Jyväskylän yliopiston julkaisuarkisto
Jyväskylä University Digital Archive

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint *may differ* from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Author(s): Vähäsantanen, Katja; Eteläpelto, Anneli

Title: Vocational teachers' pathways in the course of a curriculum reform

Year: 2011

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Vähäsantanen, K., & Eteläpelto, A. (2011). Vocational teachers' pathways in the course of a curriculum reform. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 43(3), 291-312. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2011.557839

All material supplied via JYX is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorised user.

Vocational teachers' pathways in the course of a curriculum reform

Katja Vähäsantanen & Anneli Eteläpelto

Department of Educational Sciences, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Katja Vähäsantanen

Department of Educational Sciences, P.O. Box 35, 40014 University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Tel: +358-14-260 1679

Fax: +358-14-260 1661

E-mail: katja.vahasantanen@jyu.fi

Anneli Eteläpelto

Department of Educational Sciences, P.O. Box 35, 40014 University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Tel: +358-14-260 1669

Fax: +358-14-260 1661

E-mail: anneli.etelapelto@jyu.fi

Biographical notes

Katja Vähäsantanen, PhD student, works as a researcher at the Department of Educational Sciences of the University of Jyväskylä, P.O. Box 35, 40014 Jyväskylä, Finland (e-mail: katja.vahasantanen@jyu.fi). Her doctoral thesis examines vocational teachers' professional identity negotiations and agency amid changing work practices.

Anneli Eteläpelto is full Professor of Adult Education at the Department of Educational Sciences of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her current research interests centre on professional agency and creativity among teachers and entrepreneurs.

Vocational teachers' pathways in the course of a curriculum reform

Katja Vähäsantanen & Anneli Eteläpelto

Abstract

Teachers face continuous changes, many of which significantly influence their professional identities and work practices. This study investigates Finnish vocational teachers' pathways in the course of a curriculum reform. The data were obtained by interviewing fourteen vocational teachers twice, i.e. at the initial and later stages of the reform. We used a narrative approach to analyse the interviews as whole, and also to illustrate variations between teachers. The teachers were found to exhibit distinctive pathways through the reform: an *empowerment* pathway, a *critical but adaptive* pathway, an *open and expectant* pathway, a *successful transformation* pathway, and a *struggling* pathway. The pathways demonstrated that the teachers' self-positioning in respect of the reform and their own professional identities showed varying degrees of continuity and transformation. The teachers changed or sustained their positions and identities, on the basis of their individual interpretations of the experiences and emotions they underwent during the reform. The paper concludes with a discussion of professional identity and agency in the reform context, and looks at the consequences of the reform for teachers.

Keywords: curriculum reform; professional identity; vocational education teachers; longitudinal studies; agency.

Introduction: Teachers in a changing educational context

All over the world, teachers face continuous educational reforms. Despite differences in their content, direction, and pace, the reforms have many similarities. Day (2002) notes that reforms greatly affect teachers' daily activities, challenging their work practices, and resulting in periods of at least temporary destabilisation, with the emergence of frustrating experiences and negative emotions (see also Ballet and Kelchtermans 2008; Schmidt and Datnow 2005). Day further notes

that reforms result in an increased workload for teachers; moreover, they rarely take into account teachers' professional identities – which are arguably central to motivation, efficacy, commitment, and job satisfaction, and which may be severely challenged by reforms. Professional identity can be understood as subjects' conceptions of themselves as professional actors. In the case of teachers, professional identity includes their professional interests and values, their perceptions of meaningful responsibilities, their beliefs concerning students' learning, and their understanding of the goals of education (Beijaard *et al*. 2004; Day *et al*. 2005; Little and Bartlett 2002).

The role of teachers and of teachers' professional identities is often neglected due to the fact that many educational organisations use managerial approaches, introducing reforms via top-down edicts, and applying inflexible social suggestions to teachers and their work (e.g. Day 2002; Meyer 2002; Osborn 2006). Thus, teachers are expected to implement reforms determined by an external body, without active involvement in their design or organisation. In fact, the top-down nature of reforms, *including the curriculum reform addressed in our study*, has been seen as inhibiting teachers' agency at organisational and community levels, in terms of options to negotiate the amount and content of the work, and to influence the goals aimed at (Lasky 2005; Vähäsantanen *et al.* 2008). In spite of this, it has been suggested that at the individual level teachers still have the potential to creatively mediate policy change, and to adapt, change, or subvert reform suggestions (Ballet and Kelchtermans 2008; Osborn 2006). Thus, teachers can exercise *agency* through actively implementing reforms, as well as through responding to them (van Veen and Sleegers 2006; Vongalis-Macrow 2007). In the context of educational reforms, social suggestions alone are not sufficient to change teachers' professional identities, in the absence of individuals' agentic activities and decisions (Beijaard *et al*. 2004; Lasky 2005). Thus, it seems that the role of individuals' agency is meaningful in the implementation of reforms and in the negotiations of teachers' professional identities. In order to gain a deeper understanding of these processes, it will be necessary to investigate how agency mediates social suggestions and professional identity negotiations in reform contexts.

So far, most studies on teachers' work and professional identity negotiations within educational reforms have been cross-sectional. Hence, we have only a limited understanding of the longitudinal processes involved in teachers' adaptations to the changes imposed by reforms. With this in mind, in this paper we present a longitudinal study of Finnish vocational teachers' pathways in the course of a curriculum reform. The reform in question has increased students' workplace learning and transformed the nature of teachers' work tremendously, for example by increasing the amount of work done by teachers outside the school. The teachers' pathways illustrate variations, involving both continuity and transformation, in negotiating professional identity and taking positions towards the reform at its different stages. They also give an idea of the factors underlying these transformations and continuities. In the following sections we shall describe our theoretical assumptions regarding the processes of self-positioning and negotiating professional identities in response to reforms. We shall also illustrate how agency is exercised within these processes. It should be noted that in this paper, we understand professional identity (the subject's current conception of himself/herself as a professional actor) as a phenomenon which is capable of influencing teachers' positions and responses towards reforms. We also understand professional identity as a phenomenon which can have some degree of stability – but which can nevertheless have the potential for change during teachers' careers and changing work practices.

Teachers' individual self-positioning and responses during reforms

Teachers do not react passively to educational and curriculum reforms; nor do they merely accept the goals of the reforms and the changes brought about in their work. Moreover, different teachers can react very differently to the same reform (Sloan 2006; van Veen and Sleegers 2006). Teachers take positions towards reforms on the basis of their personal interpretative frameworks (Ballet and Kelchtermans 2008; Schmidt and Datnow 2005). Recent studies have highlighted the ways in which teachers' professional identities and orientations make it possible to understand their varied responses to reforms (Little and Bartlett 2002; Sloan 2006; van Veen and Sleegers 2006). Teachers'

responses can also be related to their views of the reform in terms of its benefits for themselves and their pupils (Ballet and Kelchtermans 2008), their prior experiences (Goodson *et al*. 2006), and the subject matter they teach (Spillane *et al*. 2002). Similarly, a study which we conducted (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto 2009) indicated that vocational teachers had a variety of orientations towards a curriculum reform in its initial stage, including a *resistant* orientation, an *inconsistent* orientation, and an *approving* orientation. These orientations were shaped by teachers' individual backgrounds, including their actual sense of their professional selves, their prior working experiences, and their expectations regarding their professional future. In addition, the orientations were shaped by social affordances, and particularly by the practices and traditions of their vocational study programmes. Different ways of responding to reforms can be understood as different ways of exercising agency (Vongalis-Macrow 2007), with resistance being seen as an extreme form of agency (Sloan 2006). Teachers seem to be particularly resistant to reforms which do not match with their current professional identities, the reality of their everyday experiences, or the perceived needs of teachers and students (Schmidt and Datnow 2005; van Veen and Sleegers 2009). In addition, Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008) suggest that if teachers themselves cannot decide how innovations are to be implemented, discontent and resistance will increase.

Along with the varied responses from teachers, a variety of emotions will also emerge, ranging from positive feelings of happiness, enthusiasm, satisfaction, and confidence, to negative feelings of anger, anxiety, frustration, unhappiness, and uncertainty (Schmidt and Datnow 2005; van Veen and Sleegers 2006; Woods and Jeffrey 2002). However, there have not been many longitudinal studies that would encompass the continuities and discontinuities in teachers' responses during reforms, and the emotions experienced. An exception is the study of van Veen and Sleegers (2009), which used longitudinal data from one teacher. Their study showed how the teacher's professional orientation was at first congruent with the current reform, with feelings of enthusiasm, but also how enthusiasm declined when the local conditions of reform created conflicts, overwork, and so on. Accordingly, van Veen and Sleegers suggest that the way in which teachers

evaluate reforms is the result of a dynamic interplay between aspects of their professional identity and a variety of situational demands. This interplay can explain the decline of enthusiasm among teachers, who may be initially enthusiastic about the content of the reform itself, but who are then faced with many other situational demands, with all the stress and negative emotions thus created.

It is not only a question of what teachers think and feel about reforms, but also how they act in engaging with the reform context. In fact, one way to illuminate the role of individual agency and its interdependence with the social world is to consider how individuals engage in work practices (Billett 2006a; b). Individuals' engagement can be more or less intense, even within the same work practices, depending on their interpretations of the relations between their individual contributions and the social context (Billett 2006b). Within the theoretical framework presented here, we can suggest that in educational reform contexts teachers' agency will be manifested in their ways of engaging with changing work practices. It has been shown that such engagement can vary from acceptance or adjustment to rejection or resistance (Lasky 2005; Schmidt and Datnow 2005), and from active participation to withdrawal (Vähäsantanen and Billett 2008). In line with this, Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008) suggest that teachers deal with changes in creative ways: some new ideas and practices are adopted, whereas other are refused or modified. This illustrates the aim of finding a balance between organisational factors on the one hand and personal values on the other. All this implies that there is scope for agency in terms of different choices and activities in reform contexts, although what teachers believe and think and how they act is also shaped by socio-cultural conditions – conditions reflected in mediational tools and in external factors such as policy mandates and curriculum guidelines (Lasky 2005).

Coping with reforms is often challenging for teachers. Zembylas and Barker (2007) suggest that a reform process needs to allow teachers to carve out space and time to make sense of change, to reflect on their practices, and to make reform efforts part of their own teaching. Especially for those teachers who have initially resisted change it is important to offer spaces and opportunities for emotional sharing and social support. Having such opportunities can create a platform for them to

transform their resistant positions within a non-threatening environment. However, such opportunities may also subvert the reforms themselves, since teachers may avoid taking risks or pushing for changes if they feel that their relationships with colleagues may be threatened (Zembylas and Barker 2007). With such possibilities in mind, we aim here to address how various individual and social factors and resources are related to the maintenance or modification of teachers' positions towards a curriculum reform, over time.

Professional identity negotiations and agency

At times of intense educational changes, one can anticipate that teacher identities will be dynamic and fragmented – in contrast to the traditional view of identity as something stable and coherent (Beijaard *et al*. 2004; Watson 2006). Taking a nuanced view, Day and Kington (2008) suggest that teacher identities are neither intrinsically stable nor intrinsically fragmented; in fact, they can be more stable or less stable, more fragmented or less fragmented, at different times or during particular phases in a person's career, according to the interaction of personal, professional, and situated factors (also Day *et al*. 2006). Indeed, in the processes whereby identities are formed there is always a tension between continuity and change (Brown 1997). It is considerations of this kind that lead us here to examine professional identity negotiation as a longitudinal process, seeking a better understanding of the continuities and changes involved.

Our theoretical understanding of professional identity negotiations is informed by a subject-centred socio-cultural approach. Hence, identity negotiations are seen as processes which occur in relationships between the individual and the social, and which are shaped by and premised upon individuals' agency (Beijaard *et al* 2004; Billett 2006a; Vähäsantanen *et al*. 2008). Exercising agency means that teachers negotiate their identities amid individual contributions and social suggestions, utilising both of these within negotiating processes. In other words, identity construction is not simply a matter of adopting socially pre-existent and prescribed identities; nor is it a matter of constructing identity based on purely individual backgrounds and purposes (Beijaard

et al. 2004; Brown 1997; Coldron and Smith 1999). A starting point for an examination of individual agency (Billett 2006b) in professional identity negotiations is the capability of individuals to negotiate identity from what is socially suggested – in this study suggested within a curriculum reform.

In the reform context, professional identity negotiations are easiest for teachers whose existing professional identity is in closest accord with the socially expected identity that emerges from the (reformed) social suggestions pertaining to their work tasks and educational values. In that case, teachers can simply "embrace" the new identity and enjoy their work (Woods and Jeffrey 2002). Professional identity negotiations become more problematic when the current identity conflicts with the expected identity. In this situation, agency may be exercised in such a way as to change the existing professional identity to correspond with social suggestions (cf. Hodkinson *et al*. 2008). Teachers will in this case try to bridge the gap between the existing identity and the expected identity. This could occur in conjunction with new experiences, given that the construction of teachers' identity is a process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences (Beijaard *et al*. 2004). However, the process of changing identities can also be a challenging and long-term matter. Guskey (2002) suggests that the significant changes in teachers' beliefs and attitudes are likely to take place only after they have perceived positive changes in students' learning outcomes. Similarly, Korthagen (2004) argues that teachers' behaviour is easily changeable, but that their identity and mission are more resistant to change.

Another way of understanding what agency means in a reform context is to address how teachers try to maintain their existing professional identities and thus refuse to bridge the gap between their existing identity and their socially expected identity. A study by Lasky (2005) indicates that external expectations do not have a strong effect in shaping teachers' identity, and that one of the most powerful and enduring elements of teachers' agency is their unwillingness to change their identity. This would suggest that external mediational systems may have limited influence on shaping individuals' long-held notions of professionalism and their sense of identity.

In fact, it seems that when teachers perceive a disjuncture between their identity and the direction of a reform, they become more certain of who they are as teachers, and they strengthen their existing identity (Lasky 2005). It is further essential to address what happens if teachers are not willing to change their identities to correspond with social expectations. In this kind of situation, teachers may try to exercise strong agency in terms of resisting or changing social suggestions (Hodkinson *et al*. 2008) and seeking to influence the conditions of their work (Vähäsantanen *et al*. 2008). In such a case they may be able to pursue their professional interests and to adopt ways to work meaningfully. Otherwise, the conflict between social expectations and individual desires can lead to friction in identity (Beijaard *et al*. 2004). When professional identity is strongly challenged, a teacher's motivation, commitment and work satisfaction can be diminished, since identity is closely connected with all these aspects (Day *et al*. 2006; Woods and Jeffrey 2002).

It has generally been suggested that changes in working life make it difficult to find continuity in professional identity, or gain a sense of security. Increased flexibility at work can further have an adverse effect on employees' commitment and well-being, leading to troubled identities (e.g. Brown, Kirpal and Rauner 2007). On the other hand, Billett and Pavlova (2005) found that changes can support the continuity and development of work-related goals, assist career development, permit the projection of professional values, and promote one's standing in the workplace. This was seen as a consequence of a coincidence between subjects' work goals and the changing requirements of their workplaces. Billett and Pavlova infer that the consequences of changing work practices are not necessary negative for individuals or for a sense of continuity in professional identities. More generally, they see a need for a more elaborated understanding of the relationship between changes in work and individuals' professional identities. In view of this, the present study aims to examine longitudinally the position-taking and negotiations of professional identity that occur during a reform. It is hoped that this kind of understanding may help to support teachers' identity negotiations, well-being and work satisfaction, at a time of continuous educational changes.

Research task and research questions

This study examines Finnish vocational teachers' longitudinal pathways in the course of a curriculum reform. The following research questions are addressed: (i) What kinds of continuities and transformations can be identified in vocational teachers' positions and professional identities in relation to a curriculum reform, as the reform process unfolds? (ii) How do vocational teachers describe the grounds for the continuities and transformations that occur in their positions and professional identities in the reform context?

Methods

The reform context

The Finnish system of initial vocational education and training has traditionally been school-based. However, recent reforms at national and local levels have aimed at greater integration between schools and workplaces. Since 2001, vocational institutions have provided three-year study programmes in all fields leading to vocational qualifications, which include at least 20 credits (out of 120 credits) for workplace learning. In the institution used in the present study, the most recent curriculum reform was introduced in the spring of 2006. The reform was seen by teachers as something planned and organised on a top-down basis. The reform required that vocational qualifications should include 40–60 credits of students' workplace learning within particular study programmes. The revised forms of qualifications were implemented in the autumn of 2006, alongside existing qualifications. As a consequence of the reform, teachers must work more outside the school and co-operate with the workplaces. They now have an increased workload related in particular to organising, guiding and evaluating students' workplace learning, and to guiding and training workplace trainers, i.e. those workers who guide students within the workplace during their workplace learning (Vähäsantanen and Billett 2008; Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto 2009).

Participants and interviews

The data for the study were gathered via repeated open-ended narrative interviews (conducted by the first author), occurring at different stages of the curriculum reform in question. In 2006, sixteen vocational teachers were interviewed, and fourteen of these teachers were re-interviewed in 2007. The present study drew on repeated interviews with these fourteen teachers, i.e. 28 interviews in total (thus excluding the interviews with teachers who did not take part in 2007). During the first interviews, the participants (eight males and six females) were aged 31–57 years, with teaching experience ranging from 4 to 30 years. The participants taught in various study programmes that had been incorporated within the curriculum reform. The reform was introduced in the spring of 2006, immediately prior to the first interviews (May 2006). At the time of the first interviews, the teachers had been told about the reform and had commenced tasks related to its implementation. The revised curricula related to the reform were implemented in the autumn semester of 2006. The second interviews took place in 2007, eight teachers being interviewed in May and six teachers in November.

In this study, we emphasise the significance of *narration* for teachers. By narrating, individuals reveal to others a sense of who they are, their beliefs, and their values. At the same time, they make sense of themselves, events in their lives, and the social context (Polkinghorne 1995; Riessman 2008). Identities are constructed through such a telling process (Bamberg 2004; Watson 2006). Individuals use the narrative form also for arguing, justifying, persuading, engaging, and entertaining (Riessman 2008). This means that in the course of narrating, individuals can describe and reflect on their past, the present, and possible future situations. All this was possible for teachers in the first interviews, since they were asked to talk about issues covering, for example, vocational teachers' sense of their professional identity and work, the changes that had occurred in education overall, and the current curriculum reform, plus their hopes and expectations for the future. The interviews varied in length from 75 minutes to 125 minutes. The second interviews varied from 35 minutes to 80 minutes. These interviews addressed topics similar to those in the first

interviews, but focused particularly on what had happened in the teachers' work since the previous interviews, plus their current perceptions of the reform and its various consequences.

The analytical focus and process

All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim as a written protocol for analysis. We used a narrative approach in the data analysis. In such a case, the analysis aims to search for certain themes and patterns within a data item (such as an individual interview or set of interviews from one person), rather than to list the differences between items (Braun and Clarke 2006). Thus, data items are often analysed holistically. Interview narratives can be categorised as having a certain 'tone', based on their structure. The general tone of a narration can be progressive, regressive, or stable (Gergen and Gergen 1986). This kind of analysis belongs to the *holistic-form*-based mode of analysis (Lieblich *et al.* 1998), which looks at the complete story but which focuses on its formal aspects rather than on its content, looking at the plots or structures of stories. The researcher may also search for the turning points in the story, since these can shed light on the entire development. By contrast, the *holistic-content* mode of reading uses the complete life story of an individual and focuses on the content presented therein. The researcher decides on themes or special foci of content that she/he wants to follow in the story as it evolves from beginning to end (Lieblich *et al.* 1998). However, Lieblich *et al.* (1998) argue that separation of these modes is not always clear-cut in the real situation of conducting narrative analysis. In analysing stories, Bamberg (2003; 2004) focuses on individuals' positioning and identity. He suggests that in so doing we distinguish between the 'being positioned' orientation and a more agentive notion of the subject as positioning itself. Starting from the assumption that the orderliness of story-talk is situationally and interactively accomplished, Bamberg suggests that one should analyse how speakers actively position themselves in their stories.

With these considerations in mind, we analysed how vocational teachers positioned themselves and presented their professional identity in relation to the reform at its different stages.

We were concerned with whether there were changes in teachers' positions and identities or whether they stayed the same. In connection with this, we also analysed the kinds of factors which, as depicted by the teachers, were associated with transformations and continuities. For the purposes of the analysis, the two interviews with each teacher were first read as whole, moving from case to case. This was done in order to get a holistic picture of the bases and processes of teachers' self-positioning and professional identity negotiations in relation to the reform at two different points in time. The focus was on the most meaningful contents of each interview (in terms of the research questions), and on the storylines of the interviews. Thus, we looked at both the contents and structures of interviews (Lieblich *et al*. 1998).

It became clear that the teachers had different pathways through the reform. Through a comparison of the continuities and transformations in self-positioning and in the professional identities manifested between teachers, and through examination of the factors that seemed to be involved, we chose five teachers' accounts to demonstrate the diversity of teachers' pathways in the course of the reform. The main criterion for selecting these five teachers was, first of all, that all three initial orientations (resistant, inconsistent, and approving orientations) towards the reform were represented among teachers selected (Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto 2009). In addition to this, we wanted to present variation involving both transformations and continuities in teachers' positions and in their professional identities in relation to the reform. All the teachers' accounts were in some respects unique; hence we cannot claim that the interviews chosen are in every way representative of the material as a whole. Nevertheless, the contents and patterns identified in the five cases selected did emerge, to a greater or lesser degree, in most of the interviews. Following the selection, the interviews were re-read several times and data from the two interviews with the teacher in question were extracted (again in terms of the research questions). In another words, a single core narrative was created for each of five teachers in such a way that each narrative formed a coherent unity, progressing chronologically. The five identified narratives were then named (according to their contents) in terms of the pathway that illustrated their core nature. This process

can be compared to Polkinghorne's (1995) description of the process of narrative analysis, where the aim is to develop a narrative with a plot, i.e. synthesise the data elements into a coherent developmental account, with diachronic descriptions of events.

Findings

On the basis of the vocational teachers' interviews, we identified various continuities and transformations in their self-positioning and professional identities over the stages of the reform. Below, we shall describe separately the pathways of five teachers: (i) Ella's *empowerment* pathway, (ii) Jacob's *critical but adaptive* pathway, (iii) Oliver's *open and expectant* pathway, (iv) Martha's *successful transformation* pathway, and (v) Hannah's *struggling* pathway. It should be noted that each description is based on two interviews with one teacher. In each case, we shall first describe the situation at the initial stage of the reform and then move to its later stages, when teachers had already had experience of it.

(i) Ella's empowerment pathway

At the initial stage of the reform, Ella was extremely approvingly disposed towards it, seeing it as a huge opportunity for herself as a teacher. Ella's professional tasks had not corresponded to her view of a vocational teacher's work, and she had even considered leaving the profession. At the start of the reform, Ella felt optimistic, since in her opinion the new role would involve less formal education within the school, and more cooperation with workplace personnel. Ella saw this as an opportunity to exercise her professional interests. In addition to this, she expected that the reform would offer better opportunities to plan and control her own work, without being restricted to school timetables. She had found the atmosphere of the school to be hectic, bureaucratic, and unsupportive.

During the implementation of the reform, Ella continued to maintain a positive position towards it. The reform had indeed offered opportunities to act in the roles she preferred, and she

experienced her tasks as interesting and rewarding. In particular, she welcomed the opportunities to organise and implement the training of workplace trainers outside the school. She had performed these tasks flexibly (perceiving this as a necessary condition for performing the tasks properly):

Ella: *In the spring I got rid of teaching in the classroom, I was training workplace trainers. Now in the autumn I have partly continued in this area. This kind of work makes sense to me.*

Interviewer: *So, does it make more sense than working in the classroom?*

Ella: *Yes, and of course especially because they were enthusiastic…However, my attitude has been that when I go to a workplace, if we can't complete the agreed three hours of training, then I just go off and then I call or email about when we can continue. So you need to be ready for this… I find this sort of work interesting and I see the need for it in our field…*

Ella did not have negative feelings about the reform, even though she foresaw that training workplace personnel would be a challenge. She mainly felt that she had been successful in her work, because she had found a shared language with the workplace personnel. They had gained a better understanding of the idea of students' workplace learning once she started to work with them more closely, following the reform. Ella had also managed to create good personal relationships with people in the workplace, and she enjoyed the meetings that took place with them. She also said that these employees had given positive feedback to her about her work and training. Overall, she had gained more satisfaction from her work and more commitment to the profession in the course of the reform, because she was now better able to realise her professional interests. Ella hoped that in the future she would be able to continue working outside the school, train workplace personnel, and carry out duties related to students' workplace learning, because, as she put it: *'Doing nothing but classroom work is definitely bad for my creativity, I would no longer want to do just that'*.

(ii) Jacob's critical but adaptive pathway

At the initial stages of reform, Jacob resisted and criticised it, since it went against his beliefs concerning students' learning and the role of the teacher. First and foremost, he saw the reform as

having a negative effect on students' learning outcomes in terms of their professional competencies becoming narrower. As he saw it, there were many professional skills that could not be taught in the workplace as well as they could be taught in the school. In addition, he felt that his role as a teacher would become less interesting, and more challenging. For example, teachers would be required to motivate employees to carry out tasks related to student guidance, and to train workers to do this. Jacob saw this difficult, since workplaces had no wish to take students on for extended periods and then spend more time on guidance. After all, employees are busy people, and the reform would further increase their workload.

During the implementation of the reform, Jacob remained critical of the reform, having had negative experiences. As he saw it, the reform had meant that students did not have the opportunity to achieve extensive professional competencies, since they were not given the chance to carry out challenging tasks in workplaces. Because students had been forced to do simple donkey-work without learning proper professional competencies, some of them had dropped out, or gone to other vocational institutions. As a result of such experiences, Jacob's professional beliefs concerning the need for rich learning environments had been strengthened. Thus, he increasingly saw the school as the most powerful learning environment. Jacob had trained workers in the workplaces to act as workplace trainers and to guide students during their workplace learning periods. He had been instructed in this role; however, the training of the workers had not gone entirely smoothly, since they did not have enough time or interest in this kind of guidance, especially when they thought that such work did not belong to them. The process had been frustrating and annoying. Yet at the same time, he understood the workers' haste, and felt awkward about forcing extra work onto them. Because of workplace opposition, Jacob had not achieved the goals he had set for the training, and the situation had been a disappointment to him. It was particularly problematic in view of the fact that students cannot complete their workplace learning periods in workplaces where workers have not been trained.

Although Jacob had had negative experiences and he opposed the reform, he was nevertheless ready to adapt to the changes in his work practices. As he saw it, he might as well accept them, whether or not they were workable or sensible. His attitude seemed to be based on a lack of a sense of agency in such matters. Jacob assumed that teachers were unable to influence the conditions of their own work, or the directions of the schooling institution. Over the years Jacob had thus learnt that in this situation it was simply easier to be adaptive and to keep quiet, carrying out the required duties without loud resistance, and without making corrective proposals to the administration of the institution. He had a similar adaptive orientation to the future.

Interviewer: *How does the future look to you, how do you see it?*

Jacob: *I think I'll carry on working here. However, so many changes are taking place in the school world, and my own opportunities for influencing how they are implemented or revised amount to zero. In my view, in our teachers' room, teachers have taken the view that it doesn't matter what you do now, it can all be changed into something else tomorrow… So things are done this way now and you have no idea about the future. And in fact it's all the same what happens...*

Interviewer: *So, your feeling is, it's all the same.*

Jacob: *Yeah, I've now become hardened to that idea. So now we do it a certain way because it's useless to bang your head against a brick wall and try to say this isn't a good way and let's do something differently. Because it doesn't get you anywhere. So you learn to be quiet and just get on with it.*

Interviewer: *And then things go more easily.*

Jacob: *Exactly!*

In other words, despite his criticism and cynicism, Jacob was ready to carry out his professional tasks, and he intended to continue working as a teacher. However, he was not ready to change his professional interests and beliefs regarding teaching and learning, even though they were in conflict with the social suggestions of the reform.

(iii) Oliver's open and expectant pathway

At the initial stages of reform, Oliver was oriented inconsistently towards the reform; he had some negative comments about it, but he also mentioned some advantages. In terms of working life, he saw the reform as problematic. The increase in students' workplace learning would increase the workload and responsibilities of workers in the workplaces, and decrease their productivity. However, he saw the reform as fairly neutral from his own point of view. He further thought that he would manage with the new tasks, as long as he could get sufficient training for this. As far as the students were concerned, Oliver thought that the reform might cause motivational problems, since students would be required to do unpaid work in the workplaces. In any case, he was willing to wait, taking time before reaching a final conclusion. He wanted the effects of the reform to be investigated systematically in terms of its influences on students' learning and employment opportunities, in comparison with the old curriculum. Oliver claimed that all development projects of this kind had positive aspects, even if the results turned out to be disappointing. At least one might get an idea of the kind of system that should definitely *not* be used under any circumstances.

As the reform progressed, Oliver maintained a "wait-and-see" position. The organising of students' workplace learning had gone quite well. The workplaces had reacted reasonably well, despite the extra haste and inconvenience. However, he was somewhat pessimistic about the future; it might not be possible to find enough workplaces that would take on students for workplace learning periods, especially if the economic situation deteriorated. He was also afraid that students' professional competencies would become narrower: he had noticed that many students wanted to spend all periods in the same workplaces, and he believed that this would make it difficult to achieve a broad range of skills. Oliver also argued that the role of a teacher is essential if students' workplace learning is to be successful. Teachers need to inform workers about the goals of the system, and about what students should or should not be able to do. Teachers also need to

participate in guiding students' learning in the workplaces. He observed that teachers would need more resources and time for this kind of work.

Furthermore, Oliver had had some negative experiences concerning the training of workers. Partly this was due to a lack of time, and partly to the resistance of the workplaces themselves. The illness of a colleague had complicated this work; he had not enough time for this training, because he had been obliged to carry out extra duties. Another obstacle was that after initial enthusiasm the workplaces had refused to do this training:

> *The companies postponed the training of workers for the foreseeable future, saying there was not enough time… When we made preliminary arrangements about this training, they were enthusiastic, but it tailed off quickly. It was quite big disappointment at least for me personally. But that's life, things don't always work out the way you plan them, unfortunately.*

Despite the disappointments, Oliver did not wholeheartedly criticise the reform, and he was broadly satisfied with his work. He thought that the disappointments were just part of life and work, and people had to be able to get over them. Overall, despite negative experiences and concerns Oliver was still open to new experiences, and he still wanted to give the reform more time before reaching a definite conclusion: *'Let's wait and see, we're gaining more experience with it all the time. And in particular about students' workplace learning, how it's going, and whether the students are better prepared for working life than with the old system, or whether this new system has something better to offer'.* Taken as a whole, the reform did not seem to cause any extreme feelings or lead to changes in Oliver's views concerning the reform, or concerning his professional interests and commitment.

(iv) Martha's successful transformation pathway

At the initial stages of reform, Martha took a resistant position towards the reform, criticising the ideas it contained. She saw the directions of the reform as being in conflict with her professional interests and her beliefs concerning the students. The tasks set by the reform did not make sense to

her as a teacher. The reform seemed likely to prevent her from working in the role she desired, for her main aim was to promote the personal and professional development of the students in the vocational school. She felt that in the new situation she could not be a supportive adult who would help students with their various problems, since the students would spend more time outside the school. Martha was extremely sad about this, believing that busy workplace trainers would not want to take time for the students; in fact, students could easily be left quite alone, without any support from the workplaces. Martha believed that theoretical issues and basic vocational skills should be taught at the school, and that the increase in students' workplace learning would harm students' learning. Martha also thought that her own work would become more exhausting, as she would need to spend more time moving between the school and the workplaces where her students would be sent.

During the implementation stage of reform, Martha said that she had become positively disposed towards the reform. She had had many encouraging experiences, related to cooperation with working life, and to organising, guiding and evaluating students' workplace learning. Martha had experienced the increased co-operation with workplace personnel as especially good from the point of view of her professional development within the vocational field. Furthermore, she thought that it had been good to familiarise herself with different workers and workplaces, since she could now prepare students better to work in various workplaces and get along with different sorts of workers. In the course of the reform, Martha had been able to create good personal relationships with the workers, and to speak and swap opinions openly with them. She also felt that she had been successful in carrying out her duties, because she has noticed that the workers had gained a better understanding of students' professional development and of the workplace learning system. In addition, Martha had been able to motivate workers to co-operate with workers from different workplaces, and she had received respect and recognition for her professional proficiency. This was something that encouraged her, and made her satisfied with the changes in her work:

Interviewer: *So you see this new direction as positive that a teacher does more work in the workplaces than in the school?*

Martha: *Yes. I'd say so, totally and absolutely. And then in a way it is possible to encourage people from different workplaces to co-operate. And managers have asked me for help, quite directly, 'Can you demonstrate something to our workers and could you give them training?' So, these kinds of things have emerged very clearly. It's nice that they have confidence in the teacher's professional skills.*

Due to all this, Martha now saw her work as meaningful and pleasant. She was willing to commit herself to her new roles, and she did not miss her previous teachership.

Martha had also noticed that the most of the workers took good care of the students. For example, they had offered jobs for the students after their graduation, or made inquiries with colleagues in other workplaces on the students' behalf. Nor had she noticed any negative influences on students' learning outcomes. In fact, she had a more favourable impression of students' workplace learning than in the past, saying: '*I guess I'm no longer so scared about students' workplace learning, when I can see that it's increasing'*. However, Martha emphasised that the role of the teacher is significant if workplace learning is to be productive. Teachers must have the time and resources to ensure that workplace trainers have a good understanding of students' professional development. The trainers must be aware of their role in guiding students' learning, and know the kinds of issues they need to put across during the workplace learning periods. Although Martha was still worried about the insufficient time to teach all the basic skills in the school context, her perceptions of the teacher's role and of the students' learning environments had changed. She now thought that her role was not to teach students everything – on the contrary, she should teach the basics as best she could, and let the workers do the rest. This was all she could do in the new situation, and she was willing to accept the fact.

(v) Hannah's struggling pathway

At the initial stages of reform, Hannah had a positive and approving position towards the reform, seeing the strategic directions of the reform as in line with her own professional identity. She said that she enjoyed cooperating with workplace personnel, and that she was committed to development work, since it made good sense to her. She had not been satisfied with her previous opportunities to practise her professional interests, and saw the reform primarily as an opportunity for working in the desired role. She also believed that students' learning tended to be more productive in authentic work environments than in the school. All in all, Hannah looked forward to the reform with enthusiasm.

As the reform progressed, Hannah became more critical concerning the reform and the increase in students' workplace learning. She thought that workplace learning worked extremely well for certain students. However, she had noticed that it was less suitable for students who had personal problems, and for students who did not have the social skills or level of preparedness to fit easily into the workplace. Hannah had found the last year extremely difficult, and she was now completely exhausted. There had been lack of teachers in her programme; some of her colleagues had moved elsewhere and some had taken long periods of sick leave. In addition to her own duties, she had been forced to do extra work, since there were not enough supply teachers. Because of this, she had not been able to train workers, nor work in the roles promised to her, which would have focused on co-operation and development. In fact, she had been forced to spend more time in the school than before. Another factor was that the work had proved particularly exhausting during this time: Hannah had had to deal with students with serious mental health problems and learning difficulties. She felt that her work as a vocational teacher had been transformed into something more akin to a specialised youth worker, which was the total opposite of her desires and hopes. Thus, not only could she not work in her desired role; she had a huge workload, and was being forced to take care of students without having the proper professional competencies or social resources:

Interviewer: *Compared to last year, what kind of idea do you now have of yourself as a teacher? Has it changed?*

Hannah: *Yes, it has changed. I can no longer be a lecturer-cum-trainer; actually, I'm increasingly called upon to be a mother and a psychologist. And I don't want to do this kind of work, it's something I don't accept... Of course, this has been such a tough year altogether, because of the lack of teachers. I guess that's another reason why I've been so totally worn-out with these very sick children. So, in my opinion, the teacher's work has changed into something that's a lot tougher. And of course for that, if for anything, we would need extra training. And a functioning network of support staff. That's what's missing.*

Hannah was of the opinion that in this situation there was an urgent need for a school counsellor and health nurse to be on hand, to support teachers in their work and to help students with their problems. Furthermore, there had been a lack of external resources and of support from colleagues – since they too were exhausted. She found the situation depressing, recalling that the teaching group had been strongly supportive in the past.

Because Hannah had been forced to work inside the school, to deal with disturbed young people, and to take on a huge workload, she felt demotivated, exhausted, and disappointed. In this situation, she had tried to negotiate the contents of her work with her managers, seeking ways to carry out tasks which she saw as meaningful and in line with her professional interests. However, despite her attempts, the school management had not consented to this:

Interviewer: *So how is it – it's something we've already touched on – the amount of meaningfulness and satisfaction that you find in the work right now?*

Hannah: *Absolutely rock-bottom. Since the autumn my motivation has disappeared. It's all I can do to drag myself to work… I was so tired in the spring and to crown it all there were these psychotic cases among the students. So I was just so tired that I was crying and telling the managers that I wanted to do something else than teaching duties, development work. I told them I could no longer take on the responsibility for these groups where there were such*

> *an enormous number of problems. And they didn't listen. I don't know what I should have done, but in my opinion there's definitely something wrong if a person comes to their manager in tears and they say they just can't go on, and nothing happens. So I don't know what I should do. I suppose I should have taken a long spell of sick leave myself…*

This also demonstrates how Hannah could not exercise agency in terms of influencing her work, and how she was left alone to manage all the problems regarding her teaching and well-being. Amid all this, Hannah did not change her conceptions of her professional interests and her desired roles. She hoped that in the future there would be better opportunities to work in the role of a developer, since she had no motivation to implement the tasks currently allotted to her by the school. Nevertheless, she thought she would continue with her work as a teacher, since her financial situation made it difficult to resign.

Teachers' different pathways: the complexity of positioning and identity negotiations

The pathways of five vocational teachers demonstrated the complexity of their self-positioning and their identity negotiations in relation to the curriculum reform. The pathways are summarised in Table 1 in terms of the nature of the positions and professional identities, and the emotional consequences of the reform.

Insert table 1 about here

Ella's empowerment pathway demonstrated how she remained positively disposed towards the reform through its different stages. Initially she saw the reform as an excellent opportunity to adopt some desired tasks as a teacher and to practise her professional interests through meaningful tasks. During the reform, her initial hopes had been realised, and she had gained positive experiences from interacting with partners from working life. Based on her experiences, Ella exercised agency by positioning herself in a similar manner throughout the reform and by

maintaining, or even strengthening, her existing professional identity. All in all, she was more satisfied with and committed to her work than before (Woods and Jeffrey 2002).

Jacob's critical but adaptive pathway illustrated his unchanging resistant and critical position. Initially, he interpreted the reform as being in conflict with his professional beliefs concerning student learning and the role of the teacher, and he foresaw difficulties in carrying out his tasks. During the reform, his negative expectations had been realised: he had negative experiences concerning the students and their learning, and his inability to fulfil all his tasks was experienced as emotionally unpleasant. Despite this, he adjusted to the new situation as a matter of deliberate strategy. He had noticed from previous experience that it was easier to be quiet and adaptive, even if he had to carry out tasks that went against his professional beliefs, since he had no opportunities to influence his work or the reform context. Thus, his sense of agency was weak. However, in one sense he did exercise agency, since he maintained his critical position and refused to change his professional identity (Lasky 2005). Jacob intended to stay in the teaching profession, even if it seemed likely to lead to cynicism and a sense of conflicted identity

Oliver's open and expectant pathway illustrated how he continued to maintain his professional identity and an open mind concerning the reform. Initially, he wanted to wait and see what the consequences would be for his work and for the students' learning. As the reform progressed, he had both negative and positive experiences, but he still did not wish to define his position definitely. It seemed that Oliver had the personal resources to accept new social suggestions concerning his work, and to handle disappointments and emerging emotions with good grace. His pathway suggests that the actual *nature* of the experiences gained during the reform is not always the essential factor in positioning oneself. In fact, what seems to matter most is the way in which the experiences and emotions are interpreted. All this demonstrates the significance of agency.

Martha's successful transformation pathway demonstrated a transformation in self-positioning and professional identity. Initially, she criticised the reform, because its directions were

in conflict with her professional identity. However, Martha later became increasingly enthusiastic and contented, to the extent of becoming positively disposed towards the reform. It seemed to be her positive experiences (related to her own learning, success at work, recognition from workplace trainers, and the activities of workplace trainers) that did most to promote her self-repositioning and to change her professional identity in such a way that she responded to the notions of working embodied in the reform. Another factor promoting change was the fact that her fears over students' learning had not been realised (cf. Guskey 2002). Hence, Martha exercised her agency by changing her position towards the reform and by renegotiating her professional identity, using as resources the positive experiences she had gained.

Hannah's struggling pathway illustrated a pathway from enthusiasm to disappointment. Initially, Hannah was enthusiastic, seeing the reform as congruent with her professional identity. She thought that it would offer particularly meaningful tasks to her. However, the reform did not bring what she had desired or been promised. She was unable to carry out meaningful professional tasks, and she was unable to remedy the situation or to influence the content of her work in spite of her active efforts. In other words she did not have strong agency. She was forced to take on roles which she had not been trained for, had a huge workload, and was not provided with external resources. Nor had the effects on students been as positive as she had expected. As time went on, she increasingly experienced a lack of motivation, disappointment, exhaustion, and a troubled identity, while all the time becoming more critical of the reform (Little and Bartlett 2002; van Veen and Sleegers 2009). In this situation, her agency was compromised, though she maintained some degree of agency in her refusal, in the face of adverse circumstances, to abandon her professional interests and the role she believed in.

Concluding discussion on professional identity and agency in the reform context

The vocational teachers interviewed had distinctive pathways in the course of the reform. The pathways illustrated both continuity and transformation in negotiating professional identity and

taking positions towards the reform. The continuities and transformations were mainly grounded on the teachers' interpretations of their experiences and emotions. Their experiences and emotions concerning the reform were strongly related to its influences on their work and on their students, and on the social resources that had been available to them. The opportunities and constraints surrounding professional identity and/or the exercise of agency (in terms of influencing the work and the reform) undoubtedly had a powerful influence on how teachers experienced the reform emotionally, and on how they responded to the reform and new kinds of work. However, it seems that how teachers positioned themselves did not depend merely on the nature of the experiences, or even the emotions emerging from these experiences, but also on how the teachers interpreted them.

In line with some previous studies (Ballet and Kelchtermans 2008; van Veen and Sleegers 2009), our findings showed that there were similarities and differences in teachers' positions towards the reform, according to their individual interpretative framework. It further appeared that the same teacher could have multiple and even contradictory positions at different moments, or – at the opposite extreme – that the positions could be more or less permanent. For example, Jacob did not change his resistant position; on the contrary, negative experiences strengthened his criticism and resistance over time. By contrast, Martha changed her position from resistant to more approving over time, with an increase in positive experiences and emotions. In terms of negotiating their professional identities during the reform, some teachers were ready to re-negotiate their identities, while other teachers refused to adjust their current professional identities. Thus, it appears that some teachers' identities were resistant to change (Korthagen 2004). On the other hand, positive experiences and emotions functioned as resources for changing professional identities. Our findings imply that professional identity should be understood as a path which includes both transformations and consistencies (Brown 1997; Day *et al*. 2006). All in all, among our own interviewees, professional identity negotiations and position-taking emerged as continuous and situated processes, and showing varying degrees of continuity and transformation. These are dimensions that cross-sectional studies do not reveal. For the future, more longitudinal studies will be needed if we

wish to understand the processes of identity negotiations and self-positioning, and especially the continuities and transformations that take place during reforms.

The continuous changes in work practices have raised the question of their perceived consequences for individuals (e.g. Ballet and Kelchtermans 2008; Billett and Pavlova 2005; Day *et al*. 2005). Our findings showed that the reform tended to polarise teachers. Some teachers seemed to experience increased work satisfaction and commitment; for other teachers the reform seemed to have negative effects on motivation, well-being, and the sense of meaningfulness at work. All this can be seen as a consequence of the relationships between individual and social contributions. For some teachers the reform strengthened their existing professional identity, whereas for some of them it resulted in troubled identities. Overall, the greatest harm seemed to come from social suggestions offered by the reform context that were in conflict with the teacher's existing professional identities, at least in cases where teachers lacked the agency to influence the content of their work, and further, when they did not have the willingness or resources to re-negotiate their identities and/or positions. By contrast, the situation was positive (i) if teachers had opportunities to practise their professional interests in the reformed context, (ii) if they were willing to re-negotiate their identities to correspond with existing social suggestions, using their positive experiences and emotions as resources, or (iii) if they had the ability to be flexible and to adapt to changes, despite negative experiences.

Our findings can also be interpreted in terms of agency. The teachers' agency seemed to be fairly constrained as regards opportunities to influence the reform or the contents of their work. Jacob, in particular, experienced a lack of agency in terms of influencing his work and the reform, and saw its influences as unsatisfactory. In this situation, he was adaptive and cynical, being aware of the weak options for agency. It seemed that Hannah, too, was extremely disappointed and de-motivated, due especially to the fact that she could not exercise agency in terms of carrying out the work tasks she desired, and was unable to change the content of her work, in spite of her efforts. We could thus suggest that in some cases more agency at organisational and community levels would

have decreased teachers' negative experiences, and led to less resistance in the reform context (Ballet and Kelchtermans 2008). However, since the teachers' self-positioning and identity negotiations can be seen shaped by the particular nature of their agency, these processes were different for different people, even if the reform in question was the same. We can conclude that if social suggestions and expectations were enough to change teachers' professional identities, those teachers whose identities were non-congruent with the reform would have transformed passively them. However, this did not happen – leading us to the view that it is agency, comprising individual activities and decisions, that mediates professional identity negotiations (Beijaard *et al*. 2004; Brown 1997).

It seems that if the changes challenge teachers' current professional identities, they tend to provoke intense emotional reactions and resistance. However, our findings revealed that initial positions towards the reform – and even professional identities – can be transformed. On the other hand, when teachers did not have positive experiences or emotions, they lacked grounds for changing their resistant positions and identities (Guskey 2002). There may also be a need to take account of and to give support to identity work in situations where teachers face changes in their work practices. Mahlakaarto (2010) suggests that this kind of support could be offered though creating a variety of social and individual spaces and educational tools (e.g. portfolio work, including drama methods, and individual and social reflection); these could help subjects to become aware of themselves and their relation to the changing social environment, to deal with personal emotions and to strengthen possibilities to affect their own work contexts. In the reform context, these kinds of tools and spaces could help teachers to make sense of the reforms, themselves, and their emotional experiences, and to find resources to redefine their positions and identities (cf. Zembylas and Barker 2007). In the future it will be essential to look more closely at how teachers' well-being and identity work can be supported, and to conduct intervention studies aimed at finding new practical tools for providing such support, in an epoch when their work practices are unlikely to remain stable.

Acknowledgements

The study presented was supported by the Academy of Finland (Project no. 111184, '*Professional identity in working life communities*', and Project no. 130888, '*Professional agency and collaborative creativity in work-related learning communities*'); it was also supported by The Finnish Graduate School in Education and Learning. The authors wish to thank the vocational teachers interviewed. We would also like to thank Donald Adamson for polishing the language of the paper. We are also grateful to two anonymous referees for their helpful comments regarding this paper.

References

Ballet, K. and Kelchtermans, G. (2008) Workload and willingness to change: disentangling the experience of intensified working conditions. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 40 (1), 47- -67.

Bamberg, M. (2003) Positioning with Davie Hogan. Stories, tellings and identities. In C. Daiute and C. Lightfoot (eds), *Narrative Analysis: Studying the Development of Individuals in Society* (London: Sage), 135- -157.

Bamberg, M. (2004) Considering counter narratives. In M. Bamberg and M. Andrews (eds), *Considering Counter Narratives. Narrating, Resisting and Making Sense* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company), 351- -371.

Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C. and Verloop, N. (2004) Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 20 (2), 107- -128.

Billett, S. (2006a) Relational interdependence between social and individual agency in work and working life. *Mind, Culture, and Activity,* 13 (1), 53- -69.

Billett, S. (2006b) *Work, Change and Workers* (Dordrecht: Springer).

Billett, S. and Pavlova, M. (2005) Learning through working life: self and individuals' agentic action. *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* 24 (3), 195- -211.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3 (2), 77- -101.

Brown. A. (1997) A dynamic model of occupational identity formation. In A. Brown (ed), *Promoting Vocational Education and Training: European Perspectives* (Tampere: University of Tampere), 59- -67.

Brown, A. Kirpal. S. and Rauner, F. (eds) (2007) *Identities at Work* (Dordrecht: Springer).

Coldron, J. and Smith, R. (1999) Active location in teachers' construction of their professional identities. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 31 (6), 711- -726.

Day, C. (2002) School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37 (8), 677- -692.

Day, C., Elliot, B. and Kington, A. (2005) Reform, standards and teacher identity: challenges of sustaining commitment. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 21 (5), 563- -577.

Day, C. and Kington A. (2008) Identity, well-being and effectiveness: emotional contexts of teaching. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 16 (1), 7- - 23.

Day, C., Kington, A., Stobart, G. and Sammons, P. (2006) The personal and professional selves of teachers: stable and unstable identities. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32 (4), 601- -616.

Gergen, K. and Gergen, M. (1986) Narrative form and the construction of psychology science. In T. Sarbin (ed), *Narrative Psychology. The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (New York: Praeger Press), 22- -44.

Goodson, I. F., Moore, S. and Hargreaves, A. (2006) Teacher nostalgia and the sustainability of reform: the generation and degeneration of teachers' missions, memory and meaning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42 (1), 42- -61.

Guskey, T. R. (2002) Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 8 (3/4), 381- -391.

Hodkinson, P., Hodkinson, H., Hawthorn, R. and Ford, G. (2008) *Learning through Life*. Learning lives summative working paper no. 1. Available online at: http://www.learninglives.org.

Korthagen, F. A. J. (2004) In search of the essence of a good teacher: towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20 (1), 77- -97.

Lasky, S. (2005) A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21 (8), 899- -916.

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R. & Zilber, T. (1998) *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis and Interpretation* (London: Sage).

Little, J. W. and Bartlett, L. (2002) Career and commitment in the context of comprehensive school reform. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and Practice*, 8 (3), 345- -354.

Mahlakaarto, S. (2010) Subjektiksi työssä - identiteettiä rakentamassa voimaantumisen kehitysohjelmassa. **[**Becoming a subject at work – constructing identity within a program of empowerment]. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research, no. 394 (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä).

Meyer, H-D. (2002) From “loose coupling” to “tight management”? Making sense of the changing landscape in management and organization theory. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40 (6), 515- -520.

Osborn, M. (2006) Changing the context of teachers’ work and professional development: a European perspective. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 45 (4-5), 242- -253.

Polkinghorne, D. (1995) Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J.A. Hatch and R. Wisniewski (eds), *Life History and Narrative 5* (London: Routledge), 5- -23.

Riessman, C. K. (2008) *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Thousand Oaks: Sage).

Schmidt, M. and Datnow, A. (2005) Teachers' sense-making about comprehensive school reform: the influence of emotions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21 (8), 949- -965.

Sloan, K. (2006) Teacher identity and agency in school worlds: beyond the all-good/all-bad discourse on accountability-explicit curriculum policies. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 36 (2), 119- -152.

Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J. and Reimer, T. (2002) Policy implementation and cognition: reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research*, 72 (3), 387- -431.

van Veen, K. and Sleegers, P. (2006) How does it feel? Teachers' emotions in a context of change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 38 (1), 85- -111.

van Veen, K. and Sleegers, P. (2009) Teachers' emotions in a context of reforms: to a deeper understanding of teachers and reform. In P. Schutz and M. Zembylas (eds), *Advances in Teacher Emotion Research: The Impact on Teachers' Lives* (New York: Springer), 233- -252.

Vongalis-Macrow, A. (2007) I, teacher: re-territorialization of teachers' multi-faceted agency in globalized education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28 (4), 425- -439.

Vähäsantanen, K. and Billett, S. (2008) Negotiating professional identity: vocational teachers' personal strategies in a reform context. In S. Billett, C. Harteis and A. Eteläpelto (eds), *Emerging Perspectives of Workplace Learning* (Rotterdam: Sense), 35- -49.

Vähäsantanen, K. and Eteläpelto, A. (2009) Vocational teachers in the face of a major educational reform: individual ways of negotiating professional identities. *Journal of Education and Work*, 22 (1), 15- -33.

Vähäsantanen, K., Hökkä, P., Eteläpelto, A., Rasku-Puttonen, H. and Littleton, K. (2008) Teachers' professional identity negotiations in two different work organisations. *Vocations and Learning: Studies in Vocational and Professional Education*, 1 (2), 131- -148.

Watson, C. (2006) Narratives of practice and the construction of identity in teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and Practice* 12 (5), 509- -526.

Woods, P. and Jeffrey, B. (2002) The reconstruction of primary teachers' identities. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23 (1), 89- -106.

Zembylas, M. and Barker, H. (2007) Teachers' spaces for coping with change in the context of a reform effort. *Journal of Educational Change*, 8 (3), 235- -256.

Table 1: Continuities and transformations in teachers' positions and professional identities in relation to the curriculum reform, and the emotional consequences

	Positions	**Professional identity**	**Emotional consequences**
Ella's empowerment pathway	Continuity in an approving position	Continuity, a strengthened identity	Increased satisfaction and commitment
Jacob's critical but adaptive pathway	Continuity in a resistant position	Continuity, a conflicted identity	Cynicism and surrender
Oliver's open and expectant pathway	Continuity in an inconsistent position	Continuity, a preserved identity	A constant sense of commitment and work satisfaction
Martha's successful transformation pathway	Transformation from a resistant to an approving position	Transformation	Enthusiasm and satisfaction
Hannah's struggling pathway	Transformation from an approving to a critical position	Continuity, a troubled identity	Deteriorating motivation; exhaustion and disappointment