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N Wickramasinghe
University of Wollongong

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**A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for
the award of the degree**

Doctor of Education

**From
University of Wollongong**

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2004**

**A study
of the changes to Sri Lankan pre-service
teachers'
knowledge about teaching
during their student teaching period**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements
for the award of Doctor of Education degree,
in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong.

I also certify that this is my original work unless otherwise refereed or
acknowledge and that it has not been submitted for a degree at any other
university or institute.

*This thesis
Is dedicated to*

my mother, Leelawathie Wijenayake Jayawardhana

and

late father, Don Martin Wickramasinghe

*Although denied the benefits of the education
they merited and deserved,
they always appreciated its value and supported
their children's education,
sometimes at considerable personal sacrifice.*

Abstract

This study investigated how a group of Sri Lankan pre-service teachers changed their understanding of effective teaching during the twenty days student teaching (student teaching) period of their teacher preparation program. In order to explore changes in their understanding across this period, two methods were combined: concept maps and structured interviews. The study involved twelve student teachers preparing for teaching in secondary mathematics and science as participants. The student teachers were asked to draw concept maps of effective teaching three times: prior to beginning their student teaching period, in the middle of student teaching, and at end of the student teaching period. Half of the participants received their previous maps before developed their second and third concept maps; the other half drew their maps without reference to previous maps. Shortly after they drew their concept maps, participants were interviewed at these three stages. These interviews were audio recorded. Data were triangulated from concepts maps and interviews. Based on these data, multiple case studies were developed. Using qualitative analysis, these case studies were used to identify the changes in the student teachers' understanding about teaching and the factors that influenced these alternations. The results of the case studies were used to interpret patterns of change in participants' understanding about effective teaching. The prominent change across the maps was that over the time the participants' views of effective teaching had broadened significantly. The simple constructions of their first and second maps had become much more complex, with more concepts, more levels and more cross links. In their interviews, the student teachers provided some possible explanations for the changes, including the nature of their school experience, the support provided by workshops at their college and own their own reflections. On the basis of the these findings the study makes several recommendations for developing Sri Lankan teacher preparation and some directions for further research.

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