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# Interference of Personal Identities of Educators on Their Teaching Practice

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**ABSTRACT:** It has been posited that teacher self-efficacy develops on the basis of information accessed through four self-efficacy sources: vicarious and enactive experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states, and by interacting with a myriad of personal and external factors. The very process of teacher self-efficacy development, however, is not well understood. This phenomenological longitudinal qualitative case study contributes to addressing this issue by illustrating how a pre-service secondary mathematics teacher's teacher self-efficacy is affected by the way she sees herself. More specifically, the study illustrates how aspects of a strong student teacher identity negatively affect the pre-service teacher's teacher self-efficacy appraisal, and how her teacher identity, emerging through the processes of autonomous role enactment and social verification, supports teacher self-efficacy development.

**KEYWORDS:** personal, identities, educators, teaching, practice

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pre-service teacher education is the crucial time when many students are confronted with the classroom realities for the first time. They enter teacher education with their previous experience as learners at schools.[1] Many studies show (Chang-Kredl, & Kingsley (2014)) that the beliefs gained before university form their understanding of what good teaching and what an effective teacher is. This perception is often challenged throughout initial teacher education. An important source of developing professional identity is teaching practice. It is the first time they are given the responsibilities of a teacher and can feel the atmosphere. It provides authentic observation and teaching experience and gives students opportunities to apply the gained knowledge in real-life situations. According to Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop (2004) and Korkko, Kyyro-Ammala, & Turunen, (2016), students have various subidentities – the actual identity shows who the student teacher is, the ideal identity encompasses hopes and goals, while the norm identity reveals what kind of teacher one should be. These identities are harmonized and often show the reasons students have entered studies. Thus guided reflection can be used to help students become aware and facilitate their further improvement. At the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art, the University of Latvia student teachers of English have an opportunity to do four teaching practice periods, the main aim of which is to bridge the gap between theory and practice giving students opportunity to develop and improve their professional competence. The 39 ECTS one should obtain are distributed among 4 teaching practice course: x Teacher's Practice I. 6 ECTS are awarded. This is observation practice the aim of which is to give students the possibility to get acquainted with educational institutions and teaching and learning process as part of educational system. During this practice, students can prepare for the acquisition of the professional methodology courses. Students spend 4 weeks at schools observing, filling a reflective diary. x Teacher's Practice II. 9 ECTS are awarded upon successful completion of the course. This is class teacher's practice the aim of which is to give students the possibility to get to know class teacher's work, subject teacher's work in the chosen specialty and the system of out-of-class work in an educational institution. Students spend 6 weeks at school in the role of class teacher's assistant, build relationships with learners and work in teams to plan, conduct and reflect on English lessons.[2] x Teacher's Practice III. 12 ECTS are awarded. Students whose second chosen specialty is English language teacher spend 8 weeks at school. Student teachers of English teach their minor subject. The aim of this practice is to give students the possibility to develop their professional competence. During this practice, students improve didactic and autonomous skills to plan, organise, conduct teaching and learning process of various age group students, as well as assessment in the chosen school subjects. Students develop their competence to apply appropriate and various multiple teaching methods and technologies, as well as use and create teaching materials and tests and evaluate their work and plan for improvement. Teacher's Practice fosters students' understanding of topical education issues and readiness to contribute to the development of sustainable community.



## II. DISCUSSION

Because culture strongly influences the attitudes, values, and behaviors that students and teachers bring to the instructional process, better teacher preparation is a major factor in solving the problems of underachievement. Reasonably, teachers can only be held accountable for student outcomes if they are adequately prepared to be culturally responsive to their students' learning styles and needs. Seminal studies of culturally responsive teaching, conducted over the course of the past 30–40 years have provided the evidence base for many of the innovative practices developed by Geneva Gay, Sonia Nieto, and Gloria Ladson-Billings. These “teachers of teachers” developed systems of instructional delivery based on what the research told them about racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students. For them, cultural congruity had to be deeply embedded in any teaching practice; therefore, they recommended training teachers in instructional techniques matched to the diverse learning styles of their students.[3] Gay (2002) made the case for preparing teachers with culturally responsive knowledge, attitudes, and skills during preservice education programs to improve the school success of diverse students. Through proper training, teachers learn to bridge the gap between instructional delivery and diverse learning styles and establish continuity between how diverse students learn and communicate and how the school approaches teaching and learning. Villegas and Lucas (2002) encouraged teacher educators to critically examine their programs and systematically interweave throughout prospective teachers' coursework, learning experiences, and fieldwork the strategies that research has shown better prepares them to work successfully with diverse students. These researchers posited that helping prospective teachers develop the following six characteristics would prepare them to be culturally responsive. 1. Socio-cultural consciousness: A teacher's own way of thinking, behaving, and being are influenced by race, ethnicity, social class, and language. Prospective teachers must critically examine their own socio-cultural identities and biases in the context of the inequalities culturally diverse segments of society experience. They must recognize discrimination based on ethnicity, social class, and skin color and inspect and confront any negative attitudes they might have toward diverse student groups. 2. Attitude: A teacher's affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds significantly impacts student learning, belief in themselves, and overall academic performance. By respecting cultural differences and using curricular and instructional practices related to the cultures of their students, schools and classrooms become inclusive. 3. Commitment and skills: A teacher's role as an agent of change confronts barriers/obstacles to those changes and develops skills for collaboration. As agents of change, teachers assist schools in becoming more equitable over time. 4. Constructivist views: A teacher's contention that all students are capable of learning requires building scaffolding between what students already know through their own experiences and what they need to learn. Constructivist teaching promotes critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and the recognition of multiple perspectives. 5. Knowledge of student's life: A teacher's learning about a student's past experiences, home and community culture, and world in and out of school helps build relationships by increasing the use of these experiences in the context of teaching and learning. 6. Culturally responsive teaching: A teacher's use of strategies that support a constructivist view of knowledge, teaching, and learning assists students in constructing knowledge, building on their personal and cultural strengths, and examining the curriculum from multiple perspectives, thus creating an inclusive classroom environment.

## III. RESULTS

An understanding of teachers' selves, their cognitive and emotional identities, is central to the analysis of variations in teachers' work, lives and effectiveness in which structure (external influences) and agency (one's ability to pursue the goals that one values) are perceived to be in dynamic tension (Archer, 1996, 2000). The concepts of self and identity are often used interchangeably in the literature on teacher education. Both are complex constructs, not least because they draw on major research and theoretical areas of philosophy, psychology, sociology and psychotherapy. Earlier writers (e.g. Cooley, 1902) tended to position the self as a singular, unified, stable essence that was little affected by context or biography. These initial views on the construction of self focused on the ability of an individual to create a defining system of concepts. These concepts, which remained constant over time, were developed through the subjectively interpreted feedback from others, and were distinct and identifiable to an individual. Progressing from this fundamental principle, the connection between self-awareness and the perceived opinions of others began to develop as a major influence on the construction of self. This theoretical advance, which Cooley (1902) called the ‘looking glass self’, enhanced his initial opinions, as it situated the formation of self as part of a reflexive, learning process by which values, attitudes, behaviour, roles and identities are accumulated over time. Drawing on the individual's concern for how others relate to him/her, Mead (1934) believed that the self, though stable, was a continuous concept closely linked to social interactions and created through language and social experiences. Like Cooley, Mead furthered the discussion relating to self being part of a reflexive process, by suggesting that individuals create a ‘generalised other’. This ‘generalised other’ was not only an accumulation of values, roles and identities, but was a combination of many different attitudes towards an individual which, when integrated, were reflected in the individual's attitude towards





him/herself. For the first time, it was suggested that the self, though stable, could take on different approaches to different social experiences based on the particular part played by the individual. These perspectives, though fundamental to our theoretical understanding of self, do not take into account the fact that people's lives are multifaceted. Goffman (1959) went some way towards addressing this issue when he presented the idea that each person had a number of 'selves', each one focusing on the execution of one role at any given time and situation (Goffman, 1959). [4] He believed that the ability to adapt the self was essential in order to effectively communicate the social processes necessary within each situation. However, even in the light of this development, these theoretical perspectives do not allow for a continuous, lifelong development of self which may undergo many changes over time. More than a decade later, referring specifically to 'professional identity', Ball (1972) usefully separates situated from substantive identity. He views the situated identity of a person as a malleable presentation of self that differs according to specific definitions of situations (e.g. within schools) and the more stable, core presentation of self that is fundamental to how a person thinks about himself or herself. Parallel to these perspectives, but in the psychoanalytic tradition, Erikson (1959) suggested three 'stages' in adult life which he characterised as crises: (i) distanciation (a readiness to defend one's identity against all threats); (ii) generativity versus stagnation (motivated and goal oriented or coasting, on the road to disenchantment); and (iii) integrity versus despair and disgust (a readiness to defend the dignity of one's own lifestyle against all physical and economic threats) (Erikson, 1959, p. 98). Erikson's theory provides insights into the inner, sometimes conflicting forces which affect identity during particular life phases. Importantly, it suggests that identity is 'never gained nor maintained once and for all' [5]

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Enacting a pedagogy of teacher education is enmeshed in the ways in which teacher educators knowingly and purposefully create opportunities for students of teaching to see into teaching. It is about how teacher educators are able to make teaching a site for inquiry. In so doing, students of teaching might see into practice (both their own and that of their teacher educators) in such a way as to gain a genuine appreciation of the skills, knowledge and abilities that shape practice. Such inquiry opens teaching to questioning, probing, reflection and critique that goes way beyond the technical. Enacting a pedagogy of teacher education matters so that practice is not simplistically viewed as just "doing teaching." As above, it is not easy work for either students of teaching or for teacher educators, yet it is fundamental to better understanding and valuing teacher education practices. [6]

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