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**Abstract:** This paper explores the expectations of a group of site-based teacher educators as each attempted to support a pre-service teacher who struggled to achieve satisfactory outcomes on their professional placement. Discourse analysis of teachers' narratives provided my personal, partial and dynamic (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) interpretation of what occurred in these typically emotionally painful events. Literature related to emotion, power, 'non-traditional' students and Hargreaves' (2001) 'emotional geographies' aided my attempts to make sense of teachers' stories when viewed through a post-structuralist lens. The paper is concerned with the bases for strong emotional experiences and raises questions in relation to how we can support teachers make sense of discourses that shape their lives and their emotions, particularly with respect to site-based teacher educators' expectations of their pre-service teacher. This paper also raises questions for university staff and site-based teacher educators in addressing issues raised by this interpretation and I provide suggestions to consider for both when working together to develop quality site-based programs for all the participants.

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Expectations of a preservice teacher: implications of encountering the unexpected.

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Ethics statement included in body of manuscript: I gained ethics approval from my university.

Author Biography (approx. 25 words)

Wendy is currently Sub Dean Professional Experience, following a long career as a teacher and consultant working for NSW DET. Her work and research are closely related, striving to enhance the quality of programs offered at her university.

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Expectations of a preservice teacher: implications of encountering the unexpected.

This paper explores the expectations of a group of site-based teacher educators as each attempted to support a preservice teacher who struggled to achieve satisfactory outcomes on their professional placement. Discourse analysis of teachers’ narratives provided my personal, partial and dynamic (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003) interpretation of what occurred in these typically emotionally painful events. Literature related to emotion, power, “non-traditional” students and Hargreaves (2001) “emotional geographies” aided my attempts to make sense of teachers’ stories when viewed through a poststructuralist lens. The paper is concerned with the bases for strong emotional experiences and raises questions in relation to how we can support teachers make sense of discourses that shape their lives and their emotions, particularly with respect to site-based teacher educators’ expectations of their preservice teacher. This paper also raises questions for university staff and site-based teacher educators in addressing issues raised by this interpretation and I provide suggestions for both to consider when working together to develop quality site-based programs for all the participants.
Background

As a university-based teacher educator responsible for coordination and maintenance of a large number of professional experience placements within preservice teacher education courses in early childhood, primary, secondary and middle schooling, I regularly support site-based teacher educators who are faced with an unsuccessful preservice teacher. At the individual, interpersonal and institutional levels, these situations are always both difficult and potentially damaging. Addressing these issues is an essential function of my role in policy and professional development in relation to preservice teacher education in my tertiary institution. One particular event was the impetus for commencing a detailed study of emotional experiences of site-based teacher educators who worked with preservice teachers who struggle to find success on their school placement (Hastings, 2009). It was a particularly difficult experience for all concerned, including the site-based teacher educator. The larger study was built around teachers’ stories and highlights the impact of emotions (the irrational, the unpredictable, the unconscious, unbidden and often uncomfortable) on teacher identity. Through recorded interviews teachers recalled emotional episodes associated with working with a preservice teacher who was ‘failing the prac’ and the impact of these emotions on both their personal and professional identities.

Many teachers believe time spent in schools is the ‘sine qua non of teacher education’ (Bullough, Draper, Smith, & Birrell, 2004d). However, because site-based education is a time when preservice teachers are immersed in ‘complexities of practice [and] are exposed to numerous competing understandings about what it means to think and act as a professional’, it is at times characterised by conflict (Phelan, Sawa, Barlow, Hurlock, Irvine, Rogers, et al., 2006, p. 163). It is reasonable to assume that having an extra person, such as a preservice teacher in the classroom, would potentially increase the complexity, including emotional
complexity, of any classroom. However, there is currently limited literature on the emotional dimension of initial teacher education, particularly from the perspective of the site-based educator. According to Denzin, it is essential to study emotions from within, as a ‘lived, interactional process that has the self of the person’ as central (1984, p. 32). There is limited but increasing research attention to issues associated with failing preservice teachers (Siebert, Clark, Kilbridge and Peterson, 2006; Shapton, 2006; Tucker, 2001). During a site-based program, the otherwise routine situation can be fractured such that teachers experience tensions and emotional upheaval under the public gaze of preservice teacher and university supervisor. Their sources of support, methods of coping and established relationships can be strained and stretched in what are emotionally-demanding situations.

Preservice teachers have traditionally seemed “familiar” to site-based teacher educators, in that they would typically have been younger than the teacher colleague and would have entered the profession with the intention of it being a lifetime commitment. While the majority of current preservice teachers may be recent school leavers, there are increasing numbers of older and/or male career-changing individuals or the twenty-something teacher education students who do not necessarily see teaching is a life-long career, undertaking initial teacher education programs. This new cohort of preservice teachers, many of whom are well beyond 30 years of age, are quite different to the post-school undergraduate of the 1970s who entered teaching in their early twenties with limited experience in the work force and with recent experience of schools and schooling. Mature-aged graduates, many of whom have long term experiences in the work force, often have only distant memories of what school cultures might be like. It is worth noting that the situation for “non-traditional” teacher education students is not restricted to Australia. Studies in the United States indicated that two thirds of non-traditional students are married and over half have children 67% are
between 30 and 49 years of age; 27% above 40; 53% were using family resources to pay for education and work 31 or more hours per week (Manos & Kasambira, 1998).

Teacher education students are more likely now to be in part-time work while studying fulltime or in full time employment while they are studying part-time and as such may not be able to be fully committed to the expectations of their site-based placement because of expectations from say, family. Many preservice teachers have their own children, who require after-school support, which prevents them from remaining on the premises at the end of the school day. The presence of these students is changing the complexion of teacher education programs (Butler, 1998) and preservice teachers, such as these are not what site-based teacher educators traditionally “expect”; not what they are used to. I suggest that the expectations on the lives of preservice teachers are unfamiliar to many site-based teacher educators, who are still coming to terms with the implications of the different experiences, dispositions and needs of members of these newer cohorts.

Collecting the stories

Following the critical incident in my own work place, I gained ethics approval from my university, and proceeded to engage the support of colleagues in universities throughout Australia to contact school-based teacher educators from their own programs who have recently been involved with preservice teachers who experienced difficulty on the practicum. Subsequently, twenty three teachers associated with seven different universities initially indicated that they were willing to participate. However, in order to manage the project’s size and geographical spread of teachers, I ultimately interviewed sixteen teachers from six different universities. Of the sixteen participants, thirteen are female and seven taught in primary schools. Determination of the final sixteen participants was more to do with
participant self-selection, rather than with me seeking a balance of sector (primary or secondary) gender, age, or experience as teacher and/or school-based teacher educator. Given the personal and sensitive focus of the research, I only persisted with people who were proactive in their willingness to participate by responding with suggestions for times and places in which the interview could be conducted. It is worth noting at this point that eleven of the preservice teachers who form the background to this study were post graduates, ten were mature-aged (not recent school leavers or university graduates) and half were female - which does not reflect the typical gender balance of students enrolled in preservice teacher education programs.

I determined that teacher narratives would be the most appropriate source of data for the study. According to Lieblich, Turval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998, p. 9), by studying and interpreting narratives, researchers can better understand ‘the individual identity [and] also the teller’s culture and social world’. I wanted to get a better understanding of site-based teacher educators’ experiences. Clearly it was not possible to engage in observations of teachers working with preservice teachers to gather data suitable for this project, predominantly because the focus of the research could not be “predicted” to occur in any context. I could not know beforehand which teachers would be working with an “unsuccessful” preservice teacher, to be there to observe the moment(s). I needed to capture teachers’ perceptions, their memories and particularly their feelings, as they relived and recreated those emotionally-laden events through narrative reconstructions after they had occurred. I wanted to describe the situations - to make public the emotional dimension of those events, as well as make sense of the multiple discourses operating within and between the schools and universities involved. Accordingly, I chose to undertake one to one
interviews to collect the material for the research. Much of what was told to me reflected memories of significant events in the teachers’ lives.

**Hearing the stories**

Teacher educators, such as myself can learn much from inquiring into and listening to the stories of teachers and in this case teachers working with preservice teachers (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009). Accordingly I chose to interview each participant once using a semi-structured interview that lasted about one and a half hours. I used recently published research related to emotions, across a range of disciplines, to develop prompting follow-up questions for use following from the teachers’ original uninterrupted narratives.

As the interviews had a focus on the emotional dimension of the placement outcomes, it was important to me that I maintained connections with the participants by sharing anonymously aspects of other’s accounts as a means of support and to assure them that there were other teachers who had similar experiences. Additionally I wanted to make explicit my reasons for undertaking this particular study. Kincheloe (1991) asserted that it is important to make explicit my reasons for undertaking the research – ‘to reveal [my] allegiances, to admit [my] solidarities, [my] value structures and the ways such orientations affect [my] enquiries (p. 38). There were times throughout the interviews that I felt the need to lead the interview process, not in a compromising manner but rather in a process of re-iterating the teacher’s comments for clarification purposes as well as to reassure the teachers that I had correctly understood their intended meaning.

I used discourse analysis informed by a feminist, post-structuralist tradition that enabled me to explore multiple facets of the events to be interpreted more readily. It directed my attention
to the intersubjective, to the non-neutral relationship between what is said and how it is interpreted by the listener, as well as how it will be read by others – both in the field and in context of the research. Discourse analysis ‘helps us appreciate the sometimes subtle distinctions teachers make in accomplishing the role identity of teacher’ (Cohen, 2008, p. 80). The interpretation of texts ‘depends on the multiplicity of subjectivities that accompany their readers ... and the analysis is the consequence of the ‘specific biographical, ideological and professional concerns of the author’ (Weiner, 1994, p. 82). As the analysis progressed it became clear that there were discursive issues at play which required an analytic technique to identify discourses (both productive and regulatory) present within the data. Accordingly, the research reported is underpinned by a poststructuralist understanding of discourse –a Foucauldian view (Youdell, 2006). One of the strengths of poststructural analysis is that enables the study to ‘produce specificity in the analysis of a particular phenomenon’ (Gore & Parkes, 2008, p. 48).

**Teacher stories**

The literature tells us that schools are complex social sites and teachers within and outside them operate from a number of different subject positions (Lye, 1997) and participate in and produce a variety of discourses (Alsup, 2005). The complete study details the range of emotions teachers experienced within the different and often competing discursive frameworks and the manner in which the discursive practices construct the emotional experiences. Almost every teacher’s individual story reflects intense negative emotional episodes and these are reported elsewhere (Hastings, 2009). What is reported in this paper are the “expectations” that teachers have of their preservice teacher and the relationship to the site-based teacher educators’ emotional experiences. I argue that these expectations are “discourses” of the good preservice teacher, and they ultimately accentuate the emotional
intensity of these (negative) experiences, because these teachers cannot see their failing teacher fitting into what is a normalised discursive construction of a preservice teacher.

**Expectations of the good preservice teacher**

According to Phelan, et al., (2006), the teaching profession is characterised by a ‘culture of sameness’ where individuals share the common task of teaching according to a common standard. Beginners to the profession are legitimately inculcated into the “sameness” by experienced professionals through the operation of power (p. 176). Teachers typically see their own performance as normative and agreeable and may be unaware of their subjective position as constructed within and by the discourses of schooling – the processes are invisible and often uncontested. I argue that they are similarly unaware of the discursive practices through which preservice teachers are constituted. According to Hamacheck (1999) teachers consciously ‘teach what [they] know; unconsciously, [they] teach who [they] are’ (p. 209) and thus it would also seem reasonable to assume that this would also apply to the manner in which they support preservice teachers. Site-based education, in which a preservice teacher is expected to work collaboratively with an experienced teacher, is a ‘complex discursive and interactive space’ (Davies, 2007, p. 32). Some aspects of the formal making of the “good teacher” occur in preservice teacher education through site-based teacher educators’ evaluation the preservice teacher – they evaluate through the lens of their own experiences. They tend to look for their own practices in their teaching of the preservice teacher whom they are observing/supporting (Courneya, Pratt & Collins, 2008).

Teachers’ stories reveal the disappointment, frustration, anger, guilt, hurt they experienced when their preservice teacher could not meet the former’s expectations of the professional placement. One of the most consistent and significant aspects of the full study were the teachers’ comments in relation to the preservice teacher not “being” and/or “doing” what is
expected either pedagogically, professionally and/or personally. Typically the teachers in this study appeared to experience greater emotional discomfort in relation to professional and personal issues, than in relation to what I would call pedagogical competence. While still being critical of their preservice teacher’s lack of pedagogical knowledge (effective planning, teaching, assessment and evaluation etc), the teachers’ stories indicated the emotional pain was magnified when their preservice teacher appeared unable to grasp the more professional and personal expectations, such as commitment (“by having a go”), professional courtesy (taking on board advice), professional demeanour (attire, promptness etc) of being a teacher.

The site-based teacher educators described some of the behaviours of their preservice teachers that they saw as problematic - behaviours such as going down the street for a cup of coffee and staying there in the middle of the morning, arriving after classes commence (interpreted as “late”); leaving before classes conclude (interpreted as leaving “early”); failing to have lessons organised – all of which were interpreted by the teachers in this study teachers as “lacking commitment”. When teachers accept a preservice teacher into their classroom they take on an increased workload and make a significant commitment to the profession. Many of the teachers in my study indicated that they felt that this contribution was not valued by their respective preservice teachers. Further, they expected preservice teachers to demonstrate an appreciation of the efforts of the teachers. For example, Annette recalled that her preservice teacher did not say goodbye, did not thank her in the way that previous preservice teachers had done by bringing [usually] a nice little gift, like a cake that finds its way on to the morning tea table. Or a little thank you note is written to that effect’.

Preservice teachers who “got it right” in this discourse appear to be knowing and complying with a set of rules as privileged by those within the system. Preservice teachers who know and comply with the rules are likely to be the most successful but also are likely to cause less
stress, frustration and anxiety for the site-based teacher educators. The preservice teachers who cause such emotional distress appear to be those teachers who ‘just don’t get it’ (Sarah) or who aren’t ‘right for it’ (Therese) – as if there is an “it” – as if there is one way to be the teacher – one “regime of truth” of teaching.

The participants in my study were all aware, at least to some degree, of their respective preservice teachers’ backgrounds prior to entering teaching. For example, Natalie (an experienced teacher/site-based teacher educator) recounted how Nigel had told her that he wanted to be a teacher rather than an administrator in the Department of Defence, “because it would be easier”; while Lydsay told Loretta that she didn’t know what else to do, so chose teaching because friends chose teaching. Emily recalled that her preservice teacher Amanda’s mother (who is a teacher) told her that “she would be good at teaching”. It could be suggested that statements such as these provided by the neophytes are “politically naïve” and potentially create a situation where site-based teacher educator’s thinking is “in conflict” with that of their preservice teacher in relation to professional commitment as well as professional demeanour. Other emotional conflict occurred when the caring/nurturing discourse (which is privileged by the good teacher) competed with the discourse of gatekeeper of the profession. For example, Alison and Annette, who are both experienced site-based teacher educators, found themselves “torn” as they attempted to balance their desire to be a professional gatekeeper with their need to be nurturing and supportive of their preservice student. Both of their respective preservice teachers were not recent school leavers but were women in situations where they needed to complete their teacher education course in order to “earn a living”, and to establish safer domestic/personal circumstances for themselves. They had professional expectations of their preservice that conflicted with personal concerns for their preservice teacher, causing further emotional distress.
The following sections of text are recollections from some of the site-based teacher educators’ in relation to their respective preservice teachers’ behaviours, which were at odds with what the teachers constructed as normalised behaviours of a preservice teacher. I present the reader with a small selection of the types of episodes that are repeated throughout the teachers’ narratives. Sylvia, like many other teachers, indicated that she had some idea (usually based on previous preservice teachers’ capacities) of what to expect of her preservice teacher, Mary, when Mary came to the school. Sylvia stated:

... I would imagine [Mary] would have an idea of how the day runs and how you, how children would respond to different things, like your body mannerisms and that sort of thing. Picked up some strategies for dealing with behaviour management um, Non-verbal sort of stuff. Less controlling from the teacher. I was quite shocked that there wasn’t very much in that area and it was all teacher-controlled.

Natalie’s preservice teacher, like many associated with this study, had worked in industry for many years. Natalie indicated that she was surprised at his attitude to “teaching” and the work required. She outlined Nigel’s prior experiences while repeating some of the statements Nigel made about teaching:

I mean [laughs] you know he said he wanted to get away from[other job] that because he didn’t want to work the long hours and so he wants to get into teaching because it’s an easy job! And I thought well, well (her emphasis)

and later in the same interview

I just got this thing all the time. Like, “I don’t want to do this anymore so therefore I’m coming into this. I just have to do this Dip Ed, you know, because that’s what you need, but I don’t need it. I only have to do this prac only because I have to do it, but I don’t really need that either”.

Loretta found Lyndsay’s lack of maturity equally confronting, when she interacted with the students in the kindergarten classroom. When I asked what aspects of Lyndsay’s behaviour caused her concern, she replied:
Yes she was about 19. Um, she was friends with the children. She wasn’t the teacher with the children, either. She thought it was cute the way they were. “It’s just really cute, they’re kids”. But she didn’t understand that as a teacher, you’re not the friend, you’re the teacher, but you do get along with them, of course.

Therese felt her preservice teacher’s (Neil) overall attitude resulted from a lack of commitment to the practicum, in general. She believed that Neil questioned everything she did or everything that she asked of him. Therese found his behaviour ‘arrogant’ and his attitude (as a young person) towards an older person ‘was appalling’.

Therese: He just would not listen - he just would totally ignore what you had to say. He was so great (her emphasis) that he didn’t feel that he had to be answerable to anyone.

Elizabeth’s narrative indicated that she was able to distinguish the difference between the professional knowledge that her preservice teacher, Harriet needed to grasp, from the content knowledge. According to Elizabeth, Harriet was also unaware of the subtleties required by a teacher – issues such as physical contact with students, drinking coffee on duty, interactions with staff. Elizabeth recalled that:

So she, and she found it very difficult to take advice on things like that. So, if you said to her “Look don’t make a cup of coffee at 20 past 11 as you’re not going to have time to drink it, because the bell’s about to go”, she would still continue to do it. ...
At no time was I, am I talking about somebody who didn’t understand the subject. What she didn’t understand was that in a school situation how you behave....

Sylvia was one of a number of teachers who was conscious not only of the stress that she was feeling – anxiety, frustration and hurt – but she was also aware of the impact that the demands of the placement was having on her apparently ill-prepared preservice teacher (who was often in tears), which resulted in Sylvia experiencing intense feelings of guilt:

Sylvia: I thought that I was responsible and perhaps putting stress on her, too much stress on her. And then I went back through my booklets and thought – No I’m not asking any more than I [should] of a graduate ... [I’m] nervous about
Lee (2007) wrote autobiographically of her work as university liaison with her preservice teacher who ‘follows the beat of his own drum. He is not part of an ensemble … he ignores the sheet music and waving baton. Lost in his own world’ (p. 547). She described how he lacked commitment, initiative, the capacity to engage with his students – he never quite understood and acted on expectations that the school and the university had of him. Similarly, Korthagen (2004) asserted that irrespective of how a preservice teacher establishes a “teacher identity”, once established it is resistant to change (p. 83). This becomes particularly problematic, as outlined in this study, when preservice teachers have an unrealistic and unsupported positive perception of their competence. These preservice teachers’ apparent resistance to a new/different discourse on teaching and learning is then a cause of extreme frustration, and often suppressed anger, hurt, guilt for their site-based teacher educators because the latter perceive such a response as a dismissal of their professional competence.

**One interpretation**

Preservice teachers have spent many years as school students and these experiences/histories/biographies shape their beliefs about teaching and learning (see for example, Lasky 2005). When they commence their university studies, they are required to balance their previous knowledge of schools with the new forms of knowledge construction as presented by their university or the school in which they undertake their professional placement (Mills & Satterthwait, 2000). Preservice teachers’ beliefs about teaching are typically shaped by managerial and technicist discourses which:

- draws them away from concerns with the social justice, with humour, with
- close relationships between students and teachers and with issues focused
upon the emotional dimension of teaching to a position concerned with management, outcomes, strategies and the like, all of which involve rational decision-making (Davies, 2007, p. 30)

and thus may be at odds with what they are presented in their initial teacher education course (Korthagen, 2004).

Research also suggests that preservice teachers who become involved in school life and demonstrate a commitment that mirrors the site-based teacher educators expectation are assessed more favourably than if they enact a discourse that does not resonate well with the school-based teacher educator. The ways in which preservice teachers can come to know the ‘discourse of schooling’ has a significant impact on the preservice teacher as well as the school-based teacher educator. ‘Fitting in’ is important as teachers and school administrators use the professional placement as an opportunity to assess whether a preservice teacher ‘importantly … fit[s] into the ethos of the school and the staffroom’ (Bennett, Jones, & Maude, 1994, p. 68) particularly as they assess for the purposes of future employment.

The published literature in this field asserts that unsuccessful career-changing preservice teachers often have a naïve expectation of the time and effort required to create quality lessons – they failed to understand that impromptu “flying by the seat of the pants” would rarely be successful (Sudzina & Knowles, 1993). When a neophyte appears to lack commitment by eliciting such behaviour and/or dismissing the teacher’s advice by ignoring it, it is not difficult to understand the teachers’ extreme negative emotional experiences. Teachers’ knowledge and commitment to teaching is what makes them who they are in this context as ‘knowledge is entwined with identity’ (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009, p. 141).
The point I make here is that the site-based teacher educators’ narratives appear to indicate that they have an expectation that their preservice teacher knows and understands school cultures and the related expected behaviours; an expectation which I believe is misplaced. However, while the expectation may be misplaced, the emotional impact was real for these teachers – the preservice teachers’ dismissal of advice and apparent disinterest in learning to teach is seen by these teachers as an attack on their professional and personal identity. As mentioned previously, teachers’ stories indicate that preservice teachers who conformed more closely to teacher expectations of what a preservice teacher “should be” elicited fewer negative emotions from these site-based teacher educators. However, these site-based teacher educators’ insistence on a unitary category of preservice teacher ignores the multiple intersections from which they originate (Butler, 2006), and, according to Levine-Rasky (1998), preservice teachers often ‘defy generalisation as a group’ (p. 90).

Research indicates that older students and males failed more often than younger and female students, respectively (Harwood, Collins & Sudzina, 2000). Studies of failing students identified the most common cause of “incompletion” was due to the preservice teacher’s decision that teaching “was not for them” – they did not “fit in” to the discourses they encountered., as well as contextual factors such as preservice teachers’ inability to understand school cultures or needs of school students – issues that were outlined by the participants in the study reported here.

Research suggests that models to which older preservice teachers typically have access are those where a teacher delivers a lesson in a transmission model from the front of the classroom, to a class of students sitting in rows of desks. Further, their experiences are often coloured by memories of a discourse, in which they were a successful student, where
competitive and individualistic learning was privileged, and where the teacher was seen as the giver of knowledge from a position of power (Marsh, 2002). Older preservice teachers bring maturity, knowledges and skills to teaching but often have opinions that are inflexible and inhibit their ability to adapt to the demands of teaching today (Hargreaves, 2005), and they can become frustrated because the strategies they previously used with adults proved ineffective with adolescent and young learners (Eifler & Potthoff’s, 1998).

How do non-traditional, as well as traditional preservice teachers, come to develop their sense of what is good teaching and how to interpret and operate successfully within the discourses of schools, particularly those whose relationships and interactions with 21st century schools is less current? What prior experiences have non-traditional teachers encountered which impact on their understanding of schools and schooling i.e. what other public narratives do these teaching candidate access? Do available narratives provide an “accurate” representation what it means to be a teacher, as ‘public narratives have a significant influence on construction and negotiation of teacher identity’ (Søreide, 2007, p. 132).

I argue that the mismatch between site-based teacher educator expectations and the apparent limited understanding of the discourses of schools by a preservice teacher can result in significant negative emotional experiences for the teachers. Hargreaves (2001) framework of “emotional geographies” is useful here in assisting us to understand the implications of such dissonance. He defined emotional geographies as the ‘spacial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distances in human interactions and relationships that help create, configure and colour the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves, our world and each other’ (p. 1061). Emotional geographies are culturally and psychologically bound and have
five specific but interconnected forms of distance – socio-cultural, political, moral, physical and professional. The model is useful in making sense of the aspects of teacher’s work, particularly here in relation to their work with preservice teachers, which result in both positive, and importantly in this study, negative emotions.

Teachers experience significant emotional labour in achieving emotional distance or closeness with students etc., such that emotional geographies are ‘active accomplishments by teachers that structure and enculture their work, as much has been structured and encultured by it’ (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1062). As the demographics of teacher education students change, then there exists the likelihood for increased socio-cultural “distance” between teachers and their preservice teacher colleagues. When teachers are “distant” from preservice teacher, as is often the case when they are working with non-traditional preservice teachers, they may experience accentuated negative emotions. According to Hargreaves (2001), socio-cultural distance often leads teachers to stereotype individuals. The “othering” by teachers may result from the teachers’ unwitting assumption that their way is normal and privileged (Popkewitz, 1998). Similarly, Eisenberg, Heycox and Hughes (1996) noted in their research on “failure” social work students found that cultural differences and/or gender differences are a significant issue in instances of failure.

Teaching is a value-laden enterprise and closeness in values and morals impacts on emotional experiences of all participants. In this study teachers commented that preservice teachers were: a ‘good guy’ (Lyndall); ‘nice bloke (Alison), ‘lovely girl’ (Renee) - such connections/closeness with preservice teachers can make failure more difficult and I would suggest that at times the “caring” nature of site-based teacher educator clouds objective judgement associated with final assessments. In the case of these three teachers, however,
they did not succumb to the romance of the caring, and did eventually fail their students and consequently the emotional cost is potentially greater than with a preservice teacher with whom they had not developed a closeness. It certainly has been identified as an issue in other “caring” professions - for example, by Andrews (2007) and Duffy and Nursing (2003) in the nursing, as well as Sharp and Danbury (1999) in social work.

In order to establish sound professional and personal connections with colleagues, closeness is required - closeness in time as well as professional and cultural. Negative emotional experiences exist when there is a moral distance between individuals, such as occurs when teachers feel a sense of loss when they are criticised or devalued by others. Teachers’ stories reveal that they often felt devalued when preservice teachers did not accept advice they gave in order to support the development of the neophyte or when preservice teachers dismissed teachers’ assessment of their competence. The short time frame of many school-based preservice programs (3-5 week blocks) often makes it difficult for teachers to establish relationships with their preservice teacher. Hargreaves (2001), asserted that infrequent and non-face to face communication makes the establishment of emotional understanding and professional partnerships very difficult. It would be productive for triadic members to collaboratively examine the emotional geographies of their relationships and address openly their differing status and explicitly negotiate the different “place” of each participant involved in teacher education, as well as to find ways to address these differences.

**Implications**

This study highlights a number of issues for initial teacher education – issues associated with: changing demographics, understanding discourses and their productive capacity; developing models of preservice preparation that are more inclusive of all partners. Consequently, we
Site-based teacher expectations

need to find ways to make productive the possibilities to learn from individuals who are different from us. There is little to be gained from attempting to keep institutions, such as schools, homogeneous. To do so is to run the risk of becoming balkanised and exclusionary, which may result in sites being emotionally as well as intellectually bland. As funding to universities moves towards increased enrolment of students from disadvantaged groups (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) – Indigenous, low SES, NESB – it will be important for universities to address the needs of non-traditional students and to revise university policies and procedures, particularly in relation to “connecting” both preservice and in-service traditional and non-traditional educators (Manos & Kasambira, 1998).

Further, it would seem sensible that teacher education courses should include aspects of “understanding discourse” as a component to enable preservice teachers to better understand how individuals produce and are produced by the discourses – some of which are competing. Similarly, teacher education courses could assist site-based teacher educators to attend to discourses that shape their lives as well as those that shape the lives of preservice teachers and their students. According to Winograd (2003) and Marsh (2002), this is crucial because within discourses, teachers, children and families ‘are positioned in very particular ways in relation to one another’ (p. 453) – and these ways are changing as social landscapes shift (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009). Learning to examine the discourses through which we enact our teaching lives provides us with opportunities’ for choices, according to Marsh (2002, p. 453). There are benefits for site-based teacher educators not only in terms of their identity but also because such knowledge would be useful in assisting teachers to find ‘alternative ways of viewing the world in which relations of power can be disrupted and reconfigured’ (ibid, p. 469) and lead to schools having greater capacity to be transformative. Similarly, Alsup (2005) asserted that teacher education programs ‘should be political in their
pedagogies. [They] must enlighten students about the political nature of education as well as help them understand how to engage in teacher identity discourse … and empower them to change the educational system through transformative discourse’ (p. 182). Accordingly, it would be useful for universities to work collaboratively with preservice teachers and site-based teacher educators to support each others’ understandings of discourses, including emotion discourse. Further it would seem appropriate that any professional learning program that prepares site-based teacher educators for their work with preservice teachers must include discussions around the changing demographics of candidates in initial teacher education programs. To ensure the success of such program development, the model must be one in which knowledge, attitudes and beliefs are a co-construction, such that eventual pedagogical practices associate with site-based education enable all participants to benefit (Le Cornu, Mayer & White, 2001). In order to achieve genuine co-production of initial teacher education, however, there is a need for substantial socio-cultural and organisational change, which will inherently involve shifts in the distribution of power (Dunston, Lee, Boud, et al., 2008, p. 42) – and the challenge here cannot be under-estimated.

Conclusion

All participants demand that site-based education is a productive learning opportunity for all stakeholders. However, research reported here indicates that when there is a mismatch between site-based teachers’ and preservice teachers’ expectations of their site-based work, there appear to be less positive outcomes for all participants as well strong negative emotional experiences for teachers involved. There is certainly scope within teacher education to address the issue of diversity of expectations and different issues of discourses (such as “the good teacher”) and the power of discursive practices to “produce and reproduce” subjects. Until such time as teacher educators – both within schools and
universities – incorporate discussions around these issues into preparatory programs, there appears little chance that there will be any genuine improvements in teacher education. Much resides on successful preservice teacher education being a co-production and this is not going to occur without deliberate attention to achieving it. Preservice teacher education, particularly the site-based component is becoming increasingly complex as sites, universities and the teachers within them attempt to provide quality programmes in the face of decreasing funding levels and increasing levels of accountability. To achieve outcomes that are desired by all stakeholders there may well need to be a reappraisal of funding priorities to enable university staff and site-based teacher educators the opportunity to engaged in the kinds of conversation that appear to be missing from universities covered by research reported here.

REFERENCES


I refer to the teacher in the school who works with a preservice teacher – somebody engaged in a tertiary initial teacher education program as a site-based teacher educator. Different countries adopt the term “co-operating teacher”, supervising teacher; teaching associate, mentor etc.

Unfortunately the Australian Bureau of Statistics is unable to provide data indicating the demographics of teacher education students on a national level. However, anecdotally staff in Australian universities suggest this is consistent with their situation.