



## **I Was a Good Classroom Teacher, Why Do I Feel so Lost Now? Examining a Doctoral Student's Transition with Becoming a Teacher Educator During and Post Pandemic**

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on the transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator and how this impacts teacher identity, but more specifically the additional challenges of learning to become a teacher educator during a pandemic. Employing self-study methodology this work examines not only the transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator but also the increased complexity of this experience while teaching online during the pandemic, and the transition back to some sense of normalcy with teaching in person. Data sources include Author One's reflective journal, recordings of meetings with critical friends providing feedback throughout the process, and student artifacts from different activities applied from year 1 to year 2. From our coding of the journal from year 1, several codes were identified about Author One's identity as a teacher educator being tied to the types of interactions he fosters in his classroom. As he transitions to teaching in person in year 2 (Fall 2021) we will look to see how he takes what he learned about fostering these interactions in an online environment and applies them to his in-person teaching. Techniques learned from his semester 2 experience of online teaching will guide him in this process and critical friend meetings will focus on attending to the transitional moments in his identity as he makes yet another shift in developing who he is as a teacher educator.

**Keywords:** *Identity; Self-Study; Teacher education; Teacher educator*

### **Introduction**

Transitions can be difficult. Transitions that occur during unprecedented world events can be more difficult. Author 1 (referred to from here on in the first person) experienced some of these transitions while in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Experiencing the transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator as well as life as a first year PhD student and teaching in unique situations created strong areas of conflict in my identity. During this time, I was forced to reevaluate what I valued in teaching and how I could integrate what I felt made me a good teacher into this new role as a teacher educator. This was a particularly challenging experience, I constantly felt as though I was struggling as a student and as a teacher and exploring this through the context of self-study allowed me to explore these tensions, come to some understandings of what I view as important, uncover the importance of reflection, and to find stability within the context of my changing identity.

Three factors impacted my identity during my first year as a teacher educator: (1) I shift from classroom teacher to teacher educator; (2) my transition from an in person/online content teacher to an online methods instructor; and (3) I transition from secondary teaching to elementary focused methods instruction. The aim of this study is to explore how my identity as a developing teacher educator shifts and/or grows as I make the transition from secondary classroom teacher to elementary teacher educator. The research question that guides this investigation is:

What did I experience during this first year of teaching elementary preservice teachers that challenged the development of my identity as a science teacher educator?

For this study, my identity as a teacher educator is framed within Vermunt et al's (2017) definitions of three main characteristics of identity. These are (1) multiplicity (the multiple facets of teacher identity), (2) discontinuity (the ongoing nature of identity formation), and (3) within the social nature of identity (context within relationships and social interactions). This framework allows us to understand how I viewed my development as a teacher educator as well as contextualize those findings within each of these groups.

Vermunt et al's (2017) framework pulls from various works on identity to define each of these terms. Multiplicity is viewed as the amalgamation of various ways that teachers view themselves as professionals such as "subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, or didactical experts (Beijaard et al 2000. P. 751)". Discontinuity is an ongoing developmental process of reevaluating one's experiences and leads to shifts in identity at a constant rate. The social nature of identity focuses on the interactions with colleagues or mentors and how these interactions shape teacher educator identity. Working within these constructs using a self-study methodology, we were able to investigate my identity development throughout an already traditionally difficult time complicated by a global pandemic.

To address the research question, this study is focused on collecting and interpreting information. From the data that is collected we can use Vermunt et al's (2017) framework to determine how my identity was influenced and how it evolved throughout this time. Implications for how developing teacher educator identity can be supported and encouraged are also discussed.

### **Related literature**

Identity is complex, continually changing, and influenced by the world around us. There are wildly varying definitions of identity and how identity changes and develops (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Berry (2007a) uses tensions as a means of framing our experiences and identity. These tensions include:

- (1) Telling and growth:
  - Between informing and creating opportunities to reflect and self-direct.
  - Between acknowledging student teachers' needs and concerns and challenging them to grow
- (2) Confidence and uncertainty:
  - Between making explicit the complexities and messiness of teaching and helping student teachers feel confident to proceed
  - Between exposing vulnerability as a teacher educator and maintaining student teachers' confidence in their teacher educator as a leader.
- (3) Working with and against:
  - Between working towards a particular ideal and jeopardizing this ideal by the approach chosen to attain it.
- (4) Discomfort and challenge:
  - Between a constructive learning experience and an uncomfortable learning experience.
- (5) Acknowledging and building upon experience:

- Between helping students recognize the ‘authority of their experience’ and helping them to see that there is more to teaching than simply experience.
- (6) Planning and being responsive:
- Between planning for learning and responding to learning opportunities as they arise in practice (pp. 1313– 1314).

Many of these tensions are being explored through self-study by various researchers. Bullock (2012) describes his feeling of being unprepared for his role as a teacher educator and his search for a “distinct pedagogy” that separates his experience as a physics teacher from his role as a physics teacher educator. Garbett (2012) discusses her difficulty in shifting roles and how the innateness of pedagogy can make teaching methods courses difficult. Richards and Alsup (2015) examine key factors related to teachers cultivating their online teacher identities and discuss many of the same tensions that we have started to identify within his’s own study.

Transitioning from a classroom content teacher to the role of teacher educator can raise identity issues even under routine circumstances. These issues can leave new graduate students struggling to develop their identity and impact how we educate our students (Newberry 2014). Abell (2010) builds upon this point by calling attention to the lack of attention in developing science teacher knowledge for teaching teachers.

The coalescing of different ideas; transitioning from classroom teacher to teacher educator, the tensions that exist in improving one’s practice, and being in a PhD program can be difficult (Wood & Borg, 2010). This can be complicated by the idea that the previous experience that you have as a teacher can be counterintuitive to making you an effective teacher educator (Berry, 2007b) and teaching during teacher education programs is not necessarily effective as a means of preparation (Abell et al., 2009).

With all these factors potentially impacting the identity development of new graduate students, it becomes important to have a means of investigating these tensions as they arise. Self-study can be a lens to help process these tensions and explore their combined impact on this construct (Abell 2010).

## **Methods**

This study was carried out using self-study methodology. Self-study is a self-initiated examination of one’s own practice and a way of improving that practice through the reflection of one’s own beliefs and their actual practice (LaBoskey, 2004). I had taught this methods course twice previously (Fall 2020 and Spring 2021) as a first year graduate student. Due to the COVID pandemic, courses were taught using an online and asynchronous modality. In Fall of 2021, I had a desire to explore my own practice as this would be my third time teaching the course and first time teaching it in person. I felt that there was a unique intersection of events and experiences that were shaping my identity as a new teacher educator that should be explored more deeply. Beginning my PhD program during the pandemic, transitioning from a teacher to a teacher educator, and teaching an elementary methods course online and

asynchronously created a unique situation for me. Conducting my self-study while teaching the now in-person methods course allows me to see the impact of these coalescing experiences through the lens of a new graduate student.

Self-study is inherently unique in nature and as such a variety of qualitative evidence helps ensure that the researcher is looking beyond their own lens of perception. Critical friends offer an outside perspective that can be helpful in analyzing this personal experience (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Self-study can be deeply personal and uncomfortable and critical friends can offer an objective view while also eliminating potential bias from a single researcher and strengthens conclusions (LaBoskey, 2004). Each of the critical friends involved in this study filled a unique role that will be discussed later.

### **Background**

I have a background in education that varies between secondary and undergraduate science content teaching. I received my undergraduate degree in biology and spent 4 years working in laboratory settings. During this time, I completed my Master's in teaching in a transition to teaching program and spent 8 years teaching secondary science courses both in person and online while completing graduate science courses to allow me to teach at the college level. Once I completed enough graduate level science coursework, I spent 3 years teaching anatomy and physiology courses both in person and online at the college level. Therefore, I have spent most of my career focused largely on developing and practicing my science content knowledge for teaching at the secondary or early post-secondary levels. In these contexts, I describe my approach to teaching largely as inquiry-oriented and heavily discussion focused with students regularly engaging in activities designed for collaboration, critical thinking, and application of content, and grounded in constructivist teaching allowing students to build upon their knowledge and skills through the purposeful design of the course. However, my online teaching of a college level science course, designed as a pre-requisite for students to apply to a nursing program, took a different approach. I described my teaching in this context as more traditional, such as teacher led instruction and lab activities, and little student to student interaction.

In fall 2020 I began my doctoral degree in science education. Of course, matters were complicated as this was during the height of the COVID-19 global pandemic, so all of my schooling was shifted to online either synchronously or asynchronously. I was assigned to teach one section of an elementary science methods course as part of my assistantship for the program, and due to my background with online teaching of college courses, was also assigned the asynchronous section of the course. Therefore, I was presented with two challenges: 1) how to teach preservice elementary teachers when all my background was at the secondary and college science level, and 2) how to teach in an asynchronous environment in such a way that held true to how I preferred to teach, which was interactively (like in my secondary classrooms).

## Context and Participants

This self-study examines the impact of this first year and a half as a teacher educator. During this time, I taught one section of the elementary methods course each of the three semesters, with the first two semesters being an online and asynchronous modality and the third semester being in-person. I periodically wrote journal entries during the second semester as a class assignment reflecting on our teaching experiences but kept a weekly journal during the third semester (the in-person teaching). My responsibilities in teaching this course included explorations into various areas of elementary science as well as exploring pedagogy used to teach science in the elementary classroom. I was teaching this course at a large, public, midwestern university in the United States. The in-person course that I focused on for my data collection outside of my journaling was composed of 14 female students who were all white except for one African American, and one male Hispanic student. All the students in the course were undergraduate students majoring in Elementary education. My previous teaching experience came from teaching science at the secondary level for eight years, with no prior experience in teaching elementary students or teacher education outside of the prior methods courses. This became a key component of my study as I examined my teaching and development as a teacher educator through this lens of changing identities. I was specifically concerned with the examination of our rapport and how this had changed between teaching science as a secondary teacher to teacher educator teaching asynchronously online, and now to teaching in-person in this role. Reflections on my weekly interactions with the students were the key data source for this study. Student discussion posts, a mid-semester survey and end of course discussion and survey provide additional sources of data.

Critical friends played a crucial role at multiple points throughout the study. Critical Friend 1 acted as my main critical friend. Her major contributions focused on the conceptualization of the study, data analysis after collection, and identifying the significance of the study with the fields of teacher education and self-study research.

Critical Friend 2 served as a critical friend because of his experience in teaching the methods course as a hybrid course during the height of the pandemic. He was also a first-year doctoral student in my cohort and shared similar experiences with me regarding this unique period as a teacher educator. His experience teaching the course offered insight into how to transition between the online and in-person teaching experiences. I also worked closely with another colleague in planning the course as we were both teaching a section of the course and her time spent as a teacher educator and doctoral student offered insights on how to be a more effective teacher educator. Both Critical Friend 2 and my colleagues offered support and guidance in framing my thoughts about being a teacher educator as well as designing impactful learning experiences for my preservice teachers.

Conversations with all my critical friends took place during the data collection. They helped focus my thinking on identifiable issues associated with my teaching and helped to reduce my bias in interpreting the data. Through our conversations I was able to hone my feelings and convey them more accurately than I was prior to their input. They offered unique perspectives that helped me to stay focused on the areas I was examining within my teaching.

### **Data Sources and Analysis**

The primary data source for my self-study comes from reflections that I recorded weekly and following relevant conversations with my critical friends. Other data sources include written comments from a mid-semester survey, my end-of-semester evaluation form, as well as a final discussion in class focusing on how the preservice teachers felt that they have grown as educators in science throughout the semester and what activities that they found most impactful over the course of the semester.

My reflections were recorded within 1-2 days after my weekly meeting with my students as well as in response to questions offered by Critical Friend 1 during our bi-weekly meetings. These entries focused on my observations regarding my interactions and areas where I feel like I did well or areas that I could improve upon going forward. I also discussed how I was feeling in terms of my confidence as a teacher educator and areas of frustration. In response to Critical Friend 1's questions, I would reflect on how teaching preservice teachers was a unique experience compared to my previous teaching experience. The secondary sources mentioned above were gathered as a routine part of the course and allowed me to adjust my plans accordingly to make sure that they were getting more of the experiences that they were finding most helpful in their teacher preparation. The discussion served to circle back to areas the preservice teachers identified as areas of strength and areas for improvement to give them an opportunity to reflect on their growth throughout the semester and share their experiences in teaching, learning, and planning lessons throughout the semester. The student discussions post also allowed for further reflection tied to topics covered in the course textbook focusing on effective science teaching and inquiry. These reflections offered insight into their development and understanding of the pedagogical processes that we practiced in class as well as deepen the conversations that we had in class and give them opportunities to further practice their instructional design techniques.

This first data point, the reflective journal, contained 27 entries over the course of nearly a year. These became the focal points of most of the critical friend meetings with Critical Friend 1. These entries covered both my second semester teaching online and then my first semester of teaching in-person. There were a variety of topics and conversations that stemmed from these entries related to identity, my teaching practice, dealing with the transition from online to in-person teaching, challenges, and my goals for the future.

In the second semester Critical Friend 1 and I would meet on a biweekly basis to discuss the prior week's entries and gave Critical Friend 1 an opportunity to ask questions and encourage me to probe these areas deeper in my reflections and in my teaching. Doing this helped to clarify my decision making process and provide me an opportunity to examine these discrepancies in what I value and what I was doing in my practice (LaBoskey, 2004). This collaborative dialogue between Critical Friend 1 and I as well as my supporting conversations with Critical Friend 2 were used to explore my rationale and motivations for the choices I made in the classroom (Hamilton and Pinnegar, 2013). These meetings expanded upon the reflective journal entries, helped develop my understanding of pedagogy, and furthered my development as a teacher educator.

Another data source was provided by my undergraduate preservice teachers. These came in the form of a mid-semester “exit ticket” type survey for students to provide feedback on my instruction in the classroom and a discussion in class at the end of the semester giving another opportunity for me to receive feedback on my instruction and for the students to identify areas of growth and continued concern for their own teaching to better inform my decision making and planning processes going forward.

The reflective journals were coded for common themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994) through an inductive process. I chose to reread the entries and the comments made by Critical Friend 1 and group them based upon the recurring themes. Once this was coded, I looked over the journals again to identify specific words or phrases that were representative of these themes more specifically. I also coded portions of our critical friends’ meetings that were related to these general themes. The themes that I developed were: Feeling like I don’t belong or underprepared as a teacher educator/difficulty with the transition, focusing on my pedagogy and how to effectively prepare future teachers, and using reflection and feedback to guide my decision-making process.

## **Findings**

The findings from this self-study were organized around three themes that became prevalent throughout the data analysis process. The themes of (1) feeling like I don’t belong, (2) transparency within my practice, and (3) reflection and feedback as instructional tools emerged from the data. Throughout the entirety of the journal, we see that I struggle with feeling confident and accepted within my role as both PhD student and teacher educator. These tensions that manifested themselves created conflict within my newly emerging identity as well as my core understandings of what it means to be a teacher. We see these feelings interacting with my teaching more overtly from the second and third themes respectively and serving to provide clarity regarding the research question and how my identity has developed as a science teacher educator.

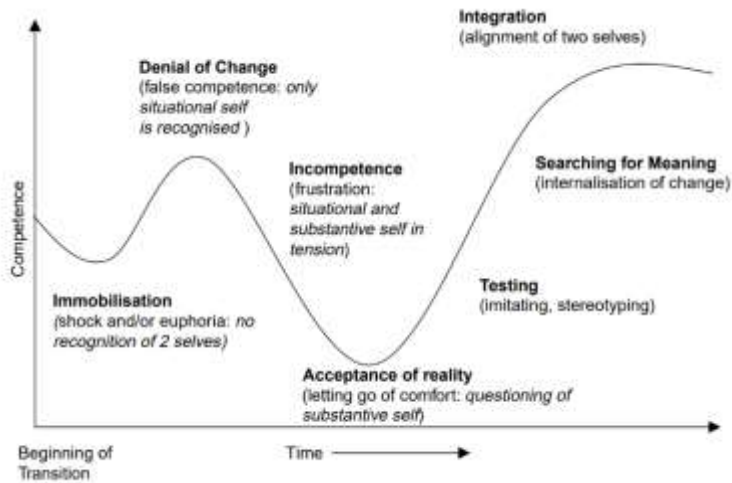
### **Feeling Like I Don’t Belong**

My transition to teacher educator and the associated emotions that occurred (which are still ongoing) was a major reason this self-study was initiated. The emotions that I experienced are not uncommon for graduate students. I found that my emotions would come in waves with times of me feeling confident and effective and punctuated by times where I found myself wondering if I was doing a good job. Often, I found myself doubting my abilities to teach effectively. This became more prevalent in my journal as I moved back into my face-to-face teaching. I noted in my entries more frequently that I was nervous or doubtful and feeling like I didn’t belong. Throughout the in-person course I noticed I had more up and down experiences, starting out as feeling nervous, then encouraged, and extremely encouraged, and then coming back to those feelings of nervousness, followed by me focusing more on my teaching in my journaling. Much of this thinking follows along with Wood and Borgs (2010) model of the transition curve (Figure 1). I found myself doubting, then feeling like I was doing well, then feeling that conflict of wondering

if I am doing a good job and doubting that I am and being able to slowly start to question my teaching and my goals with the help of my critical friends.

Figure 1

*Woods and Borg (2010) Transition curve model*



One thing I noticed at the end of the asynchronous course was that I found myself pointing out that the lack of interaction affects me as a teacher, I note “This continues to be such a hard problem for me as someone who thrives on interaction with the students and having my students discuss and collaborate in my classroom. I think that being able to at least see someone’s face and hear their voice is more impactful than simply seeing text...” (journal entry 4/19/21). Throughout the pandemic, the isolation of teaching asynchronously was something that I viewed as playing a significant impact in my teaching and me struggling to feel like I belonged as part of my program. I also found myself commenting on how I noticed the students being engaged and when I felt like I had a good day teaching, I noticed it was usually tied to an activity that the students were engaged in.

There was a link between me feeling confident in my teaching and how I felt my interactions with the students went. I found myself more confident with the in-person group compared to my asynchronous class. The consistent grappling with feeling effective or that I was doing a good job is seen throughout the 11 months of entries. Wilkinson (2020) discusses similar feelings, “The above field diary entry was not the only instance of stage fright, and such narratives permeated my diary entries. Stage fright and performance anxiety have been documented in previous literature concerning university lecturers (see Scott, 2007b).” I found that within my journals there was a regular mention of not feeling confident or that I wasn’t doing enough.

Throughout this time, mostly Fall 2021 semester (In-person teaching), I kept circling back to these feelings of fear, doubt, and uncertainty. They are influences on how I view myself as a teacher educator and an influence on some of my teaching decisions. As I moved throughout the year, I noticed my focus shifting to my teaching and how to



impact my students and less on myself as the year progressed. My later journal entries focus heavily on the various areas of my identity and the stress that comes from balancing the roles of student and teacher.

“Being a student and a teacher is hard and I think at this point many of my colleagues feel like they are just surviving, it’s hard to feel prepared coming into a program like this, you could be a diligent student and a great teacher but balancing those two can be extremely hard and extremely isolating.” (11/17/21 reflective journal entry).

There were times when I was more cognizant of my own practice and my own struggles with confidence and my role as a teacher educator. Reviewing the journal entries, there were mainly times of frustration and a lack in my confidence that were readily apparent, but there were instances where, through my time spent journaling I was able to be aware of specific issues that were caused by this lack of confidence.

I am trying to focus more on giving them opportunities to work and discuss things in their groups and coming around and spending a few minutes talking with individual groups. This has made me feel more like a classroom teacher and teacher educator as I have tried to focus more on my pedagogy and getting back to a place where I am more comfortable. I think I was positioning myself as the “leader” for our discussions because of that fear that they aren’t learning unless I am being the source of that knowledge, it’s a naïve view but taking that control gives that false comfort, I guess. It’s hard to explain, I don’t believe that the instructor at the front and fully in control and “executing the lesson plan” is the best pedagogy but I think when I don’t feel confident it’s easy to fall back into that so I am trying to make a conscious effort to allow more discussion in small groups and have students come to their own conclusions rather than me feeling the need to point them out. (10/6/21 reflective journal entry)

The ebb and flow of this confidence and feeling at times like I did not belong align with Vermunt et al’s (2017) focus on discontinuity that arises when transitioning from the role of classroom teacher to teacher educator. This discontinuity can also impact student learning which has an impact on teacher identity development as well. There is a feedback loop that is created between the teacher and students that is continually in flux as the teacher educator deals with the changing nature of identity that is influenced by their interactions in the classroom.

### **Transparency Within my Practice**

Transparency within my teaching practice became a focus as I moved back into in-person teaching. I made it a goal to be open with my students about my design and decision making during my teaching as much as possible. This means being explicit about procedures, expectations, and the pedagogical choices made within the class and my teaching.

The course is designed with several scaffolds in place to help create an experience that will hopefully raise their content knowledge, pedagogy, confidence, and ultimately help positively shape their identities as teachers of science. We will look at readings from the textbook and various articles designed to facilitate discussion around classroom practice, these will hopefully be bolstered by the weekly online discussion posts to continue or

deepen the conversations in class. We will also have weekly lab activities that will be carried out by me at first, then as the course progresses the students will be given an opportunity to lead these activities. These will be non-graded, and feedback will be given by both me and their peers to practice the content and hopefully gain some confidence in lesson planning and teaching science. The goal for me is to be as transparent and explicit as possible in my pedagogy during the activities so the PSTs can develop that understanding of how teachers plan and execute lessons as well as the how and why. (8/26 reflective journal entry)

Part of this stems from my time teaching online during the 2 semesters prior to moving back into face-to-face teaching and feeling like I could get back to some of the things I felt like I had lost while teaching online. I pointed this out in my wrap up of my online semester, “In the stress of starting something new and tried to figure out this course along with the general stress of the times, I got away from the things that I know are important as a teacher. I did not focus on collaboration or student to student interaction because of that.”

Focusing on making my implicit decisions more explicit was something that I wanted to include in my teaching. “I am thinking more directly about the reasons I teach the way I do and being explicit about that with my students and encouraging them to start thinking about how they switch from students to teachers and what that looks like for them.” (9/1/21 reflective journal entry). From this focus on explicit teaching, I noted that the students were engaging more deeply and taking the reins more and asking deeper questions and engaging with their peers more in those discussions.

I have seen improvement in most of the students regarding their content knowledge and their understanding of pedagogy. They are able to answer my questions about their educational decisions more confidently and are pushing themselves to try activities that are more of their original ideas. I have really wanted to create a space for them with these investigations where they can feel comfortable in trying something outside of their comfort zones. I am seeing this come through as they are planning their units for their science teaching in M201 as well. (10/27/21 reflective journal entry)

Based on student feedback from the mid-semester survey, the students seemed to be appreciative of this approach, although some of the feedback is reflective of my openness and desire to be honest about all facets of teaching, these point to the value of being explicit and how this is helpful in building positive relationships and forming a community of support within the classroom.

Much of what the PSTs share reinforces my desire to form positive relationships and that being explicit does encourage more in depth and relevant conversations but there is room here to grow and finding a balance between being friendly and engaging and leveraging those relationships to bolster their pedagogy and pushing them to integrate on the application of this explicit pedagogy into their future classroom practices.

This focus on transparency led me to feel more in control of my classroom and led to powerful conversations regarding pedagogy and the decisions that teachers make within their classroom on a regular basis. This conceptualizes the positive impact of the social nature of identity (Vermunt et al 2017) as these interactions and feedback from students helped to shape my emerging identity as a teacher educator.

### **Reflection and Feedback as Instructional Tools**

Reflection and feedback can be powerful aids for teacher educators in improving their practice. Throughout the course of this investigation, the power of reflection has become increasingly obvious. In a conversation with Critical Friend 1, I discussed that this self-study has been a difficult process and something that has both helped my transition to teacher educator and made it more difficult. When faced with my own thoughts and sharing those with my collaborators, I open myself up to questions regarding my own decision-making in the classroom.

In one of our meetings, I was asked about how I have modified my instruction during this transition and my response was, “I’m becoming more comfortable with this. I never really had to do it before...even last year online. Since it was asynchronous (online) we discussed it more as “tricks/tips” to take with you, sort of this is what you can do... But in the synchronous mode now, we get to discuss and talk through. I’m having to explain my own thinking more and not just tell. Now I find myself asking; Why am I talking about this, why do I think this important? I’m thinking about my own pedagogy a lot more, sharing my pedagogy.”

After another meeting, critical friend 1 left a question for me to consider, “Should content and pedagogy be viewed as separate bases of knowledge to attend to, (so one dominating or forward in thinking, and the other in the periphery)? Why not consider them equally at the same time?” This question drove me to look back over my journal entries of the previous year and look at them through this new perspective. As I addressed this question, I ended my response by saying “I think for me, finding this balance is part of the growing process for me as a teacher educator as the pendulum swung from one to the other (between pedagogy and content knowledge development). I am finding myself coming back towards the center and having more confidence in both as I am getting more comfortable in this role of teacher educator.” (10/19/21 reflective journal entry)

It became clear that my answer to this question has developed over the course of my journaling throughout the past year. As a new teacher educator who was teaching asynchronously online, I found myself struggling to integrate content knowledge development into my teaching related to pedagogy. I often would frame pedagogy within its general application to content, treating the two as mutually exclusive. As I moved back to in-person teaching the next semester, I found myself doing more to build preservice teachers content knowledge of elementary science content while still engaging in conversations around pedagogy. I struggle to say whether this was a result of me becoming more confident in my role as a teacher educator transitioning from the secondary science classroom or because of the shift in learning environments from asynchronous online teaching to live in-person teaching. Odds are that that burgeoning confidence comes as a result of both factors, but it is an insight into my own development

that I would have most likely overlooked had it not been for my critical friend's posing of the question affording me the lens to reevaluate that growth.

The ability to reflect and open myself to feedback has been difficult in transitioning from classroom teacher to teacher educator. As previously stated, I have grown because of these things, but this is also difficult as I am trying to find my confidence in this new profession. Constantly having to assess and explain my choices during critical friend meetings has caused me to reevaluate nearly all my decisions in the classroom and has made me question my ability to be an effective teacher educator. There is a balance that exists in getting feedback and not letting it shake the foundations of who you are as a teacher educator and during this time of transition that isn't always easy. I found that as the study and critical friends meetings continued throughout the semester, I was gaining more confidence in my decisions as I continued to develop this identity as a teacher educator.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The primary goal of my self-study was to examine and better understand the dynamics that are creating the difficulty in his transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator. Understanding these sources of tension allowed us to explore the areas within this transition that can help me grow as a teacher educator and bring those positive pieces into my future teaching. As we analyzed the data, we were able to identify areas within my experiences that I value as an educator as well as areas of growth as I continue throughout my program and ultimately into a career as a teacher educator. There is a shift within my journal reflections from feelings of doubt to moments of positivity and growth. Building rapport with students and focusing on being transparent in both my professional background and desire to grow with my students as a teacher educator as well as bringing that transparency to my course design and classroom instruction did have a positive impact on my students as well as my confidence in my new roles.

There are three areas that impacted me the most and from those findings we believe that there are implications that could be beneficial for new teacher educators and those that support them in these roles. The first area that was identified was tied to feelings of not belonging, perhaps even rising to the level of "imposter syndrome", from this finding we can better understand the dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of identity in transitioning from a traditional content teacher to a teacher educator. Freese (2006) discusses that the institutional culture is shaping the "teaching self" of the educator stepping into this role. Implications of this study, along with Freese's (2006) thoughts point to a need for more coaching and support through mentors. Coursework focused on developing as a teacher educator could also prove beneficial. Though these ideas are not new and often mentioned within research (Avraamidou, 2014), this study further echoes the need for more support for graduate students stepping into these roles. There is also a need to more effectively identify and support students who are dealing with "imposter syndrome". Reflection and journaling can be powerful tools in identifying this and can even offer catharsis (Hiemstra, 2001 & Travers, 2011). Even throughout this process reflecting on my teaching and the feelings that went along with it led to more impactful conversations among critical friends that have helped in building my confidence and developing my identity as a teacher educator.

The second area of impact was within the development of being transparent in teaching. Understanding how to be explicit in my decision-making of my teaching led to engaging conversations led by the students about how to design their lessons and their thoughts on creating engaging science activities. This goal of transparency led to better relationships with the students and conversations that seemed to be more impactful compared to prior classes that were online and discussion board focused. There does need to be a balance within these relationships and a focus on understanding the needs of the student while balancing the emotional investment of the teacher as Phillips and Park Rogers (2020) point out in their study. I believe this openness does lead to more engaging and effective teaching and was a source of positivity in my journals. The difficulty inherent in our practice as teacher educators coming from a teaching background is making the implicitness of our pedagogy explicit for the benefit of our preservice teachers.

The third area, feedback and reflection as instructional tools, was one that has had the most significant impact on my development as a teacher educator. Self-study by its nature epitomizes reflection as a powerful tool for teacher educators. Through this self-study I have developed a clearer understanding of the role of reflection in my practice. There is still a considerable learning curve, being willing and able to assess and critique yourself without cutting too deeply is a balancing act, but one that can empower your teaching practice as Spencer (2016) discusses.

There is an inherent danger in that any reflective undertaking may, by its very nature, become insular and private (Cochran-Smyth & Lytle 1993 cited in Clarke & Erickson 2004). Self-studies are carried out in what Schön (1987) refers to eloquently as “indeterminate, swampy zones of practice” (p3). Much of the literature regarding self-study intimates that sharing and communicating knowledge and practices is the key to maximise learning, and that the support of colleagues engaged similarly supports ongoing, critical engagement with the challenges and issues investigations such as these present (Loughran, Mitchell & Mitchell 2002, cited in Clarke & Erickson 2004).

As a student and a teacher, I have a better understanding of how reflective practice can be used by me and my students as a tool to improve pedagogy. This is an area worth putting more effort into exploring and understanding how deeply these practices can be used as tools for PSTs and teacher educators. Loughran (2011) discusses the importance of reflection when he says:

“Although teaching is important, and good teaching is crucial, the shift from only teaching to teaching and research as expectations of academic work, is central to identity formation for a teacher educator. Part of that shift involves understanding that teaching about teaching must be informed by knowledge of practice that goes beyond the recounting of one’s own school teaching experiences or being limited to the passing on of tips and tricks about teaching; it is about moving beyond a view of teaching solely as doing.”

(Loughran, 2011 pg. 284)

Journaling and self-reflection became powerful tools for me as a novice teacher educator to critically examine my practice, identify areas of improvement, and see the development of my confidence and skillset as I transitioned from classroom teacher to teacher educator. It became a place for me to voice my frustrations and challenges and

stay focused on addressing them. A few of my journal entries demonstrate this growth in my mindset that perhaps would have gone unnoticed had I not written them down and been able to go back and reread and reevaluate them through the lens of self-study.

There is a need for new teacher educators to understand their practice and identify the strengths and the weaknesses within it. We must be willing and able to examine our practice, find those insightful bits of knowledge, and leverage those to create experiences for our students that transcend our individual experiences, we must grow and evolve as teacher educators. This demonstrates the inherent value of self-study and how it can help shape both new and experienced teacher educators into more effective versions of themselves that are needed to prepare students for the challenges that they will face in the classroom.

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**Please Cite:** Kitts, K. & Perry S. (2023). I was a good classroom teacher, why do I feel so lost now? Examining a doctoral student's transition with becoming a teacher educator during and post pandemic. *The European Educational Researcher*, 6(2), 55-70. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31757/euer.625>

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**Conflict of Interest:** None

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**Data Availability Statement:** The journal entry data can be shared.

**Ethics Statement:** Not applicable

**Author Contributions:** Both authors contributed equally to the paper.

*Received: March 1, 2023 ▪ Accepted: June 8, 2023*