Teacher identity development is an integral part of teacher learning processes. Exerting indiscernible yet extensive power over teachers’ practices (Rex & Nelson, 2004), teacher identity offers a framework through which both self-reflection and the external exploration of practices can occur. In other words, using identity as a framework, teachers can build their own ideas of their beings, actions, and understandings of their teaching practices and their place in society (Sachs, 2005), and scholars can draw upon identity as a basis for interpreting teachers’ decision-making and meaning-making processes (Bullough, 1997). Teacher identity concerns teachers’ responses to the following two questions with respect to their teaching self-images: Who am I at this moment? Who do I want to become? These questions together highlight the dynamic and ever-changing nature of teacher identity, negotiation, and imagination (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). In terms of teaching practice, teacher identity molds teachers’ “dispositions, where they place their effort, whether and how they seek out professional development opportunities, and what obligations they see as intrinsic to their role” (Hammer, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005, p. 384).

Motivation for the Research

In this study, we rely on sociocultural understandings of teacher learning and identity development (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2004; Lasky, 2005; Olsen, 2008) to examine how three English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher candidates (TCs) learn to handle their emotional states in relation to their teacher learning and emerging identities as teachers of English language learners (ELLs). Using a sociocultural lens (i.e., a combination of social and cultural variables), we conceptualize teacher identity as teachers’ dynamic and constantly evolving self-conception and...
imagination of themselves as teachers. From this perspective, teachers develop and manifest their identities through their participation in activities and interactions in human relationships. Their identities are shaped through context, social positioning, and ways of making meaning. In our conceptualization of teacher identity in the current study, we view teachers’ emotions as one of the crucial aspects in identity development, and in this chapter we highlight the role of emotion in three ESOL TCs’ identity development during teaching practicum experiences.

Lasky (2005) views teachers’ emotions “as a heightened state of being that changes” (p. 901) as a result of teachers’ reflections on past and future teaching practices and interactions with the dynamics of their teaching contexts and their colleagues, students, and students’ parents. TCs experience a variety of emotions as they respond to the numerous instructional and noninstructional situations that they encounter and manage in their teaching contexts (Benesch, 2012; Day, 2004; Golombek & Doran, 2014). Because teaching is largely composed of human interaction, teachers’ emotional states are inevitably at the epicenter of their work (Nias, 1996). Hargreaves (1998) asserts, “...good teachers are not just well-oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and all their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy” (p. 835). In the same vein, Nias (1996) draws attention to the inseparable relationship between feeling and perception, and auctivity and judgment, and she contends, “teachers’ emotions are rooted in cognitions” (p. 294). Therefore, a better understanding of the complicated process of how teachers learn and think entails the exploration of their emotions (Lasky, 2005).

During the journey of growing as teachers, emotions emerging out of TCs’ interactions with their colleagues, students, and students’ parents can be employed to orient, inform, and define the formation of their identities as teachers. TCs go through and reflect on various emotional states that signal and point to the instructional values in which they are deeply invested (Zembylas, 2003). Over time, TCs gain an enhanced “self-knowledge” (Zembylas, 2003). In other words, they become aware of what matters to them professionally as they learn what saddens, scares, annoys, frustrates, and stresses them as teachers, as well as what excites, animates, pleases, satisfies, and heartens them in their teaching practice. This self-knowledge also bolsters TCs’ incipient “emotional literacy” (Hayes, 2003), which refers to their capabilities to handle emotion-evoking experiences; to have “appropriate” emotions for particular situations (Benesch, 2012, p. 112); and to maintain their individual integrity, commitment to teaching, and professionalism. Emerging teacher identities influence how TCs respond emotionally to varying incidents as they journey through the activities of initial teacher education. As TCs’ identities have an important effect on where they are channeling their efforts and exerting their energies (Hammerness et al., 2005), their identities determine to a large degree the type and intensity of their emotions.

Because exploring teachers’ emotions gives us deeper insights into the matters and concerns that teachers have at stake, the scrutiny of emotions can contribute to an increased and nuanced understanding of their commitment and identity as teachers (van Veen & Lasky, 2005). Thus, as important signals of the dispositions and values underlying their identities, second language (L2) teachers’ emotions should be incorporated into any discussion about their teacher identity construction. Examining how L2 TCs are coping with their emotions and acquiring the emotional literacy to do so (Hayes, 2003) can provide L2 teacher education researchers with opportunities to observe how ESOL TCs negotiate, frame, and enact their identities in these emotional situations.

Research Question

The data reported on in this chapter are part of a larger study in which data were collected to address multiple research questions (see Yazan, 2014). This chapter focuses on providing answers to the following research question: How do teaching practicum experiences afford three ESOL teacher candidates opportunities to learn to handle their emotional states as part of their teacher learning and identity formation?

Data Collection

Data were gathered through in-depth, individual interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. For the purposes of answering the research question presented in this chapter, we focused primarily on in-depth, individual interview data from two rounds of interviews that were conducted at the beginning and end of the school year. The participants’ responses to questions about their teaching practicum experiences as interns provided insights about their emotions in relation to their instruction and identities.

We recruited three ESOL TCs as participants—Zoe, Elizabeth, and Leslie (all names are pseudonyms)—who were enrolled in an intensive 13-month MATE-SOL program at a large research university in mid-Atlantic United States in the academic year 2013–2014. Completion of the MATESOL program also leads to K–12 (kindergarten through Grade 12) certification in TESOL for U.S. public schools in the state. TCs were placed as teacher interns in both elementary schools (i.e., typically up to grade 6) and secondary schools (i.e., typically from Grades 7 through 12) for one semester. They were in the schools during the entire school day and were in charge of 50 percent of their mentor’s teaching load.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was guided by the procedures of grounded theory, so we sought “naturally occurring classes of things, persons, and events” and looked “for similarities and dissimilarities—patterns in the data” (Berg, 2009, p. 103), which could lead our analysis to yield well-rounded findings. We started with open coding. We
we found a recurrent pattern. Indeed, as interns in both elementary and secondary education, a consistent theme that emerged in the two rounds of interviews with all three participants was related to the emotional stresses of teaching. This theme emerged through our interpretation of the data to make sure these findings made sense to our participants. Additionally, we had other colleagues review our interpretations of the data along with the direct quotes from the data to make sure these findings made sense to them, were answering our research question, were logically classified, and did not overlap.

Results

A consistent theme that emerged in the two rounds of interviews with all three ESOL Teacher Candidates (TCs) is the category of codes discussed in this chapter. The category of codes that led us to the results shared in this report is the three ESOL TCs’ “emotional development” through their teaching practice.

We used the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to develop themes by “identifying incidents, events, and activities and constantly comparing them to an emerging category to develop and saturate the category” (Creswell, 2007, p. 238). Then, we started formulating findings statements to construct the three ESOL TCs’ “storyline[s]” (Creswell, 2007, p. 67) that explained how the teaching practicum afforded them opportunities to learn about their emotional states as part of their learning and identity formation.

In order to make sure that our interpretation of data was valid, credible, and reflective of the truth in our participants’ situations, we first shared the transcribed version of the two individual interviews and asked the interviewees to confirm the accuracy of the transcribed texts and decide if they wanted to make any additions or changes. Second, we shared the initial PowerPoint presentation that included the discussion of the themes emerging from their data. We made sure that our findings statements were presenting a trustworthy account of their experiences, and they agreed with the interpretation of what we shared with them. Additionally, we had other colleagues review our interpretations of the data along with the direct quotes from the data to make sure these findings made sense to them, were answering our research question, were logically classified, and did not overlap.

Compassion is Key

In response to an interview question about qualities of an effective ESOL teacher, Zoe stated that she thought, “Compassion has to come first.” She imagined herself becoming a compassionate ESOL teacher with high expectations for her ELLs. She stated:

Compassion is key because I feel like my space is the only space where they have the time to slow down. I don’t know if that’s true, but in my head, that’s how I approach my class. Compassion for their situations and their unique experiences, but also you have to have expectations.

(Zoe, Interview 2)

The image of an ideal ESOL teacher in Zoe’s conceptualization is marked by her feelings for ELLs with regard to their “unique experiences.” This essential characteristic often resulted in classroom management problems because she believed that her compassion needed to be balanced with strictness or an authoritative style of teaching to demonstrate that she held her ELLs accountable. She suggested, “an authoritative parenting style [which is] stern and strict, but the warm and compassionate and loving side also shows through” (Zoe, Interview 2). With this ideal in her mind, she then described how she struggled to strike the balance between the strict and loving sides of her teaching, especially relative to classroom management.

Sometimes I think I’m more strict and stern, and I feel really guilty about that, like I haven’t figured out where that line is, where compassion can balance the strict, . . . When your kids are being annoying and when they’re really disruptive, all you’re thinking is I need to get this under control. Your compassion side goes out the window until you start to see the effects of that, and then you reel yourself in. Now is the time to show them that I still care, show them that they’re still valued or show them that they never weren’t [sic] valued.

(Zoe, Interview 2)

Zoe’s emotions governed a considerable portion of her approach to teaching ELLs, which she believed was shaped through “reflection and then experience and then practice” during her practicum. Her priority when handling classroom management issues was to be compassionate as well as strict so that ELLs felt cared for while at the same time being held to high expectations. Her emotional side had
an obvious influence on her instructional approach, which was reflected in her image of the effective ESOL teacher she envisioned becoming.

In addition, in Zoe's case, her emotional state contributed to her decision to view instructional issues in her classes as significant, a decision that almost jeopardized her decision to become a teacher. In her comments below, Zoe shared how feeling stressed led her to reflect on her teaching, and through this process, she was able to recognize how the variability of students' behavior impacted her teaching, independent from her lesson preparation.

The internship was definitely stressful because of all that was required...[I] can remember a couple of days at the elementary school where I was driving home, and I was just like I can't ever imagine doing this ever. I didn't know if it was just elementary school because they were driving me nuts that day. But, then what I remembered, [TESOL program coordinator's name] showed us a PowerPoint of words of wisdom from the prior cohort, and they said you'd never have two bad days in a row. I stuck that one in the back of my mind because I remember driving home one day and thinking this is awful. I'm never—I can't ever imagine doing this. I don't know what I was thinking. Then the next day the kids were on and everything went perfectly. It went better than I could ever plan. I was reminded there aren't two bad days in a row.

(Elizabeth, Interview 2)

Being "driven nuts" by the students deeply impacted Zoe, to the extent that she could not envision herself teaching anymore. This emotional experience drew her attention to the demands and challenges that she would be encountering in the classroom. She recognized a dissonance between what she believed teaching should look like and what it actually looked like. Then, her experience the following day made her believe that "you'd never have two bad days in a row." She came to understand that her teaching skills were not the only variables or factors affecting how events in her classroom would unfold, so she reconsidered what she rendered as discordance between her "professional functioning with [her] ideals and commitments" (van Huizen, van Oers, & Wubbels, 2005, p. 285). She concluded that she could still be an effective teacher even if events in the class did not unfold as she thought they should; the reason might be that students were on or off on a given day. This example from Zoe's experience exhibits how intertwined teacher learning, identity, and emotions can be in actual teaching practice.

Elizabeth: I Am Really Happy

Elizabeth's emotional experiences during her practicum also revealed the reciprocal relationship between her identity development and the emotional states she went through while teaching and reflecting on teaching. During her internship, she had not only positive but also negative emotional states; these were intertwined with her reflections on her teaching and with how she, as a self-described perfectionist, and others evaluated her teaching. For instance, she noted in an interview: "There were good days and bad days, and I think that happens to all teachers. A lesson goes really well and you're thinking, 'Oh that went really well. I'm so happy'" (Elizabeth, Interview 2). She drew attention to the possibility of good and bad days in teaching, which, she thought, was true for any teacher, so as an emerging teacher, she seemed cognitively prepared for that aspect of teaching. When asked for examples, she discussed the experiences in one of her classes, which was observed by a university supervisor.

Well one of my observations went really well. In my elementary placement I had planned out this lesson, and it just went the way that I envisioned, and I was so excited. The kids were responding. They had remembered things from the day before. It... was just... it just moved really well and everything connected together. Yeah, it just went really, really smoothly. I was really happy with that one.

(Elizabeth, Interview 2)

It is noteworthy that Elizabeth gave one of her observed lessons as an example of "good days" and her happiness when teaching. The fact that the class went well likely made her "really happy" and "so excited" for two reasons: she had success in teaching the class, and the university supervisor who had an evaluative role was there and observed her successful lesson. Her sense of herself as a competent teacher whose lesson went as planned was complemented by the external recognition that came from the supervisor's evaluation. This experience exemplifies the joint role of self and other in the formation of teacher identity and in the emotions that form teacher identity, because becoming a teacher necessitates not only self-identification but also social legitimation from other members of the professional community. Secondly, as in the case of Zoe, Elizabeth underscored the salience of how her students responded to the lessons she prepared and how their responses determined, to a large degree, whether or not "everything connected together" in her lessons and all would go "really, really smoothly." This particular practice teaching situation evoked happiness in her, which led to the emergence of her self-image as a good teacher. This positive emotion likely affected her confidence and enthusiasm for teaching because "emotional experiences register the quality of a person's participation in activity in relation to that person's needs and motives" (van Huizen et al., 2005, p. 273).

Elizabeth also shared negative emotions that she had about her teaching during her teaching practicum. Her frustration concerning a lesson, which did not go as planned, led her to engage in more reflection. She noted:

[When] something doesn't go well and I'm thinking, "Oh, what could I have done differently or what should I have done differently?" And then
moments when I was really frustrated where I'd planned to do X, Y, Z and I [only] got to X. Or the kids were totally off task, and they just weren't paying attention, and it was hard to get them to pay attention to what I . . . because we needed to get through the material or not feeling prepared in terms of how to teach something in particular and then just kind of scrambling at the last minute to sort of try and get the students to understand what I was talking about, but they're not getting it. It's frustrating for them. It's frustrating for me.

(Elizabeth, Interview 2)

The constraints Elizabeth described (e.g., covering the material in a limited period of time, drawing students' attention to important information, last-minute preparation) are all realities of the teaching profession that any TC should anticipate encountering. They lead teachers to certain emotional states because emotional experiences stem from “teachers' embeddedness in and interactions with their professional environment,” and they are meaningful in that they reveal their “sense making” and “what is at stake for them” (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 996). Through their emotional experiences, TCs can learn about the relationship between their aspirations and commitments and how they function in the professional community (van Huizen et al., 2005). Their emotions constitute “the means through which teachers personally interpret the demands placed upon them” (O'Connor, 2008, p. 118) and drive attention to the extent to which TCs' teaching is in accord or discord with their imagined and projected self-images as teachers (Day, 2004). This happens when TCs experiment with teaching and take responsibility and ownership of actual classes during the course of their teaching practicum.

Leslie: You Have to Care

As an ESOL TC, Leslie frequently highlighted in the interview sessions the fact that ELLs come to the US classrooms with unique experiences and challenges, and their teachers should establish a good rapport with them to best serve them. In her conceptualization, an effective ESOL teacher should love teaching and education, because “if you're not happy and you're not feeling it and don't get the joy out of those moments when the kids get it, you know, you're not doing the right thing” (Leslie, Interview 2). She viewed teaching as an emotionally charged process and stressed the inseparable nature of teachers' cognition and emotions. In a similar vein, her caring had important connections to her views on how to approach the teaching of ELLs. She commented:

You have to care about your students . . . I think it's also important to try and do everything with a smile, with some warmth, because if they know you're coming from a place of care, of warmth, it helps them trust you more . . . Some students need that undying warmth and you're doing great, acknowledging everything that they're doing because they're so hurt or lacking confidence . . . Who knows how little sleep they're getting and who knows what they're going home to, whether they're getting taken care of or whether they're entirely on their own or almost on their own.

(Leslie, Interview 2)

Leslie's comments were a display of her sympathy and concern for ELLs, which influenced her approach to her classes. This sympathy and concern are indicators that she prioritized extra emotional support in the form of showing care and warmth, and that she believed her ELLs might need support because of the potential hardships they were going through. The approach she took with her students reflected the fact that Leslie was experimenting with the development of her teacher identity and that she took on an identity from the desired selves (Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008) as an important part of her teaching practice.

Furthermore, in Leslie's case, her positive emotions about teaching were connected to her ELLs' abilities to grasp what she was presenting, while her negative emotions arose due to classroom management and student behavior problems. In response to an interview question about her emotional experiences as an intern, she remarked:

I think my happiest moments were when I saw that they got the information, when they had the light in their eyes or when they, you know, the quiet one shared his or her opinion in front of the whole class, you know, those really made me happy. I think the hardest parts were when I felt the classroom management got out of hand. Those were hardest for me . . . The hardest thing for me to deal with was the behavior issues.

(Leslie, Interview 2)

The two intense emotional states that Leslie went through were indicative of what she prioritized in her instruction or what she thought she should be able to accomplish as an ESOL teacher. Her emotions led her to externalize what she developed in her “interpretive frame” (Oblen, 2008) (i.e., the set of preconceptions she had about language teaching and learning). What mattered for her as a source of happiness was represented in “the quiet one [sharing] his or her opinion in front of the whole class,” so she would probably channel her energy and efforts in this direction. By the same token, what concerned her most was classroom management issues and handling of student behavior problems, so these concerns were also regarded as instructional priorities. In her “implicit theories” (Peercy, 2012) about teaching effectiveness, she considered herself a successful teacher when she effectively handled student behavior problems.

In addition, Leslie felt it was crucial to establish rapport and bond with her ELLs. She was committed to having personal conversations with them and
providing additional academic support. She shared, “I was always very happy to spend the extra time with the kids when they had a question or needed extra help. When they would come to me for extra help, I was shocked and overjoyed” (Leslie, Interview 2).

As she indicates in her comments above, another source of happiness about teaching for Leslie was the out-of-class time she spent with her ELLs when she helped them with a question or got to know them better as she listened to their stories and future plans. When ELLs approached her requesting extra help, Leslie felt that she was receiving the recognition she needed to reinforce her identity as a teacher of ELLs, which manifested as a happy emotional state. The more time she spent with her ELLs, the stronger her infrastructure became as she constructed her identity as a teacher of ELLs.

Finally, as evident in her comments below, Leslie had to handle frustration in relation to her mentors and feelings of not being autonomous enough in the ESOL math classes she taught. This emotional state of frustration mainly stemmed from issues of collegiality in her relationships in the school community, issues that were related to the fact that she was still an intern who was being supervised by mentors. She described the issues as follows:

Frustrating was sometimes working with [name of her mentor]... was hard because she was controlling, and with [name of her other mentor] too, I felt like she was a little controlling. And the math class with not having that autonomy... not having the autonomy to help [struggling students] in a way that best suited their needs, I think, was very frustrating.

(Leslie, Interview 2)

Leslie’s emotional response was a signal to her that there was a discrepancy between the working conditions she considered ideal for her to successfully teach ESOL math and the conditions she had as an intern who was not granted adequate autonomy. She believed that her mentors were exerting their power and authority to restrain her autonomy, thereby making it difficult for her to best serve ESOL math students. The frustrating moments that she had throughout her internship, contributed to her framing her identity as ESOL math teacher who needed sufficient freedom to make instructional decisions to best address ELLs’ linguistic and academic needs.

Discussion and Implications

The reciprocal relationship between teachers’ emotional states and their identity formation was important in the cases of three ESOL TCs examined here. The common goal of all three participants who participated in this research was to become ESOL teachers, which is “an emotionally demanding and frequently stressful activity” (Hart, 2000, p. 61). Their classroom experiences in their internship schools were pivotal ones because they felt “the impact of [their] emotional condition[s]” (Hayes, 2003, p. 154) most intensely. They tried out teaching in actual settings and interacted with their students and mentor teachers. To illustrate, all three TCs experienced both positive (e.g., happiness, excitement) and negative (e.g., stress, frustration) emotions during their teaching practice. As Kelchtermans (2005) states, these were “meaningful experiences,” which emerged as the TCs participated in and interacted with the professional community. These experiences revealed how the TCs made sense of the situations they confronted and what was “at stake for them” in their classes (Kelchtermans, 2005). Elizabeth’s class, which was observed by the university supervisor and became part of Elizabeth’s official evaluation, evoked the emotion of happiness in her because the class went smoothly, students were responsive, and she received the supervisor’s recognition for her good teaching. This incident was noteworthy in the development of her self-image as a teacher because these positive emotional states about teaching supported her belief about successful and effective teaching. On the other hand, she also felt frustrated with her teaching at times when she had to go through the material quickly or when “the kids were totally off task, and they just weren’t paying attention.”

Another example of the mutual relationship between TCs’ emotions and identities came from Zoe’s experience when she said that she was “driven nuts” because her elementary students were “off” for a couple of days. These stressful days made her feel awful, and she was so intensely influenced by this particular experience that for a short while she could not “ever imagine” teaching anymore. More specifically, in response to an interview question inquiring about her teaching-related emotional experiences, Zoe commented: “I can’t ever imagine doing this.” In this instance, students’ behavior elicited some negative emotions in Zoe and “distract[ed] and divert[ed] her attention from instructional goals” (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003, p. 336). Discordance between how her classes went and how she thought her classes should have gone (van Huizen et al., 2005) brought about this emotional state. Reflecting on the problematic situation and applying an aphorism that previous cohort interns in her situation had shared (i.e., “you’d never have two bad days in a row”), Zoe learned how to regulate her negative emotional states (Zembys, 2003) by considering her challenges in teaching (e.g., students’ misbehavior) as part of her teaching. It is likely that in the future when she reflects on instruction that does not go as planned, Zoe will recall her earlier experiences and continue to evaluate her teaching without finding her teaching competence as solely responsible for creating negative emotional states related to teaching. Regulating her emotional states in this way, Zoe was able to maintain her teacher self-efficacy (Olsen, 2008; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003) and her self-image as a capable ESOL teacher. Her frustration led her to recall advice from previous cohort members and encouraged her to revise her self-image as a teacher. Rather than interpreting the failed lesson as an indicator that she was a bad teacher, she felt that it was likely that even good teachers have bad days as a natural part of the teaching process, and she...
could not control all the variables, especially the variable of students who might overthrow her lesson plan.

Additionally, Leslie’s experiences in her teaching practicum gave her opportunities to “practice” both positive and negative feelings (Beck & Kosnik, 1995), and this practice was part of her identity formation process as a teacher. Building good relationships with her ELLs was an important part of her teaching practice, and she was overjoyed when she could spend time with her ELLs, listen to their “unique experiences,” and have “honest conversations” with them. She also was happy when she observed her ELLs make progress and when a quiet student made an effort to participate in the class. Both her joy and happiness were intimately connected to the values that she believed her teaching should represent. While student teaching, she had the opportunity to learn about what made her happy as an ESOL teacher, which will probably determine where she will be channeling her efforts in her future teaching. Furthermore, regarding her negative emotions, she felt frustrated when she believed that her classes were out of her control and when her mentors did not grant her the autonomy she needed to best serve her ELLs in ESOL math classes. Regarding her classroom management, Leslie’s frustration came from the fact that she felt she lost control of her classes because of student behavior problems. This situation made her feel that she was not an effective teacher, which she aspired to become. As for her mentors in ESOL math classes, her frustration pointed to the fact that, as an emerging ESOL teacher, she was committed to helping struggling ELLs and placed a special emphasis on their particular needs. In both examples, her emotional response to student behavior issues and controlling mentors was indicative of the concerns she had at stake in her teaching (van Veen & Lasky, 2005). These concerns are reflected in her instructional priorities and values (Zembylas, 2003), values that reflect her self-conception as an ESOL teacher.

The accounts we share here of the emotional experiences of three TCs highlight the twisting and turning nature of teacher identity construction. The findings that we report on in this chapter corroborate the idea that TCs go through a socioemotional development process as they learn to teach and as they simultaneously develop their identities as teachers. Zoe, Elizabeth, and Leslie learned how to handle their emotions and how to emotionally respond to teaching and nonteaching incidents during their teaching practicum experiences. Their emotional responses were mediated by the kind of teachers they were or they aspired to become. Therefore, along with constructing their knowledge and competency base to effectively teach, TCs’ initial preparation critically entails becoming “literate” about the handling of their emotions (Hayes, 2003), which is triggered by TCs’ interactions with others and tacitly influences their practices and self-images as teachers.

Because teachers’ emotions are “too important to be left to chance” (Hayes, 2003, p. 169), teacher educators should first raise TCs’ awareness about the fact that they are going to confront varying emotional experiences, particularly during the teaching practicum. To contextualize this issue, teacher educators can invite beginning teachers from previous cohorts of TCs who graduated from the same program and ask them to share their experiences. TCs should also know that these emotional experiences have an impact on their understanding of teaching and on themselves as developing teachers. This awareness could aid them in seeing the reason why they need to engage in more introspection and reflection to better explore and understand their emotional responses when they encounter certain emotion-provoking situations. They also need to be able to pinpoint how “their emotions expand or limit possibilities in their teaching, and how these emotions enable them to think and act differently” (Zembylas, 2003, p. 232). Becoming conscious identity developers necessitates that TCs discern their emotional responses to certain teaching and nonteaching incidents “as signals of the (more or less successful) agreement of their professional functioning with their ideals and commitments” (van Huizen et al., 2005, p. 285). Then they can learn how to handle their emotional reactions and, despite their vulnerability, especially in school settings (Kelchtermans, 2005), they can successfully “navigate the inevitably emotionally charged process of becoming a teacher” (Malderez, Hobson, Tracey, & Kerr, 2007, p. 242).

Furthermore, TCs should be afforded opportunities to express their emotional responses to teaching because “if we don’t express [emotions] . . . we will not learn how [emphasis in the original] to have them. We need practice [emphasis in the original] in being affectionate, fearful, and angry at appropriate times” (Beck & Kosnik, 1995, p. 163). For this to happen, TCs should feel comfortable expressing their emotions when working with their students, peers, teacher educators, mentors, supervisors, and others. Although being comfortable or not might be determined by their personality, teacher educators, mentors, and supervisors should help facilitate an increase in their comfort level relative to expressing emotions about teaching. Regarding their interactions with their students, TCs should consider their potential emotional responses when planning their lessons and “when certain events transpire, controversial beliefs surface, or challenging comments emerge” (Olen, 2008, p. 131).

Lastly, TCs are highly emotionally vulnerable during their early teaching experiences, especially in their teaching practice. They are newcomers to the teaching profession; consequently, they need considerable support from their mentors and supervisors, as well as the other coworkers and principals in school settings. The support they receive determines whether their practicum experiences turn into a crucible that threatens their emotional welfare or into a fruitful learning environment that facilitates the development of their emotional literacy (Hayes, 2003).

References


