A PORTRAIT OF A PRACTICING TEACHER: EXPLORING TEACHER IDENTITY (211 pp.)

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The purpose of this study was to explore the construction of the identity of an in-service teacher. The issue is complex because teacher identity changes over a teacher’s lifetime: Relationships, interactions, and opportunities impact a teacher’s identity formation and contribute to the fluid nature of the teacher self. Not all teachers are gifted, but as in-service teachers they have opportunities to acquire and develop any skills they may lack. Exploring the components of what makes teachers skilled at their craft helps to create a blueprint for the construction of a teacher’s identity. One particularly important component of teacher identity is a keen sense of self, essential to function at a high level of competence.

The theoretical framework of this study derived from melding research about identity, which led to a focus on self and society and the interaction of the two. Designed to contribute to understanding teacher identity, this qualitative work involved the collection of data from observations, interviews, and artifacts necessary to study one in-service teacher–participant. The result was a dynamic portrait of an in-service teacher with a focus on four developed themes: cultivating relationships, respecting spirituality, voice of action, and intentional reflection.