INVESTIGATING THE FORMATION OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Teacher identity

• Attention to teacher identity increased in recent decades (see e.g. Akkerman & Meijer, 2011).

• Teachers’ sense of their professional identity manifests itself in job satisfaction, occupational commitment, self-efficacy, and changes in levels of motivation (Day, 2002).
Current study

• We introduce a questionnaire, inspired by socio-cultural tradition and **Dialogical Self Theory**, that was developed to explore the formation of a teacher’s professional identity.

• Pedagogical dilemmas
Socio-cultural perspective

• Following the socio-cultural perspective, the formation of professional identity is **relational**, and thus interwoven with influences from the cultural context.

• The result of dialogue between the person and his or her social surroundings is the **adaption or creation of meanings** (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007).
Laminal model of internalization/externalization (Valsiner, 1997, p. 305)
Dialogical Self theory (Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010)

• The self is a system of relatively autonomous I-Positions between which the self fluctuates.
• These I-Positions have emerged through different historical, cultural and institutional experiences and social relationships and are supplied with “voices”.
• The migration of a group of students into a new socio-cultural environment of an institution is expected to feed into the creation of a new I-Position (me as a professional).
• It is presumed that I-Positions (I as myself and I as a teacher) are not identical and therefore cause **ambivalence**.

• The ambivalence between the old and a new I-Position is for that reason a key phenomenon to focus on while studying someone’s **professional role in progress**.
Research question

A questionnaire – Investigate the use of different I-Positions (I as a person and I as a professional) when solving ambivalent professional situations.

The exact selection of the dilemmas was informed by the instructional core framework of teaching (see methods section).
Research questions

1. How do pre-service teachers solve the different pedagogical dilemmas?

2. What is the relationship between work and study experience and the presentation of professional positions in pre-service teachers’ answers?
Participants

• 234 pre-service teachers studying at a university in Estonia.
• 2 year teacher education module 24 ECTS subjects; 24 ECTS practicum
• 132 at the beginning; 102 at the end of the 3rd semester.
Developing the questionnaire: selection of dilemmas

Figure: Framework for analysing challenging and empowering events (cf. Herbart, 1835, Kansanen & Meri, 1999; Toom, 2006)
### Example question

**Table 1.** The multiple choice answers presented in the instrument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of dilemmas</th>
<th>Possible solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) When the teacher has to teach themes that (s)he is not interested in, (s)he feels...</td>
<td>1.1. bad, since the teacher would actually not like to teach themes that (s)he is not interested in. (NEGPRSN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2. good, since the teacher can also teach the themes that are interesting to him/her. (POSPRSN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3. bad, since now the teacher has to start teaching the uninteresting theme. (NEGPROF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4. good, since it is teacher’s job to teach the themes prescribed in the curriculum. (POSPROF)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reliability of the sub-scales

- $\alpha_{(negprsn)} = 0.74$, $M=1.75$, $Min=0$, $Max=6$, $SD=1.72$, $N=178$
- $\alpha_{(negprof)} = 0.65$, $M=1.31$, $Min=0$, $Max=6$, $SD=1.43$, $N=178$
- $\alpha_{(posprof)} = 0.65$, $M=1.67$, $Min=0$, $Max=5$, $SD=1.55$, $N=178$
- $\alpha_{(posprsn)} = 0.59$, $M=1.26$, $Min=0$, $Max=4$, $SD=1.33$, $N=178$
Results: overview

Table 2. The communication of professional and personal role orientations and related feelings among pre-service teachers when solving ambivalent pedagogical situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dilemma nr.</th>
<th>Valid N¹</th>
<th>Role expectations and related feelings</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Posprof² (%)</td>
<td>Negprof³ (%)</td>
<td>Posprsn⁴ (%)</td>
<td>Negprsn⁵ (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.Content: unsinessing themes</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.Content: themes not known</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.Ped: unable to keep order in class</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.Ped: pupil unpleasant behaviour</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.Didactic: inability to make theme understandable</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.Didactic: not interested in using suggested teach method</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differences between 2 groups of students

Table 3. Mean Ranks of professional and personal orientation sub-scales of the questionnaire among two groups of pre-service teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professional¹</th>
<th>Personal²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of studies (1)</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>116.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of studies (2)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>118.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Sum of professional role orientations chosen across the dilemmas; ² sum of personal role orientations chosen across the dilemmas

Z = -1.915; U = 5775; p = 0.055
Differences between 2 groups of students

Table 4. Mean ranks four sub-scales of the questionnaire among two groups of pre-service teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Posprof(^1)</th>
<th>Negprof(^2)</th>
<th>Posprsn(^3)</th>
<th>Negprsn(^4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean rank</td>
<td>Mean rank</td>
<td>Mean rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of studies</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>113.36</td>
<td>119.81</td>
<td>112.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of studies</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>112.85</td>
<td>114.50</td>
<td>123.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Sum of professional role orientations accompanied with positive feelings; \(^2\) sum of professional role orientations accompanied with negative feelings; \(^3\) sum of personal orientations accompanied with positive feelings; \(^4\) sum of personal orientations accompanied with negative feelings

Z = -2.927; U = 5267; p = 0.003

e.g. I feel bad because I as person cannot realize some of my preferences, while solving ambivalent work-related dilemmas.
Discussion

• Results revealed that across the two questions that focused on a particular element of the instructional core (content relationship, pedagogical relationship, and didactical relationship) students came very different answers.
A higher level of **school practicum and study experience** is related to **less frequent** presentation of **personal orientation** accompanied with **negative feelings** when solving **ambivalent work-related dilemmas**.

- Not related to **professional orientation**.
Laminal model of internalization/externalization (Valsiner, 1997, p. 305)
Discussion in the context of IT studies

• How could be the results taken into account in changing theachers’ practice in introducing IT studies and career choices in schools?
Thank you!

Questions?

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