

**IS A LANGUAGE TEACHER'S  
PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AFFECTED BY  
HIS/HER PERSONAL SELF?<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

It is a known fact that teachers' professional identity is affected by a number of factors. Among these are their personal selves and how they view their environment. With this in mind, the purpose of the present case study is to find out the relationship between a teacher's personal, educational and professional experiences and his/her professional teacher identity. In order to do this, a volunteer language teacher was given two guided journals and two interviews were carried out with him. After each interview, he was also observed in the class while teaching. The results of the qualitative data analysis showed that the teacher was influenced by his experiences as a student since he explicitly said that he seemed to be teaching like his teacher at the language school. He also tried to be a teacher he would like to have when he was a student. Moreover, the teacher was found to be quite affected by the significant male figure in his life. His handwriting, his success and his tidiness both as a student and teacher seemed to be influenced by this male figure. The general impression about him was that he paid attention to small details a lot. This attention was also seen in his classroom observations as he tried to make every detail clear for the students. In conclusion the professional identity of the teacher was found to be affected by his experiences as a student, by the role model he had for himself and by his personality.

**Keywords:** *Teachers' professional identity, personal and professional self.*

**Article History:**

**Received**

04.05.2016

**Received in revised  
form**

14.05.2016

**Accepted**

25.05.2016

**Available online**

27.07.2016

<sup>1</sup> This study was presented at CUELT 2016 on April 28-29.

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## **1. Introduction**

It is a known fact that teachers' professional identity is affected by a number of factors one of which is their personal selves (Bukor, 2011; Gu & Benson, 2015; Hsieh, 2010; Stout, 2004). According to Freeman (1995), how teachers view their environment is important in the development of their professional identity.

Before the term "teacher identity" started to be used, terms like teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs, professional development and reflective practice had been in use (Bukor, 2011, p. 87).

What is meant by teacher identity has changed throughout the history due to the different emphases in language teacher education. In 1940s and 1950s, the view was purely scientific, which meant that what a teacher knew was transmitted to the student-teacher. With the introduction of cognitive psychology in 1960s, thoughts or decisions of teachers were investigated. The 1980s witnessed the introduction of the humanistic psychology. Humanistic view focused on teachers as autonomous whole-persons who can change with the help of others but not directed by anyone. Finally, in 1990s reflective model became important. It is the reflective model which gave rise to the term "teacher identity". With this, teacher identity development started to be seen as a very complex thing which included teachers' prior experiences as students, their beliefs, values, metaphors for teaching, and how they plan their classes (Roberts, 1998).

The review on teachers' professional identity development shows that it is quite difficult to reach a consensus on the definition of professional identity (Beijaard, Merjer & Verlop, 2004). Wenger (1998) claims that identity is made up of both social and individual characteristics. They cannot be viewed as dichotomous; and it is difficult to force limits on where the individual ends and the social or collective starts. He further asserts that "It [the identity] does justice to lived experience of identity while recognising its social character – it is the social, the cultural, the historical with a human face." (p. 145). Wenger (1998) calls this Communities of Practice Model (CoP Model) where the individual and the social meet. The present study is theoretically based on this CoP Model of Wenger.

Since teacher identity development is defined as a complex process that differs across teachers (Bukor, 2011), it is important to find out what constitutes teacher identity, what teachers are influenced by and how their identity is shaped or developed. The present study aims to investigate how a language teacher's professional identity has been shaped and what kinds of things have influenced it with the following research question:

- What is the relationship between teachers' personal, educational and professional experiences and their professional teacher identity?

### 1.1. Research on teacher identity

Teacher identity development has been the core of some research studies (Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt, 2000; Bukor, 2011; Cross & Ndofirepi, 2013; Stout, 2004; Goode, 2000; Gu & Benson, 2015; Hsieh, 2010; Nagatomo, 2012; Schultz & Ravitch, 2013; Zhao, 2007). Most of these studies focused on the identity development of pre-service or beginning teachers. For instance, in the study carried out with 8 beginning English

language teachers, Hsieh (2010) found out that teachers' professional identity was influenced by personal factors such as experiences as students and experiences they had before starting to teach. A similar finding was revealed by Stout (2004) who conducted a longitudinal study where beginning teachers were asked about their perceptions of teaching in their first, second and third years of teaching. The study revealed that professional identity was related to personal-self and their professional experiences.

On a similar basis, Gu and Benson (2015) aimed to look at teacher identity formation in China and Hong Kong. They concluded that identity was formed by individuals but shaped by the socio-economic background along with what people thought and talked about teachers in the society. Likewise, Bukor (2011)'s study carried out with 4 language teachers showed that the personal background of a teacher was highly influential on his/her development of professional identity.

On a similar fashion, Goode (2000)'s study investigated teachers' professional identity development though the focus was on the relationship between the teachers and the students. The analyses of the observations, field notes, memos and interviews indicated a positive correlation between practical knowledge and teachers' relationship with their students.

Nagatomo (2012) conducted two different studies about the same issue. The first study included four novice university English language teachers. The analyses of the data which were gathered through interviews showed that teachers were affected by their former teachers believing that they should not behave like the teachers they had negative images of. Since they were novice, they were able to remember their experiences as students and they were able to empathize with their students. The second study was a case study with a beginning teacher. This teacher was found to be teaching in the way she understood better as a student. She believed in the necessity of knowing everything as a teacher; thus, her classes were highly teacher-centred. She was interested in motivating the students claiming that good materials were necessary for motivation. Lastly, she experienced a gap between her expectations as a teacher and the reality where her students had to take a standardized exam.

The studies mentioned above were about pre-service or novice teachers. Studies centred on experienced teachers revealed similar findings, as well. For example, Zhao (2007) carried out a study with 7 ESL teachers with the help of semi-structured interviews, in-class observations and follow-up interviews. The results indicated an influence of teachers' their own L2 learning experiences on their identity development. A similar result was found by Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000) with 80 teachers through a questionnaire. The teachers were found to be affected by the teaching context, experience and their personal background.

Finally, Cross and Ndofirepi (2013) concluded their study done with experienced teachers in a similar way. They found out that teachers' experience as students, their model and their tacit knowledge played an important role in the development of their professional identity.

The studies reviewed above show the difficulty of defining what teachers' professional identity is and what constitutes it. Therefore, the present study aims to shed more light on how the professional identity of a language teachers with an experience of nine years has been shaped.

## 2. Method

This was a purely qualitative study whose purpose was to gather detailed information about one case. In Rossman and Rallis' (2012) words, in qualitative inquiry, "ultimate purpose is learning" (p. 3). Therefore, my purpose was to learn about the professional identity development of a language teacher through data collected from "the real world" of the teachers (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 4).

### 2.1. The participant

The participant Özay (a pseudonym was used for ethical reasons) is 32 years old. He graduated from ELT department at a state university in Istanbul. He started his MA at the same department and university immediately after his graduation; but he did not complete it. He has been teaching at the prep-school of a state university in Istanbul for nine years. He has given private language courses at the same university and at some language schools. During his pre-service years, he taught English to kids at the kindergarten of the university on a voluntary basis and he did his practicum at a private primary school in Istanbul. Except for English, he knows German at A2 level.

### 2.2. Instruments

I used some of instruments which Bukor (2011) used in her study. The participant was asked to write two guided journals and two interviews were carried out. The first guided journal (Appendix A) and the interview (Appendix B) were about the general life experiences of the participants asking him to create a life line and commenting on important events and turning points as well as significant teaching experiences. The second journal writing and the interview focused on the significant male and female figures in Özay's life. Apart from the journals and the interviews, two observations of the teacher's classes were done. The classes were not recorded; instead field notes were taken. During the observations, I focused on the things Özay mentioned in the journals and the interviews.

### 2.3. Procedures

First of all, a voluntary teacher was found. After Özay accepted to participate in the study, a consent letter was sent to him to ensure that all the information he would give would be used only for the study. On the first meeting, the first guided journal was given to him and detailed information about the study was provided. He was informed that he would be interviewed one month later. On the day of the first interview, the first guided journal was received and the second guided journal was given. Finally, the second interview was carried out one month after the first one and all data were completed. After each interview, a 45-minute classroom observation was carried out.

### 2.3. Data analysis

Before the analysis of the data, guided journals, the transcriptions of the interviews and the field notes of the two observations were read by the researcher. And then they were coded and categorised in accordance with the research question. I preferred descriptive coding. In Saldaña's (2013) words, "descriptive coding summarizes in a word or short phrase-most often as a noun- the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (p. 88). After the analyses a codebook was formed. In the codebook, the code, its definition and an example from the data were provided. Table 1 shows the codebook.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example from the Text</b>
<b>Primary school principal</b>	The conversation between Özay and the principal	<i>“When we went to the primary school for registration, the principal showed me the photographs of Atatürk and the Turkish flag. I felt proud with myself because I gave him the correct answer.”</i>
<b>Classrooms at the primary school</b>	The detailed descriptions of the classrooms	<i>“Our second grade classroom was just behind the Atatürk Bust. I don’t why but I loved that more than the others. Although all the classes were designed in a similar way, that classroom seemed to be more beautiful than the others.”</i>
<b>The 1<sup>st</sup> day experience</b>	Özay’s first day experience at the primary school	<i>“On the first day, I did not cry contrary to most of the kids at school; but it was terrifying to be away from my mum. Since I was short, the teacher made me sit on the front desk. We did line drawing on the first day. The teacher drew “I” on each pupil’s notebook and he wanted us to do the same. I cannot remember well but I think he gave us one-page homework. After that, we did italic line drawing”</i>
<b>Teacher’s pens</b>	The pens that Özay’s primary school teacher had	<i>“The teacher drew the example lines with his fountain pen with red ink. He had 2 brown fountain pens one with red and one with black ink.”</i>
<b>Özay’s notebooks</b>	The descriptions about his notebooks	<i>“My first note-book is a small, red and yellow, striped with a pattern of italic lines. I paid attention to my notebooks a lot.”</i>
<b>Perfect teacher</b>	How Özay defined the perfect teacher	<i>“The teacher at the language school was perfect. He explained everything in a detailed way with stunning examples. He did not leave any question unanswered... He gave synonymous words together and I studied in this way.”</i>
<b>Handwriting</b>	The attention Özay paid to his handwriting	<i>“My primary school teacher’s handwriting was beautiful so as my brother’s and my father’s. Maybe due to this, I have a</i>

		<i>beautiful handwriting. I really liked writing. When the teacher wanted us to copy the things on the board on our note-books, I got quite happy."</i>
<b>Monthly journals</b>	Özay's attention to the monthly journals they had at primary school	<i>"In the second grade, there were monthly journals that we studied. I became very happy on the day of their arrival. I liked the smell of those new journals. Their being brand new fascinated me. I paid great attention not to curl their pages. I didn't want anyone to touch them. I wrote very carefully with a pencil. I don't remember using pens."</i>
<b>Shyness</b>	Özay's feelings towards the teacher	<i>"We were either at the second or the third grade. We were collecting leaves and I was sitting between two talkative girls. Some water from the bottle of one of these girls poured on my leaves collection. I got really angry but I wasn't able to tell this to the teacher because of my shyness. I told this to my mum at home and she told it to the teacher. The teacher said that he would not eat human beings!"</i>
<b>Classroom management</b>	Özay's idea about the most important thing for a teacher	<i>"The Geography teacher at secondary school was the worst because there was a chaos in the classroom; he could not control and manage the class."</i>
<b>Motivation</b>	How teachers should motivate their students	<i>"When I started to go to the language school, I became aware that the students coming from other school were far better than me at English. This affected my motivation. In the examinations I had 50% success. ... but with the help of the teacher there, I became better. Sometimes, he praised me, which made me really happy and motivated. "</i>

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Table 1. Codebook

After the development of the codebook, I merged the related codes and reached the common themes. By looking into the data, I tried to find out the things which seemed to be influential in the development of the teacher's professional identity.

### 3. Findings

Four themes emerged out of the data. These were attention to details, behaving like teachers, and motivation. Each theme will be explained through examples in the next part.

#### 3.1. Details

Özay was found to be interested in details a lot. He was able to remember small details quite well. For example, he reported that "When we went to the primary school for registration, the principal showed me the photographs of Atatürk and the Turkish flag. I felt proud with myself because I gave him the correct answer." Another example was about the physical conditions of his primary school. He described his second classroom like this: "Our second grade classroom was just behind the Atatürk Bust. I don't why but I loved that more than the others. Although all the classes were designed in a similar way, that classroom seemed to be more beautiful than the others." These examples showed his attention to physical conditions at school.

Moreover, he paid attention to the details of the events that he experienced as a student. In extract 1:

On the first day, I did not cry contrary to most of the kids at school; but it was terrifying to be away from my mum. Since I was short, the teacher made me sit on the front desk. We did line drawing on the first day. The teacher drew "I" on each pupil's notebook and he wanted us to do the same. I cannot remember well but I think he gave us one-page homework. After that, we did italic line drawing.

The most detailed descriptions were about his primary school teacher's pens and his own notebooks. As for the teacher's pens, he said that "The teacher drew the example lines with his fountain pen with red ink. He had 2 brown fountain pens one with red and one with black ink." This was an indication of the fact that he was observing his teacher very well. With regard to his notebooks, he reported that "My first note-book is a small, red and yellow, striped with a pattern of italic lines. I paid attention to my notebooks a lot." Another outstanding example for Özay's attention to details lied in his definition of the perfect teacher. In his words, "The teacher at the language school was perfect. He explained everything in a detailed way with stunning examples. He did not leave any question unanswered... He gave synonymous words together and I studied in this way." When I was observing his classes, I realized that he was teaching like the perfect teacher he described in the journal. Everything was neatly organized. He explained the subject in detail with sufficient examples encouraging students to ask questions and trying not to leave any question unanswered. This style was consistent with his teaching philosophy he mentioned in the interview: "My teaching philosophy is .... not trying to catch up with the pacing. It is to teach everything to the end. It is to make the information permanent and meaningful for the student." This showed his intentness on teaching everything to



the small details. It is also likely that his attention to small details in general like the physical conditions of the school or the colour of the teacher's pens was reflected in his teaching philosophy, "...to teach everything to the end."

### 3.2. Neatness

The second category that emerged out of the data was neatness. Özay mentioned neat handwriting in his journal. In extract 2, he mentioned that:

While writing, the edges of the pages were curled, which made me angry. I tried to write as neatly as possible. My primary school teacher's handwriting was beautiful so as my brother's and my father's. Maybe due to this, I have a beautiful handwriting. I really liked writing. When the teacher wanted us to copy the things on the board on our note-books, I got quite happy."

Özay's attention to neat handwriting was also seen in his classes during the observations. He had a quite neat handwriting. Although he did not use the board neatly, his handwriting seemed to be hindering that. This might indicate his wish to seem to be like his primary school teacher or his brother as his role model.

With regard to neatness, there was another thing he paid attention to. It was the monthly journals that they were studying at primary school. Extract 3 shows that:

In the second grade, there were monthly journals that we studied. I became very happy on the day of their arrival. I liked the smell of those new journals. Their being brand new fascinated me. I paid great attention not to curl their pages. I didn't want anyone to touch them. I wrote very carefully with a pencil. I don't remember using pens.

After giving this information, he added that "Up until a couple of years ago, I did not write on the course books with pens as a teacher. I still like new books and their smell. I become happy with their newness." This showed that he was influenced by his primary school years, relating the joy of having a new journal to the joy of having a new course book as a teacher.

A further example related to neatness came from the male role model of Özay. He said that he took his older brother as a role model and he completed the sentence "From this person, I learnt that in order to succeed, I ..." in the following way, "I should study, be tidy and not give up." Similarly, he said that "From observing this significant male figure's life, I want to be more hardworking, tidy and ambitious." Özay seemed to attribute success to being tidy and neat since these characteristics belonged to his role model who was a successful example for Özay.

### 3.3. Behaving like his teachers

The third category was behaving like teachers Özay had as a student. First of all, he gave an example related to his shyness. He said that he was a very shy student at primary school. It is shown in extract 4 that:

We were either at the second or the third grade. We were collecting leaves and I was sitting between two talkative girls. Some water from the bottle of one of these girls poured on my leaves collection. I got really angry but I wasn't able to tell this



to the teacher because of my shyness. I told this to my mum at home and she told it to the teacher. The teacher said that he would not eat human beings!

After sharing this memory, he said that as a teacher he was using the same expression "I won't eat human beings!" when his students were afraid to participate in the class. This indicated how he was able to remember this and do the same as a teacher.

Moreover, according to Özay, a teacher who had a classroom management problem would lead to the worst teaching experience. For instance, he said that "The Geography teacher at secondary school was the worst because there was a chaos in the classroom; he could not control and manage the class." When he recalled his worst teaching experience, he mentioned the one with a classroom management problem. He reported that "Last year, I had a class I had a class which I had to take from one of my colleagues in the second term. It might be considered as the worst experience because the class was impossible to control." Therefore, he did not want to have a classroom management problem in order not to be the teacher he described above.

#### 3.4. Motivation

Motivation was another thing which came out of the data as a common theme. Özay mentioned motivation both as a student and as a teacher. As a student, he remembered one of his teachers motivating him. Extract 5 indicates that:

When I started to go to the language school, I became aware that the students coming from other school were far better than me at English. This affected my motivation. In the examinations I had 50% success. ... but with the help of the teacher there, I became better. Sometimes, he praised me, which made me really happy and motivated.

He took this example as a model and extract 6 shows that:

I think as teachers we should motivate our students. We should give them a chance to show themselves. For example, last week there was a unit about robots. The students would make a presentation. On the day of the presentation, I was shocked and at the same time happy to see a robot teacher in the class! Creativity is quite important and it helps learning and remembering.

These examples showed that Özay believed in the necessity and the positive effect of motivating students. Since he experienced this as a student, he seemed to be well aware of the positive consequences. Motivation was also observed in the effect of the male figure in Özay's life. As I gave the example above, he said that he had learnt not to give up from the male role model. He had the motivation to continue whenever he felt discouraged.

#### 4. Discussions and conclusions

I aimed to find out what affected the professional identity development of a language instructor in detail. When the overall findings were considered, the participant Özay seemed to be affected by his experiences as a student, which was consistent with the findings of Beijaardi, Verloop and Vermunt (2000), Bukor (2011), Cross and Ndofirepi (2013), Goode (2000), Hsieh (2010), Nagatomo, 2012, Stout (2004), and Zhao (2007). What was common to all these studies along with the present study was that teachers did not forget about their experiences as students. They continually observed and observed

their teachers and when they became teachers, they tried to be like the “perfect” teacher in their mind, avoiding to be like the teachers they disliked. A similar thing is true for Özay's attention to details. As a personality trait, Özay was found to pay attention to details. He showed this characteristic while he was teaching, as well. He tried to provide every single detail with utmost care.

Another result was related to motivation. Similar to Nagatomo (2012)'s study where the participating teacher believed in the necessity of motivating students, Özay claimed that a teacher should motivate his/her students as much as possible.

Especially the study of Cross and Ndofirepi (2013) revealed that the role model of the teachers played an important role in their professional identity development. Likewise, the participant in the present study reported to have been influenced by the role model in terms of motivation, neatness and ambition, attributing neatness and ambition to success.

All in all, the study showed that it was quite difficult to define what teacher identity meant since it was a complicated issue which was influenced by the teacher's past experiences, people in his life, his teachers and so on indicating that teachers should be analysed as a whole in order to understand how their professional identity develops. This finding is in line with what Wenger (1998) claims in CoP Model that includes both personal and social aspects in identity development. Moreover, as Beijaardi, Meijer and Verloop (2004) attested, identity is not something fixed or unchanged, rather it undergoes a constant change. Therefore, the findings of this case study confirmed this complication and paved the way for more research on the topic to see whether there were some other variables that affected the issue.

#### 5. Implications

The study has two implications for teacher education in general or language teacher education in particular. First of all, pre-service teachers might be made aware of the development of their teacher identity. They should start viewing themselves as a whole not only gaining training from their undergraduate courses but also from their background as students, the important people in their lives and their experiences in general. This might help them develop their teaching philosophies in a more holistic manner.

As for in-service teachers who already have a teaching philosophy and who have already developed a professional identity, some in-service training might be given so that they can have the opportunity to look back on their experiences, reflect on them and if necessary re-construct their philosophy and identity.

Making both pre- and in-service teachers aware of their professional identities will pave the way for more successful and self-confident teachers because according to Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000):

Teachers' perceptions of their own professional identity affect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change and to implement innovation in their own teaching practice.” (p. 750)

Therefore, in a world where things change too rapidly, it is significant for teachers to know about their professional identity.

#### 6. Limitations

Since this is a case study carried out with only one participant, I did not aim to find out generalizable results which would be valid for the other teachers. I aimed to dig into details of one case in order to understand the issue from his point of view. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to a wider community.

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## Appendix A

## Guidelines for Autobiographical Journaling I

Overall rationale and purpose for the Autobiographical Journaling:

The goal of keeping an autobiographical journal is to help research participants remember and reflect on their experiences in a systematic and guided manner. The autobiographical journal is conceived of as a preparation tool for the in-depth detailed interviews with the researcher. In this sense, journaling facilitates the recall of participants' experiences; it allows them to reflect on them on their own so that they will be able to participate in the interviews more fully. It is, therefore, viewed as *a tool for preparing the groundwork* for the interviews.

The participant will be provided with each set of activities well in advance of each interview. For example, the participant will receive the first set of guidelines in preparation for the first interview about one month prior to the first interview. The second set of guidelines will be handed out to him on the day of the first interview and he will have about one month to work on the activities before the second interview takes place. The third, final set of activities will be distributed on the day of the second interview and the participant will be able to spend about one month on the activities before the final interview.

## 1. Journal Themes in Preparation for the First Interview

Rationale:

The goal and the intent of the following activities are to trigger your memories about your life experiences. They will help you recall your memorable life experiences and will also greatly facilitate your preparation for the first in-depth interview with the researcher.

The first interview will build on the material you cover in these activities so please make sure that you spend quality time on these activities. The interview will provide you with an opportunity to further elaborate on your experiences, the significance you assign to them in your life, and it will facilitate uncovering some of the unconscious or hidden beliefs that might be rooted in them.

For your information the theme of the first interview: *The Development of the Professional Self*. The following topics will be covered:

- Educational experiences as a student (e.g. schooling and professional education)
- Professional experiences as a teacher (e.g. teaching experiences)
- Uncovering professional beliefs about good teaching/teacher and good learning/student

General Activities: Preparation for the Journaling

Rationale:

The following general activities (A/1, A/2, and A/3) have a broad framework to allow you to create a repertoire of your life experiences, which is considered as a pool of information that can be drawn on when you work on the more specific, autobiographical writing activities (e.g. A/4, B/6, and C/1) during the entire research process.

It is important to go as broad as possible with recalling your life experiences so that later you can select from them for the more specific autobiographical journaling activities

related to (1) the development of your professional self (Activity A/4) in preparation for the first interview, and to (2) the development of your personal self (Activity B/6) in preparation for the second interview. Finally, you can also draw upon the pool of information to work on the autobiographical writing related to (3) the connections between and synthesis of the professional and the persona selves (Activity C/1) to prepare for the third interview.

**Activity A/2: Creating Your Life Line**

Jot down the most important events from birth up to the present. This will comprise the “raw material” which you can draw on during the entire research process. Make sure that you provide every possible event on the **Life Line** that comes to your mind as significant in a positive or negative sense. Include even those memories or events that seem to have no obvious connection to your professional life as a teacher at the moment.

Birth

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**Activity A/2: Synthesis of Your Life Line**

Looking at the various events of your life (i.e. the raw material), simplify the events with a short title or phrase that describes the main activity or process you felt occurred in certain periods of your life. Decide how you want to break down your life in smaller periods that are meaningful to you.

**Example assigning vignettes to a period of life:**

If you find that you moved several times with your parents between ages of 5-10, you might sum up that period with a phrase “several moves” or “learned to be flexible”. Or you may say: Age 18-24: “turned to academic achievement. Made good grades in school in x subject.”

**Activity A/3: Key Events, Turning Points, Significant People, and Insights**

In your journal compile a list of key events, turning points, significant people who influenced you positively and negatively or seemingly negatively, and many insights that you learned from significant events or people. The Life Line could serve as a good tool for this writing activity. The key words can be used in point form as you compile the events under the various time periods of your life. Make sure that you use the same periods in Activity A/2. (You can use abbreviations for places and pseudonyms for people to protect their identity)

**Specific Activities: Development of the Professional Self**

**Activity A/4: Autobiographical Writing**

Narrow your focus on your experiences as a student/learner from early childhood on up to university/graduate studies/professional education both in formal and informal learning scenarios. Using Activities A/ 2 and A/3 create your narratives about an event that stands out most in your memory from each period that may be related to the development of your Professional Self. Write a separate story about each event with as much detail as you can.

Write reflections on the following topics:

- Early childhood experiences
- Experiences as a student in primary school
- Experiences as a student in high school
- Experience as a student at college or university
- Informal learning experiences
- “Best” and “Worst” courses/teachers; influential teachers as role models
- “Best” and “Worst” teaching experiences

#### Activity B/1: Analysis of Significant People’s Influence

The objective of this activity is to explore significant people’s (e.g. parents/caregivers) achievements, attitudes, philosophy of life, their strengths and weaknesses, and their unresolved issues—from YOUR point of view as YOU saw and experienced them as a child. This process may assist you to reveal dominant links and relationships between your aspirations, achievements/failures, weaknesses/strengths and that of those influential people in your life. The activity also helps become aware of your underlying beliefs that might be rooted in the way you viewed the role of these important people in your early childhood.

Read the questions and write your answers in your journal from the point of view of your early childhood.

#### A. Observing a significant male figure’s life (e.g. father, male caregiver, etc.)

##### a. work accomplishment

What type of work did he do when you were young?

Was he proud of what he did?

In what way did he excel?

##### b. affirmative self-expression

List positive words that best describe this male figure (e.g. loving, intelligent, etc.)

What one or two words best describe his personality?

What was unique about him?

##### c. negative self-expression

List negative words that describe any negative trait in this male figure (e.g. critical, opinionated, etc.)

What triggered negative behaviour?

What one or two words best describe his worst trait?

##### d. significant male figure’s childhood.

Describe as best as you can this person’s childhood. Was he happy? Neglected?

Went to work at an early age? Poor? Rich?

In what way did his childhood influence his life choices?

##### e. significant male figure’s philosophy

What was most important to him?

What statement or credo best expresses this person’s philosophy of life?

##### f. missing elements

List what you think was missing from this male figure’s life.

What might he have done if he had had more time, money or education?

#### B. Observing a significant female figure’s life (e.g. mother, female caregiver, etc.)

##### a. work accomplishment



- What type of work did she do when you were young?  
Was she proud of what she did?  
In what way did she excel?  
b. affirmative self-expression  
List positive words that best describe this female figure (e.g. loving, intelligent, etc.)
- What one or two words best describe her personality?  
What was unique about her?  
c. negative self-expression  
List negative words that describe any negative trait in this female figure (e.g. critical, opinionated, etc.)  
What triggered negative behaviour?  
What one or two words best describe her worst trait?  
d. significant female figure's childhood.  
Describe as best as you can this person's childhood. Was she happy? Neglected?  
Went to work at an early age? Poor? Rich?  
In what way did her childhood influence her life choices?  
e. significant female figure's philosophy  
What was most important to her?  
What statement or credo best expresses this person's philosophy of life?  
f. missing elements  
List what you think was missing from this female figure's life.  
What might she have done if she had had more time, money or education?

C. Analysis of what you learnt from your significant male figure.

Your observations about your significant male figure's life can function as either positive or negative beliefs that you still carry.

Finish the following sentence with positive qualities you got from this person:

Like this male person, I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Finish the sentence with negative qualities you got from this person:

Like this male person, I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Finish the following sentence:

From this male person, I learnt that in order to succeed, I should:

- a.
- b.
- c.

From observing this significant male figure's life, I want to be more:

- a.
- b.
- c.

For what are you grateful to this person?

For what would you be willing to forgive this person?

From your list of what was missing from this person's life, what, if anything, have you chosen to develop?

D. Analysis of what you learnt from your significant female figure.

Your observations about your significant female figure's life can function as either positive or negative beliefs that you still carry.

Finish the following sentence with positive qualities you got from this person:

Like this female person, I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Finish the sentence with negative qualities you got from this person:

Like this female person, I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Finish the following sentence:

From this female person, I learnt that in order to succeed, I should:

- a.
- b.
- c.

From observing this significant female figure's life, I want to be more:

- a.
- b.
- c.

For what are you grateful to this person?

For what would you be willing to forgive this person?

From your list of what was missing from this person's life, what, if anything, have you chosen to develop?

Appendix B

### First In-Depth Interview Questions

**Interview Theme:** *The Development of the Professional Self*

- educational experiences as a student (e.g., schooling and professional education)
- professional experiences as a teacher (e.g., teaching experiences)
- uncovering professional beliefs about good teaching/teacher and good learning/student

#### **Questions related to Educational Experiences as a Student:**

1. What memorable experiences do you recall from your early childhood? How would you characterize yourself as a young child? How did your parents or relatives characterize you as a child?
2. What is the most memorable experience for you as a primary school student?
3. Do you have an important memory from high school?
4. Can you recall **two** important things in which you excelled and failed (elementary and high school)?
5. In what way do you consider yourself successful or unsuccessful in those experiences?
6. Why do you think these memories stayed with you for a long time? What lessons did you learn from these experiences?
7. What significant experiences do you remember during your university studies and professional education? What was the "best" course you took? And the "worst" course? What factors played a role in calling them the "best" or "worst" courses?
8. How do you think these experiences influenced your views on teaching and learning?
9. Tell me about a positive and a negative experience in your language learning. How do you think your language learning has influenced your teaching?
10. Do you recall any influential people in your life? "Best" teachers or professors, coaches, etc? How have they influenced you? Do you recall the "worst" teacher you had? How have they influenced you?

#### **Questions related to Experiences as a Teacher:**

1. Tell me about your formal professional education to become a teacher and your initial experiences as a teacher (i.e., the facts about your professional education and a list of workplaces).
2. What do you consider your strengths and weaknesses in the initial years of teaching?

- How do you think these experiences influenced your views about teaching and learning?  
How have your strengths and weaknesses changed over time?
3. Have you had any other work experience besides teaching that may have affected your teaching style or teaching philosophy? In what way? What factors have played a role?
  4. What are your "best" and "worst" teaching experiences?
  5. In what way were they good or bad?
  6. What was the "best" lesson or activity that you taught? What was the "worst" lesson or activity that you had? What factors played a role in success or lack of success?
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7. What characteristics do you think a good language teacher has? What makes language teaching efficient and successful in your opinion?
  8. How do you think the above-mentioned factors and/or experiences affected the development of your teaching philosophy and your beliefs about a good teacher / teaching?
  9. Can you summarize briefly your teaching philosophy?

### **Second In-Depth Interview Questions**

#### ***Interview Theme: The Development of the Personal Self***

- personal life experiences (e.g., childhood, family, friends, and significant other people)
- uncovering personal beliefs that may be connected to professional issues
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#### ***Questions related to personal experiences:***

- Tell me about your memorable childhood experiences.
  - What is the "best", most cherished childhood experience you remember? What factors play a role in making this experience positive in your memory?
  - What is the "most unpleasant" memory from your childhood? What factors make this experience unpleasant for you?
  - What lessons do you think the "best" and the "most unpleasant" experiences have taught you about yourself?
  - Can you tell me about your feelings and memories related to significant people (e.g. parents/caregivers) in your life?
  - How did you perceive these important people as you were a child?
  - What "positive" and "negative" characteristics do you think you inherited from each of them?
  - What relationships do you see between your life and the missing element in your parents' (caregivers) life? How do you think you carried on fulfilling any of the "unfulfilled" dreams of your parents/caregivers?
  - How would you characterize your relationship with your siblings (if any – or closest friends)? Did you find any traits in them that frustrated you? Why do you think they were frustrating for you at that time? How do you think the frustrating quality of your sibling has mirrored any of your own issues that you had in yourself?
- What character traits / qualities do you find most important / desirable and admirable in your best friend / in people who are close to you?
- Can you tell me about your past preoccupations? How did they influence your beliefs about yourself in your personal life? What did you learn from having those preoccupations? How do you think these past preoccupations may have influenced your beliefs and views about yourself as a teacher?
  - What "things" would you like to change about yourself at the moment?

- How do you think you can attract some new alternatives to change your old preoccupations? Why do you think it would be desirable for you to do this? How would having the new alternatives in your life make you feel about yourself? How do you think having the new alternatives in your life may affect your perspective of who you are as a teacher? How would you benefit from having those new alternatives in your professional life as a teacher?