The Emergence of Professional Identity in Teacher Education

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Rationale for the study

• Strong sense of teacher professional identity contributes to
  ➢ Career retention
  ➢ Pride in profession
  ➢ Appreciation for role as “extended professional”

• Collect data about student learning related to professional identity development

• Use data to inform curriculum
Alberta Early Career Leaving

Percent of teachers who leave after 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 years

- Year 1: 10%
- Year 2: 6%
- Year 3: 5%
- Year 4: 4%
- Year 5: 4%

Based on all certificated teachers with FTES (excluding substitutes) hired in 2004-2008. A cohort of 100 teachers would show a decrease of 26 teachers over five years.

Statistics from Alberta Education Workforce Planning.
Left Teaching After 5 Years

% New hires who left in the first 5 years and did not return to teaching in Alberta

- 2001: 24%
- 2002: 27%
- 2003: 33%
- 2004: 22%
- 2005: 27%
- 2006: 30%
- 2007: 32%
- 2008: 34%

Based on all certificated teachers with FTES (excluding substitutes)

Statistics from Alberta Education Workforce Planning
Turn and Talk

What do you think of when you hear “teacher professional identity”?

What are aspects of professional identity?
Dimensions of Professional identity

Lamote & Engels, 2010

- Professional Orientation
- Task Orientation
- Commitment to Teaching
- Self-efficacy
Commitment to Teaching

• The degree to which students feel psychologically connected to the profession

• Survey questions on CT scale:
  o As a teacher, you can have a significant effect on others
  o As a teacher, you have a key role in society
  o Working as a teacher gives a lot of satisfaction
  o There is no better profession than teaching
Task Orientation

• Personal attitudes and beliefs that students hold about the act of teaching (e.g. the relationship between students and teachers; educational goals; instructional emphasis)

• Survey questions on TO scale
  o To promote learning, competition between students is important
  o It is important that students collaborate with one another
  o At school, order and discipline are important
  o Students need to study well at school to get ahead in society
  o It’s important for students to get high marks.
Professional Orientation

• Students’ interpretation of their roles as teachers within and beyond the classroom as “extended professional”

• Survey questions on the PO scale
  o It is important that a teacher discusses his/her approach to teaching with colleagues
  o Keeping up with professional literature is essential for teachers
  o School policy is not only of interest to the school board
  o Individual teachers cannot decide for themselves how they teach or how they help students learn.
Self-Efficacy

- Students’ perception of competence in various aspects of teaching; a judgment of his/her ability to bring about desired outcomes of engagement and learning

- Survey questions on the SE scale
  - How much can you get children to follow classroom rules?
  - How much can you motivate students who show low interest in school work?
  - How well can you implement alternative teaching strategies in your classroom?
  - How much can you assist families in helping their children do well at school?
Research question

• How does professional identity evolve across a four-year Bachelor of Education program?
  ❖ Longitudinal (currently year 2 data)
  ❖ Mixed method
    ❖ Quantitative: survey
    ❖ Qualitative: portfolio self-assessment and teaching philosophy
  ❖ NOTE: plan to add interviews at the end of third year following first 5 week practicum
Professional Identity survey (n = 51)

Philosophy of Education statement (n = 41)

Self-assessment of KSAs (n = 41)

Both of these are included in portfolio

KSA = Knowledge, skills and attributes of a teacher according to Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard
Alberta Education KSAs
Knowledge, Skills and Attributes of a Teacher

- Planning for Learning (a, c, d, f)
- Facilitating Learning (e, i, j m)
- Assessment (k)
- Classroom Environment (g, h)
- Professional Responsibilities (b, l, n, o)
  - (Government of Alberta, 1997)
Philosophy prompts

1. What is the purpose of education?
2. What is your role as an educator?
3. How will you reach the diverse children in your classroom?
4. What are your beliefs about how children learn?
5. How will your beliefs affect your teaching? Consider management, instructional strategies, curriculum design, diverse needs, and assessment.
6. What will be your relationship with the community, parents, teaching colleagues, administration?
7. Articulate a metaphor that captures your beliefs about how you see yourself as a teacher. Show how this metaphor informs your practice.
Self-assessment prompts

• **Strengths** with reference to specific competencies (KSAs)
• **Areas for Growth** with respect to specific competencies (KSAs)
• Reflection on the **alignment** between personal teaching philosophy and practice

• **Portfolio serves a metacognitive role**, helping to set a purpose for future learning
Survey and case studies

FINDINGS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of PI</th>
<th>Overall trends in qualitative data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task orientation</td>
<td>Highly constructivist: student-centred, value creating warm, supportive environment, engagement and choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Generally strong view of their own self-efficacy but often set specific goals for future growth (e.g., differentiated instruction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Teaching</td>
<td>Few examples in qualitative data May become more important as they encounter challenges that cause them to question or reaffirm their commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Orientation</td>
<td>Few examples in qualitative data; don’t yet see role as “extended professional”</td>
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## Trends in PI Scale Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>2012 Scale Score (/100)</th>
<th>2013 Scale Score (/100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Teaching</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Orientation</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Orientation</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>81.7</td>
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</table>
“Lindsey”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commitment to Teaching ( /100)</th>
<th>Task Orientation ( /100)</th>
<th>Professional Orientation ( /100)</th>
<th>Self-Efficacy ( /100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>81.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
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Lindsey’s CT score increased from 74-88 out of 100 as a result of
• higher perceived import of the role of teacher in society
• the notion that teaching is a profession you can continue to grow in, and that it is a career for life

Lindsey’s PO score increased from 64.6 to 78.5 due to
• acknowledged importance of emerging theory and professional literature on practice,
• increased importance of collaboration and discussion w colleagues
I believe the aim of education is to help children grow mentally, physically, emotionally and socially. Education helps children discover who they are. Education allows children to let their personalities, skills and passions flourish in a supportive environment.

I want my students to feel comfortable trying new things and confident in themselves. My role includes creating an engaging environment for students to learn. I will do this by creating engaging lessons, teaching students to take responsibility in their learning, and ensuring the classroom is a positive welcoming place.

My classroom will be an inclusive environment for all students. My lessons will include diverse in tasks assessment to reach every type of learner.

I believe children learn best when they are interested and engaged. I will connect students lessons to the world around them. I will motivate them with enthusiasm, exciting information and inquiry projects that allow for creativity. I believe students learn when subjects are integrated together. I will combine art and math, music and language arts, physical education and science.

Lindsey’s task orientation quotes
Self-efficacy

Year 1: Recognizing key principles

• My portfolio helped me identify my strength in recognizing and reflecting on what I have learned in class. For example, when I learned about the [UDL] in class, I recognized it happening in the class I volunteered in. I think being aware of the types of learning experiences and environment happening in the classroom allowed me to reflect on it in my journals and in my portfolio. This reflection really helped me understand what my philosophy for teaching is at this point.

• First year general comments were quite general; year 2 identifies more specific learning and goals.
It was exciting to see how the children responded to the lesson I had planned. I wanted to create a positive and welcoming classroom for my lesson. I discovered through explaining the lesson and giving my expectations during the activity that the classroom environment was organized and (there was a) positive environment because I did not have to stop and correct the class.
Self-efficacy

Year 2: Tutoring and assessing

- I worked with this child on reading twice a week for over two months and was able to learn about how children learn to read and how to adjust plans to provide the best learning experience. The Miscue analysis was an assessment tool to track the mistakes a child makes while reading. The running record is a similar tool in where I tracked all of a child’s reading for a full story and then assessed the types of mistakes a child was making in order to see what we could then work on to help with decoding and comprehension.

- Tutoring led Lindsey to identify specific strengths in reading instruction and assessment.
Self-efficacy

Year 2: Goals

• In third year I want to learn more about planning for learning through making lesson plans for different grades and types of activities. I know that a lot more emphasis is now placed on inquiry learning, so I would like to know how to plan for learning for an inquiry project.

• With inquiry learning I would also like to learn more about assessment. If each child is working individually on a different task how am I able to assess their learning?
“Carolyn”

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Commitment to Teaching ( /100)</th>
<th>Task Orientation ( /100)</th>
<th>Professional Orientation ( /100)</th>
<th>Self-Efficacy ( /100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70.8</td>
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Commitment to teaching
- Greater perceived impact on others
- Professionally fulfilling
- Greater pride in profession

Professional orientation
- Greater importance of professional literature and evidenced informed practice
- Recognition that children learn collaboratively
- Individual autonomy
- Collaboration with teacher colleagues
Because I want to help students develop skills to expand; their ability to question, freedom to explore, and power to discover and understand. I think a crucial part of teaching children is to really be invested in the students; to get to know them and help them to get to know themselves. Focusing on their interests and exploring ways to motivate the students in an authentic way. Fostering metacognition by encourage the discovery of ones strengths and weaknesses.

I believe it is important for students to understand their own thinking and through this they can develop personalized strategies that help them do the best they can. When areas that cause difficulty for some students arise, I believe that as a teacher it is my goal to provide support and resources for struggling students. I believe that it is the right of every child to feel valuable and successful.

Just like knee pads, a teacher acts as a safety net, setting up an environment where students are encouraged to try new and challenging things. If a student reaches a bumpy point in the road, a teacher is there to help them feel secure and to protect their self-esteem.

I want to provide students with the exploration of the curriculum in many different mediums; hands-on work, visual, oral, movement, musical, etc. In doing so, ones own learning styles can be found. In addition through the diversity of mediums, I will develop a strong awareness of the levels of each learner in the class.

Carolyn’s task orientation quotes

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Professional Orientation
“Carolyn”

“I also want to be able to create strong relationships with my fellow teachers because I truly am team player. I believe in the effectiveness of team work. Teachers, administration, parents, and the community are all strong influence on children and need to work together to raise them to be aware of the world around them.”
Self-efficacy Goals
“Carolyn”

• I think that a goal for facilitating for learning is more understanding of how to actually manage different needs in a classroom, when you are one teacher and you have to accommodate many needs.

• I would like to have more experience in assessment so that as a teacher I am able to pinpoint areas of struggle and strength more easily in the work of my students.
How the data is shaping curriculum

- Previous year 1 and 2 Field Experience was primarily observational thus little change from year 1 to 2 in data
- If richest reflection is reflection on one’s own teaching, they need to teach earlier
- Practicum is the heart of the degree!

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Observation and assistance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester 2</td>
<td>Lead at least one lesson or activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 3</td>
<td>Literacy tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 4</td>
<td>Teach lessons with a focus on assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 5</td>
<td>5 week practicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 8</td>
<td>9 week practicum</td>
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Going forward

• As students enter their first practicum, we must pay close attention to struggles that may threaten their
  - Self-efficacy (SE)
  - Beliefs about teaching (TO)
  - Commitment to teaching (CT)
  - Professional orientation (PO)

(Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009)
Reflection creating cognitive dissonance

If their practice does not match professed beliefs, student teachers may “activate a richer narrative of self which then functions to accommodate … mismatches between existing and preferred selves.”

(Warin, Maddock, Pell and Hargreaves, 2006, p. 237)
Some MRU supports for identity development

• Developing communities of practice within cohort through place-based seminars in schools

• Triads – mentor teachers, student teachers and faculty supervisors

• Portfolio reflections and self-assessment

• Curriculum instructors supervise practicum

• Partnership schools
Proposed interview questions following practicum

- **Self-efficacy**: What particular strengths did you observe in yourself during practicum experience? What specific areas for growth do you still need to work on? (prompts: planning rich tasks, managing challenging behaviour, assessment, professional communication)

- **Task orientation**: How did you balance student needs with outcomes? In what ways did you meet your ideals during practicum?

- **Professional Orientation**: How did you see yourself as a member of the teaching profession? What were your responsibilities to the school and the community?

- **Commitment to the Profession**: Where do you see yourself professionally two years from now? Five or ten years?
References


