

# Linköping University Post Print

## Trajectories in teacher education: Recognising prior learning in practice

Per Andersson and Kristina Hellberg

N.B.: When citing this work, cite the original article.

Author Posting. (c) ' Australian Teacher Education Association', 2009.  
This is the author's version of the work. It is posted here by permission of ' Australian Teacher Education Association ' for personal use, not for redistribution. The definitive version was published as:

Per Andersson and Kristina Hellberg, Trajectories in teacher education: Recognising prior learning in practice, 2009, ASIA-PACIFIC JOURNAL OF TEACHER EDUCATION, (37), 3, 271-282.

ASIA-PACIFIC JOURNAL OF TEACHER EDUCATION is available online at informaworldTM:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13598660903052274>

Taylor & Francis: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/default.asp>

Postprint available at: Linköping University Electronic Press

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:liu:diva-19804>

**2008-0187.R1****Trajectories in Teacher Education: recognising prior learning in practice****First/Contact Author:**

<b>Name</b>	Per Andersson
<b>Title</b>	Associate Professor
<b>Institution</b>	Linköping University
<b>Phone</b>	+46-13 282115
<b>Email</b>	per.andersson@liu.se
<b>Postal address</b>	Department of behavioural sciences and learning, Linköping University, SE-581 83 Linköping, Sweden

**Secondary Authors:**

<b>Name</b>	Kristina Hellberg
<b>Title</b>	Senior Lecturer
<b>Institution</b>	Linköping University

**Author Biographies**

<b>Per Andersson</b>	Per Andersson is an Associate Professor in Education at Linköping University, Sweden. His main research interest is educational assessment and, in particular, recognition of prior learning.
<b>Kristina Hellberg</b>	Kristina Hellberg is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Linköping University, Sweden. Her main research interest is inclusive education and children with special needs.

# **Trajectories in Teacher Education: recognising prior learning in practice**

## **Abstract**

This article analyses the trajectories into teacher education of a group of child minders who are studying to become pre-school teachers. The specific focus is on what prior experiences and learning from pre-school mean for their trajectories, and how these experiences and learning are recognised in the first year of teacher education. A situated learning perspective is applied, with a focus on participation and trajectories in the two communities of practice where teacher education is situated: the university and the pre-school. The data consist of transcribed interviews with 10 student teachers, and additional data gathered from stakeholders in the program. The results show that prior experiences and learning are given implicit and indirect recognition. In the practice of the pre-school, the trajectory means a shift in identity, from child minder to student teacher and pre-school teacher. In the practice of the university, prior experiences and learning help students in their trajectories from peripheral to fuller participation.

# **Trajectories in Teacher Education: recognising prior learning in practice**

## **Introduction**

This article focuses on a group of child minders who have entered teacher education. They were offered an opportunity to participate in a process of recognition of prior learning (RPL)

when admitted to the program. The RPL process was intended to identify possible credits for prior learning. However, only a few of the participants admitted accepted the challenge to participate in the initial RPL process and thus receive credit. Nevertheless, the child minders completed the first part of their education with good results, i.e. better results than the regular students. For this reason, we wish to analyse the impact of their earlier experiences and informal learning, and how these are recognised during teacher education. Breier (2005) discusses “‘rpl’ as opposed to ‘RPL’”, using the abbreviation RPL for Recognition of Prior Learning that takes place before/outside the educational process, and rpl for recognition of prior learning within the educational process. Here, we will thus focus on post-entry “rpl”.

Valuing and recognising prior learning from outside formal education is not a new phenomenon. The journeyman’s and the master’s examination are examples of how learning in the workplace has been recognised earlier, but in the last few decades the notion of prior learning has become more clearly expressed. An important starting point was the ideas about extended admission to higher education with a selection based on “prior learning assessment”, which were formulated and put into practice in the United States in the 1970s. RPL has also been developed in other parts of the world, e.g. Australia, and in other sectors than higher education, e.g. for recognition of vocational competence in the labour market. In Sweden, there was also an interest in widened admission to higher education in the 1970s, but it was not until 1996 that the ideas of RPL were explicitly expressed in terms of “validation” in adult education policy (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1996). In Swedish higher education, the idea of using applicants’/students’ “real [actual] competence” in assessments for eligibility and credit was introduced at the beginning of this century in an initiative to widen access (MoE, 2001). One of the areas where a number of Swedish universities and university colleges have tried to widen admission through RPL is teacher education, specifically targeting child minders to facilitate their training to become pre-school teachers. The present study is an

example of such an initiative where the idea is that students have prior learning that helps them at the university and could be given credit, which reduces the need for teaching by the university.

## **Background**

As a background to the study, we profile pre-school and the teacher education in Sweden. The background also includes some information about the current initiative of teacher education for child minders.

We will discuss education for “pre-school teachers”. Formally, Swedish teacher education does not result in a pre-school teacher degree but a “teacher in [e.g.] pre-school” degree, i.e. all teachers are teachers regardless of choice of age group. However, there is no difference in practice, and we use the everyday term “pre-school teacher” to make the text more reader-friendly even if the term is not formally correct.

### ***The Swedish pre-school***

Pre-school institutions play an important role in the Swedish welfare state. Today, a majority of Swedish children between 1 and 5 years old attend pre-school even though it is not mandatory (Markström, 2005). In 1998, pre-school became part of the school system for children from 1 year old and the first curriculum came into force (MoE, 1998).

In the pre-school institutions, two kinds of occupational groups exist. There are pre-school teachers and child minders. In the practical work at pre-school, these two groups do almost the same work although their responsibilities may differ. There are also differences in education and salary and they belong to different unions. Child minders’ education differs a lot in length, from 20 weeks to two years, and it was previously an education program belonging to upper secondary school. Nowadays, the education program for child minders is a one-year supplementary course after finishing upper secondary school. The pre-school teacher

is educated at university (or university college) for three and a half years. In 2007, the distribution between the two groups was: pre-school teachers 49% and child minders 40%. The remaining 11% had other professions or no vocational education at all (National Agency of Education, 2008).

### ***Teacher education in Sweden***

Teacher education in Sweden is available for all levels of the Swedish school and pre-school system. Teacher education in Sweden has been involved in the Bologna process, which means that the length of courses and programs are measured in terms of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) points. 60 ECTS points represent one year of full-time studies. Further, courses are defined in terms of learning outcomes that must be achieved to pass, a shift from the previous type of definition in terms of aims. From 2001, all teacher education programs in Sweden are divided into three areas, *general education studies*, *direction* and *specializations* (MoE, 1999). In the first year of teacher education, all students take four courses, which are the same for all students regardless of what kind of age group of children they will teach. This set of courses is part of general education studies. Teacher education includes university-based education and school-based education. The students normally study full-time, but there are exceptions in the form of part-time programs mainly for students employed as teachers but needing to complement their work experience with a teaching degree.

### ***The current initiative for child minders***

The education program that gives child minders the opportunity to enter teacher education was established to fill the need for educated pre-school teachers. In recent years in Sweden it has been obvious that there is a shortage of qualified pre-school teachers in pre-school, which will continue for a long time. For the child minder group of students discussed in this article, teacher education differs in some respects from the regular teacher education programme.

Both include 210 ECTS points but differ in length. The teacher education program for child minders is six months longer. These students must also have worked for at least two years in pre-school before admission to the education program and they must be employed at a pre-school while they are studying. In this education program, the students study half-time (50%) at the university. The remaining 50% consists of the practical part of their education carried out in their workplace. They study the same courses as the regular students, i.e. almost the same lessons and literature (there could be slight differences). Before the students enter the teacher education program for child minders they are offered the chance to take part in a validation (RPL) process.

### **Prior research**

This study is about recognition of prior learning as an aspect of students' trajectories into teacher education. In a review article by Jordell (2006), he argues that studies of teacher socialization and teacher development have been criticized for not explaining how development takes place and how a person moves from one stage to another. This means that the focus is on results and products rather than on process. As regards the present study and the theoretical framework, there are a number of studies of professional learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Schön, 1983).

In this study, we apply a situated learning perspective, which will be presented in the next section. O'Donnell and Tobbell (2007) have studied the transition of adult students to higher education from this perspective, focusing on experiences from an entry course. They discuss the process of transition in terms of whether the peripheral participation in the entry course is legitimate participation that contributes to students' belonging to the community of higher education and to a fuller participation in this community. Furthermore, they conclude that practices of higher education can serve as barriers to these adult students, but that there are no shortcuts – the students have to engage in sociocultural practices to reach fuller

participation. Another interesting study explores learning in a group of teachers who were attending a university-based in-service teacher education course. The results show how the boundary line between workplace and university helps teachers to resolve problems from/in the workplace in new ways (Finlay, 2008).

RPL/rpl is a developing research field, which has been studied and analysed from different perspectives. An interesting example in relation to the present study is Osman (2006), who combines situated learning theory and critical theory to analyse RPL projects in South African higher education. She argues that recognising prior learning is not only an epistemological question but also a political question, where situated learning theory brings the collective dimension to the epistemology. Another example, similar to the present case but on upper secondary level, is an analysis of the relations among learning, experience and recognition in in-service training in the Swedish care sector for elderly people, where carers were trained to become assistant nurses (Fejes & Andersson, 2009). The results show how prior experiences and learning played a central role in the training process on the individual as well as the collective level. The carers' experiences and prior learning got recognition, and were the starting point for new learning through reflection and discussion in the group.

Taylor (1996) discussed to possibility of developing RPL in professional development programs for teachers. Further, Taylor and Clemans (2000) reviewed RPL policies in Australian teacher education and concluded that the development of RPL procedures had a long way to go, but that they worked best when they was taken seriously by staff who understood the problems.

One area for recognising prior learning in teacher education, which is of particular interesting in a situation where there is a teacher shortage, concerns the upgrading and accreditation of overseas-trained teachers, who could get credit for their prior teaching qualifications. A study of this group aimed at reaching an understanding of the teachers'

experiences from their own perspective and was based on the concept of teacher's practical knowledge. What the overseas-trained teachers had in common was a high level of skills and education, which were employed in the Australian context, but nevertheless they had experiences of difficulties in getting information about qualification and upgrading (Cruickshank, 2004).

Another way to address teacher shortages is to create new teacher education programs. Green, Randall and Francis (2004) discuss a program called Accelerated Teachers Training Programs (ATTP), which was created to meet the need of new teachers. The students came from a diverse range of backgrounds. The structure of the education program was designed to enable the students to develop both theoretically and practically in a shorter time frame than regular students. The structures of the courses were based on the essential elements of a teacher-training course, and one of the elements that reduced two years to eighteen months of study without sacrificing quality was recognition of occupational experience and other qualifications.

### **A situated learning perspective**

Our theoretical point of departure is a *situated learning* perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991). We apply this perspective to develop the understanding of how prior learning situated in one practice, the pre-school, could be recognised in another practice, the university. From the situated learning perspective, learning is not a separate process related to individual performance within the individual himself, but an ongoing process between people (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In other words, learning is seen as a process that takes place in a participant framework, not in an individual mind. Lave and Wenger (1991) used the concept *legitimate peripheral participation* to explain their view of learning. Peripheral participation is about being positioned in the social world. Initially, the individuals' intention to learn is obvious and the purpose of learning is to more intensive participation in related communities.

Learning could be described as increased belonging. This means that learning is not so much about “knowing more” as it is about acting in a social practice. The word *central* is discussed by Lave and Wenger (1991) in relation to *peripheral*. They argue that using this concept is problematic because it implies that there is a centre of a community with respect to an individual’s place in it. Instead, they prefer to use the term *full participation*. Lave and Wenger (1991) claim that the idea of peripheral participation implies several things:

Peripherality suggests that there are multiple, varied, more- or less engaged and – inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 36)

*Legitimate peripheral participation* is central when learning is discussed. The concept is used to analyze relations between newcomers and a social practice and illustrates the process by which newcomers become a part of the community. We will discuss *legitimate peripheral participation* and *full participation* in the analysis of our data.

Other central concepts in this perspective are community of practice, trajectory, and identity. Learning could be seen as change in participation in a *community of practice*, following a *trajectory* that could go from legitimate peripheral participation to more central – or full – participation in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), for example, as students in teacher education. As mentioned above, learning can be seen as part of a social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Furthermore, learning is seen as a process of participation, which means that *identity* is created and changed. Identity is developed through membership, through participation and through belonging in a community.

“Experience” is a central concept in the discourse of RPL, where prior informal learning is often discussed in terms of prior experiential learning. From our perspective, experience could be discussed in terms of participation. That is, experience means that you

have participated in a community of practice, and is thus closely connected to the process of learning.

In relation to *legitimate peripheral participation* in an educational practice, it is valuable to discuss the concepts of “learning curriculum” and “teaching curriculum” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). There is a difference between practical knowing, which could refer to learning curriculum, and theoretical knowing, which could refer to teaching curriculum. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), a teaching curriculum is constructed for the instruction of newcomers. A learning curriculum, by contrast, is derived from everyday activity such as participation in a community of practice, viewed from the perspective of learners. One way of expressing the outcome of learning by participation in a community is to talk about *tacit knowledge* (Polanyi, 1958). Tacit knowledge describes knowledge that is developed through everyday participation but not formulated explicitly. This does not mean that tacit knowledge cannot be formulated, but as yet it is not explicit knowledge. The situated learning perspective should be useful to understand how such (tacit) knowledge developed through prior learning in everyday activities, in the informal learning curriculum of work in the pre-school practice, could get recognition in relation to the teaching curriculum of the university practice.

### **Aim of the study**

The aim of this study is to describe and analyse the participation and trajectories of child minders entering teacher education. The research question is: How are child minders’ prior experience and learning recognised in the first year of a pre-school teacher education program?

The study will provide new knowledge about how vocational experience is utilized in teacher education. Furthermore, it will also say something about how prior learning and experience are used in higher education in general.

### **Design of the study**

This study comprises child minders who are attending a teacher education program to become teachers in pre-school for children 1–6 years old. The article is mainly based on interviews presenting the perspectives of participating student teachers. We have interviewed ten (out of a total of 28) student teachers with a background as child minders. The students were between 25 and 59 years of age and had experience of pedagogical practice as child minders for 6–30 years. The interviews were conducted at the end of the first year of the students' teacher education. The interviews were qualitative (Kvale, 1996) and semi-structured, i.e. we had a number of open-ended questions to start from, and these questions were supplemented by follow-up questions during the interviews. The length of the interviews was half an hour to one hour and they took place at the university. The interviews focused mainly on the students' experiences from their first year as student teachers, and particularly on how their prior learning and experiences had been made visible in the courses.

The interviews have been transcribed according to what Linell (1994) called base transcription, and the transcriptions have been analysed in a qualitative, interpretative way. The study follows the Swedish Research Council's ethical principles for research in the humanities and social sciences (Swedish Research Council, 2002), including protection of the individual participant through information, consent, and confidentiality. One ethical consideration has been to make the setting of the study as anonymous as possible. In order to achieve this, the names of the participants have been changed (Kvale, 1996). In the presentation of results, quotations from the interviews are used to illustrate our findings. The quotations are translated to English, as the interviews were conducted in Swedish.

The study also includes data gathered from different stakeholders in the program (e.g. teachers), among them one of the authors of this article ([author]) who was involved in the work on starting up this education program, and also involved as a teacher in the program. Her experiences are part of our pre-understanding prior to performing the analysis.

The students were seen as informants and were asked to report to us what had happened and what they had done during their first year in the teacher education program. In line with our theoretical perspective of *situated learning* (Lave & Wenger, 1991), it is natural to collect data from students as well as stakeholders to obtain information concerning how this group of child minders copes with entering a new community, in teacher education, and how learning takes place and how their participation changes when they as newcomers become part of the community. In the theoretical perspective, learning becomes a process distributed across persons, time, space and activity rather than an individual event. The individual learner does not gain a discrete body of abstract knowledge that he/she will transport and reapply in later contexts. Instead, he/she acquires the skill to perform by actually engaging in the process in which the participation changes.

## **Results**

As mentioned, this study focuses on a specific aspect of a teacher education program, namely, how prior experiences and prior learning are recognised when child minders begin studying in an education program to become pre-school teachers.

### ***Trajectories of child minders in two communities of practice***

Teacher education is a practice, which, in itself, involves two different communities of practice. The program has the ambition of connecting theory and practice in the studies. That is, connecting these two different communities of practice – the practice of theoretical

university studies and the practice of work where students get practical experiences in the pre-school/kindergarten.

Participation in teacher education means that students follow a trajectory from peripheral to more central or full participation in these practices, and this trajectory also involves changes in the (professional) identity of the students.

Johanna: I had some knowledge before, but I couldn't develop it and explain.

But now since studying these courses everything's fallen into place or something. I had knowledge before from the work we have to do with the curriculum and so on, one has that basic knowledge at least and one has had these "AHA" experiences every day and they become more pronounced.

Some of the child minders claim that they possess what they call "tacit knowledge" from the practice of work. Participating in teacher education helps them to articulate this knowledge. In some way, it constitutes an *implicit* recognition of their knowledge. I.e., their prior, tacit knowledge is made explicit, but this is not explicitly discussed in terms of a process of recognition. Interestingly, the two communities of practice turn out to be closer to each other for the prior child minders than for regular students, and the trajectories are different for the child minders since they participate in these two overlapping communities of practice in a different way than do the regular students. Firstly, they have already participated and have a fairly central position in the practice of work, even if their identity is that of a child minder and not pre-school teacher. This means that they have experiences and knowledge from this practice, and their trajectories in this community of practice describe a shift in identity (from child minder to university student and pre-school teacher) rather than a movement from peripheral to full participation. Initially, they think they have already done the same job as the teachers do, but after a while they see the difference, and the shift in identity is possible.

Anna: To be able to talk to other pre-school teachers or teachers in general, to understand each other: before I started studying I thought that pre-school teachers and child minders do the same thing, but it's not like that at all. You have more education and you have more knowledge of what the profession involves, you see such a pronounced difference now. So my expectation is to become a better pedagogue/teacher. I was that before but to become more sure of what I'm doing, when parents come and ask and to be able to explain, You notice how you speak with other people, with parents, how one speaks in general, how one works.

The childminder Anna also says that the participation in the practice of university helps her to become more confident in her professional position in her job at the pre-school.

Secondly, these experiences from the pre-school help the child minders to enter the community of practice of university studies.

Natalie: It's in everything. I'm thinking of literature seminars. We have a different understanding and the professional language maybe and some other things.

Before the teacher education for child minders entered the teacher training program, their "minority status" (cf. O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007) was a matter of concern for the teachers at the university. But here, belonging to the minority of child minders means that prior experiences help these students in their university studies. The reason is that their studies focus on the practice of work of which they have extensive experience (cf. Fejes & Andersson, 2009). Many of the assignments in teacher education are intended for regular students, to connect theory to practice. That is, the theories that are studied in the practice of university studies are the starting point and should be related to the practice of work. But for this group, it is more the other way around – the tasks theorise practice since the child

minders can use (and get recognition for) their experiences from pre-school as their starting point when they study theory. This brings the two communities of practice closer to each other for them, and their trajectory into the practice of university studies involves a movement from a peripheral to a more central/full participation.

*Work-place experience/knowledge facilitating the trajectory into the practice of university studies*

The practical experience that correlates with the content of pre-school teacher education is one of the factors that facilitate this trajectory into the university studies. The students pointed out that this experience is useful and makes it possible for them to move to a more full/central participation in the practice of university studies.

Eva: Then the practical training comes again then when one reads the theory one can tie it very quickly to. I ah yes that's the way it is that's the way it is I have seen it I have experienced it a lot so so it's easy that we don't need to go out to our practical training, we have already seen what needs doing if one has perhaps never been to pre-school or in the school world other than as a pupil. Then one has to go out with those eyes and we can just say ah yes we we knew that, that we have evidence of our knowledge.

Eva says that she really does not need the school-based part of the education program. This is where students work in order to gain practical experience. These child minders already have extensive experience from pre-school. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the teacher education program and its teachers, it is difficult to separate participation in the practice of the university from the practice of work and give (more) credit for practical experiences, as the design of the program is based on integration of these two parts. (The child minders will get some explicit credit for their practical experiences, but they are not fully aware of this yet – see below.) Practical experience helps the student in the trajectory towards fuller participation

in the practice of university studies. This means that students' tacit knowledge from the practice of work is transformed into explicit knowledge in the practice of the university, where theories, literature, discussions etc. help them to put words to their experiences. From this perspective, which enhances and elevates the child minders' practical knowledge, it is assumed that these students learn when they have opportunities to formulate the tacit knowledge that is embedded in the practice (see Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). It means that participation in the university practice is about theorising practice (cf. Finlay, 2008).

Johanna: and I believe that it has an influence even more I KNOW I have seen I haven't just worked but I also know that it is scientific and I believe it gives one a different attitude.

Two additional factors have been identified as being important for the trajectories into the practice of university studies. Firstly, the work as child minders means that they have extensive experience of working with adults. A lot of work in teacher education is organised as group work, and the child minders' prior experience in this respect is recognised implicitly and helps them to move from a peripheral to a more full participation in this type of practice.

Eva: You are used to speaking at parent-teacher meetings. So that you can work together with each other, we are used to cooperating and working in a group and then it is possible to perform well.

The students point out that their child-minder experience, working in groups in their everyday work, is important and helps them in their university studies. By using their prior experience they say that they were able to easily transfer this to the practice of university studies. This is useful in literature seminars as well as in different kinds of examinations, both oral and written.

Secondly, these students are highly motivated to study in this specific education program. This motivation makes them eager to participate fully in the studies, and to move in

the direction of the identity as a pre-school teacher. This motivation is both internal and external. The internal motivation means that they really want to become pre-school teachers. They already know to some extent from prior experience what this profession means, and they have chosen voluntarily to study teacher education.

Maria: We feel another [type of] responsibility for our studies. We are more responsible. We have already tried this occupation and we really knew what we wanted. It isn't that I didn't want, we have really tried this!

The external motivation stems both from work and from their private lives. Being employed as a child minder was a prerequisite of admission to this specific program, which means that the employers are involved in the process. Both the employer and colleagues have expectations, due to the fact that they are on part-time study leave and spend the rest of their working hours at the pre-school. Additionally, in some cases the employers pay their salary for half the study time (i.e. the child minder gets 75% of her salary, works 50% and studies another 50%). These students are also on average older than the regular students and more often have a family. This means that they have less spare time that could be spent on study activities, and consequently they are motivated to use their study time effectively.

### ***Implicit and indirect recognition of work-place experience/knowledge***

Focusing on the aspect of recognition, we can see how the formal recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a minor part of the program. This lack of formal and explicit recognition means that what we mainly see is indirect, implicit and/or informal recognition (rpl). From what we have described above, we see how these students make use of their prior experiences in different ways. When they use their prior experiences, and current position in the workplace, this helps them in the trajectory into their university studies and at the beginning of the shift of professional identity in the workplace – which means that their background is recognised.

An explicit policy in this teacher education program was that these students should have the same education as the regular students when it came to courses, study tasks, literature, etc. The teachers also followed this policy to a large extent. The courses were not designed to take into account the backgrounds of these students (child minders).

However, their background was taken into consideration at the program level. The whole idea of this specific program for child minders means that this group is given recognition – they have a background (including knowledge and experiences) that is valuable when studying to be a pre-school teacher, and the program is designed in a way that is intended to make it easier for them to participate (half-time studies, practice at your own workplace, etc.). In addition to this, the design includes a general credit that has yet to be awarded, which the students seem not to be fully aware of – the idea is that all students will be given credit for a course consisting of 30 ECTS points in their area of specialization.

## **Conclusion**

Applying a situated learning perspective has developed the understanding of the role of prior learning in teacher education. Regarding teacher education as being situated in two communities of practice, the university and the (pre-)school, where students participate, following different trajectories and developing certain identities, seem to be particularly fruitful ways to think about this initiative in terms of recognition of prior learning. This has contributed to new insights concerning the recognition of prior experiences and learning, which are situated in a community of practice that is both relevant and one of the practices of teacher education.

The function of admitting “new groups” of students to higher education might be that of a Trojan horse (cf. Harris, 1999), bringing new students into the university and starting a process of change from within. However, this is not necessarily the case. From our

perspective, a reasonable interpretation is that changes from “within” are not very likely from the beginning. The child minders are initially peripheral participants, and change from within might require a more central position in the community of practice. However, the results show how these students become less peripherally situated fairly quickly. Their prior experience and prior learning help them in their trajectory into university studies and in their shift of identity. Not least their participation in the practice of work, where part of the education program is situated, could to a large extent be seen as full.

There are new requirements and challenges for a teacher education program and the university teachers when education is targeted at a group of students who are expected to have relevant experiences and knowledge acquired through informal learning. The shift in focus from teaching to learning is obvious. The “teaching curriculum” is not as important as before. The teachers must also take into consideration the “learning curriculum”, which here also includes prior learning. The idea of “learning outcomes” is not fully realised in the program we have studied: the participation and the trajectories of the student teachers could vary to a large extent, as long as they reach the same learning outcomes. In this case, the expected outcomes are related to the identity as a pre-school teacher, and the close relation between “theory” and “practice”. Even if the policy was that the child minders and the regular students should follow about the same trajectories and reach the same learning outcomes, we have seen interesting differences in the trajectories. These different types of trajectories could be employed in teacher education to adapt the program to different groups with varying backgrounds, experiences, and prior learning, who are crossing the boundary between university and school in different ways (cf. Finlay, 2008). An important aspect of this is the possibility that students have valuable tacit knowledge, as the challenge then is to make this knowledge explicit rather than to develop new knowledge. Another aspect is that the child minders have similar backgrounds – their prior experiences and learning, or their trajectories,

from/in pre-school make them a fairly homogenous group of students in contrast to the variety of backgrounds in the study by Green et al. (2004) – which means that they can support each other in their learning trajectories in a specific, collective, way. As mentioned, Osman (2006) has highlighted the collective dimension of prior learning that is made visible through the perspective of situated learning. In our study, we can see how prior participation in the practice of work influences the study process, and that this process involves the community of practice in the pre-school in different ways. In this way, the teacher education program in which these child minders participate has the potential to influence the work at their pre-schools both during the study period and beyond it, as the new pre-school teachers adopt a central position and sense of belonging within this community of practice.

## References

- Breier, M. (2005). A disciplinary-specific approach to the recognition of prior informal experience in adult pedagogy: ‘rpl’ as opposed to ‘RPL’. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 27, 51–65.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S.L. (1999). Relationship and Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Communities. In A. Iran-Nejad & P.D. Pearson (Eds.), *Review of Research in Education*, 24 (pp. 249–307). Washington: Aera.
- Cruickshank, K. (2004). Towards diversity in teacher education: Teacher preparation of immigrant teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 27, 125–138.
- Fejes, A., & Andersson, P. (2009). Recognising prior learning: Understanding the relations among experience, learning and recognition from a constructivist perspective. *Vocations and Learning*, 2, 37–55.
- Finlay, I. (2008). Learning through boundary-crossing: Further education lecturers learning in both the university and workplace. *European of Journal of Teacher Education*, 31, 73–87.

- Green, A., Randall, R., & Francis, R. (2004). Industry into teaching: an alternative model. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 32, 23–33.
- Harris, J. (1999). Ways of seeing the recognition of prior learning (RPL): What contribution can such practices make to social inclusion? *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 31, 24–39.
- Jordell, K.O. (2006). *Learning to teach: A review and a discussion* (Report no 1, 2006). Oslo, Norway: University of Oslo, Institution for Educational Research.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Linell, P. (1994). *Transkription av tal och samtal: Teori och praktik* [Transcription of speech and conversations: Theory and practice] (Arbetsrapporter från Tema K, Nr 9). Linköping, Sweden: Linköpings universitet.
- Markström, A.-M. (2005). *Förskolan som normaliseringspraktik: En etnografisk studie* [Pre-school as a normalizing practice: An ethnographic study] (Linköping Studies in Pedagogic Practice No. 1). Linköping, Sweden: Linköpings universitet, Department of Educational Sciences.
- Ministry of Education. (1996). *En strategi för kunskapslyft och livslångt lärande* [A strategy for adult education and lifelong learning] (SOU 1996:27). Stockholm: Regeringskansliet, Utbildningsdepartementet.
- Ministry of Education. (1998). *Läroplan för förskolan* [Curriculum for pre-school] (Lpfö 98). Stockholm: Fritzes.
- Ministry of Education. (1999). *Att lära och leda: En lärarutbildning för samverkan och utveckling* [To learn and to lead: A teacher education for cooperation and development] (SOU 1999:63). Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.

- Ministry of Education. (2001). *Den öppna högskolan* [The open university] (Proposition 2001/02:15). Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.
- National Agency of Education. (2008). *Personal i förskolan 15 oktober 2007* [Personnel in pre-school October 15, 2007]. Retrieved September 2, 2008, from <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/1665>.
- O'Donnell, V.L. & Tobbell, J. (2007). The transition of adult students to higher education: Legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice? *Adult Education Quarterly*, 57, 312–328.
- Osman, R. (2006). RPL: An emerging and contested practice in South Africa. In P. Andersson & J. Harris (Eds.), *Re-theorising the Recognition of Prior Learning* (pp. 205–220). Leicester, UK: NIACE.
- Polanyi, M. (1958). *Personal Knowledge*. London: Routledge & Kegan, Paul.
- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Swedish Research Council. (2002). *Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning* [Ethical principles for research in the humanities and social sciences]. Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet.
- Taylor, T. (1996). Learning from experience: Recognition of prior learning (RPL) and professional development for teachers. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 24, 281–292.
- Taylor, T. & Clemans, A. (2000). Avoiding the hoops: A study of recognition of prior learning processes in Australian faculties of education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 28, 263–280.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.,

