

Toward a conceptual framework of personal, professional and situational teacher identity: A study of multiple teacher selves in Further and Adult Education in Ireland.

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In more recent years, there has been some fresh debate around the issue as to what constitutes the complex notion of teacher identity across various teacher education settings. Three seminal reviews of the literature in the last decade (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijard et al., 2004; Rodgers and Scott, 2008) have emphasised, in particular, the importance of and interrelation of notions of identity, context, emotion and agency.

One of the challenges that existed in researching the process of student teacher identity formation to date has been the general different foci of studies. According to both Beijard et al. (2004) and Hamman, Gosselin, Romano and Bunuan (2010), there has been a strong preoccupation with investigating characteristics or content, namely what roles and values, constitute teacher professional identity and less consideration of more situational and contextual factors within the broader framework of teacher professional development. Rodgers and Scott (2008) and Hamman et al. (2010) claim also that studies have also tended to focus more predominately on student teachers being authored by micro- and macrocontextual forces of change as opposed to authoring their own stories.

This paper reports on the first phase of a three-year research project undertaken at Waterford Institute of Technology. It focuses on the teaching-learning environment of two of the first graduate and postgraduate TEQ programmes for Further and Adult Education (FAE) in Ireland. More precisely, the study takes a close look at participants' intentions, expectations and experiences in respect of their professional identity over the duration of their TEQ programme.

The focus of the research is to explore the evolving professional identity of Irish FAE educators. More specifically, how personal, professional and situational dimensions embrace their notions of identity, context, emotion and agency. It would seem that finding oneself in a FAE education culture entails a dimension of visualizing the possible and ideal self as an agent of creatively embracing principles of good practice in challenging times in education.

The WIT School of Lifelong Learning and Education is the primary context for this research study. Methods used included reflective statements, collaborative workshop, interviews and document analysis.

Our research results are similar to those of Conway and Clarke (2003), and Hamman (2012):-

- Student teacher possible selves evolve from being “task based” to “quality based”
- Teacher feared selves remain predominately task based

Furthermore our results also show a strong relationship between personal, professional and situational mediating factors in the formation of possible future teacher selves. Teachers demonstrated that the process of reflection on action having experienced an eventful change in their lives, both personal and professional, was critical in the formation of their evolving possible selves. The question remains as to how to facilitate teachers “readiness for change” as they envisage future possible selves personally and professionally.

The need for more research into FAE teaching-learning environments in professional development for teachers in Ireland is identified. Further steps are also identified for developing the TEQ programmes, in particular support for the evolving future orientated possible teacher self.

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