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THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF THE
BEGINNING TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article focuses on the beginning teachers in higher education and their professional identity construction. Used methodology is oriented on the significant features of the teacher's personality which are conducted by the teacher's perception. The aim of the research is to analyse the future teachers at universities. The qualitative methodology design was conceived in the lines with the aims of the research and it was used and analysed narrative interviews (Creswell, 2009) of the teachers (n=30). The research deals with the changes in future teachers' self-concept and progress of their self-development during the study on the university. Henceforth, their point of view offers a new way, how to improve current situation at universities and how flexibly react to the progressive social pressure of the changes, which influence the construction of the teacher's complexity. The findings are indicating university teachers' development phases. Thus, the conclusions describe current opportunities and strategies on how to deal with conceptual identity changes in earlier stages of the beginning teachers.

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Keywords: Beginning teacher, construction of the teacher's identity, higher education, phases of construction, professional identity.



1. Introduction

In today's social consciousness, there is a confusing situation in the perception of the concept of identity of beginning teachers who are experiencing a professional start at higher education institutions. The general concept and perception are conditioned by the inconsistent inclusion of the teacher's identity into the broad selection of generalized identities. The definition of the area of the tertiary education by ISCED 2011 classification (OECD, 2015) defines the following qualification grades of education in the 6th to 8th levels of Bachelor, Master, Doctorate. This provision stems from the Lisbon ratification with reference to the Bologna Communiqué (EACEA, 2015).

All these grades can be studied in the relevant field of a given higher education institution. The tertiary education sector includes, among others, universities and other similar institutions in the context of *de lege lata*, which are governed by the state, privately or by Church. The student's dismemberment of individual institutions is variational and the students have autonomous choices of the institution and can profile and make decisions liberally before entering the chosen institution in the tertiary sector. The person who will lead them during their studies is sometimes hidden in the shadows and is neglected in the concept of society. The university teacher is in the eyes of Czech society in terms of prestige at an unbalanced place in the ranking of the perception of prestige compared to other states. The development of perceptions of social status in the society can passively influence the construct of an individual's professional identity. Passively perceived situations can lead to the demotivation of the development of one's own identity during the choice of the profession and the subsequent acceptance of a professional conviction.

A university teacher is often characterized as an academic, an innovator, a leader, a researcher, an expert, a professional in a given field, a teacher, or the person who knows everything (Skelton, 2012; Průcha, 2002; Pennington & Richards, 2016; van Lankveld, Schoonenboom, Volman, Croiset, & Beishuizen, 2017). The beginning teacher from a university perspective does not necessarily have to be limited by the age that categorically defines his / her inclusion in the "beginner" characteristic.

1.1. The diversity of teacher perception

The diversity of the terminology concept of the beginning teacher and his / her characteristics is defined from the university environment inclusion point of view in relation to the academic experience. We find the differences in comparison with the common pedagogical terminology (in our condition) in the perception of the given phenomena, especially in the length of professional practice in which an individual profiles the knowledge of his /her identical concept of self (Skelton, 2012; Průcha, 2002; Cooper & Olson, 1996). The cognitive part of a beginner's teacher's professional identity derives from the previous knowledge, i.e. employment or previous activities, expertise in relation to the development of the knowledge component of the personality that forms the spectral integrity of a generalized identity. Cognitive formation of the identity of beginning teachers is influenced by processes that are related to the intrapersonal anchoring of the whole society's expectations towards the individual.

Consequently, an individual is driven by the social pressure to self-development and self-concept in the sense of achieving a certain identity, which is a significant sign of the expected concept of generalized identity in the whole social context. If the university teacher is perceived by the generalized popular opinion rather as a widely recognized person from the society point of view, this vision of society does not bring a

new concept of identity, but the teacher is then perceived as a puppet that does not have his / her own identity and does not tend to incline to it. Contrary, the teacher becomes fragmented, an empty person without his /her own identity.

2. Problem Statement

The definition of a contextual generalized construct of the teacher's concept of a teacher in a university environment is a key aim of this outcome. The construct of identity and its concept on a generalized scale is so extensive that it asks to be emphasized by a clearer definition from a multi-perspective concept.

- The perception of the identity of a beginning teacher is defined by a categorical definition: self-components, professional components, research components,
- The variables are linked to the individualized part of the individual sub-category defined as identity properties, important for the needs of clear event prediction in relation to the partial description of the stages of identity development,
- Other essential elements of personal perception define external and internal factors that correlate with the integral entity of teacher identity.

As a research problem, we stated an ungrounded idea of the difficulty of individual development of a teacher's identity in the university environment. Can the relation between the expectation of generalized identity and the constructed personality of a beginning teacher be shaped by self-concept and self-development? This research problem is related to the overall complexity of the development of one's own teaching concept in the relationship of macro, meso and micro implications, which are connected to the description of the phenomenon sought in the construct of teacher identity.

3. Research Questions

By categorized selection, this study defines a more precise description of the phenomenon and its entities. We are faced with the research challenge of a diversity of grounding of an emerging teacher's identity in a cultural, professional, scientific, personal world that is widely understood as a generalized idea. Self-identity is transcendent, it contains extensive elements that are intertwined or not connected at all. Such an identity is hierarchically superior and relies on a considerable influence on the subjective experience of a beginning teacher in relation to the need of taking responsibility for self-conception and self-development, which leads to the development of other attributes in relation to the teacher's mastery. What do individual teachers see as an obstacle to the concept of self-development they are currently facing and defined from the point of view of the teacher identity? Can the self-concept of the teacher's own identity be perceived as meaningful to the conscious fulfilment of the teacher's aim?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to define the necessary elementary facts that influence the construct of the teacher's perception of identity from his/her role point of view in the early stage, in the environment of

the higher education sector and to bring to light the hierarchy of the awareness of the possibilities of sub-elementary distribution of the generalized identity reflected from many points of view which are not transparently portrayed for further teachers' needs. By comparing possible approaches and illustrating the interdisciplinary interconnection of phenomena, the teacher's identity is categorized and defined as a complete professional identity of a beginning teacher in the university environment in a wider contextual conception, linking the current perception of the phenomena by the actors of tertiary education.

5. Research Methods

The exploratory part of this paper is oriented to narrative techniques, which were analysed by subsequent post-production of the data and reflect the knowledge from individual partial constructs of individual respondent identities. Narrative Techniques (Creswell, 2009) can be found as an effective tool for collecting and evaluating qualitatively oriented research, in phenomenologically focused research of the current interdisciplinary module research profiles leading to the validation of constructively oriented research in relation to the subjective conception of the studied phenomenon.

Sample and tools

The research sample consisted of 30 respondents who were chosen from the Palacky University academic staff with beginning teaching experience reporting their own way and the perception of the current phenomenon in the narrative interview. The narrative technique was supported by the grounded theory (GTM), which, by means of categorical coding and subsequent axial analysis, describes individual unknown areas in relation to the phenomenological sought, in order to illustrate to a great extent the necessary substances of the sought phenomenon and partial causes of the teacher identity.

6. Findings

6.1. Back to the roots

The start of a construct of professional identity can be seen in the traditional family concept of education. The interaction between individuals and parents forms the initial indication of future development and direction. Nevertheless, from our results, we refer to the fact that the factor of family influence reaches significant differences, especially in traditionally adapted countries, mainly from culturally and religiously oriented values. The traditional vision of family pressure influences the construct of identity, especially from the point of view of self-esteem, and deny the economically transgressive orientation associated with performance and its evaluation, which is the primary impulse for the subsequent intrapersonal conceptual vision of self-concept in the early stages of individual development. Below we present an example of values and self- construction influence of the family of the students.)

Respondent B: *“My father was a bachelor for Mathematics and he was a mathematics teacher for the secondary school, ...he always sad that you should not only look for the money in your life but you should upgrade your knowledge. Like my father said, if you get a better education, it will give you a light, like a light in your life. After my father retired from his position as a school principal,*

he recruited some of the boys from poor families, who come to my house, they live in some kind of dormitory for free.”

In axial relationship to the phenomenon in criterial findings in the narration of the respondent B and N.

Respondent N: *“University of both, one technical direction and one graduated from teaching... but not just that formal value on paper, but in general...that you gain experience, skills and qualifications. ...rather promote and develop their potential.”*

6.2. Facilitators and Barriers

These main subjects, who participate in the later development from the behavioural point of view, anchor the principles of self-perception and the subsequent motivation to develop the already acquired knowledge. This model outlines the various scenarios in relation to the observed micro relationships between the traditional value that is rooted in the family principles versus the intrapersonal struggle for the gradual profiling of an individual in relation to the future career perspective.

Values of education are consistent, assuming the optimal model that the environment in which the individual gains support is in the cooperative mode of support for the given self-development. Any form of support has an impact on the later transfer of learned behaviour and positively oriented habits can greatly help in the subsequent optimal construction of the professional and teaching concept of the individuals (Kropáč & Koribská, 2017).

6.3. Influence of expectation and doctoral degree and concerns about studies

Under current conditions, variable demands on professional qualifications can be found in terms of education attained in the university environment. In particular, these conceptual changes are inconsistent, and many university workplaces regulate the individual demands by the internal norms. In the concept of beginning teachers, we observe the general trend of the minimum degree demand on education started in the doctoral study program, which is presented from the research results in comparison with the expressions of our respondents as the motivational component of the support of the teacher's construct, which has a natural origin in us. Furthermore, in terms of self-concept, this variably different form study is very binding and many respondents consider these demands of study as frustrating and demotivating, which also causes the primary obstacle to the future teacher start and in his/her career at the university. Without educational attainment in doctoral studies, respondents expressed as if they were inferior in terms of legislative and internal claims anchor institutions, but in the reflection of their vision from the perspective of their own identical presentations considered to be a teacher, regardless of the length of formal practice. The study itself is often time-consuming and brings another fundamental problem from the construct of our own identity. Beginning teacher must split (divide) himself by priority.

In the applied selection of findings, the result of the research brings knowledge of self-development and its interconnection as a beginning teacher, including an integral part of his/her everyday professional work. Self-development is considered to be an appropriate part of the individual's identity, which involves its boosting from the general point of view, not only related to the cognitive characteristics, experience, but

also to other key factors where categorization of professional improvement in relation to egoistic enriching oneself and self-perceiving identity to improve our own good for the benefit of society.

From the transcription of the methodological postproduction of data, we demonstrate the concepts of respondents' views on the importance of self-development to their own identity in the following examples, which are related to the topic:

E.g. (Self-development focusing.)

Respondent W: *“I like to set up obstacles.”; “...but the idea of doing something that I enjoy and what I'm moving forward and exploring something that interests me”.*

In correlation to the phenomenon in criterial findings in the narration of the respondent Y and W.

Respondent Y: *“But the self-development on the base of knowledge is one thing and the mental another one, maybe even more important to me”.*

If the teacher's self-development strategies lead to the re-establishment of the limitations that the individual is able to identify and define, they can lead to intrapersonal engagement, which causes not only cognitive development, but also mental-psychological development, which can subsequently fulfil the construction of a resistant personality structure of an individual who is able to cope with the pressures and expectations of a given social mission.

Identity consists not just of the need for self-development, but also the need for coherent strategies that an individual must cope with during self-development in order to achieve the desired outcome. In our research, we encounter the most frequent occurrences of strategic approaches that are based on the professional concept of self-development, without a coherent vision, professional growth in the teaching, the mission cannot be achieved. From a research point of view, we mention a primary and secondary strategy that cannot be separated. From the coding results, we present the following findings of a strategic approach - the strategic concept of identity in the context of professional commitment in relation to the profession, e.g. researcher, teacher, lecturer.

E.g. (Personal focused strategies of the self-development by own point of view.)

Respondent Q: *“I try to maintain on a professional basis, to systematize my overview and to update ... and secondly, I try to present the themes and get feedback from somebody else. Most often I invest in literature. I need to be forced by deadlines to move further”.*

In correlation to the phenomenon of criterial findings in the narration of the respondent Q and Z.

Respondent Z: *“I still write some articles, I make a proposal for a scientific research, that deals with my discipline teaching children's literature. Yes, the key in my life, to manage my studies is to wake up early and study”.*

Furthermore, the systematic increase in the quality of the teacher's own profile in order to increase the quality of feedback in the academic environment, not only in the teacher-student relationship but also in the broader community concept of emerging opportunities in relation to the expected opportunities of teaching professionalization.

The generalized identity of beginning teachers is predominantly based on the following constructs of professional identity:

- the experience component of identity (based on a pragmatic concept),
- the cognitive component of identity (based on cognitive profiling),
- time and practice horizon (experience is interdependent with the duration of the phenomena to the individual identity),
- the professional component of identity (focused on soft-skills),
- the expert component of identity (the expertise of the individual focused on the emerging identity),
- self-identity component (a key element forming our own identity and its concept); (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Dewey, 1986; Mead, 1934; Taylor, 1989),
- research identity component (research identity profiling) (Skelton, 2012),
- behavioural identity component (from variational to substantive identity factor).

7. Conclusion

Identity is very complicated and incomplete in the concept of a beginning teacher. In our article, we try to define fragments, which form a coherent vision of a construct of the identical perception of teacher identity in relation to the teacher's profession in tertiary education. Real identity is time-varying and inconsistent, and often adversely affects teacher decision-making, related to its current subjective experiences and reflections that are behaviorally related to its socio-emotional habits needed for the expected performance of the teaching mission. It should be mentioned that these habits can internally tie up the teachers and variably limit him/her in the understanding of self and the importance of self-development in relation to the unified professional identity grounding of an individual from the teacher role importance point of view, which is mature and professional in the eyes of the society, given the unique identity of a teacher, but no longer observed with deeper understanding by the society. The relationship of time and its influence on the identity construct, the partial longitudinal processes in the strategic approaches of self-development in the professional concept, do not indicate the clear prediction of the teacher's super-identity, but rather define the partial characters needed to understand the complexity and difficulty needed to create an individual concept of a teacher's identity unified features of social importance. A university teacher and professional identity from today's circumstances bring an unfinished circle of possibilities to explore the complexity of the phenomenon.

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