

Influences of Childhood Experiences on Early Childhood Education Students

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Abstract

This qualitative study examined whether or not childhood experiences of the early childhood education students affected their present personal beliefs and pedagogies. A digital survey was filled out by 58 students majoring in Early Childhood Education program. The participants were asked to identify and reflect on their impactful early experiences. The follow-up interviews with two participants were conducted to deepen the reflections on childhood experiences and explore their effects on the present lives of the early childhood educators. The theoretical framework for this study was based on the concept of the experiential continuum originated by one of the most influential American philosopher, John Dewey. The findings suggest that early childhood education students' early childhood experiences are connected to personal and professional aspects of their lives. The results of this study suggest that despite the potentially changing interpretation of the past, childhood may continuously affect the lives of early childhood education students. These results support the importance of reflecting on students' own childhoods in teacher preparation programs. Another result of this study was that early peer experiences affected teachers' present lives. Based on the results, suggestions for the teacher education programs are made. Such suggestions included promoting students to facilitate their reflections regarding childhood experiences via the following questions: "Why am I reflecting on this teaching experience/knowledge the way I am? What within myself, within my own past experiences may be driving me to see what I am seeing, to conclude what I am concluding?"

Keywords: childhood experiences, pedagogy, early childhood education, experiential continuum

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Erken Çocukluk Tecrübelerinin Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi Öğrencilerinin Üzerine Etkileri

Öz

Bu niteliksel çalışmada erken çocukluk eğitimi öğrencilerinin erken çocukluk tecrübelerinin şu anki kişisel inançlarını ve pedagojilerini etkileyip etkilemediği incelendi. Erken çocukluk eğitimi programındaki 58 öğrenci dijital ankete katıldı. Katılımcılardan kendilerinde etkili olan erken çocukluk tecrübelerini tanımlamaları ve bu tecrübeler üzerinde düşünmeleri istendi. Anketi takiben iki erken çocukluk eğitimcisi ile erken çocukluk tecrübeleri ve bu tecrübelerin onların şimdiki hayatlarına olan etkisi hakkında derinlemesine bilgi almak amacıyla röportaj yapıldı. Bu çalışmanın teorik çerçevesi en ünlü Amerikan felsefecilerinden John Dewey'in deneyimsel süreç kavramı üzerine kurulmuştur. Erken çocukluk eğitimi öğrencilerinin erken çocukluk tecrübelerinin onların kişisel ve mesleki hayatlarıyla ilişkili olduğu sonucu elde edilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, geçmişin potansiyel olarak değişen yorumlarına rağmen, erken çocukluk döneminin sürekli olarak erken çocukluk eğitimi öğrencilerinin hayatını etkileyebildiğini önermektedir. Bu sonuçlar, öğrencilerin çocukluk dönemleri hakkında düşüncelerinin öğretmen eğitimi programları açısından önemli olduğu görüşünü desteklemektedir. Bu çalışmadan elde edilen bir başka sonuç ise erken çocuklukta akranelarla ilgili tecrübelerin de öğretmenlerin bugünkü hayatlarını etkilediğidir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçlarına dayalı olarak öğretmen eğitimi programlarına yönelik önerilerde bulunulmuştur. Bu öneriler arasında, öğrencilerin erken çocukluk tecrübeleri üzerine derinlemesine düşüncelerinin şu sorular yoluyla desteklenmesi gerektiği yer almaktadır: "Neden bu öğretim tecrübesi/bilgisi üzerinde bu şekilde düşünüyorum? İçimde, geçmiş tecrübelerimden beni gördüğüm şeyleri bu şekilde görmeye sevk eden nedir?"

Anahtar Sözcükler: çocukluk tecrübeleri, pedagoji, erken çocukluk eğitimi, deneyimsel süreç

Introduction

The purpose of teacher preparation goes beyond simply familiarizing early childhood education students with the best pedagogical practices and theories of child development. Childhood experiences may steer our students' present interpretations of what they may learn in our classroom and how they may translate it into their own teaching (Van Hook, 2002). The purpose of teacher educators is, therefore, to include students' mindful self-reflections (Bowman, 1992) and empower students' ability to understand how and why they interpret the present educational experiences based on their past, including childhood.

This qualitative study examined childhood experiences of early childhood education students in relation to the present personal and professional aspects of their lives. The overarching question that guided the investigation was, "If and how do childhood experiences influence personal beliefs and pedagogies of early childhood education students?" Using a survey with open-ended questions and follow-up semi-structured interviews, this study traced back and analyze patterns in which specific childhood experiences are continuously connected to the present lives of early childhood educators.

Role of Childhood Experiences in the Profession of Early Childhood Teachers

Internalized childhood experiences may have an effect on how teachers shape the childhoods of their students, in part through teachers' personal and professional identities. Teachers' "own childhood histories and memories" are a part of the past experiences that interact with present circumstances to influence the teacher identity (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006, p. 607). As Day et al. (2006) noted, "...identity is a key influencing factor on teachers' sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness" (p. 601). Therefore, exploring childhood experiences as potential factors in identity formation of early childhood education students may contribute to the understanding of their future practice.

This study is aligned with the emerging dialogical approach to conceptualizing teacher identity as "both unitary and multiple, both continuous and discontinuous, and both individual and social" (Akkerman, & Meijer, 2011). The childhood experiences are viewed as part of the continuous construction of teachers' self with the respect to their present lens of reflection on these experiences. Specifically, teachers' responses to open-ended survey and interview questions highlighted pathways in which childhood experiences were echoed in their reflections of current selves and their teaching. The conceptual understanding of reflection and its importance for understanding the continuous power of early childhood experiences is grounded in Dewey's theoretical works described in the next section.

Rothenberg (1994) states that "knowledge of one's belief system, insight and reflection are vital components of good teaching" (p.370). Therefore, how teachers reflect upon their early memories of school experiences is a significant topic of the

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teaching profession. Chang-Kredl and Kingsley (2014) examined the Canadian preservice teacher's memories of prior experiences. The results showed that positive early memories (such as having an influential teacher) have a positive impact on later becoming a teacher. Their findings also suggest that among the memories involving school, family, and work, primary school memories were the most significant. Participants also recalled early memories involving watching a sibling, taking care of a sibling or cousin along with the behaviors of the parents' and their support.

Van Hook's (2002) study of preservice teachers' reflection on memories from early childhood at a sophomore-level teacher education program in the U.S., found that the participants recalled memories of positive teacher characteristics and strategies (25% of the student memories) such as a teacher demonstrating act of empathy and providing positive guidance and memories of negative teacher characteristics and strategies (65% of the student memories) such as a teacher demonstrating lack of respect for the children and providing negative guidance strategies (placing the student in a box as a behavior management strategy). This study attempted to explore further the importance of childhood experiences by connecting the reflections of those past experiences on current personal and professional lives of future early childhood teachers. In other words, building upon Van Hook's (2002) study, this current study examined the impact of childhood experiences not only on the personal beliefs of the early childhood education students but also on their teaching practices.

Dewey's Experiential Continuum and Reflection

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the concept of the experiential continuum originated by John Dewey, the American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer. Within Dewey's conceptual framework of experiential continuum "...every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences. For it is a somewhat different person who enters into them..." (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). The person partially "modifies" the experience through her reflections on previous experiences (Dewey, 1933). In this sense, teachers' reflections on their childhood experiences may continuously co-author the consequent experiences of the educators. The current experiences, may in turn affect the way these childhood experiences are interpreted. This study views childhood experiences through the participants' reflective lens that continuously "colors" present experiences of future early childhood teachers, who will in turn influence the childhoods of children they teach.

In the field of early childhood education, much appreciation has been showed to the importance of personal knowledge (Van Hook, 2002), personal memories, and reflective teaching on the profession. Reflective teaching is rooted on Dewey's (1933) idea that reflective action entails continuous self-appraisal and progress, which is the opposite of routine action. Routine action is the static state of unwillingness to make changes based on the changing circumstances (Pollard, 2005).

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Therefore, a reflective teacher's classroom practices are shaped by the reflection the teacher is involved in. This reflection is a multifaceted process that involves the content of the reflection, the way the teacher engages in reflection (i.e., through notebook, video reflection or surveying students), and timing of the reflection (how often the teacher reflects upon her or his pedagogy, or when the teacher reflects).

Along with reflective teaching, another important concept that provides framework for current teaching practices for the early childhood education teachers is early memories. For instance, Thomas and Pederson (2003) state that preservice teachers' ideas on the nature of teaching is largely impacted by their early memories with regard to elementary school. Drake and Sherin (2006) found out that the teacher's make adaptation in their teaching based on interpretations of their early experiences. Namely, their teaching practices are affected by their early memories and interpretation of these memories, in this case their math experiences; they "view their own instruction through the lens of their early experiences as students" (Drake & Sherin, 2006, p.178). Therefore, early memories seem to have richer and more dramatic long lasting impact on their teaching practices.

Method

This paper focuses on interpretation of the qualitative data from an open-ended digital survey and follow-up interviews on childhood experiences conducted among Early Childhood Education major students. The digital survey questions prompted students to draw on their childhood memories, describe impactful childhood experiences, and reflect what they learned from them. To triangulate the data, after the initial survey analyses, in-person interviews were conducted with select participants to deepen reflections on childhood experiences and explore their connection to the present lives of the early childhood educators. Early childhood (prior to and during primary grades) experiences were considered "early experiences" for the purpose of this study. Participants were prompted to reflect on their memories specifically from that period of their lives.

The digital survey on childhood experiences distributed among students majoring in early childhood education yielded 58 participants. Qualtrics, the university's internal secure survey software was used to disseminate the survey. The participants' responses were consequently analyzed for themes related to reported influences of childhood experiences on present personal and professional aspects of participants' lives. Two survey respondents were recruited for in-person semi-structured interviews to follow up on their survey responses. The interview participants were selected based on their uniquely different childhoods from one another (according to the survey data). Pam was raised in a traditional two-parent household with religious parents from the South and dreamt of being a teacher from early on. Ella's parents were never married, she was raised by a liberal mother in the North and decided on teaching as a career right before college.

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One-hour long individual interviews were conducted with participants focusing on childhood experiences that they identified as impactful for their personal development and teaching careers. The interviews followed a sequence starting with background/history, then description of the experiences, and, finally, the meaning of the experiences (Seidman, 2006). Peer-debriefing and member-check was employed during data transcription, analysis, and interpretation. Specific themes were identified in the participants' narratives. These themes were organized by the identified patterns in which childhood experiences entered present personal beliefs and pedagogies of the early childhood education students.

Results

The impactful childhood experiences that participants drew upon from their reflective memories are early family influences (e.g., taking care of an ill grandmother who passed away early), early school influences (e.g., connecting with a new elementary school teacher) and early peer influences (e.g., becoming friends with a linguistically and culturally different peer). Participants' school and family early experiences were higher in frequency than their peer experiences. This result is consistent with the developmental trend in adult-child and peer-child relationships at the age that is of interest to this study (Peterson, Bonechi, Smorti, & Tani, 2010). The three major categories of continuous influences of childhood experiences on present participants' lives were personality/personal principles, career choice in education, and the kind of educator they are/want to be. Some patterns (themes) in which most common childhood experiences are connected to these aspects of present lives are mapped out below. The interview participants' voices (Ella and Pam) as well as voices of 58 anonymous survey participants were used to demonstrate some examples of each of the patterns. The themes identified in the interview participants' narratives were consistent with findings from the open-ended survey responses of the 58 participants.

The themes emerging from the study are experiential continuum patterns between early family, school, and peer past experiences and present personality/personal principles, career choices and teaching philosophies of early childhood education students. Seven major patterns of connections between the early childhood experiences and present of the participants were identified. These patterns are presented below and supported by evidence from the qualitative data.

Early Family Experiences

early family experience → personality/personal principles

One of the ways that early childhood family experiences were found to be connected to present of the early childhood education students is through shaping their personal identity. Specifically, participants identified how their childhood impacted who they are as a person today. For example, Pam, an interview

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participant, highlighted her experience of taking care of her sick grandmother as a child. She related this experience to her current personality trait of being tough:

What you go through when you are younger, I do believe can form who you are as an adult and even in the case of a harsh childhood. It can be healed after through time like with my grandmother. She had been abused... So that was her childhood... but because of that she was tough. And because of my childhood, hearing of her experiences... I became, I don't know, tough. Your childhood experiences, even if they are dark or light, that they can be an example to others. You can't give them away... even if they are bad memories they can be brought to life to lead you in the way that you should go.

In her childhood, Pam had a very close relationship with her sick grandmother. As a young child she was taking care of her till she passed away. Remembering their special connection and the loss she endured when her grandmother died made Pam tear up during the interview. She added that she rarely talked about her grandmother to avoid painful memories and only now is starting to open up those bottled up feeling of childhood loss. This powerful experience and the experiences her grandmother overcame in her own childhood shaped Pam into a self-described “tough” person whose positive and negative experiences were stepping-stones in who she is today. Looking back at herself, she formed a belief that whatever children go through can shape who they are as adults. She also believes in children’s ability to overcome challenges and persevere despite a “harsh childhood”. This presently held belief on childhood and children found in her reflection on own childhood may find its way into her teaching. For example, Pam may try to help children from difficult childhoods to overcome their harsh experiences and use them to “lead them in the way that they should go” and use her own example as “an example to others”.

Another example of how early childhood experiences are mirrored in the present personal beliefs of educators comes from a survey participant. When describing powerful childhood experiences she recalled;

“The fact that my father was not there... It changed how I look at family and me knowing the true meaning of family is not walking out on them”.

This participant’s reflection on her childhood memories brings out her currently held belief on family and responsibility of both parents within the family. Her reflection on this past experience with her own father is connected to the way she currently perceives what a true family is. This may potentially have an implication for her practice as a teacher, specifically, her communication with single parents or their children in her classroom.

early family experience → career choice

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Some of the early family experiences have significance in lives of early childhood education students through their choice in becoming an educator. One of the survey participants wrote about memorable childhood experience;

“Helping my father grade papers...I thought it was fun to grade papers”.

Watching his father do a part of his teaching job, grading papers, at home was one of the exciting memories (among others) that prompted this early childhood student to go into teaching.

To interpret the example above, growing up with a family role model that inspires a child to pursue a similar career may affect the way they perceive the career itself. One's perception of a career (teaching in this case) may have an impact on how they engage in it (teaching practice). The participant's father, the motivation behind participant's career choice, was a college professor. While the experiences of teaching in an early childhood and a higher education classroom have some similarities, there are also differences in these two careers (such as a higher level of academic freedom, less focus on classroom management). Thus, some of the beliefs that the participant formed about the profession based on watching his father, a college professor, might prove different when he begins working as an early childhood teacher.

early family experience → teaching philosophy

In addition to echoing in personal identities and career choices, early family experiences may also continuously influence teaching philosophy. For example, Ella, an interview participant, reflects on her experiences growing up with polar opposite parents:

My mom... she doesn't drink milk. She says it's cow's blood and my dad, his sister lives on a farm. So one day I'd be living with my mom and not drink milk, it's cows blood, it's evil and the next day I'd be with my dad and we'd be drinking it from the source. It kind of showed me it's ok to have different opinions, you know, and people are different and when I was with each one I kind of knew, 'Ok, well I'm with my dad, I need to be this way because he is this way and then when I'm with my mom I need to be that way because she is that way.

This experience translates into Ella's current view of teaching;

“I think it helps me to figure out my kids a lot better than if I hadn't had that experience... I have to figure out where this [student behavior] is coming from and then work my teaching methods around.”

Ella had an early experience of growing up with parents who had uniquely diverse personalities. As a child, she learned that people's views may be different from one another and their actions are tied into these unique beliefs. As a result, she

learned the importance of understanding peoples' frames of reference. This understanding and ongoing practice with her own parents aided her ability to switch her behavior to adjust to the differences of people (including her students). Reportedly, this experience helped to shape her skill of paying attention to and analyzing individual backgrounds of her students in order to modify her teaching. Therefore, Ella's understanding of imminence of individual beliefs rooted in her childhood is currently echoing in her teaching.

Early School Experiences

early school experience → personality/personal principles

In addition to family experiences, early school experiences of early childhood education students were found to continuously influence their present through the role they reportedly played in shaping their personal identity. For examples, Ella recalls her childhood experience of having a great teacher;

She had this amazing family, and a husband and kids, and she had everybody go snowshoeing in the wintertime and she just had all these really neat activities and she was just a really neat person. And I could understand when she taught, everything synced with her...I think Miss Warner had the biggest effect on me... it wasn't more my teaching style but more like the role model. Like, wow, this person is so cool, you know? I've never seen a woman... that's so put together and just has everything going on and is so smart. You know I just thought she was a really cool person. And so, I wanted to be like that when I grew up.

Ella's former teacher influenced her view of an admirable woman to be. The teacher who made the long-lasting impression on Ella was descriptably neat, put together, with an active full life and a great family. According to the participant, her teacher's biggest impact was not as much on her teaching style, as on the personal image of a teacher as a role model. Ella's interpretation of her childhood experience highlighted the importance of teacher's personality for the lives of children beyond classroom. Ella's reflection on her school experiences may potentially lead her to emphasize her own role as a personal role model for her students.

Another example of connection between childhood school experiences and present personal aspects of teachers' lives comes from a survey participant. Her negative experience she encountered at school influenced her personality.

"I had a teacher that treated White students better than Black students. She made it known that she did not like Black people... This experience made me realize that racism still exists and I have many odds against me. This experience pushed me to be a great person and made me want to obtain all the knowledge that I possibly can."

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The participant's childhood experience with the teacher's racism and preferential treatment increased her motivation to succeed against the odds. Because of the reflection on her childhood experience, the student is continuously striving to expand her knowledge and develop personally to overcome the limitations the teacher believed she had. Potentially, the significance of this experience in the present reflection of the student may transact into her teaching. Possibly, she could be more aware of how she is treating students from different cultural backgrounds in her own classroom.

early school experience → career choice

The study found a common theme within powerful childhood experiences that influence teachers' present: the connection between early school experiences and participants' career choice in education. Particularly, students in early childhood education, when reflecting on impactful childhood experiences, credited their teachers as catalysts of their desire to pursue career in education. For example, one of the survey participants reflected:

My kindergarten teacher was amazing and made me want to be a teacher. She made me enjoy kindergarten so much that I knew I wanted to become a teacher from that point. Almost every elementary teacher I had was great and all made me even more sure I wanted to become a teacher.

When choosing a career in education following the footsteps of a particular teacher(s), early childhood education students may apply their image of the teacher they had to the teacher they want to become. A difference between these images may result in a dissonance.

early school experience → teaching philosophy

Early school experiences acquired by early childhood education students may also echo in their presently held teaching beliefs. For example, Pam associated the school she went to as a child with her current preference in pedagogical approach:

I went to a private preschool, and it was small, and I would say it was almost Montessori in a way. Which is my favorite teaching philosophy, Montessori. So I remember a lot of playtime that I had. A lot of dress up and Play-doh, and like people reading to us, and playing outside.

Perhaps, the fact that Pam enjoyed Montessori approach as a child molded it into her favorite teaching philosophy. This could potentially lead her to bringing elements of this pedagogical approach into her own classroom.

Ella recalled her school negative experience involving a teacher whose teaching techniques are now on her "not to do" list,

"...everyday we would come in and there would be this long, long... like I would say two paragraphs on this overhead projector, and we had to copy verbatim, word for word, in our notebooks everyday. And all the kids, you could hear the moans and groans as we were doing it, and he was just doing dry and boring, and it was just awful and so tedious. It was horrible."

This experience with a less than engaging teaching method resulted in Ella's motivation to strive for exciting and inspiring teaching rather than the force-fed learning that she witnessed in her childhood;

"I think it should be a facility where you are inspiring the children to be lifelong learners. It shouldn't be, you know, 'Ok we should study our vocabulary words.' It should be something to get the kids excited, you know, get them interested, curious, make them want to be there and have fun doing it."

Ella's childhood experience drives her ambition for engaging learning for her students.

Pam also had a positive experience with a teacher that echoed in her current teaching philosophy;

There was a disabled child in that room... he had to have special accommodations and I just remember she [teacher] didn't treat that child any differently and it made a really big difference to see that because I liked that.

Pam is referring to this childhood experience as grounds for her presently held belief about addressing differences in the classroom.

She modeled just treating everybody the same and the kind of attention that they need, but not making them feel inferior because of that attention that they need. Because each one of them is special and deserve different attention but the same amount.

Perhaps, not having this early school experience with disabilities would make the concept of modification more challenging for Pam to grasp.

Early Peer Influences

Early peer experiences also found their way into reflections of teachers as they relate to their present. For example, one of the interview participants, Pam, recalled her peer influences that defined her current interest in foreign languages:

My best friend in preschool, her parents were from Iran and so she spoke Farsi and English but she was learning English in preschool. So she was

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my first student, I say that. She was trilingual: French, Farsi, and English and I thought she was the coolest thing ever. It was like, "Oh my gosh, I want to learn all of those languages!"

In the interview, Pam shared how her interest in teaching English as a Second Language evolved by reflecting on her impactful childhood experiences. Her admiration for her peer's multilingual ability nurtured her interest in learning foreign languages, as well as teaching others English. The childhood experience of having a peer with a different cultural background is continuously affecting her present through the choices she made to learn languages and the interest she developed towards cultures.

Interpretation and Implications for Teacher Education Programs

This study on early childhood education students revealed how childhood experiences (early family, school, and peer experiences) may be relevant to their presently held personal and professional beliefs. The relevance of these experiences was evident in the role that participants assigned to their impactful/powerful childhood experiences in their personality, career choice, and teaching philosophy. The patterns of connections between childhood experiences and present personal and professional aspects of teachers' lives support the theoretical framework of experiential continuum.

The meaning of childhood memories might somewhat change throughout a lifetime to mirror changes in cognitive development, acquisition of new knowledge, and acquired social interactions (Peterson, Bonechi, Smorti, & Tani, 2010). However, this study suggests that despite the potentially changing interpretation of the past, childhoods may continuously affect the lives of early childhood education students through the present day significance that they assign to those experiences. These results support the importance of reflecting on students' own childhoods in teacher preparation programs.

Analysis of childhood memories through guided self-reflections may bring to the forefront the potential impact that childhood experiences have on teaching practices. For example, teachers' own family experiences may subconsciously affect the way they communicate with parents of their students (e.g., being raised by a single parent). Teachers may subconsciously empathize with their students whose childhoods remind them of their own (e.g., the participant who felt discriminated in the class might be more sensitive towards minority children). Finally, teachers may directly and consciously attribute their childhood experiences to their present teaching philosophy (e.g., the participant whose ability to value students' different backgrounds came from being raised by polar opposite parents). These experiences are especially evidently connected to future teachers' practice and may provide a wealth of opportunities in the higher education classroom for either 1) elaborating on the experiences to strengthen the positive learning from the childhood experiences or

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2) correcting/redirecting lessons learned in childhood that may interfere with best practices.

Incorporating exercises with early childhood students' self-reflections on their childhood experiences "teacher educators can foster the student's authentic explorations of identity development and support the student in building confidence and resilience as a future teacher alongside the instructional paradigm of child development theories" (Chang-Kredl & Kingsley, 2014, p. 35). These self-reflections could guide students in understanding self and exploring how their vision of childhood experiences may translate into shaping childhoods of their students.

While teacher education programs emphasize reflective teaching, self-reflections of preservice students, including reflections on their own childhood experiences may add to their development as educators. Reflective teaching is a practice of deeply analyzing one's teaching and making implications for future teaching experiences (Schon, 1983). However, students' reflections of their teaching are not isolated from individual differences within those who reflect. The reflections of our students and the knowledge/reality they construct through those reflections is deeply rooted in their interpretational lens shaped by their previous experiences. According to Dewey, the experience is what we make of it through our reflections. Our reflections are partially grounded in the meaning we constructed from transactions with our past experiences. How we reflect on the present experiences, in turn, effects our future reflections and meaning making (Dewey, 1933).

Students' reflections on their own teaching may be steered by their individual lenses that have been shaped by their previous experiences, including those from their own childhoods. The individual lenses that students use when reflecting on their teaching can be brought to light through guided self-reflection on experiences from their past. The eminence of childhood experiences found in the study supports the importance of not just reflective, but also self-reflective teacher preparation programs.

To highlight the importance of our students' perceptive lens of current teaching experiences, teacher education programs may focus on guiding students to metacognize their reflections. The questions we might start asking students to encourage their metareflections are, "Why am I reflecting on this teaching experience/knowledge the way I am? What within myself, within my own past experiences may be driving me to see what I am seeing, to conclude what I am concluding?" The teacher education programs may empower students through a practice of metacognizing about students' reflections -- interpreting how findings from their self-reflections may be related to the way they reflect on their own teaching.

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