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REFLECTIVE THINKERS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE STUDENT TEACHERS' JOURNAL REFLECTIONS DURING THE
STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Students and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Title: Reflective Thinkers: An Examination of the Development of the Student Teachers' Journal Reflections during the Student Teaching Experience

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One of the ultimate goals of teacher education programs is to produce highly qualified educators who will be able to teach and inspire students. One way to prepare effective teachers is to include reflection in teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Moore, 2012; Schon, 1987). Reflection aids teachers to make instructional decisions which impact student learning (Schon, 1987; Shkedi, 2000). Using reflective thinking is a skill which requires thought and practice (Schon, 1987; Sparks-Langer, Simmons, Pasch, Colton, & Starko, 1990). The small case study included purposeful reflection workshops for 12 student teachers during the student teaching experience in order for me to be able to explore the possible influence that the workshops may have had in the journal reflections. The journal reflections were examined and evaluated according to the Reflective Pedagogical Thinking Scale (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1993) during the student teaching experience. Initial study phone interviews were conducted with the university supervisors in order to provide information about their prior experiences with student teachers and their expectations for the student teachers in this study. Culminating phone interviews were also conducted with the university supervisors in order for me to learn about their student teachers' strengths and areas of growth and improvement during their student teaching experiences. There were also initial and culminating focus group sessions with the student teachers to obtain their perceptions of their strengths, areas of growth, and use of reflective thinking during student teaching. Findings included that reflective thinking can be

taught and learned in reflection workshops. As a result of teaching how to reflect and providing time to practice reflective thinking during the workshops, student teachers included related concepts and terminology from the reflection workshops in their journal reflections. The student teachers reported that the reflective thinking during the study improved their instructional decision making skills while student teaching.