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**THE DISCOURSE OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY  
CONSTRUCTION OF BEGINNING TEACHERS**

Štefan Chudý (a), Jiří Kropáč (b), Vlado Balaban (c)\*, Iva Koribská (d)

\*Corresponding author

- (a) Institute of Education and Social Studies Palacky University in Olomouc, Žižkovo nám. 5, Olomouc, Czech Republic, stefan.chudy@upol.cz,
- (b) Institute of Education and Social Studies Palacky University in Olomouc, Žižkovo nám. 5, Olomouc, Czech Republic, j.kropac@upol.cz,
- (c) Institute of Education and Social Studies Palacky University in Olomouc, Žižkovo nám. 5, Olomouc, Czech Republic, vlado.balaban02@upol.cz,
- (d) Institute of Education and Social Studies Palacky University in Olomouc, Žižkovo nám. 5, Olomouc, Czech Republic, ivakoribska@gmail.com

*Abstract*

This research focuses on the process of designing teachers' professional identity. The main objective is to carry out an in-depth description of the stages of the process of constructing a professional identity. The main focus is on the abilities and constructs of personality which is formatting during studies at the university. The main aim is to analyse the basic factors of teacher's professional identity formation. In this qualitative oriented research design, mind mapping based on narrative analysis, semi-structured interview, open coding analysis of the statements were used as the data collection methods. The output of the research is the concept and creation of the discourse, structures, and semi-structures of the self-identity development and professional self-concept with focus on reconstruction and construction the subjective conceptualization of the teachers' profession perception. Based on this discourse analysis, we intend to present the conceptual apparatus in theory of teachers' education.

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**Keywords:** Discourse, teacher, higher education, self-identity.



## 1. Introduction

University institutions represent not only centres of education and research, which are linked to the ever-increasing demands and needs of society, but also the active communities sharing common values through which they view both worldwide and regional issues. Teachers as members of these communities are the bearers of these values practically applying them in the educational processes.

The importance of the existence of faculties of education in the Czech Republic as holders of the value of education does not correspond to the financial appreciation or the prestige of the teaching profession, as evidenced by the fact that more than half of their graduates choose another professional career.

Expectations that these students have do not always meet the requirements and demands of individual faculties of education. Unfulfilled expectations may be the cause of early study leaving or function as one of the major obstacles. Professional expectations stem from the past experience of their own success or failure, first educational experience and interaction with supervisors (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Gobet, 2017).

Students represent the future bearers of the professional value orientation reflected in the academic environment. This is also related to the transfer of value orientation from academic to practical school life. One of the key professional values of the pedagogical profession at all levels is the relation to the value of education, which can be viewed from many angles within a professional identity.

### 1.1. Perception of the general concept

For the purpose of our research, the beginning teacher is defined as a student of the faculty of education performing an encounter with an educational reality. These teachers, in their own interest, require support not only on the ground of the educational institution but also reflect their experiences with other students in a narrower circle. The supervisors – both from the educational institution (practical) and university (academic) are perceived as experienced academic and practical school staff who have many years of experience in teaching pupils and leadership of students in the process of professionalization of their educational activities. In this context, it acts as an important element of feedback based on reflection and consultation of one's own experience, which, as a key factor in the process of professionalization, forms a professional identity for a future career path.

When constructing the professional identity, it is necessary to consider the professional component of the identity, which is quite variable. Life and personal experiences of schools and teaching that the pre-service teachers bring with them to teacher preparation courses affect the way they manage the “becoming” process (Živković, 2018). The next point of view is the expert component of the identity (Kropáč, Peng & Chudý, 2018 in press). Self-component of the identity presents the key element of the professionalization (Epitropaki, Kark, Mainemelis, & Lord, 2014).

The professional value orientation of the supervisors as part of their professional identity is reflected in their feedback provided to their students. In this context, the transfer of professional value orientation is realized from an academic environment into a practical one in the form of teaching. For the purpose of the research, the value of interaction between the supervisor and the student is grouped into a social context of

values, including cultural and religious values. This conception follows on from our concept of the transferred professional identity, which occurs in the process of professionalization.

Respondent 16: *“My supervisor is very good, like with my father, very detached. This is exactly what I need. Freedom, independence and support are very important.”*

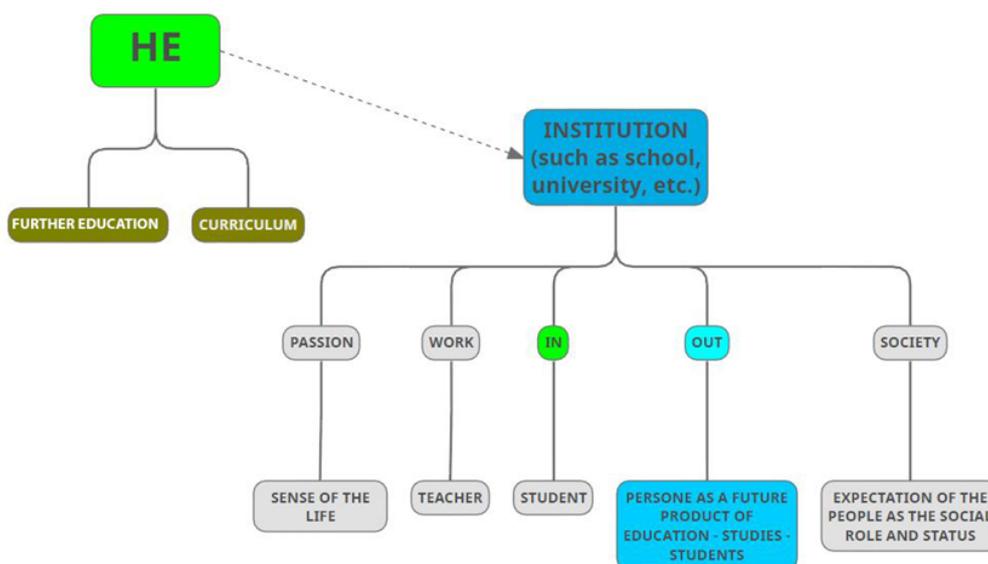
Respondent 8: *“At the beginning, we need to find the way of communication with our supervisors, but now I feel we are friends.”*

The meaning of Higher Education (HE) in a generalized concept for beginning teachers is influenced by linking the curricular reforms with an emphasis on the development of professional identity in relation to lifelong learning (Kropáč & Koribská, 2017) within the university environment.

As part of professionalization at the institutional level, the acquired theoretical knowledge is transformed into the experience gained during the pedagogical activity of the beginning teacher. From the perspective of teacher professionalism, social perception is also an important factor influencing the direction of professional identity development. Society as a dynamically evolving entity creates a pressure that the teacher has to cope with.

Respondent 9: *“From an academic environment, generally from a formal one, I’m a little scared, but my supervisors have come good, I feel support, I feel good about them.”*

From the legislative point of view, it is necessary to take into account the need for a focus on university teacher training in a wide societal context. Regarding the higher education, the necessity for the preparation and leadership of future teachers is largely influenced by the concept of current trends in curricular transformations that cause usage to generalized portability of information for future generations of teaching (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělesné výchovy [MŠMT], Amandment 2017).



**Figure 01.** Generalized perception of the influence of higher education structure on beginning teachers

## **2. Problem Statement**

The teacher's identity is fragile and inconsistent. The elemental components of each personality affect individual identity formation during partial development stages. All these layers of professional approach are directed by the needs of the society. The research intends to clarify the relationships and their development in the process of teacher identity formation and its professionalization.

## **3. Research Questions**

How is a teacher's identity influenced by the abilities and constructs during the university studies?

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The research analyses the basic factors of teacher's professional identity formation, including partition characteristics that greatly influence the formation of the teacher's identity in relation to his/her profession.

## **5. Research Methods**

To create a structure (emerging points, the creation of discourse analysis) and to define the basic aspects and the concept of discourse during the data collection phase (2016-2018), the concept of mapping and the design technique using unfinished sentences was applied. Concept mapping as a data collection method is used to structure concepts (Buzan, 2007), schematic concepts, and to the graphical representation of mutual relationship (hand-drawn, computer-drawn) (Beel, Langer, Genzmehr, & Gipp, 2014). Conceptual mapping served to "uncover" ontological structures of the thinking of students and novice teachers about the concept of discipline and other related concepts (Rogers, 2014). The clear structure and (re)construction of the conceptual apparatus at various levels of universality, at a certain time, based on their own experience, practical capabilities, and "experienced" educational situations, provides a very exciting material for analysis and discourse.

Structuring the conceptual apparatus by using this method allows understanding changes in thinking and structuring of concepts (e.g. shift in the areas of cognitive thinking development). It allows understanding of the style of processing as a graph-motor expression, and last but not least the constructivist "reasoning" and the capture of meaning by means of representations of terms or symbols. Unstructured mapping is presented in a central concept and the purpose is to search for related concepts on the content page, meaning and other criteria specified for the purpose of this research. In research, the focus of conceptual mapping is determined by the extent and content of discourse. The creation of disciplinary structures and related concepts demonstrate the presented conceptual maps in the reflection of the functions of clarifying, visualizing and presenting ontological structures of "problem thinking".

These maps illustrate perceptions and (re)constructions of the conceptual apparatus of novice teachers, and they also reveal the level of ontological basis of subjective conceptualization. Their content analysis and analysis of abstract levels and relationships between concepts also served to conceive some

assumptions and relational relationships in hypotheses as well as to specify some items in the questionnaire used in empirical research.

Narrative analysis was used to analyse written statements of novice teachers (n: 41) that were part of their portfolio during a study at the faculty of education (analysis carried out in 2016, 2017). Students had to write in various literary forms their observations and experiences that were directed to intrapersonal pro-linking with their self-substance. These parts help with the formatting of own construct in self-point of view. The portfolio was supplemented with the part called self-narration diaries (notices) of teachers' activities. This reflected the memories and the handling of the teacher's attributes during the lesson, which the respondents participated in the roles of pupils. Through the analysis, it was possible to reveal the hidden meanings of situations, perceptions and solutions of pedagogical situations. The statements, which are presented in the text and form the basis of the specification, represent the depth of discourse and its content definition. These claims are based on an analysis of these written statements.

Semi-structured interviews were used on a selected sample of respondents (n: 41). The interviews concerned the discipline issue and were implemented in 2017 and 2018, where starting teachers have already completed two months of continuous education in their (first) employment. The interviews were subsequently overwritten - their transcript was created. It was subjected to an element of analysis similar to biographies of novice teachers - data processing segmentation across responses and open coding and categorization. The analysis of testimonies with the help of a semi-structured interview is based on descriptions of the situations in the school environment in relation to the discipline. Fragmented sample segments are part of the work

## **6. Findings**

The construction of the professional identity is determined mainly by the transfer of the family values that create the stable basis, on which the values of the significant ones – supervisors are built in the process of professionalisation. One of the key factor influencing the professional identity are the expectations that the beginning teachers have from themselves in the process of preparation for the future profession and the mutual interactions in the form of feedback between student and supervisor. On the other hand, beginning teacher transmits by the feedback some communicational and situational patterns, which can be perceived as stereotypes. In this case, the critical thinking comes as crucial modifier, that can limit or eliminate the transfer of stereotypes. The curricular definition is based on valid legislation for the university area, which is governed by the dominance of the state apparatus according to the law. Higher education and readiness is not only benevolent but also monitored by government supervisors such as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, etc. The government provides some external evaluation of the given quality of education and supervise the expected outcomes of the graduate for the needs of the professionalization of the teaching mission in the 21st century. Teacher's alma mater and its initial position play in the education market a major role. The reputation of the institution itself results in an appropriate starting position for the hiring of experts from a broad spectrum of disciplines and enables better conditions to share current trends in education. Successful graduates of educationally-oriented approbations become beginning teachers.

The theoretical basis is then deepened and accumulated in the practical utility mode of activities and practical interactions in the everyday concept of educational reality amid an organized and systematic pedagogical activity. The expected career shift is achieved not only within the career classification in the framework of salary, but mainly in the understanding of the schematic structured perception of the pedagogical vision, which in the case of the novice teacher is based on not only social but also on intrapersonal factors reflecting on the professional concept of their own activities. This subsequent shift from the beginning teacher's boundary may be long-term or short-term.

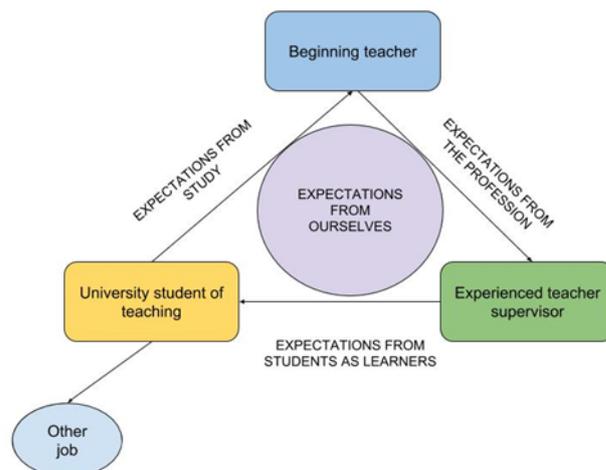
There is no proven continuity between the time horizon, the speed of learning and the management of situational obstructions in a pedagogical concept that our research could demonstrably prove. It is obvious that the respondents coming from the background of the teacher's family have certain assumptions leading to the acceleration of the progress phase of the construct of their own professional identity, as the transgenerational professional continuity is expected. It is possible to demonstrate this phenomenon in the following example:

Respondent 34 “...*My father was a headmaster and he always said that you should not only look for the money in your life, but you should upgrade your knowledge*”.

The activity of the university forms as one of the factors the construct of the beginning teacher's own professional identity. Teacher training must be seen as a basic pillar within the framework of a stable theoretical basis of transferred knowledge that a future teacher must cover at the beginning of his/her own professional career as an integral part of his own teacher's professional identity with an emphasis on the practical transformation and rebuilding this basis which is individualized and subjective within the scope of the self-development of each of us.

Beginning teachers always have the opportunity to take advantage of support measures by experts who can deepen their acquired competencies through a feedback function that deepens and speeds up their transition in their early stages. This feedback process makes it easier to grasp the stereotyped learning behaviour of poor pedagogical practices or thoughts and enables individuals to develop their own direct feedback.

Beginning teacher transmits many habits and systematic learned behaviour and reactions to certain pedagogical situations, that in this case it is possible to talk about the passing of the actual facts or patterns of behaviour or the identities we experience, that we find similarities and links to the so-called transmitted identity, which is the interactional and communication patterns and situational habits, the feedback component of transcendence, which helps to develop its own concept of the threshold of a critical perception of a teacher within a generalized perception in a pedagogical reality where the beginning teacher is surrounded by various elements and activities.



**Figure 02.** Expectations of the beginning teacher in the context of the professional identity development

## 7. Conclusion

The emerging construct of professional identity of the beginning teachers is influenced by these following factors: the process of professionalization and the legal impact. These factors are significant in the formation of the teacher's identity and its construction is influenced by the external and internal phenomena of the self-identification. The value of the feedback from the significant others provides the basis for the self-reflection of the current progress in the beginning teacher's career, which together with other social factors like student's cooperation and practical teaching activity enables the development of the professional identity.

In this sense, it can be said that the transferred identity and the influence of the university environment on the beginning teachers have an irreplaceable influence, which is perceived in the context of 21st century. Our analysis defines to a large extent the transferred identity as the main pillar for the following self-development in the dynamic pedagogical world.

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