly analyse and critically evaluate their beliefs, attitudes about teaching and teachers and also to modify these beliefs to include new ideas. For example, this might include ideas about what it means to be a good middle-school teacher, what it means to learn, and what it is to be a committed learner both individually and collaboratively with carefully selected experienced academics, teachers and principals. The provision of a middle-school scholarly learning community would not only assist pre-service teachers in developing confidence but also allow them to develop and maintain a sense of belonging in the community of teachers. However, the findings also imply that a relational framework with respect to ontology, epistemology, teaching and learning, and teacher identity needs to permeate all of the subjects (including the practicum subjects) in the pre-service teacher education course.

As evidenced by the latent themes in the participants’ responses (e.g., a need for personal and professional recognition as future colleagues by teacher educators and other significant persons involved in teacher education), it is clear that isolation and evaluation anxieties will not be allayed by arming pre-service teachers with content knowledge alone. This could further problematise the individual and dismiss the fundamental importance of the individual feeling part of an emerging middle-school community in which they perceive
themselves to be supported. The implications of isolation and evaluation anxieties as experienced by some of the participants suggest that a relationally-based approach that is permeated throughout all subjects, including the practicum, can assist post-graduate pre-service teachers to feel empowered. This in turn can result in their helping future students to experience their humanness more fully while at the same time enjoying their learning experiences.

The practicum component of the Graduate Diploma course was a concern to all mature-age graduate pre-service teachers. It was clear that most of the participants felt not only unprepared for the realities of the classroom, the school culture, but also isolated and separate from that of the university. This suggests a need for the establishment of a support structure based on the relational framework that includes, as already mentioned, non-intimidating workshops, and in particular a stronger collaboration between the university and the school personnel where the mature-aged post-graduate pre-service teacher is being placed. The implications for the establishment of positive and collegial relationships between supervising teachers and post-graduate pre-service teachers also indicate a need for further support and training to help the supervising teachers in their role. To support a stronger collaboration between the university and the school personnel, regular workshops on mentoring could be provided by the university that have been developed in collaboration with the school.

7.7 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the development of middle-school teacher identity in a cohort of mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers. The study was informed by three research questions. The first research question sought to understand how participants identified as teachers and what changes took place in their identifications across the duration of the program. The second question related to the factors during the graduate diploma program that shaped the development of a middle-school teacher identity. The final question related to how a
relational-ontological perspective might support the development of these mature-age graduate middle-school pre-service teachers’ middle-school teacher identities.

The findings of the first research question indicated that while most of the mature-aged graduate pre-service teachers came in to the one-year graduate diploma program with a strong sense of personal and professional selves they did not identify or have a clear sense of themselves as middle-school teachers. Nonetheless, they all came with well-considered reasons why they wanted to teach middle years. The findings also indicated that their choice in choosing the university involved an expectation of support and welcome to a middle-school community and culture.

There were two major factors that contributed to the emerging graduate pre-service teacher's middle-school teacher identity. First, it was suggested what participants brought with them to the graduate diploma program in terms of their personal and professional life-experiences shaped their ontological and epistemological selves. Findings indicated that all participants came to the graduate diploma program with well established personal (core identities) and professional identities (e.g., nurse, accountant, geologist, librarian, small business owner) that had been influenced by prior life-experiences. Second, based on prior school experiences most participants came to the graduate diploma program with traditional ontological and epistemological beliefs about teaching and learning, the nature of the good teacher and learner.

Participants’ identities—that is, their sense of selves as middle-school teachers—changed across the one-year Graduate Diploma program. A substantial catalyst for this change was the workshop program where participants were introduced to the notion of teacher identity, middle-schooling, and scholarly community of learners and where they were encouraged to explore and to critically reflect about middle-school teaching and learning, and the good teacher and learner in collaboration with teacher educators, principals and other significant persons concerned with education. Most of the participants came to see that a middle-school teacher identity is a new way
of being and becoming and that it was a relational endeavour. This was confirmed to participants after their practicum experiences where they came to see teaching and learning as relational. They came to see that the establishment of connections between themselves as teachers and their students was paramount in their students’ successful educational outcomes.

In terms of the second research question, findings indicated that the graduate diploma program, the practicum and the workshop program contributed variously to participants’ emerging middle-school teacher identities. It was found that the focus on participants’ interpersonal and social experiences, rather than the acquisition of competencies and skills alone, provided them with a comprehensive understanding of their learning experiences. The two critical issues that emerged from the pre-service teachers’ narratives were the importance they placed on the human support and the affirmation of themselves and their emerging teacher identities. In other words, the development of a committed middle-school teacher identity is inherently dependent on the support and recognition of their developing teacher identity from their peers, and (future) colleagues at both the university and school sector.

The final question in relation to a relational-ontological perspective suggested that a way forward is to make explicit and acknowledge that the pre-service teacher’s learning and formation is socially embedded, it is relational, and is continual, a lifelong process. Overall it can be concluded that some form of on-going support, such as workshops that focus on the relational perspective to support learning and the formation of the good middle-school pre-service teacher self, should be provided in pre-service teacher-education courses. Similarly, the importance of ensuring a non-intimidating learning environment where the teaching and learning is relational, where lecturers, mentors, and pre-service teachers are co-learners and where collegiality is encouraged is clearly evident. This relational-ontological framework should permeate throughout each and every subject in the overall program.
That framework in this exploratory study supported the development of the mature-aged graduate middle-school pre-service teacher identity. It provides an alternative perspective with which to better address current held assumptions regarding the purpose of pre-service teacher education programs. In particular, it articulates a more constructive ontology, one which recognises that selves are social, interrelated, and dialogical, and in which there are critical questions about rational understanding and procedures being mastered, which can be incorporated into the practice, of middle-school graduate pre-service teacher education.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Pre-service student pre-enactment interview questionnaire

Background and conceptions about teaching and learning in general

1. What was your previous degree in?
2. What is teaching?
3. Why have you chosen to teach?
4. Why middle years teaching?
5. What is learning?
6. Describe a good learner?
7. What do you expect from your students?
8. How do you think you will treat your students?
9. What do you think is meant by teacher quality and what teacher qualities do you value?
10. What do you think is meant by teaching quality and what teaching qualities do you value?

Expectations of One Year teaching program

11. What expectations do you have from the one year graduate diploma program?
12. Is there a unit that you think will be challenging in the teaching degree program? Why? Why not?
13. What do you think is meant by teacher standards and to what extent do you think teacher standards will influence you?
14. What do you think is meant by teaching standards and to what extent do you think teaching standards will influence your teaching?

Teacher Identity

15. When you hear the term “teacher identity” what comes to mind?
16. When you hear the term “mathematics teacher identity” what comes to mind?
17. Is teacher identity important to you? Why? Why not?
18. Is mathematics teacher identity important to you? Why? Why not?
19. Is there anything that I have not mentioned that you feel you want to add?
Appendix B: Pre-service students’ post- enactment interview

Background and conceptions about teaching and learning in general

1. How was your practicum and are you still as passionate about teaching as you were prior to going beginning the course?
2. How did you find teaching middle years teaching?
3. What is teaching?
4. What is learning?
5. Describe a good learner?
6. What do you expect from your students?
7. How do you treat your students?
8. What do you think is meant by a good teacher quality and what teacher qualities do you value?
9. What do you think is meant by a good teaching quality and what teaching qualities do you value?

Expectations of One Year teaching program

10. Has your expectations been met thus far from the one year graduate diploma program – in what ways?
11. What unit has been challenging in the teaching degree program thus far?
12. What do you think is meant by teacher and teaching standards and to what extent do you think teacher standards will influence you?

Teacher Identity

13. When you hear the term “teacher identity” what comes to mind?
14. When you hear the term “mathematics teacher identity” what comes to mind?
15. Is teacher identity important to you? Why? Why not?
16. Is mathematics teacher identity important to you? Why? Why not?
17. Is teaching an isolated profession?
18. Is there anything that I have not mentioned that you feel you want to add?

Thank you,
Appendix C: Practicum questions

Second day practicum observation questions

- How did the teacher greet her/his students? Was there a ‘roll call’ or what did the teacher do?
- How did the teacher introduce the lessons? How much of the lessons were teacher directed, group work, pair work or individual work?
- How did the teacher introduce you and how included did you feel as a student teacher? What about in the staff room?

Week 1 practicum questions

- What was the best thing that happened during your first week of prac and what was the worst thing that happened?
- Do you still think teaching is for you or have you changed your mind?
- How have you found your supervising teacher approach to teaching and learning?
- Have you felt included in the classroom activities? Have you been able to assist the teacher with the class?
- Have you had an opportunity to teach a lesson?
- How many times have you felt anxious during your first week of prac? What strategies did you use to alleviate the anxiety?

Week 2 practicum questions

- Has anything happened during the past week to change your mind about whether or not you will continue teaching?
- What was the best thing that happened during your second week of prac and what was the worst thing that happened?
- In what ways have you been able to support your teacher this week in the classroom?
- How has your supervising teacher demonstrated his or her support to you as a beginning teacher?
- Give couple of examples of how you were able to support the kids in your class?
- How did the kids in your class demonstrate their support for you?

Week 3 practicum questions

- Thinking back on week 3, how often during the third week of your prac did you take time out to just enjoy your experience?
- What did you do and how do you know that you enjoyed yourself?
- How many times did you and the students have a good laugh together during the last week? What happened?
- What was the best thing you learned from your students?
- What was the best thing you learned about yourself teaching the students?
- What was the best thing that you learned from your students?
- What was the best thing you learned about yourself when teaching the students?
- What was the one thing you know to do to help yourself keep being positive about teaching?

Week 4 practicum questions

- Thinking back in what ways could your practicum experience have been improved?
• What aspects of your prac have had positive influences on your choice to teach and what would have been some of the negative influences?
• How supported have you felt during your practicum by Supervising Teacher other teachers at the school, University liaison person or other University personnel?
Appendix C: Graduate Diploma in Education (ED38) Course Structure (Middle Years)  
Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

Rationale

The QUT Graduate Diploma in Education is designed to allow graduates of undergraduate degrees to obtain their first teaching qualification. The graduate entry course is offered in flexible mode giving students the opportunity to study in two semesters of full-time as well as part-time or online in one of three areas of study – Early Years, Middle Years or Senior Years.

The Middle Years area focuses on learners as they move from childhood through adolescence and so includes Years 4-9, crossing what are traditionally the Primary and Lower Secondary years of education.

Entry into the course is based on successful completion of an undergraduate degree which has not led to teacher registration. Selection will be based on a primary criterion of course grade point average achieved in the undergraduate degree. A cut-off is the minimum selection rank or OP required for entry to a particular course in a particular year and is not predetermined. Each year, cut-offs are determined by the number of places available in a course, the number of applicants who apply for the course and the standard of those applicants.

Year 1, Semester 1

Middle Years: Multiliteracies

This unit provides students with the opportunity to develop concepts of themselves as life-long learners and to demonstrate capacities as effective communicators across media through engagement with critical and socio-cultural principles of language and literacy education. The unit models curriculum development principles, inclusivity and reflective practices that involve problem-based learning

Engaging Diverse Learners

Increasingly rich and complex opportunities are offered to today’s learners to engage in personal, contextual and technological approaches to knowledge construction. To participate effectively in modern learning environments, and to be able, in the future, to support the learning of diverse learners, students completing this unit will develop an understanding of the processes of learning, and the influence of both individual differences and socio-cultural contexts in personal, social and professional development.

Middle Years Field Studies 1: Engaging Diverse Learners

This unit integrates and applies the current perspectives, issues and theoretical frameworks of inclusion and diversity. It enhances the student’s ability to identify and address social, cultural, political and legislative issues to provide quality inclusive educational experiences for all learners.
Students will actively engage with the challenges and practices of inclusive education in the classroom and the broader educational setting. To do this effectively students will need to identify barriers to student learning and develop strategies to maximize educational outcomes for all students. (22 days Field Studies)

**Middle Years: Mathematical Understandings**

This unit will provide the content knowledge and pedagogical strategies to promote mathematical development (both cognitive and social) in the middle phase of learning. The unit will provide a theoretical framework and the opportunity to participate in collaborative problem tasks. There will be a focus on students developing a broader range of thinking and reasoning processes as they work with the mathematical content. Students will be encouraged to critically evaluate ideas, reflect on their learning and freely express personal viewpoints.

**Year 1, Semester 2**

**Middle Years: Transdisciplinary Arts and SOSE**

This unit aims to enhance students understanding of the nature of SOSE and the ARTS as curriculum areas and to highlight the advantages of bringing these areas of learning together. It also aims to provide the opportunity to engage with the relevant syllabus and curriculum documents by translating goals and outcomes into innovative middle-years teaching units.

**The Professional Practice of Educators**

This Education Studies unit builds your professional and ethical capacity as an Early, Middle or Senior Phase Educator by developing a social science framework for understanding and analysing the professional practice of educators in local and global contexts. The unit will develop your knowledge of the social, cultural, and political strategies shaping professional practice and education today. It will also develop your understanding of the identities produced by these strategies and of the ways in which they might be ethically and equitably managed in all phases of learning.

**Middle Years Field Studies 2: The Professional Practice of Educators**

This unit identifies, discusses and applies the professional issues and responsibilities the beginning teacher needs to be aware of the students’ ability to identify the crucial professional issues for them personally will be enhanced. Students will not only engage with the challenges of addressing social, cultural, political and legislative issues to provide quality inclusive educational experiences for all learners but also identify a professional development program that best accommodates their needs as a beginning teacher. (33 days Field Studies).

**Middle Years: Transdisciplinary Science and Technology**
This unit aims to develop the skills and understandings required to integrate science and technology KLAs across the curriculum and create meaningful learning experiences that cater for the diverse needs of middle years’ students.