

MOONEY, EVAN M., Ph.D., December 2015

Teaching, Learning,
and Curriculum Studies

“BECAUSE PURPOSE IS NOT A GOAL. IT’S A JOURNEY”: HOW EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SERVICE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS’ PURPOSES FOR TEACHING (pp. 252)

Director of Dissertation: Alicia R. Crowe, Ph.D.

In this study, I addressed a gap in literature about purposes for social studies teacher education concerning how experiences contribute to the development of pre-service social studies teachers’ purposes for teaching. I undertook an instrumental case study of four pre-service social studies teachers and two social studies teacher educators in a social studies teacher education program at a mid-sized, Midwestern state university. The participants’ position in the program enabled them to speak to all three of the research questions.

I approached the data through a social constructivist lens, which viewed the construction of individualized meaning and beliefs as occurring through a process of experiences in a social context. I collected data from three face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each of the participants, participants’ reflective writing and journaling, written artifacts created by the participants, observations of the participants’ teacher education classes and student teaching, and detailed information about their teacher education programs. I analyzed the data using narrative analysis and compared across cases in an effort to identify how experiences contributed to the development of their purposes for teaching social studies. The findings of the study center on pre-service teachers’ experiences of teacher education, the unique incorporation of ideas from their

teacher education, the negotiation of tension in student teaching, and the confluence of these experiences as part of a “purpose formation process.” These findings have implications for improving teacher education programs, in terms of both program structure and curriculum, and improving classroom practice.

Key words: social studies teacher education, purpose, experiences, purpose formation process, student teaching