

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

# The Development of Student Teacher Identities through Undergraduate Action Research Projects: An Emirati Case Study

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## **Abstract**

In recent decades, reflective practice has taken a more central role in the construction of teachers' knowledge and practice (Elliot, 1991; Roberts, 1998). Within reflective practice, action research has developed as an approach within which teachers can systematically question, challenge and improve their teaching and recently been introduced into teacher education programmes with the rationale of encouraging student teachers to critically engage with curriculum and practice (Mills, 2003). Recent years have additionally seen interest in how teachers' knowledge is sociodiscursively constructed with a concomitant focus on the link between teacher identity and practice (e.g. Danielewicz, 2001; Miller Marsh, 2003; Norton 2000). However, few studies have attempted to explore the influence action research may have on the construction of student teacher practice and identity (Trent, 2010). This study explores the role of an undergraduate action research project in terms of the extent of its influence on the development of student practice in English Language classes and the trajectory of their emergent teacher identities. Informed by new theoretical directions in ethnography (Denzin, 1997), data was collected using naturally occurring texts integral to the student teachers' studies, including weekly lesson observations, post-observation feedback discussions and three focus group discussions over the course of the research project. Analysis indicates that the undergraduate action research project differentially affects students' practice and emergent identities, but that this relationship may be tangential and students' agency may be overshadowed by methodological preoccupations and constraints of institutions. Both global and local discursive formations combine and interact to influence this process which occurs in a theoretical 'interzone' a third space, sociodiscursively constructed between institutions.

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