

The Pygmalion principle: The practicum expectations and experiences of mature aged student teachers

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This study was part of a larger on-going study that is examining the Pygmalion Principle for the practicum experiences of six mature-age student-teachers. The participants are former graduates with university degrees and aged from 36 to 49. They have extensive career backgrounds unrelated to classroom teaching. For this part of the larger study, the mature-age student-teachers were individually interviewed using an open-ended, semi-structured questionnaire. The interviews were approximately 90 minutes in length and were recorded and transcribed at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OSIE) at the University of Toronto. The research data collected via the open-ended interviews echoed the lived experiences of the participants and were in conformity to the method of phenomenology. The study supports the Pygmalion principle of expectations influencing behaviour as perceived by the mature age student-teachers. The findings indicate that the Pygmalion Principle provides a plausible explanation for the resistance to classroom culture, a survival approach to teaching, and the defensive behaviours exhibited by the mature-age, second-career teachers during their practicum.

Introduction

In his play *Pygmalion*, playwright George Bernard Shaw, created a modern interpretation of what has been called the 'Pygmalion Effect.' Pygmalion was a mythical Greek character who once made a statue and, with the highest of expectations, brought it to life. Shaw's play drew on a similar theme of high expectations and positive results. In the play, a Victorian professor/dialect expert wagered that he could teach a lower-class girl to speak proper English and thus allow her to be taken for a lady. We can summarise the Pygmalion concept as follows: having high expectations of people and making these expectations known. The concept can be understood by examining the thoughts of Eliza, the lower-class girl made good:

You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and proper way of speaking), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will, but I know I can be a lady to you because you always treat me as a lady, and always will (Wisenthal, 1974, p. 121)

The key point is that human beings adjust their behaviour to match what they perceive are the expectations of those who are in more senior positions of authority or influence. This has been well documented in the field of teacher education where a teacher's expectations influences the achievement of his or her pupils (Weinstein, 2002). Reflecting on their experience of teaching in the 1960s and the 1990s, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968/1992) described how the Pygmalion Effect worked with their students:

I ask them to define a research problem, search the literature, design an experiment and come in with results all in one semester. Now nobody can do all that in one semester. I can't do that in one semester, but these are juniors: they don't know it can't be done; so they all do it. They do amazing things (Rhem, 1999, p. 2).

Similar to Rosenthal and Jacobson, as the co-coordinator of an elementary K-6 science course, and working with 200 undergraduate student-teachers in 2010, I integrated the principle of the Pygmalion Effect with a class assignment. The entire cohort of third year primary student-teachers was asked to pursue any open-ended unsolved research problem in science. They were required to define a self-chosen problem, search the literature, design an experiment, build a working prototype, and finally, present their results to interested stakeholders in a public science museum. They were to do this in one 13 week semester. Now to borrow the words of Rosenthal and Jacobson, "nobody can do all that in one semester. I can't do that in one semester," but these were student-teachers: they didn't know it couldn't be done. I told them that they could do it, and my behaviour towards them reflected this confidence.

This is the influence that the Pygmalion Principle has on student behaviour – and the potential implications for teachers are obvious. Regrettably, although there have been many empirical studies that lend support to the Pygmalion Principle, less effort has gone into investigating the expectations and experiences of a certain group of older student-teachers, namely second-career student-teachers.

Mature age, second career student teachers

This study examined the perceptions and subjective experiences of mature-age, second-career student-teachers immediately after their school practicum. As older students, Bay (1999) noted that returning adult students experience and respond to the expectations of higher education that reflect increased family responsibilities, restricted time management issues, increased levels of stress, the importance placed on life experiences rather than a grade, and academic demands that are seemingly unreasonable or too difficult. In combination with the added tension associated with becoming a role model for others, the older second-career beginning teacher can experience what Britzman (1991, p. 6) described as 'mis-identity.'

Although second-career teachers are sincere about their move to teaching, Petrosky and Delandshere (2001, p. 3) suggested that the actual 'experience' of the teaching profession will involve individuals embarking upon a profession that is 'suffering the de-personalising effects of the quality-assurance culture. "That is, a bureaucratic ethos in the form of rationalisation and the standardisation of pedagogy. The result has been a "snow balling" effect on the so-called "professionalising" of teaching. Consequently, once these older students become classroom teachers they will have to adapt to the expectations of standardised performance-related remuneration and regular retraining to acquire "professional" knowledge and skills (Powers, 2002). This is problematic because after experiencing the 'highs' and 'lows' of a well-established first career,

many second-career teachers not only display a low tolerance for bureaucracy and hierarchy but a general resistance to implementing mandatory policies (Johnson & Birkeland, 2002).

Although mature-age students who adopt teaching as a second-career face a variety of challenges, Jones, Miron and Young (2008) reported that when students who attend classes at a school, college, or university perceive their teachers and mentors as holding high expectations of their abilities, they have greater educational aspirations, better peer relations, higher motivation, more interest in college education, and rate teacher-student relationships more positively. It is well known that high expectations influence pedagogical practices positively (see Gollnick & Chinn, 1990); therefore this study sought to investigate the reflective expectations of the teaching experience via the school practicum, and understood through the “eyes” of the mature-age, second-career student-teacher.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine how mature-age, second-career student-teachers experienced becoming a teacher in contrast to the perceived i.e. supposed, expectations of the supervising classroom teacher. Because the school practicum is one of the first authentic teacher and student-teacher experiences, this study drew on the practicum experience as being the most appropriate “place” for subjective reflection. This was made possible through gathering the personal subjective reflections of six mature-age, second-career student-teachers who volunteered to tell their “story” of becoming a teacher.

Although this study focused on teacher education, the practicum, and soon-to-be-teachers, it should be noted that the Pygmalion Effect has also been recognised in others fields, such as economics, psychology, political science, medicine, and administrative organisation. Therefore, it is helpful to start with a brief history of the Pygmalion Effect with some real-world examples in and outside of education.

The Pygmalion principle

Although settling on one definition is difficult, a description of the Pygmalion Principle that is flexible enough to be inclusive is any assumption about one’s ethnicity, age, religion, race, gender, social status, education, skill, knowledge or history which leads to personal or professional expectancies of that person.

The Pygmalion Principle is often based on groundless or dubious expectations. Expectations can be high or low, but whether groundless or not, expectations can lead to significant behaviour change. Consider a few real world examples. The first are the expectations that came from fluctuating market conditions. In May 2011, a media rumour that there was going to be a shortage of bullets caused the cost of bullets in America to rise five to nine percent on all its lines. The effect was revealing: gun owners flocked to stores in enormous numbers to stock up on their ammunition.

As another example, consider one particular bank failure. The panic caused by the 1893 Philadelphia and Reading Railroad collapse that led to people rushing to withdraw their money from the banks. Together with a series of other events, this led to a number of bank failures and a worsening of the economy.

The famous 1968 experiment led by school teacher Jane Elliot is yet another example of expectations influencing behaviour. Just one day after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Elliot decided to teach her third graders about racism in a very concrete way. Dividing the children into blue eyed and brown eyed, Elliot purposely treated one group superior to the other. She verbally and publically expressed her low expectations of one group while showing her high expectations of the other. In the experiment, the “inferior” group of students performed far worse on their reading test scores, had minimal concentration on work tasks, and interacted poorly with their peers. The results helped to establish the well-known principle that expectations significantly affect performance.

Bullying and the Pygmalion Principle have a correlation. After a time, victims start to believe their assailant and an eventual self-fulfilling prophecy occurs. In May, 2011, in South Hadley, west of Boston, three American teenagers were sentenced to less than a year's probation after admitting to bullying a 15-year-old girl who later committed suicide. One of the teenagers had boasted: "I'm just gonna mess with her head." The thing is, victims start to believe their assailants. Even if the accusations are groundless, the self-fulfilling prophesy sometimes leads to behaviours that make the original expectation come true (Merton, 1948). We begin to accept as true what we are told and mirror those expectations through our behaviour.

There are many other real examples to confirm the principle, though one should be cautious not to ignore other factors that often contribute to behaviour changes. For example, Chang (2011) found that the Pygmalion Effect could work negatively. Working with learners in thermodynamics, even if high teacher expectations did influence student motivation and performance, when these high expectations were coupled with false judgments of the students' autonomy, the result was poor academic gains. Nevertheless, the principle holds true: expectations lead to behaviour change and predictions can directly or indirectly cause themselves to become true.

Causal relationship between teacher expectations and student behaviour

The first question one should rightly ask is whether a causal relation concerning high expectations and student behaviour actually exists. For instance, it has been suggested that this behaviour change is only in the perception of the teacher (Jussim, 1991; Fiedler, 2000). Maybe this change only takes place in the teacher's mind, and the actual behaviour and achievement of the student remains unchanged. In a study of teachers' expectations on students' achievement in physical education, Trouilloud and Sarrazin (2002) found that teacher expectations do predict student achievements, but not just because they are anticipated but because they are accurate. However, this study was with physical education students, and since athletic ability is a more direct

indicator of physical ability it can be more accurately observed by teachers. In a classroom where academic ability may not be so easily diagnosed, the causal relation between high teacher expectations and improved student behaviour still remains a question for investigation.

In 1954 the court case *Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka*, regarding racism and discrimination, brought an end to federal tolerance of racial segregation. One particular truth that came from this case was the awareness that if society keeps telling you that you are inferior, you are likely to believe it yourself. Referring to this court case, Stingham (1995, n.p.) refers to Claude Steele's research on standardised testing and stereotypes, which confirmed that poor academic performance by blacks and women occurs when students are placed in a situation in which a poor performance on a standardised test would support a stereotype of inferior ability, ethnicity, or gender. This was compared with a control group whose performance did not labour under this preconception. As Stingham notes:

[W]hen black students and white ones were given tests that they were told measured their academic abilities, black students did worse than whites. But when a control group of black students and white ones were given the same test but were told that the test did not have any such significance but was merely a laboratory tool, the difference in performance disappeared.

What is interesting about Steele's research results is that they do not apply only to black/white comparisons. The same phenomenon occurred with men and women. The women's performance deteriorated when they were told that the standardised mathematics test they were taking had shown gender differences, whereas the male/female difference disappeared in the control group when the women were told that the identical test had not shown any gender differences. It appears that expectations affect people's performance. The Pygmalion Effect seems to attract enough causal support to make this link.

The sources of teacher expectations

There are an assortment of determinates that influence a teacher's expectations of a student's ability. Some of the most obvious are test scores, evaluations, gender, ethnic background, and attractiveness.

Consistent with previous research involving the Pygmalion Principle and physical achievement (see Trouilloud & Sarrazin (2002), Rangel's (2009) longitudinal dissertation found that "teachers who themselves came from academically stigmatised ethnic groups gave higher expectations for students in mathematics than non-stigmatised teachers" (Rangel, 2009, p. 60). Consequently, schools that serve low-income and ethnic minority students could create an atmosphere in which teachers feel less responsible for student learning, which affects teacher expectations for individual students (Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004).

Ethnic racial biases exist in teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviours. Ferguson (2003) found that teachers' beliefs about black students' academic skills probably affect black students more than white. They determine that when the teacher is present in the classroom their expectations of black students' academic skills actually help to perpetuate the black-white test score gap. Similarly, research by Jussim and Eccles (1992) showed that teachers' expectations predict their own evaluations of students' performance more strongly than they predicted standardised test scores.

Since the 1960s, social psychologists have demonstrated with literally hundreds of studies that an individual's first impression of another person affects their subsequent interactions (Gumpert & Gumpert, 1968). Consider the subject of teachers' expectations vis-à-vis student attractiveness. In their 1973 seminal study, Clifford and Walster investigated the effect of physical attractiveness on teacher's expectations. Using the data gained from report cards with attached photographs, combined with comments given by the teachers, they found that a teacher's expectations about how intelligent the child was and how far he or she was likely to progress in school was contingent on the attractiveness of the child's physical appearance. Likewise, the three maxims heard frequently – beauty is in the eye of the beholder, never judge a book by its cover, and beauty is only skin-deep – reflect the important role that attractiveness plays in human interaction, and are, ironically, false maxims.

The results of a study by Langlois et al., (2000) confirmed that even when people knew attractive people well, they still had higher expectations for so-called attractive people and judged and treated them more favourably compared to unattractive people. Moreover, there is substantial agreement from within and across culture as to who is and who is not attractive. Similarly, a study on facial attractiveness by Olson and Marshuetz (2005) showed that attractive faces induce positive emotions that cause positive words. These facts make teachers' expectations of students' ability based on attractiveness difficult to ignore. We could apply the same principle to grades and a teacher's decision to award a high or low grade to a student's work sample. In their study concerning the Pygmalion Effect on grading in spelling and essay assignments assessments, Sprouse and Webb (1994) found that there is a Pygmalion Effect for handwriting. When student essays were handwritten in a legible style they received a mean score of 93.8, while the identical essays written in an illegible style received a mean score of 75.3. Moreover, the illegible handwriting was attributed to a male student, even if written by a female. As Sprouse and Webb concluded, because illegible samples received lower scores, "the grades of male students may suffer due to the Pygmalion Effect" (p.18). The conclusion is obvious: appearance played a large part for the overall scores teachers gave essays. It is apparent that something other than the student's ability was affecting his or her grades.

Teacher expectations and student achievement: You get what you expect

Teachers communicate expectations by instruction and teacher-student interactions. The saying "as monkey sees, monkey does" parallels the reality of social learning. As

Albert Bandura showed in the 1960s with his famous Bobo the clown experiments, children make good use of the information that surrounds them.

High teacher expectations create a warmer climate for learning. Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly's (1998) anti-social behaviour in the workplace study showed that reward and punishment do not have the greatest affect on behaviour; rather, it is the social context which has an extensive influence over the behaviour of individuals. The implication here is that organisations have a responsibility to shape behaviour by creating expectant environments that induce positive behaviour. Of course, we are really talking about people when we speak of such abstract things such as "organisations" and "environments." Organisations are made up of people and when we speak of creating expectant environments we are speaking about developing teachers who have high expectations of their students.

What about the expectations of students in classrooms that include a "teacher's pet"? In a study by Babad (1995) on the effects of having a "teacher's pet" in the classroom, it was shown that high achieving students were given more time, more materials, more response opportunity, more feedback, and more emotional support by their teacher compared to low achievers. But what was most surprising about the result was that when the teacher chose to exhibit high expectations and gave emotional support to low achievers this improved the morale of the classroom. The message seems to be that students themselves expect teachers to have empathy and concern for the low achievers in their classrooms. Not only do teachers communicate their expectations to their students, but the student expectations have a significant effect on teacher behaviour.

Method

Participant characteristics

The career changers who participated in the study were university graduates. A graduate is defined as a holder of at least a bachelor's degree from a university (Maclean, 1992). The participants were volunteers aged 31 to 52 with a mean age of 41 years. The majority of the sample was accustomed to holding positions of authority in their first careers.

All but three participants were currently married, two were single, and one was divorced. Thirteen of the participants were parents and had school-aged children. The participants were committed to becoming primary school teachers. Four of the participants held both a bachelor's degree and master's degree. None held doctorates. The participants were enrolled in either the Bachelor of Education or the Master of Teaching programs. The participants were interviewed during the final year of their program. They all had one school practicum to complete. Three participants had been directly involved in working with young children prior to commencing the teaching program. All participants had over 100 hours of experience working with children – most as 'reading buddies' in a school classroom or experiences assisting school personnel while on children's field trips.

The academic profiles of the participants were comparable in part due to the minimum academic A- B+ entry requirement to the program. Although it was not the intention to have the participants be representative of their respective cohorts in the entire program, there is little reason to believe that they were dissimilar from their peers. The participants had previously attained at least a bachelor's degree and had pursued a first career prior to their enrolments in the teacher education degree program. They had gained entry into the program because of their successful academic profiles, their experiences with children, and a final interview conducted by faculty representatives. Table 1.0 shows the participant's profiles:

Table 1: Profile of the participants

Name	Age	Previous career	Previous degree
Kerri	42	Administration/Secretary (hotel management)	BA (Sociology) BA (Anthropology)
Joanne	42	Corrections / Probation Officer for youth offenders	BA (Social Work) BA (Arts)
Linda	42	Marketing, Journalist, and International Translator in Lithuania	BA, MA (English)
Louise	49	Co-host of television series; Presenter and Producer of health television series; Writer and Editor for City TV Toronto; Teaching Assistant; Educator for science centre in Toronto	BA (English and Drama) BSc (Zoology and Environmental Biology)
Erica	36	Waitress and Hotel Assistant Manager in service industry	BA (Psychology)
Astrid	37	Interior designer	BA Applied Arts (Interior Design)

Sampling procedures and interviews

An email request for participation in the research was sent by the coordinator of the two-year Master of Teaching program to all second-career pre-service teachers enrolled in either the Bachelor of Education or Master of Teaching degree programs. The email invitation asked for volunteers to participate in a once-only, in-depth individual interview held on campus. The email invitation included an abstract of the research.

Each participant received a transcript of his or her interview to read over and review. This process also assisted in minimising the researcher's personal bias concerning the interpretation of the data, as they were invited to validate these data. None of the participants chose to change, alter, or delete material in his or her transcript or reinterpret the data.

Methodology and research design

The research design used a phenomenological interpretive methodology that gave priority to the participant's subjective meanings (Bruzina and Wilshire, 1978; Cohen and Manion, 1994; van Manen, 1997). A phenomenological theoretical approach was advantageous for investigating the mature-age second career teachers' perceptions of their experience (self-consciousness, in one sense) and the self in different roles (student-teacher and mature-age individual). Conscious experiences have a unique feature: we experience them; we live through them or perform them. Consequently, no comparisons of other experiences are necessary – we reflect on various types of experiences just as we experience them. Phenomenological interviewing rests on the added assumption that often there is an essence to shared experiences that can be narrated. The purpose of this type of interviewing is to describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share (van Manen, 1997).

The research employed a semi-structured interview format, using a series of 15 open-ended questions, with a further set of six supplementary questions. The questions were in conformity with commonly accepted phenomenological 'data' collection procedures (Christensen, 2003), although the 'data' are really the participants' subjective observations of their experiences (van Manen, 1997, p. 63). The method of data collection included face-to-face, audited taped interviews. These interview tapes were reviewed by the researcher prior to their transcription, providing further opportunity for look for common themes. The data was organized into categories and relationships, information was copied directly from the transcripts, and tentative ideas were developed.

Audio tapes were made, with a maximum 90-minute talking time per tape. The audio recording provided an instrument that facilitated capturing the open-ended, free-flowing, conversational style of the interviews. Journal recordings and transcript readings continued throughout the process, as recommended by Merriam (1988). Brief comments were written down during the individual interviews and entered into a journal and placed on each transcript.

The heading 'data analysis' as Groenewald (2004, p. 17) notes, "is deliberately avoided here because 'analysis' has dangerous connotations for phenomenology. The "term [analysis] usually means a 'breaking into parts' and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon...[whereas 'explicitation' implies an]...investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole". Therefore, as the researcher it was appropriate to look for the themes common to all of the interviews as well as the individual variations.

The expectations and experiences of mature age student teachers

The results draw on the subjective experiences and the first-person perspective of six mature-age second career teachers' in and during the different roles played out as a student-teacher and as a mature-age, career-experienced individual. It is recognised that most students entering university for the first time go through a phase of

adjustment; however, because of the presumed expectations of their instructors, the mature-age teachers believed that a smooth transition from a first career to an emerging teaching career was limited.

The career-changers spoke of their younger teaching peers, faculty, and program administrators perceiving them in similar ways to how a child is perceived – uninformed and reckless. As Louise (49 years of age) remembers: “[T]hey told me to keep quiet in class – not to ask so many questions. I was supposedly intimidating others, and I needed to keep my questions till after the class finished.” Consequently, participants saw faculty as ignorant of the dynamics of teaching older adults with important contributions to make and established ideas and ideals that could offer an additional element of learning to their peers and tutors. Confrontations and incidents between faculty and career changers resulted in feelings of isolation due to a suspected lack of support from faculty.

Louise (49 years of age)

Louise, a former television reporter, spoke of an intimidating experience after being ‘encouraged’ by a faculty staff member to “talk less and listen more in class.” In hindsight, Louise is certain that her assertive language, advanced as a result of working in a dynamic career of live-on-air television reporting, was misinterpreted as aggressive behaviour. Louise muses: ‘I am realising now more than ever that my previous career as a reporter is almost a disadvantage for me becoming a teacher.’ After this experience, Louise believes that she will need to “reassess what [her] actual role [is] in the teaching program.” She expounds on her experience as follows:

It’s been very odd here. It’s always like they want us to accept everything. I was told that maybe in class I should not ask too many questions and instead write them down for later. I mean, they knew what I had done previously. I had to give my CV and three references, so it was clear who I was and where I came from. Then I was told, “Well, you seem to be challenging her [a tutor in the program],” and I said, “On my honour, I am not.” I was a reporter; I tend to ask questions very strongly and very abruptly and clearly. You had to be really clear because you didn’t have much time and people wouldn’t answer you.

Kerri (42 years of age)

While on the school practicum, Kerri, a former hotel manager, experienced numerous confrontations with both her supervising school teacher and her university supervisor. She believed that this was due to the unreasonable expectations of the teaching program:

They [university faculty and school teaching staff] haven’t given me any room to experiment. They are forcing me to do the things they [emphasis added] think work, that they think [emphasis added] are right. Even if I am assigned to do something for homework, I have conflict with my associate

teacher. She doesn't like some of my tutor's ideas, so there is conflict already and I am in the middle. If I wanted to put my ideas on top of my personality and my views or experiences on it, it would not work at all. I guess this is a very structured way of learning. You are going to be doing this – this and that, and that's it – period! Once I get my own classroom it's going to be very different. Kids will accept you as their teacher all the time... I have to do it the way they are telling me – I don't have any other choice.

For Kerrie, the associate teacher did not tailor the school experience for a mature-age person who had potential to demonstrate skills and ideas of her own. There was no mentoring or encouragement; rather, there was an expectation that the trainee teacher would follow the lead of the more experienced teacher.

The experiences of Louise and Kerrie exemplify the problems that can occur as a result of the conflict between the objectives of a teaching program, the expectations of teaching faculty, and the expectations of a second-careerist. Ironically, Louise and Kerrie both saw themselves as 'persecuted' for having first careers and rich life experiences. The clashes between university faculty and the student body revealed perceptual differences – in particular, the different expectations of university faculty, supervising teachers, and the second-career student-teachers.

Erica (36 years of age)

Erica, a former waitress and hotel assistant, believed the conflicts she encountered while on the practicum were the result of a personality clash with, as she stated, "the dominant and controlling personality of my supervising teacher." As a result, Erica insisted that she had missed opportunities for experimenting with her pedagogy, and was therefore powerless to practise teaching according to her beliefs. She explains the situation:

I simply don't have the numerous years' experience working with children that many of the other career changers have gained. I do have experience with people – working as a team – yet this didn't seem important. On the practicum, I hadn't even been given a chance to explore how to teach. The teacher was extremely dominant towards me – she didn't like me and vice versa. I had to follow the teacher and just get through the assessment.

In hindsight, Erica also admits that her initial expectations of the practicum experience were mistaken. The opportunity to incorporate what she believes should entail experimental methods of teaching and learning with the students was not forthcoming; instead she hoped to "survive" the practicum and "get through the assessment." As a consequence, Erica believed the practicum was a regimented system of control with few opportunities afforded for a more trial and error experimental pedagogical experience.

Kerri continued

Kerri's experience is similar to Erica's clash of personality with the supervising teacher. She spoke of a teaching environment that was "reminiscent of a hard line impersonal approach." Kerri alleged teaching to be a foreign environment of personality clashes and stoic student/teacher interactions. The cause of this, according to Kerri, was the expectations of her supervising teacher. She spoke of the differences between herself and the teacher:

My associate teacher is into spots and rewards a lot. She is like a coach; 24-7 with everything – math, the hallway, everything. She always speaks in brief sentences, everything is very snappy. It's all information and then she finishes with "good job." I'm not like that. It's very limiting, but it is reminiscent of a hard line impersonal approach. She has the same expectations for me, but it's difficult for me to be like that. I have been really questioning myself at this point. Am I taking the right approach, trying to be myself? Is this going to really work? In this particular classroom, being myself would not work at all. I would have to be like her, even more so. If I go to a different classroom in a different neighbourhood, I could be myself, no problem. Maybe I have to allow for the possibility to be like her. I have to think very carefully what to do next.

Kerri's practicum reveals a mismatch of personal expectations, teacher expectations and the actual reality of teaching. The practicum left her with the impression that a definite teaching personality or profile is expected, one that is identical to the supervising teacher. This helped to generate doubts of ever possessing the "right" profile for becoming a teacher. To calm her anxiety, Kerri drew on her established skills of behaviour management, similar to the skills she employs as a parent, skills that she knows well and has successfully implemented. However, she soon realised that parental skills did not produce the same response from the students as it had from her children, and this left Kerri feeling "emotionally bankrupt," a phrase she used when recounting her experiences:

Just last week, when I was in grade five, things had been going so well, but then I was told by the classroom teacher that I'm not the right profile yet; I'm not a tough enough teacher. I felt emotionally bankrupt. Learning from my son and how I am with him; well, that was good enough for him and he is a grade five student. I was not tough with my son because I never had any problems with him. I was not tough with him, so I am thinking why should I change myself and be tough with these kids? They are not hurting anyone; they are learning; they are fine. My associate teacher, however, is telling me that I have to be totally different; that I have to be tough like her. I have to emulate her behaviour and who she is – I can't be myself.

Drawing on hindsight, Kerri believed that her initial expectations of teaching were at odds with the reality she experienced in the classroom. Although disappointed, she accepted this personal and professional setback and instead sought a more non-

confrontational profile. She was reluctant to challenge the supervising classroom teacher and hesitant to challenge what she considered was “an unreasonable set of practicum objectives set out by the university.” Kerri “survived” the practicum by remaining silent and not challenging the teacher. The objective became completing the practicum and graduating as soon as possible:

I’m just struggling through my practicum, pass the assessment and apply everything I have learnt here. If I were to improve it, I would maybe pick a different instructor who was not as heavily textbook oriented, but it is okay. I’m going to remain silent and get through this school and I’m going to be a teacher and forget it was ever there in my life, so it’s okay.

Louise continued

While on the practicum, Louise believed that positive and negative classroom experiences were the result of luck. As someone who believed in good and bad fortune, she was already anticipating taking advantage of any moments in the second and final school practicum that would resemble fortunate chances to learn, as they would compensate for any unfortunate events she encountered throughout the teaching experience.

It is significant that Louise believed that good teaching experiences were simply a matter of chance because it indicates her acceptance of an external locus of control well beyond anything she could achieve or manage as a teacher. Furthermore, this notion allowed her to escape accountability as a learning educator who will more than likely make mistakes.

Louise maintains that she was fortunate during the first practicum to experience teachers who were, as she states, “interested in who I was and what I was doing prior to teacher education, and better still, the school staff were genuinely interested in me and where I had come from.” Louise is positive about this first practicum experience, especially after being acknowledged as an individual with a history. As a result, she perceives the teaching staff as her colleagues, and not as supervisors: “They certainly had so much to teach me. But they actually told me that I had something to teach them. I really felt like an equal during that time. It was such a really nice cross-pollination”.

At the same time, Louise expressed concern about her second and final practicum, where she foresaw potential problems arising. She anticipated that problems would arise if the school staff, “[did] not accept [her] as an equal colleague.” Her need to be accepted as an equal colleague on practicum – with the acknowledgement that acceptance was a matter of ‘luck’ – indicates the faith she has invested in ‘others’ and the lack of confidence she has in choosing to create her own successful teaching environment. Her belief is that fate will be the ultimate decider for success as a teacher. Louise expects situational and external factors to be more important for teaching than internal ones, and she is likely to attribute her accomplishments as a teacher to that of chance, rather than effort. She is looking for a “safety net” and attributes any failures to unfair circumstances, rather than to her own shortcomings.

Joanne (42 years of age)

The practicum experience of Joanne, a former corrections and probation officer, concerned the minimal observation time available for student-teachers. She was opposed to what she termed “a hurried practicum experience.” Joanne insists that course content was covered too rapidly, allowing little time to fully understand the meaning in its entirety. For Joanne, the practicum experience had offered minimal reflection and observation time and the expectations were too high:

I just wish we had more time to observe – to observe how the teachers deal with it all – to sit in the back of the class and just watch. Not necessarily get in there ourselves, but watch how they do it; how they deal with their day; how they fit in all these assessments and teach everything else. We can read about it in a book, but I would rather watch them deal with that while you have two kids who are swinging from the lights – you know, trying to jump out the window at the same time. So what you read in a book – first you have them do this and then do that – it’s not as accurate.

Joanne wants more opportunity to observe experienced teachers and engage more fully with the skills they use to effectively manage students.

Linda (42 years of age)

For Linda, a former marketing sales representative, journalist, and international translator, teaching is bureaucracy. She is convinced that a high level of “bureaucratic authority” has been detrimental in shaping teacher-education. Linda’s ideas stress a need for more importance to be placed on individuality and autonomy over curriculum. Already displaying a sense of trepidation at “being” a teacher within a possible environment of teachers reduced to “mere technicians,” Linda insists that if this is the reality, she will re-consider becoming a teacher:

Not being able to be imaginative or autonomous as a teacher – well, I find that utterly terrifying. If that is the case, then I can’t function. I don’t know how I could function in a strict environment of learning. I might be able to find a little independent school where I would be respected as an autonomous thinker, but I’m doubtful. If I have to, I will try and stand my ground and teach the way I believe and know works. I just feel this is like a training program, because there has been a strong emphasis on certain methodologies, certain techniques, tools and tricks. You know they call them tools, but they are really just tricks to get you thinking their way.

Linda’s reservations about teaching were further heightened by the resemblance she believes teaching has to her marketing career, where employees and employers work under a technocratic, cost-efficient approach. For Linda, this means that bureaucracy is more important than people. She says, “as an employee, it was assumed I would see my career within the values of the organisation.”

Astrid (37 years of age)

Astrid, a former interior designer, had concerns that were primarily about her inability to “practise” her teaching skills during the practicum. Although she did have a number of positive experiences during her first school experience – such as having the autonomy to, as she states, “try this out and try that out on the children” – it wasn’t until the second practicum that she realised that the freedoms she would be granted to “experiment” as a teacher in her own right would not materialise. She claimed her associate classroom teacher had a limiting and restraining mind-set. Astrid communicates this experience:

This last practicum, I don’t know if it was the personality of my associate teacher – I mean she was very nice and a very professional person – but there was something that I didn’t quite feel was right. I mean, to put it quite formally, I think she was a control freak. If I didn’t do things a certain way, I wasn’t doing it correctly, so I felt, no, I couldn’t deviate from the way she expected things to be done. That’s the way she was, but I survived it and in the end I got a good review. I really didn’t get much out of it, though; that is, as I would have liked to.

Astrid’s experience is similar to those of the other career changers: teacher education and the school practicum reveal a level of dissonance between expectations and reality. Their interpretations reveal a foreign environment of teacher expectations.

The practicum experience had confirmed doubts about a teaching career and persuaded some of the second-career teachers to emotionally revisit their previous working environments and successes. When they entered the classroom and made their presence felt as teachers with extended life and career histories – and not as younger traditional student-teachers – they faced what they believed was immediate resistance from their supervising teachers, who, in their view, had privileged experience in the form of their own teaching styles, methods and practices. Consequently, the careerists saw the practicum experience as a test. This caused them to obey and conform to their supervising teacher’s pedagogical expectations – as monkey sees, monkey does.

Encounters with a faculty member developed when a career changer’s assertive personality, sometimes grounded in the experiences of a first career, was exposed. This meant that due to their previous experience and age, the career changers had a confident and assertive demeanour during disagreements concerning course content objectives and faculty expectations. However, when the career changers’ expectations were in harmony with the behaviour of their supervising teacher there was a positive expectation effect.

Discussion

The data from this study are compelling and lend support to the model of the Pygmalion Effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy. The most fundamental tenet of the Pygmalion process is that teacher-performance-expectations will ultimately influence

student performance. The variables that are most significant are the explicit, but also implicit, expectations of the teaching faculty as perceived by the second-career student-teachers, and the performance expectations of the second-career teachers themselves. The explicit is evident in what the instructors say (or perceived to have said) and how they respond to the careerists' identities as mature-age students with extensive career backgrounds and training to become classroom teachers. The implicit is experienced in a restricted learning environment that does not accommodate to include the knowledge and extended life experiences of mature-age student-teachers.

Analogous to the Victorian professor/dialect expert who wagers that he can teach a lower-class girl to speak proper English and thus transform her into a lady, and by drawing on the subjective experiences and personal perceptions of the practicum as understood by the second-career student-teachers, the career-changers undergo a behaviour change.

The lived (perceived) experience of becoming a mature-age teacher is contingent on the expectations identified by the course and practicum instructors. Since these expectations did not compare favourably with the career-changers, they were resistant to classroom culture, became survival oriented rather than achievement oriented, and were defensive and sceptical of suggestions and reproach. In a similar way, Shaw's famous line in the play *Pygmalion* sums this up well: "I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will..." When mature-age student-teachers experience teaching in ways that are not reflective of their extended profile as mature-age, career-experienced individuals, their commitment to full participation in their program is hindered and their commitment may be diverted to seeking others who will communicate and respond to them as they are accustomed.

The perceptions of the mature-age student-teachers suggest that the three maxims: beauty is in the eye of the beholder, never judge a book by its cover and beauty is only skin-deep are not always adhered to in teacher education programs. Based on their subjective experiences, as told by the mature-age student-teachers, these maxims are indeed untrue. The comparable reactions and management they perceived as coming from the teaching supervisors over the duration of their classroom experience suggests the ongoing influence that expectations and classroom culture has on the perceptions and behaviour of mature-age student-teachers. Previous studies by Langlois et al., (2000) showed that time does not change the initial perceptions and expectations of people in positions of authority. The second-career student-teachers also display a low tolerance for bureaucracy and hierarchy, which is reflective of Johnson and Birkeland's (2002) previous study. Teaching faculty should be aware that persistent expectations can have a sustaining expectation effect because the teaching supervisor's unchanging expectation sustains the mature-age student-teacher's performance. A move to adjust expectations, build a more equitable autonomous practicum, provide more open dialogue, and encourage greater autonomy for these career experienced individuals may be the way forward.

Linda's claim that teacher-education is more akin to preparing people to become "technicians of curriculum" than it is to helping them become "independent learners" echoes Apple's (1996) views on teacher training models. Apple notes that the conservative tendency in education within North America has seen a competitive market orientation materialising as the decisive factor for teacher education, the national curricula, and national testing.

The results suggest that second-career teachers believe that teaching faculty think about and respond in stereotypical ways, and that these stereotypes are resistant to change, even if they are challenged by older, career-experienced individuals who are expected to behave in ways reflective of fitting the identity of being a non-knower. This is a similar finding to those of Taylor (2001), who recommends that teaching faculty "respect students at all levels as thinkers and knowers ... [and that] such respect will ... lead to a richer, more active form of learning for everyone involved" (p. 114).

The additional research question now is, "How should mature-age student-teachers respond to expectations that are in most cases groundless?" Here things don't look too good. Rosenthal (1968/1992) showed that when pupils improve against expectations they are disliked by their teachers and in some cases show signs of being in conflict. A similar scenario repeats itself for these older student-teachers. If they do not conform to the expectations of the student-identity as non-knower, learner, beginner or apprentice, they perceive and report conflict and dislike levelled against them. This supports previous research by Taylor (2001), in a Canadian teacher-education program that showed student-teachers report feeling more like they are in a training program, not an education program. A training program suggests that student-teachers are kept busy with trivial assignments, while an education program suggests in-depth engagement with educational theories and philosophical ideas. With a training program comes the consuming identity of being a student-teacher – with the emphasis on "student" or "learner". The second-career teachers do not associate themselves with either of these two realities.

Older student-teachers can offer much to the classroom, but they expect to be treated as autonomous adults with past career experiences and successes. As Fogart and Stoehr (1991) argued: "[E]ducators must remain cognisant of the most critical element to any curriculum design: the learner. Learners' needs, and the relevancy of the curriculum designed to meet those needs, represent the 'bottom line' ..." (n.p).

If second-career teachers display a low tolerance for bureaucracy and hierarchy and a general resistance to implementing mandatory policies, as Johnson and Birkeland (2002) found in their study, it behoves teacher education and schools to implement the Pygmalion Effect in all theory and practice courses. Based on the data, one forecast could be that as the careerists' lives begin to settle and normalcy prevails, and they consider the implication of a teaching career for their working lives, their commitment to long-term teaching could be weakened. Previous research by Marsh (2004) confirms that older adult learners in higher education have high educational expectations in most domains of their work and study. This implies that if classroom teaching does not meet their high expectations of work and study, they could make a hasty retreat from the

classroom. Although this could also be said of younger non-career changers, the difference lies in the fact that career-changers have had a history of changing occupations when the opportunity arose, or when a crisis which sparked change presented itself, forcing them to amend their lives and change their jobs. Having children, a partner being laid off from work, or the experience of a life crisis could provide another window of opportunity for those who reveal particular expectations when changing careers to teaching.

In light of their confidence in their ability to teach children, especially after having had parenting successes, mature-age career-changers run the risk of failing to recognise or accept a need for support, correction, or re-assessment if their expectations fail or fall short of the realities of classroom teaching. This suggests that educational policy makers and faculty could include a curriculum focus aimed at the pedagogical practices, academic expectations, past experiences, and, in particular, the initial and on-going perceptions and expectations of these older and career-savvy individuals.

Limitations of the study

Although the data are robust, a major limitation of this study is that it employed a small-scale interview process rather than a longitudinal design with both career changers and teaching faculty having equal input. This means that the researcher could only account for the experiences and expectations of the career changers. It would be helpful to include the expectations of the teaching faculty and supervisors in a follow up study. Because of the lack of perspectives over a longer period of time, variables unknown to the researcher may have influenced the career changers ratings of teaching faculty, the practicum and their own expectations. However, the participants' perceptions of their status as older students may have influenced how their supervisors treated them and expected them to perform as classroom teachers. Unmeasured variables, such as friendship, may also have influenced the relationships in the chain.

Qualitative research methodology, such as phenomenology, has been criticised for its subjectivity and inability to generalise from the findings (Powers, 2002). However, as van Manen (1997, p. 58) suggests, "any phenomenon is a possible human experience, and phenomenological descriptions have universal (intersubjective) character." Moreover, the purpose of phenomenology is not to create an abstract, depersonalised "factual" account, which could then be generalised to all second-career teachers, but rather provide a small focussed study that could be used to represent the subjective, personal experiences of a sample of "voices" who wanted to be heard."

Discussion of implications

If indeed the Pygmalion Effect is accurate – and the situational and relational understandings expressed by the career-changers suggests that it is – one challenge for teacher education and the designers of future practicum models concerns how to best utilise the expectations of older career savvy student-teachers to meet the realities of teacher education and the school practicum. Older, career-experienced individuals have an extended educational history, work experiences, and high expectations of study and

classroom interactions. The phenomenological descriptions of the career-changers suggest that resistance, survival and defensiveness are the realities of becoming a teacher after a former career. The following considerations are offered for teacher education and practicum supervisors.

Expectation effect: Teaching faculty needs to revisit and make transparent their personal and professional beliefs about mature-age student-teachers' abilities as educators of children so as to consider how these might influence their interactions with them. The data suggest that this is important for second-career teachers who have little classroom experience but much career and life experience outside of teacher education.

Adult learning: An integrated curriculum should be implemented to provide the necessary adult-world connection to assist older learners to adjust to the expectations of the pedagogical norms of undergraduate degrees in teacher education.

Individual support and monitoring: Regular assessment needs to be made of how school administrators are monitoring the experiences of second-career-teachers. What support measures or mentoring processes have they implemented, and what goals and expectations have they established for their induction of new teachers with extensive and various work histories?

Additional research: A nationwide study to focus on the steps university faculty, school leaders, and policy makers have employed to more effectively guide, modify, or extend the strengths and expectations of career-experienced individuals into the classroom.

This purpose of this study was to make known the practicum experiences and perceptions of teaching via the personal reflections of six mature age, second-career teachers. It is hoped that their stories will help to enhance our perceptiveness of becoming a teacher as a mature age person. Their reflections of teaching contribute to our sense of tact in human relations, and with this awareness provides us with pathic forms of understanding that are embodied, situational, relational and enactive.

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