THE DIMENSIONALITY OF STUDENT TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

Although the problem of professional identity of teachers is relatively comprehensively investigate, both the theoretically and the empirically, the problem of the professional identity of student teachers and beginning teachers are not sufficient and comprehensively addressed. On the sample of N = 158 respondents, students of the Faculty of Teacher Education, Student Teacher Professional Identity Scale (Fisherman & Abbot, 1998) was used, which is in previous studies showed relatively good psychometrics characteristics and measures. On our sample of respondents, one dimension was obtained indicating job-orientation to teacher tasks rather than orientations on the profession and the teachers vocation. The implications of these results are important for decisions makers in teacher education.

Key words: teacher education, professional identity, student teachers, factor analysis.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Becoming a teacher is a more complex process than many pre-service teachers may have initially thought (Beattie, 2000; Britzman, 2003, Živković, 2013). Life history, the personal, and those 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. It has been argued that “clear self-image and ownership of an emerging professional identity” are necessary conditions that help pre-service teachers effectively apply knowledge acquired from teacher education programs into workplace situations in the future” (Bennett, 2013: 55). Moreover, the examination of pre-service teachers’ perceptions of their future selves may reveal doubts and unrealistic expectations, as well as provide a road map for developing the skills or dispositions required to become the teacher they aspire to be (Brand & Dolloff, 2002).

Teacher educators have been challenged “to recreate the space for construction of an individual, meaningful, resilient professional identity underpinned by strong beliefs and values” (Smethem, 2007:478). Understanding early pre-service teachers’ emerging identity may enable teacher educators to prepare pre-service teachers for their teaching career, through facilitating the development of a professional identity as teachers, and eventually the development of effective teachers who thrive in the profession.

Moore & Hofman (1988) have designed research to examine the hypothesis that a highly prominent teacher professional identity can block the tendency of abandoning the institution

1 Revisional scientific paper
of higher education and that this coincides with justified criticism of institutions. Authors defined professional identity as an extension of awareness of how one thinks about his roles as important, attractive images about himself that are in agreement with other roles. With the issue of professional identity and its characteristics, the authors connect the concept of job satisfaction. The following results and conclusions were obtained: satisfaction with the work was previously connected with the needs of self-realization and self-actualization, but with working conditions; professional identity is a good incentive to leave the profession, i.e., teaching work (absenteeism); insisting on quality at the level of the organization correlates with the developed professional identity of the members of the organization.

At the level and methodology of theoretical analysis, Siraj-Blatchford (1993) organize research to show that the professional identity of a teacher-beginner depends on the prescribed curriculum. Professional identity is determined by the sense of teacher autonomy. The autonomy of teachers is crucial for understanding of a identity, but in the conclusions of the research author accept the remark that in the formulation of the conclusions they were under the influence, then only the proposed, the concept of teacher competences, for whom they admit that it has negligible influence on the teacher's self-identity.

Research on the theme of forming a professional teacher identity is relevant to mentors in the training of future teachers in schools, and their goal is to better understand and conceptualize the support and needs of future teachers (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Important factors in shaping the professional identity of teachers are, in particular, biographies and beliefs expressed in these biographies (Knowles, 1992, Surgue, 1997, Kalchtermans, 1994). From this perspective, Bullough (1997) writes that:

"[...] the identity of teachers-what beginners teach about self-as-teacher teaching (sic!)-vital to education and training of young teachers; This is the basis for the creation of meaning and decision making. Teacher education, therefore, must begin by self-examination by teachers, by examining the teacher's self” (Bullough, 1997:21).

The aim of the research carried out by Sugrue (1997) was to provide an insight into the most prominent impacts (formative, personal and social) on the professional identity of trainee teachers through the deconstruction of their implicit theories. Sardis defines professional identity as part of a discourse that is open to continuous redefinition, rather than as a set of essential characteristics that are common to all teachers. As related, the author uses the concepts: image of teachers, biography of teachers. His main conclusions are: teachers-trainees are able to define topics related to their professional identity; implicit teacher theories depend on the personality of teachers, but also on the social context; The professional identity of teachers is mostly an intuitive expression of their personality (tacit) and depends on personal theory of teaching and teaching.

Some studies of a positive and negative role model clearly demonstrated the impact of teachers from their own past on beginner teachers (Koster, Korthagen & Shrijumaners, 1995). These examples show that past models form a professional "self-image" of teachers. Tasin (1999) points out that "[...] the behavior of the functions of the self-concept, which makes the self-concept the essential aspect of teaching and training for teaching" (p.27). Hamachek (1999) notes that "[...] as more teachers know about themselves - within the personal curriculum - that more personal decisions influence the making of better decisions in teaching" (p.209).
Bearing in mind the education and training of teachers, it is interesting to speculate on how far or close the personal and professional self are. Although there are those who prefer clear and pure distinctions, most researchers agree that insisting on the distinction in this area is not justified (Nias, 1989). This is why "in other professions it may be easier to notice the difference between individual and professional performance" (McLean, 1999: 104).

We can ask ourselves whether and to what extent teacher training contributes to the development of professional identity. In some, this is unquestionable, as with Bullough (1997), which states:

"The identity of teachers - what an inexperienced teacher believes in teaching and teaching, learning and self as a teacher - is vital to the education of future teachers; it is the basis for the formation of meaning and exercise in decision-making [...].

The main problem, here indicated, is that the self-concept is extremely resistant to change (Swann, 1992). Experienced teachers know that when a beginner has a negative self-concept, it is difficult to translate it in a different way of thinking about himself, even when confronted with examples in which he showed a different form of behavior (the reverse situation is, at least, controversial). The classical psychoanalytic explanation of this phenomenon is the "ego-resilience", which protects the ego.

Teacher training institutions organize their activities on the basis of the list of "basic competences" determined by the establishment in the field of education (Deros & Vanderheyden, 2002). These regulations define quality elements, but not necessarily the assumptions of the teaching profession. They represent only a part of the regulations (terms and conditions) for the preparation of the profession of teachers. What they do not prescribe is the second, much more important part: pedagogy of trainee teachers and mastering thoughts.

In the last few decades, five pedagogical traditions have made an impact on modern training programs for future teachers, as follows:
1. academic,
2. practical,
3. technological,
4. personal,
5. critical (reconstructive) (Bretzman, 2003).

Each of them has influenced a group of ideas about the goals of future teachers' training. Some comparative analyzes (Wideen, 1998) have shown that teachers still hold those positivistic ones, in the later discourse-traditional, ie, academic. Britzman analysis shows that:
- higher education teacher training institutions provide and offer knowledge through various, often fragmentary courses;
- schools provide an environment in which beginner teachers are expected to apply this theory (Britzman, 2003).

Beginners are expected to integrate educational, didactic and pedagogical theories themselves. Such, traditionally structured programs, are not effective in preparing teachers for the teaching profession. This deficit is defined as the "problem of pedagogy" and the
failure of the program of theory integration (taught at faculties) and practice (Britzman, 2003).

In this paper, a realistic and holistic approach to the preparation of teachers is taught. Korthagen (2004), as already recognized authority in the field of pedeutology research, advocates this approach, inspired by the synthesis of valuable elements of each of the above historical traditions. The adjective realistic implies the need for a real pedagogy of teacher training, realistic ways of achieving the goals of teacher training, highlighting the different types of knowledge that form the basis for application in practice, e.g. academic, technical, practical, reflexive, thorough knowledge, etc.

The focus is not on the fact that the teacher "knows a lot about teaching", but in helping him to become a good teacher who understands himself, participates in personal and professional changes. To enable these aspects of formation to become operational, Korthagen (2004) proposes the so-called level of change or onion model with basic elements, levels of personal and professional changes.

According to the model, preparing future professors for the profession should not be focused on behavioral changes, competencies and beliefs, but the focus should be on the identity of teachers and his mission as a higher, more complete level of professional achievement. Some authors (Dilts, 1990: 13) report similar levels of change that determine the issues:
- where am I (the "environment"),
- what am I doing ("behavior"),
- what can they do ("capacity of competences"),
- what I believe ("beliefs"),
- who am I ("identity"),
- what do I want ("mission, calling").

The intention to distinguish the essential qualities of teachers and teaching can be fraught with great difficulties. There are many attempts to describe the quality of teachers and turn these descriptions into competences. There is also a lot of doubt about the validity, reliability and practical value of such a procedure (Barnet, 1994; Hyland, 1994). Concepts of performance models and competencies based on teacher education models have become prevalent since the 1950s. The basic idea of these models is - concrete and observable available behaviors and behavioral criteria can serve as the basis for beginner training. After that, in order to identify the behaviors of teachers that appear in high correlation with the results of student learning, the concept of "process-product" research appears. These forms of teacher behavior are translated into concrete competences, which teachers should adopt and improve.

The development of such a logic, it turns out now clearly, leads to serious problems. In order to ensure sufficient validity and reliability in the achievements of teachers, detailed lists of skills (teacher skills) are constructed. This led to the fragmentation of teacher roles. In practice, this detailed list (taxonomic character) and a long list of skills, is considered very narrowly. Insufficient attention is drawn to the fact that a good teacher can not be comprehensively described in the terms of isolated, narrowly defined competences, which would be practiced in repeated training and practice cycles (especially for primary and beginner teachers).
"It’s a mistake to assume that methods used by experienced teachers (certified competences) can (or should) be directly applied to beginners" (Newman & Wass, 1974: 4).

Feiman-Nemser (1983) states that teachers spent many years at school as pupils, during which period they gained and developed personal beliefs about teaching and teaching, many of which are diametrically opposed to what they hear and practice in the course academic education and initial training. All of this led to the development of teacher education and training in which the transfer of scientific knowledge (or formal knowledge) was less emphasized (Fenstermacher, 1994), and the growing awareness of personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986).

This practical knowledge usually takes the form of images. An example is a picture of a teacher that many teachers retain from their personal school days (personal experience) -one who stands in front of the student and explains it. Korthagen (1996) points out that not only are "visualizations and images" or purely cognitive aspects involved in this; these are also emotional, willing and behavioral aspects (Hargreaves, 1998).

The researchers use the term Gestalt for this feature to indicate the cohesive content of earlier experience, the role model, the need, the values of images and routines, which are often unconsciously caused by a concrete situation (Korthagen, 2001). An example of this in the case of a teacher-beginner:

- the teacher-beginner faces a student whom he / she considers to be impeccable;
- almost "directly and automatically" extracts old images and feelings in order to change student behavior;
- it would not be imaginable that, at the same time and in the moment (in magic), all the knowledge acquired during professional preparation is canceled and replaced by the Gestalt;
- A beginner-teacher may, for example, seek confrontation with the student, even though knowledge about interpersonal behavior in the classroom (Wubbels & Levy, 1993) suggests that in such situations the teacher would better define himself for cooperative behavior.

**METHOD**

**Research Problem.** The main problem of this research is to examine self-reported attitudes toward main student teachers professional identity dimensions. Similar as that, the second aim of the present study was examining of the psychometric characteristics of the STPIS (Student Teachers Professional Identity Scale) (Fisherman & Abbot, 1993) that was for the first time used in Serbia.

**General Research Hypothesis.** It is expected that were one plausible and interpretable teachers professional identity dimension that expressed students teacher professional

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2 Beginner teachers often emphasize beliefs about teaching as "knowledge transmission", although their instructors (menthors) find that this belief does not have any major benefits in gaining the skills of a good teacher (Richardson, 1997).
identities characteristics according to the STPIS and research results, respectively.

**Sample and Procedure.** The initial sample of respondents consisted of 158 students from University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Education in Jagodina. The sample comprised of 54.1% of the 2nd year teacher program students and 45.9% of those who were the 3rd year and master undergraduated teacher program group. The study group consisted of 158 participants (131 [83%] women and 17 [17%] men (M=1.83, SD=.375), 50 [32%] post-graduated and 108 [68%] under-graduated students (M=1.06, SD=.206). Test distribution for academic achievements is normal (Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z=1.999, p=0.001, M=2.46, SD=.706). The survey was conducted anonymously and voluntarily in Faculty of Education in Jagodina. The data collection was conducted anonymously to protect confidentiality of the participants.

**Instrument:** *Student Teacher Professional Identity Scale* (Fisherman & Abbot, 1993) (STPIS). This questionnaire examines students’ attitudes towards being a teacher and to how much they identify with teacher’s role. The questionnaire examines their confidence about their professional choice, their sense of self-actualization as teachers, and the extent to which they see their profession as a mission and as a challenge. The questionnaire consists of 12 items. The teachers were asked to what extent they agreed with the items on a five-point scale (ranging from 1: complete disagreement, to 5: complete agreement). The total scores ranged from 5 to 60 points. Alpha reliability in previous study was α= .93 (Fisherman & Abbot, 1993), and in repeated measuring was α=.84 (Fisherman & Weiss, 2006).

**Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Single Items of the Student Teachers Professional Identity Scale for the Total Group (N = 158).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items/Stavke</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is important to me to be a teacher /Biti ucitelj za mene je vazno.</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I’m comfortable introducing myself as a teacher /Ugodno mi je kada se predstavljam kao ucitelj.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Being a teacher is a central part of my life /Biti ucitelj je centralni deo mog zivota.</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When someone says something negative about teachers, I feel hurt /Kada neko kaze nesto negativno o uciteljima, osecam se povredjeno.</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I always wanted to be a teacher /Oduvek sam zeleo da budem ucitelj</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I am attracted by the work of a teacher/Privlaci me posao ucitelja.</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I think that it will be good for me to be engaged in education /Mislim da je dobro za mene da se bavim poucavanjem.</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.901</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. When someone does not understand my profession, I explain the meaning of being a teacher to him /Kada neko ne razume profesiju kojom cu se baviti objasnim mu sta to znaci biti ucitelj

9. For me, teaching is a mission/Za mene je poucavanje - poziv

10. I think I will fulfill myself as a teacher /Mislim da cu postati ispunjen/a kada postanem ucitelj

11. Teaching is an intellectual challenge for me /Za mene je poucavanje intelektualni izazov.

12. My main challenge in my work is to advance children /Glavni izazov u poslu kojim cu se baviti jeste kako poboljsati zivot ucenika.

M=49.19   SD=9.47

**Statistical Analyses.** Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, the test-retest correlation coefficient, and the correlations between the RS and other measures were established by calculating Pearson’s correlation coefficients. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted by using data at initial assessment. All statistical analyses used two-tailed tests. For all statistical evaluations, p values less than 0.05 were considered indicative of significant differences.

The statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows, version 17.0. For statistical analysis, p-values lower than .05 were considered statistically significant. The normality of the total scores of STPIS were evaluated by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality.

**RESULTS**

Mean score on the STPIS was M=49.19 (SD=9.47). The items are presented in Table 1. The overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the STPIS was α=0.935, indicate good reliability. In the item-statistics analysis, in Cronbach’s Alpha if items deleted section, there were no items that had value above obtained α=.935. KMO (.889) and Bartlett test of sphericity (p=.000) had satisfactory values. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality Z=1.264 (p=.082). The test-retest correlation coefficient of the STPIS was 0.83, and that of the STPIS-6 was 0.84.

**Table 2. Results of Reliability Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Squared Multiple Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STPIS1</td>
<td>44.75</td>
<td>76.975</td>
<td>.648</td>
<td>.554</td>
<td>.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS2</td>
<td>44.83</td>
<td>80.734</td>
<td>.642</td>
<td>.484</td>
<td>.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS3</td>
<td>45.60</td>
<td>75.696</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td>.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS4</td>
<td>45.75</td>
<td>72.387</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>.624</td>
<td>.932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From a principal component extraction with varimax rotation, one factor were emerged. The 12 items in the STPIS were entered into principal component analysis according to the previous study. All items loaded onto the first component, and factor loadings were greater than 0.68. One-factor solution accounted for 59.83% of the total variance.

**Table 3:** Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) – Component Matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Matrix</th>
<th>Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STPIS6</td>
<td>.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS10</td>
<td>.851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS7</td>
<td>.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS9</td>
<td>.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS5</td>
<td>.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS11</td>
<td>.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS4</td>
<td>.751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS3</td>
<td>.751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS8</td>
<td>.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS1</td>
<td>.709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS2</td>
<td>.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPIS12</td>
<td>.683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

We can interpret obtain one factor as a job-orientation dimension, orientation on practice of teachers work. It seems that profession-orientation come and develop lately, in in-service phase. This means that the university students perceive teaching role more as a specific job and not as a profession. They are goal-directed towards their job as teachers, and see their practice as a part of their studies and not as a result of their professional identity development as teachers.

To sum, relationships that were found between factors in the college group, indicate of coherency of the personality factors that effecting practice. It means that the course of teacher training at college focuses on general and coherent professional identity development.
Practice influenced by both personality and cognitive factors. It seems that the university training does not invest in teacher’s professional development as a general entity but rather focuses on cognitive and personality factors separately, during the training process compare to colleges.

Professional identity development is the process of integrating personal knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, norms, and values on the one hand, and professional demands from teacher education institutes and schools, including broadly accepted values and standards about teaching, on the other. It is a process of reconciling the personal and professional sides of becoming and being a teacher. During this process, teachers may experience conflicts between what they find to be relevant to the profession and what they personally desire or experience as good. If this connection between teachers’ personal subjectivities or ideologies and their professional selves cannot be made, the personal and the professional may conflict. Such conflicts may emerge as tensions in the professional identity of (beginning) teachers. These ‘professional identity tensions’ are considered to be internal struggles between the teacher as a person and the teacher as a professional regarding undesirable situations. Tensions may have severe consequences for teachers’ learning and functioning and even cause them to quit teacher education or leave the profession.

In this study, it is being assumed that particularly beginning teachers will experience professional identity tensions. The period of transition from student to teacher can be characterised as a “struggle” for many beginning teachers, which is often invisible to their teacher educators and mentors or colleagues in schools. In this study, this “struggle” is assumed to be caused by or lead to tensions in one’s professional identity. Furthermore, reconciling the personal and the professional sides of being a teacher is a dynamic and very complex process for beginners, influenced by many occurrences, practices, and people. These many different sources may be experienced as competing or conflicting and, at least to some extent, cause or lead to professional identity tensions for beginning teachers.

The implications of these results are important for decisions makers in teacher education.

REFERENCES


