JYU DISSERTATIONS 426

Anne Martin

‘Draw with words, write myself’

Supporting Teachers’ Professional Development in Creative Writing Communities

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND
PSYCHOLOGY

JYU DISSERTATIONS 426

Anne Martin

‘Draw with words, write myself’

Supporting Teachers’ Professional Development in Creative Writing Communities

Esitetään Jyväskylän yliopiston kasvatustieden ja psykologian tiedekunnan suostumuksella
julkisesti tarkastettavaksi
syyskuun 25. päivänä 2021 kello 12.

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by permission of
the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the University of Jyväskylä,
on September 25, 2021, at 12 o’clock.

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2021

Editors
Pekka Mertala
Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä
Päivi Vuorio
Open Science Centre, University of Jyväskylä

Cover picture: Riikka Sahiluoto

ISBN 978-951-39-8824-1 (PDF)
URN:ISBN:978-951-39-8824-1
ISSN 2489-9003

Permanent link to this publication: http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-8824-1

ABSTRACT

Martin, Anne
'Draw with words, write myself' — Supporting teachers' professional development in creative writing communities
Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2021, 106 pages
(JYU Dissertations
ISSN 2489-9003; 426)
ISBN 978-951-39-8824-1 (PDF)

This thesis explores teachers' experiences of their professional development through creative writing practices, especially in creative writing communities. Taking a narrative perspective, it aims to tell stories of teacher development through creative writing, which is defined as literary art that is reflective and expressive. Professional development is approached from a socio-constructivist view, acknowledging the impact of teachers' personal lives, emotions, and previous experiences on their teacher identities. The study consists of three articles. Data were collected from in-service teachers (from primary to upper secondary level) of two different writing communities: 1) the Teachers' Creative Writing Group (N=11) and 2) Open University Studies in Writing (N=5). Data consists of creative writings and interviews, examined through a two-phase qualitative analysis process. In the first phase, a thematic analysis was performed to create themes that described the teachers' experiences of professional development in the writing community. In the second phase, a narrative analysis with a storyteller perspective was conducted, with the creation of three illustrative narratives: a poem-like word image in the first article, a nonfiction prose text in the second article, and an ethnodramatic dialogue in the third. The findings shed light on teachers' experiences of and relationship to creative writing. Teachers who participated in the writing communities narrated stories of pedagogy and the development of classroom instruction, peer support, and wellbeing through flow and inspiration. According to the results, creative writing communities offered the teachers a time and place for bouncing back and recovering, developing as writers and teachers, and engaging in narrative identity work. In conclusion, the findings indicate that creative writing communities can support teachers' professional development through narrative identity work, peer discussions, and overall reflection on being a teacher.

Keywords: Creative writing, narrative research, teachers' professional development

TIIVISTELMÄ

Martin, Anne
'Piirtää sanoilla, kirjoittaa itseäni' - Opettajien ammatillisen kehittymisen tukeminen luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöissä
Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2021, 106 sivua
(JYU Dissertations
ISSN 2489-9003; 426)
ISBN 978-951-39-8824-1 (PDF)

Tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin opettajien ammatillisen kehittymisen kokemuksia luovan kirjoittamisen keinoin, ja erityisesti luovissa kirjoittamisen yhteisöissä. Luovalla kirjoittamisella tarkoitetaan tässä tutkimuksessa sanataidetta tai kaunokirjallista tekstien tuottamista ja tuottamiseen liittyvää luovaa kirjoitusprosessia. Aihetta lähestyttiin sosio-konstruktivismista ammentavan narratiivisen tutkimuksen keinoin. Ammatillinen kehittyminen nähtiin tässä tutkimuksessa prosessina, johon linkittyy identiteettityö, ja johon vaikuttavat opettajan ammatilliset kokemukset, henkilökohtaisen elämän kokemukset sekä niiden nostattamat tunteet. Tutkimus koostui kolmesta artikkelista ja yhteenveto-osasta. Aineisto kerättiin kahteen erilaiseen kirjoittamisen yhteisöön osallistuneilta työssäkäyviltä peruskoulun ja toisen asteen opettajilta: 1) Opettajien luovan kirjoittamisen ryhmä (11 opettajaa), sekä avoimen yliopiston kirjoittamisen perusopinnot (viisi opettajaa). Aineisto koostuu sekä opettajien luovista kirjoitelmista että semi-strukturoiduista teemahaastatteluista. Laadullinen analyysi toteutettiin kaksivaiheisesti. Ensimmäinen vaihe noudatti reflektiivisen teemoitteluanalyysin vaiheita, ja sen pohjalta muodostettiin teemoja, jotka kuvastavat opettajien toiveita ja odotuksia sekä kokemuksia kokonaisvaltaisesta ammatillisesta kehittymisestä luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöissä. Analyysin toinen vaihe oli narratiivinen prosessi, jonka pohjalta tutkija muodosti kussakin osatutkimuksessa kerronnallisen, kaunokirjallisen tekstin: ensimmäisessa artikkelissa runon (word image), toisessa proosatekstin (creative non-fiction) ja kolmannessa draamadialogin (ethnodramatic dialogue). Tutkimuksen tulokset heijastelevat opettajien kokemuksia luovasta kirjoittamisesta ammatillisen kehittymisen tukena sekä opettajien suhdetta kirjoittamiseen ja kirjoittamisen opettamiseen. Tulosten mukaan luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöt tarjosivat opettajille ajan ja paikan palautumiselle, opettajana ja kirjoittajana kehittymiselle sekä narratiiviselle identiteettityölle. Tutkimuksen perusteella voi tehdä johtopäätöksiä siitä, että luova kirjoittaminen, ja erityisesti luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöt kuten kirjoittamisryhmät ja kirjoittamisen opinnot, voivat tukea opettajan ammatillista kehittymistä vertaiskohtaamisten, reflektion ja kerronnallisten menetelmien avulla.

Avainsanat: Luova kirjoittaminen, narratiivinen tutkimus, opettajan ammatillinen kehittyminen

Author's address

Anne Martin
Department of Teacher Education
University of Jyväskylä
anne.martin@jyu.fi
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4434-4975

Supervisors

Professor Mirja Tarnanen
Department of Teacher Education
University of Jyväskylä

Professor Päivi Tynjälä
Finnish Institute for Educational Research
University of Jyväskylä

Reviewers

Professor Debra Myhill
Graduate School of Education
University of Exeter, United Kingdom

Professor Minna Uitto
Faculty of Education
University of Oulu, Finland

Opponent

Professor Minna Uitto
Faculty of Education
University of Oulu, Finland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not be here today without Professor Mirja Tarnanen and Professor Päivi Tynjälä. I have been lucky to have the best supervisors one could hope for. Our collaboration has been enjoyable from the start, and I am deeply grateful for getting you to be my supporters and mentors. We have not only discussed the thesis, but also shared personal life experiences. There has been laughter and there has been tears. Päivi, in 2015 I told you that I had finally decided what I want to study in my doctoral thesis, and you have been supporting me ever since. Your expertise on professional development and writing has inspired me and your insightful comments have guided me throughout this project. When working on the articles of this thesis, you have always remembered to encourage me by saying: "This will be a wonderful ('ihana') article!" I remember this, because I have always written down your lovely comments so that they will cheer me up on a rainy day. Mirja, you were the one who helped me clarify my research plan and who cleared the road for me to travel on my path to becoming a doctor in education. You are wise, brave and inspiring, and you are not afraid to speak out if you feel that something could be done better. You have taken me under your wings and given me so much emotional, structural and academic support that I can never thank you enough.

I want to thank my dissertation examiners, Professor Debra Myhill and Professor Minna Uitto, for your encouraging and detailed comments that helped me develop and finish the manuscript of this thesis. I wish to thank Minna Uitto for agreeing to be my opponent on the day of my defence. I hope that I will be able to collaborate with you in the future and learn more from you. I also wish to thank all the anonymous reviewers of the articles of my thesis for your important work. Special thanks to my dear sister-in-law Riikka Sahiluoto for making the beautiful cover of this thesis.

I have been studying and working at the University of Jyväskylä since 2005. There are so many people who have supported my growth and professional development, and if I could, I would write a letter to each of you. First, I want to thank the teachers at the Department of teacher education for giving me world's best teacher training. Second, thank you to the teachers at the Studies in Writing at the open university, for helping me develop my writer identity and take my career to the next level. I especially want to thank Nora Ekström for giving me great ideas and tips when I was planning the Creative Writing Group, and Anne Mari Rautiainen for collaborating me in the third article of this thesis: working with you has been a pleasure. I also want to thank the creative writing researchers' seminar at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and to Dr. Elina Jokinen for your creative academic writing courses.

During my years in the academy, I have been working in several interesting and inspiring projects at the Finnish Institute for Educational Research. Thank you to all my colleagues and peers at FIER for moments of collaboration, meaningful learning, peer support, work trips, dinners and the funniest lunch breaks. Ilona and Matti, thank you for always being my peer mentors. Taru and

Jenna, making friends with you has been one of the biggest joys in my adult life. In my current workplace, the Department of Teacher Education and the Faculty of Education and Psychology, there is plenty of room for creativity, playfulness and meaningful conversations. I am thankful for learning and growing with all of you, my dear OKL-colleagues. Special thanks to the 2D-noppa, the participants of Mirja's PhD seminar and the former and current members of the informal peer group Melkein kuolleet väitöskirjatutkijat. I want to thank my dear friends and colleagues Teppo, Vili, Emma and Mirja of the ULA-project (Uutta luova asiantuntijuus, funded by the Ministry of Education), in which I worked for the last 3,5 years in the best team one could ever hope for. During these years, I have been able to develop myself professionally and to advance my thesis as well.

PhD processes neven happen in a vacuum, but in the midst of everyday-life. My biggest support in life comes from my family and friends. I want to thank my parents, Tuula and Jarmo Liukkonen. Mom and Dad, there has never been a time in my life when I had to doubt your love and support. You have always been there for me. My siblings Iina, Sanna and Jaakko, my sibling-in-laws Mikko, Petteri and Iida-Maria, thank you for you love and support and for encouraging me to go after my dreams, including this thesis. Thank you to my mother-in-law Mirja, and Seppo, and my father-in-law Timo, and Sirpa, for taking care of my children when I needed to work or rest. I want to thank all my friends, who happen to be the best friends anyone could ask for. I love you all so much. With you by my side, I can get through anything!

I dedicate this thesis to all the teachers in my life. Thank you to all my teachers in Pohjanlammen koulu, Kuokkalan koulu, Voionmaan lukio and the University of Jyväskylä. Special thank you to Timo Ilomäki for encouraging my creative expression in highschool. Thank you to all my friends from teacher studies for learning and growing with me. And to all the teachers who participated in this research, thank you for sharing your stories with me. Your work matters. You are superheroes!

Finally, I want to thank my husband Mikko and my daughters Ronja and Iris. Mikko, you have been my rock during the PhD process. You reminded me time after time that there is so much more to life than work, for example: Star Wars, music, dancing, playing board games, kissing, going to the forest, cooking, and planting tomatoes.

Ronja ja Iris, rakastan teitä enemmän kuin mitään muuta maailmassa. Kiitos kun saan olla juuri teidän äitinne.

16.8.2021 Jyväskylä,

Anne Martin

PREFACE – TWO STORIES

The big story

It started as a joke on a coffee break with my colleagues. You can imagine how much we valued each coffee break with colleagues in early 2021. The campus building was empty, with only a few people working there. Most of our colleagues were working from home, as they had been for almost a year. I had asked my boss if it would be okay for me to occupy my empty office, as I had to take my kids to and from school and daycare each day, both located next to campus, and as my mental health was in a condition that could not withstand the loneliness of working only from home. She had agreed, so there I was, after a long and relaxing Christmas holiday, chatting with two peers while keeping a safe distance, sharing random thoughts while sipping coffee.

I was talking about the pain of writing the introduction chapter for my thesis, and with my colleagues, Eve and Ville, we started painting a picture of an introduction that would blow everyone's mind. It would, of course, start from the Big Bang, and lead us through time and space, moving on to the slow and violent formation of a planet that would later be called Earth, leading on to ancient Greeks with their willingness to eat potato chips instead of listening to the great philosophers, which would of course lead to the destruction of their civilisation. Then, the introduction would zoom in to the Finnish context through the old saying 'Suo, kuokka ja Jussi' (swamp, mattock, and Jussi, see Linna 1959), illustrating the hard-working Jussi's pain as he did not have the words or means to express his emotions: no literature skills, no teachers who understood him, no story that he could call his own. This is how the introduction would finally land on the topic of my thesis, and everything would make perfect sense and it would be the greatest introduction ever.

We were laughing so much I nearly spilled my coffee.

I was obviously not going to write all that in the introduction, or so I thought back then. In fact, I did not think I would actually write the whole situation down, but later on, I returned to that moment. What we joked about were some of the oldest stories, the origins of life, the ancient civilisations, and the narrative of a traditional hardworking Finn. These are narratives, socio-cultural understandings, constructed realities that we all share in the context where we live, grow, act, and work. At the same time, there was a deeper social aspect of peer support that only a PhD student can give another. We were on the same page, and through humour, my peers offered me support to manage and get through the emotions that the doctoral thesis was raising in me.

All this got me thinking about the different stories we tell and share. The meanings and aims behind stories. The truths that we illustrate in stories so they are easier to understand, and the lies that we portray as stories so that they are easier to believe. From the oldest cave paintings to memes and TikTok videos,

we humans have a natural tendency of expressing ourselves via telling stories, and one of the oldest ways of sharing them with others has been through written language. Indeed, it can be said that the story of developing written language is one of the most important great stories of our time.

As I am writing these words, the world is in flames. The COVID-19 pandemic has continued and is still going strong globally. News media all around the globe are following the shift of presidential power in the United States of America, and there is a struggle between fake news and 'fake news'. People are watching old movies where folks kiss, hug, dance, get together in large groups, and share pints, and we are all thinking: 'Is that how life used to be? How dangerously we used to live!' The chaotic circumstances have taken our gaze away from the wildfires in the Amazon and the melting of glaciers. On the other hand, there has been a rising awareness of inequality, as minorities are taking and are given a voice of their own, and as we are given a chance to hear, read, and see stories of various lives such as black, queer and female, instead of the one-sided truths and canons we have been used to.

All these changes have emphasised the importance of education. Through education, we can learn to navigate in the sea of stories that are being broadcasted. From my view, there seems to be an ascent of consciousness on power, and as I have learned in my years in academia, part of having power is telling good stories. Good education has the chance to shed light on issues of power. But then, learning about stories can also shed light on ourselves: Who are we, who are the people we are connected to, what do we feel, need, and experience? Learning to express ourselves can help us reach others, which is something that is truly needed in these times.

When I started doing research on teachers' experiences of writing, I was mostly interested in their personal experiences and personal development. I soon learned that the teachers' personal experiences impacted their professional development as well. As a peer mentor and teacher, I was aware of the socio-constructivist views of learning and thus understood that writing, as solitary as it might seem, never truly happens in a vacuum of complete loneliness: even when we are writing by ourselves to ourselves, we are still connected to the world. However individual and unique our writing voice is, it has developed through our interaction with school, work, books, friends, teachers, Netflix, peers, movies, essays, articles, and Instagram posts. What became clear to me as I went on with my research was that when writing our experiences and emotions, we are in connection with ourselves: we are having a conversation with ourselves and learning new things about our lives as we approach them from different perspectives and different plotlines and angles. At the same time, we are in conversation with our surroundings: the events that have taken place, the people in our lives, the work we have done, and the hopes we have for not only ourselves but also for the ones following in our footsteps.

I have discovered that although quite a specific one, this thesis is in connection to larger narratives of teacherhood and creativity. You see, I seem to have put myself in the position of a storyteller researcher. Once you begin

studying stories and narratives, you start seeing them everywhere. And, once you detect a decent story, you do not want it to go to waste. You want to tell it, to share it. In fact, if I had to sum up my research, this would be one way to put it:

'To tell stories, and to share them with others.'

The small story

This is the story of how I became a soon-to-be doctor in educational sciences. Before I get started, however, you must take into account that is not the only story that could be told about my path.

It is the one I choose to narrate today.

As our stories shift and change over time, and as there are always several storylines we can choose from, I find it quite challenging to choose the words for this chapter. I write this story to help you, the reader, grasp why I have chosen to explore professional development as a holistic process that includes aspects of personal life, identity and emotions. I am not merely a researcher in education. I am also a mother, a daughter, a wife, a friend, a sister, a woman with health issues, a teacher educator and an author with lots of dreams, hopes, heartaches, fears and passions. I could write a story of each of these storylines, but today, I will try to focus on the things that are most relevant for you to understand, why I have written a doctoral thesis called 'Draw with words, write myself'—Supporting teachers' professional development in creative writing communities.

One of my earliest memories: I was four or five, sitting on the back seat of our car - we were on our way to granny's - and I told my parents that I had a huge book inside of my head that I wanted to compose as soon as I learned how to write. Becoming an author was my first dream job.

I did not go to preschool (at the time it was not mandatory in Finland), but my mother, who was a stay-at-home mom and a kindergarden teacher, taught me the alphabets when I was six. Next year, at first grade in school, I very quickly learned to read and write. My imagination served me well, and I would wander in the forest that spread its green arms from our backyard and welcomed me with a warm, inspiring embrace, making up stories, poems and song lyrics. Writing became an important habbit for me, and I soon realised that it also helped me deal with all the feelings and experiences that I underwent in my everyday life as a sensitive child.

As a teenager, I had adopted the identity of a writer. I knew that I was good at expressing myself through written language, I got great feedback from my teachers and I had already written hundreds of poems, short stories and even some short novel manuscripts. By the time highschool came to an end, I started to think that maybe I was not talented enough to become a real author. Maybe it was time to think of some other career plans than just being a creative writer? I did not match the image I had of humanist students and artists: I was socially active, loud, extroverted, and got along with almost everyone. My favourite book

was Ronia, the Robber's Daughter, and the classic western literary canon did not attract me that much. I took a year of to study literature and to work at local schools, and I then applied to both Finnish language and literature teacher education and primary school teacher education programmes at the University of Jyväskylä. And, to my surprise, I got in to both.

I ended up choosing the path of becoming a primary school teacher. My major subject was education. I minored in literature and educational leadership, and was actively involved in the local student union activities. I did some substitute teaching on the side, which was often stressful and demanding. I also underwent a lot of big changes in my personal life: I fell in love with a green-eyed, gentle, talented and patient humanbeing, who later became my husband and the father of my two children. Slowly my connection to creative writing started to strengthen again. By the time I got my master's degree, I had realised that maybe being a primary school teacher was not the path for me after all, and so, in addition to applying for teaching positions, I also contacted my university professors and teachers and told them that I was looking for a job.

My first years working in the academia were filled with short contracts at the Department of Teacher Education and the Finnish Institute for Educational Research. I worked in several different projects on pre- and in-service teacher development and on student learning. Those years included also unemployment periods, the birth of my first child, and uncertainties about the future and my professional identity, but on the other hand, I found each job interesting and rewarding. Still, there was always something missing, and that something was a spark that only lights up when one is truly passionate about their work. For me, that spark was creative writing. To light the spark, I started studying creative writing in the Studies in Writing programme.

Less than a year later, in autumn 2015, I decided that I wanted to stop passively "ending up" to different jobs and to actively start pursuing my own interests. This decision was impacted not only by professional life, but also personal life: The Studies in Writing programme had encouraged me to reconnect with myself as a writer and I had started writing a manuscript for a novel. As a mother, I wanted to set an example to my daughter and try to make my own dreams come true while also providing for my family. I wanted creative writing to intertwine with my work. To do this, I decided to combine my passion for creative writing and my expertise in teaching and teacher development and applied for Doctoral school in Education.

I started planning a Creative Writing Group for teachers, and learning about the theoretical background of writing and professional development. I learned about teacher identity, and discovered the term narrative identity. I talked to a lot of interesting academics with different research focuses. In 2016, officially became a doctoral student, started running the Creative Writing Group and collected and analysed data. I later contacted a colleague and a teacher from the Studies in Writing programme and suggested that we would write an article about the teachers who participated in the programme.

For most of my time as a doctoral student, I was doing my PhD on the side, while working as a mentor, a university teacher and a project researcher, or while being unemployed or on a maternity leave after the birth of my second daughter. In 2018, I was hired to a project called Creative Expertise - Bridging Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education (ULA). The themes of the ULA-project were relevant to my own PhD as well, and I could make good use of my creativity. With the longer job contract and, partly because of cancelling many events due to COVID-19, I was able to schedule time for my PhD as well.

During the years I was doing narrative research on teachers' professional development in creative writing communities, I faced multiple challenges that were not related to my job: I watched my mother fight breast cancer and survive. I got pregnant and gave birth to a child. I lost my beloved cats. I was diagnosed with multiple chronic illnesses and I struggled with both physical and mental health. With my husband, we ran a household of two daughters. There were also moments of joy, happiness and inspiration. I got to instruct creative writing workshops and continued writing my diary. I got to be a mom to two awesome kids. I spend time with family and friends. And, like I had anticipated as a little child, I did write a book which was rewarded with a publishing contract.

So, here I am today.

I have told my own story, or at least one storyline, in order for you to understand why I was drawn to the themes of this thesis. My story is here also to show that I am by no means a stranger to the themes that I have studied. I have done this research with an open mind and a reflexive heart: I have been objective where objectivity has been needed, but I am also aware that my position and role as a researcher has been impacted by the many stories of my life.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

This doctoral thesis is based on the following publications. These articles are referred to as sub-studies or Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3 in the text. Copies of the articles are appended to the thesis.

Article 1

Martin, A., Tarnanen, M. & Tynjälä, P. 2018. Exploring teachers' stories of writing: A narrative perspective. Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 24 (6), 690–705. DOI: 10.1080/13540602.2018.1462790

Article 2

Martin, A., Tarnanen, M. & Tynjälä, P. 2021. Narratives of Professional Development in a teachers' creative writing group. New Writing. DOI: 10.1080/14790726.2021.1900274

Article 3

Martin, A., Rautiainen, A. M., Tarnanen, M. & Tynjälä, P. 2021. Teachers as creative writing students – Narratives of professional development. Teacher Development (In peer review)

The author of this thesis is the first author of in each research article. The author of this thesis was responsible for writing each article manuscript.

In studies 1 and 2, she was responsible for designing the study, collecting and analysing the data and conducting the literary reviews. The co-authors had advisory roles in designing and conducting the study and they provided comments of the manuscripts.

In study 3, the first author collected and analysed the data with co-author Anne Mari Rautiainen. The other co-authors had advisory roles in designing the study. All co-authors of this study provided comments of the manuscript.

FIGURES

TABLES

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Take Care Once You Start Writing

You are about to enter a danger zone
Wear protective clothing around your heart
Take off your shoes

Writing can seriously damage your sadness
Writing can seriously damage your nightmares
You are in danger of achieving your dreams

Once started you won't be able to stop
Nor will you want to
And others might catch it too

You are in serious danger of learning you're alive
You are in serious danger of laughing out loud
You are in serious danger of loving yourself

If it gets in your eyes, consult your loved ones
If it gets in your mind, cancel your therapist
If it gets in your heart, hold on tight

- Gillie Bolton

1.1 Why write? Teachers in the changing world

Educational systems around the globe are continuously challenged to develop innovative approaches to support teachers' professional development. This thesis takes a narrative perspective to explore the support of teachers' professional development through creative writing practices in the context of two writing communities. In addition, with the aim of giving a unique and

holistic voice to the participants of this study and illustrating their stories, this thesis integrates creative writing methods into the narrative research process.

Teachers' professional development can be depicted as processes of learning, growth, and development of their expertise, leading to changes in their practice to support their students' learning (Avalos 2011). Although the students' learning is eventually the primary goal of any development attempts in schools, teachers' own professional development is essential for supporting the growth of their students (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith & Dutton 2012). Schools could benefit from supporting teachers' individual development arising from personal interests, also known as supporting their personal mastery: the practice of developing a personal vision for one's life, where one can enjoy learning and develop personally and professionally (Senge et al. 2012). Both academic literature and educational policy documents emphasise that in order to support teachers' professional development, they should be offered collective and individually inspiring education that facilitates the development of both teachers and school communities (OECD 2019; Senge et al. 2012).

Despite the rewarding and motivating nature of teaching, teacher stress is a global challenge for education (Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright, Donald, Taylor, & Millet 2005; Steinhardt, Smith Jaggars, Faulk & Gloria 2011). Although most teachers feel satisfied in their work (OECD 2020a), teaching is a challenging occupation that requires continuous professional development. In Finland, studies have shown that teachers' work-related fatigue and stress have increased (Gluschkoff 2016). For example, according to a survey by the Finnish teachers' union, 43% of respondents experienced stress daily (OAJ 2018). Finnish teachers are given a lot of autonomy, and they have a prominent role in decision making in schools, especially their own classrooms; e.g. in terms of pedagogical practices, assessment, and teaching materials. On one hand, these increasing responsibilities can burden the teachers (Toom & Husu 2012), and the COVID-19 pandemic has raised more concerns about teachers' expertise and wellbeing, as they are faced with challenges of distance teaching, quarantines, and safety (see OECD 2020b). On the other hand, Finnish teachers are committed and motivated, and enjoy their work (OECD 2019; Taajamo & Puhakka 2019). However complex the nature of teachers' relationships to teaching is, previous literature suggests that their professional development should incorporate support for bouncing back and dealing with emotions (e.g. Aarto-Pesonen & Tynjälä 2017).

It is acknowledged that teacher development is a process that includes professional, personal, and social dimensions (Bell & Gilbert 1996), but as these divisions seem artificial as they often intertwine, research on teacher development could benefit from a more holistic approach (e.g. Geeraerts, Tynjälä, Heikkinen, Markkanen, Pennanen & Gijbels 2015). Indeed, teachers' professional development should be examined and supported holistically, taking into consideration different aspects of teachers' lives, such as personal experiences, classroom pedagogy, school development, and social aspects (Akkerman & Meijer 2011; Alsup 2019; Beauchamp & Thomas 2009; Bell & Gilbert 1996). In this thesis, teachers' professional development is viewed as a process of extending

teachers' self-knowledge, including reflecting on identity, and simultaneously, as a process of professional, social, and personal development. In addition, this thesis explores teachers' experiences of growth in classroom pedagogy, or in other words, skills that aim at supporting the learning of students. Hence, this thesis holistically aims to cover different angles of teacherhood from the perspective of creative writing communities.

Due to its reflective nature, writing in general is considered to be effective in supporting learning and the growth of expertise (Bétrancourt, Ortoleva, and Billett 2016; Kurunsaari et al. 2015; Locke 2014). More closely, researchers have discovered that creative writing in particular can enhance wellbeing and identity work, and that creative writing methods, such as autobiography, drama, prose, and poetry, may bring new insights into the reflective practice of writing (Bolton 1999; Elbaz-Luwisch & Pritzker 2010; Hunt 2000; Ihanus 2019; Kosonen 2015; Pennebaker & Chung 2007). In the literature on health-related issues, there is a growing body of research on creative arts (Clift 2012), creative writing (Hunt 2000; Kähmi 2015), and creative writing groups (Ramsey-Wade, Malyn &Thomas 2020) for supporting personal development and wellbeing. However, these topics are less studied in teacher research. Although some studies in the field of educational research, more precisely in pre-service and in-service teacher education, have taken part in filling this gap (e.g. Anspal, Eisensmchmidt & Löfström 2011; Elbaz-Luwisch & Pritzker 2010; Selland 2016; Smith 2012; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman 2017), there remains a lack of research on supporting teacher development via creative writing communities, such as writing groups and writing studies.

Creative writing may be used in both pre- and in-service teacher training as small writing assignments to support learning and self-expression, but as writing in those cases is merely a tool for supporting learning, the interest of teacher educators and researchers is probably not on the writing itself, but on phenomena in learning. To date, research on teachers' development and identity work has utilised creative writing methods such as autobiography and fiction in study designs and data collection (e.g. Anspal et al. 2011; Orland-Barak & Maskit 2011; Pennanen et al. 2016). Indeed, written data, such as creative learning assignments and autobiographical and fictional texts, has given researchers in-depth knowledge about teacher development and identity work. In the preceding examples, creative writing has been a tool for collecting data and new information. Less is known about teachers' perceptions of and relationships to writing itself, especially creative writing. Although some research has been conducted on teachers' writer identities in the context of school and professional development (e.g. Cremin and Baker 2014; McKinney and Giorgis 2009), teachers' relationships to creative writing and its connection to their identities is an under-researched area in educational research (Cremin and Locke 2017).

In Finland, the current national core curriculum for basic education communicates and, underlining the importance of today's multifaceted teaching profession, views teachers as multitalented professionals working in collaborative networks (FNBE (Finnish National Board of Education) 2014). Furthermore, the curriculum for basic education introduces transversal

competences such as creative, multiliterate, and self-regulative skills (FNBE 2014) that demand teachers to develop their pedagogical skills to support their pupils' learning. As all teachers are writing teachers, regardless of the subjects they teach or their students' ages or skills (Peterson 2008), teachers could benefit from opportunities that help them develop themselves as writers and writing teachers.

In this thesis, I approach creative writing as a way of holistically supporting teachers' professional development through actions taken in a socially engaged writing community. Loveless (2012, 110) expresses a gap in educational research as follows: 'Not much is known about how the learning lives of creative practitioners themselves contribute to learning, practice and pedagogy'. My interest lies in the way in which teachers narrate their experiences in writing communities and describe their relationships to creative writing.

The aim of this thesis is to seek a better understanding of in-service primary and secondary level teachers' relationships to creative writing and to explore their experiences in two creative writing communities: the teachers' Creative Writing Group and the Studies in Writing programme at a Finnish open university.

1.2 The house on the hill—Thesis in the crossing of disciplines

My professional background is in the educational field: I am a trained primary school teacher with a Master's Degree in education and with studies in educational leadership. On the other hand, I have always had a passion for creative writing and literature, both which I have studied on the side. My work experience is mostly from the academia, where I have worked since my graduation in 2012. My current professional status would be a teacher educator, an educational researcher, a writing instructor, and a creative writer with an upcoming first novel. In this chapter, I clarify the connection between the two disciplines, education and writing, and present narrative research as a way to connect the two.

The current research is set in the field of education, with the aim of studying the support of teachers' professional development through creative writing. On one hand, I have identified my research as part of a larger discussion on teachers' professional development, which I will discuss in later parts of this theory chapter. On the other hand, as educational research on writing is on most parts focused on the pedagogy and learning of writing, embarking on this thesis has called upon an interdisciplinary approach. As the focus of this research is on creative writing as a means for teacher development, exploring the tradition of writing research in human sciences has been essential to complete this thesis. Next, I will discuss the discourses of writing research in general and in the Finnish context, after which I will zoom into creative writing research and finally, determine the research gap this thesis is attempting to fill within the field of writing research.

Bétrancourt and colleagues (2016) recognise two main lines of writing research: the process of learning to write, that is, the processes of writing itself, and the impact of writing activities on developing new ideas and knowledge, that is, the processes that arise from writing. Within these two lines are numerous perspectives that sometimes intertwine. The field of writing research is diverse and somewhat nebulous, as it consists of many divergent approaches and is strongly interdisciplinary. For example, in Finland, research on writing has been studied in linguistics, education, art, and social sciences (Erra 2020). The Finnish writing research field is multidisciplinary, and it often intertwines different areas, such as learning and education or language and literature. A timely and important insertion in Finnish writing research has been the possibility to do doctoral studies in creative writing, a discipline located in the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Department of Music, Art, and Culture Studies at the University of Jyväskylä. So far, there have been less than a dozen published doctoral dissertations in the discipline of creative writing (Ekström 2011; Erra 2020; Kähmi 2015; Kallionpää 2017; Kulmala 2020; Niemi-Pynttäri 2007), but this number is due to increase in coming years.

During the first years of my doctoral studies, I had to turn to research on human sciences (literature and arts), therapy and counselling, health care and social sciences, and philosophy and education to learn more about the themes of my research. In particular, familiarising myself with the Finnish research discipline of creative writing helped me determine my research topic and define the gaps in research on creative writing in the Finnish educational context. Indeed, in the global context and also in Finland, most doctoral dissertations on creative writing seem to be conducted by PhD researchers whose research is facilitated in the human sciences and particularly in creative writing post-graduate programmes. Narrowing down my theoretical framework took time and effort, but convinced me that there is a research gap that my doctoral research could help fill.

As a starting point for defining my niche in the crossover of creative writing and education, I will inspect Ivanič's (2004) framework of discourses in writing. Ivanič (2004) specifies six discourses of learning to write and writing: skills discourse, creativity discourse, process discourse, genre discourse, social practices discourse, and sociopolitical discourse. These discourses are on some levels intertwined, but on others contradictory (i.e. skills discourse vs. process discourse). This thesis is drawn to creativity discourse, with the note that in this research, supporting writers' creative expression is aimed at professional development, thus expanding from the mere text to the writers' change and growth. In this research, I approach writing from the perspective of social practices discourse, which moves beyond the text (skills, creativity, and genre discourses) and the individual process (process discourse) by acknowledging the situated and social context of writing (Ivanič 2004, 225, 234–237). Furthermore, this thesis can be positioned in the sociopolitical discourse of writing, which sees writing as a sociopolitically constructed practice that has consequences for identity and is changing over time (Ivanič 2004, 225, 237–240).

According to Hyland (2015), our understanding of writing can be approached from three perspectives: text-oriented understandings, writer-oriented understandings, and reader-oriented understandings. This thesis is positioned at the writer-oriented approach, which Hyland (2015) further divides into three strands: expressivist, cognitivist, and situated. Bringing Hylands' three strands of writer-oriented approach together, my thesis examines writing as personal expression and self-discovery, but also as a cognitive process of telling, transforming, and reflecting knowledge and experiences. Writing is explored as a situated act that is impacted by the writers' past experiences and the socio-cultural context of the present writing situation (Hyland 2015, 12–20). Lillis (2013, 160–161), on the other hand, divides the theorisation of writing into eight domains: poetic-aesthetic, transactional-rationalist, process-expressionist, social semiotic, socio-discursive, social practice, participatory culture, and socio-cognitive. Of these, my research is mostly set in the socio-cognitive domain, where emphasis is on social actions and learning, and in the social practice domain, which further moves the researchers' attention from texts towards practices and approaches writing from the perspective of the use and meaning of language in everyday practices (Lillis 2013, 158–161). However, each of the eight domains in Lillis's (2013) description overlap on some levels, and domains such as the poetic-aesthetic are visible in this study.

To further specify the standpoint of this thesis, I use the following citation, where Gilbert and Macleroy (2020, 3) describe the evolution of research on creative writing, emphasising the difference between literary criticism (focusing on the product of creative writing) and the enquiry of writing as a process.

> 'Creative writing has been researched in the form of literary criticism for centuries. However, analysing a piece of creative writing is, in some ways, quite different from investigating the creative writing process, which is the act of a person either preparing to write or writing something. Therefore, exploring creative writing involves first looking at a writer's processes and, then latterly, the finished product. The focus can be different from the literary critic, who tends to look at the finished product of a writer or writers.'

In Figure 1, I portray the theoretical and methodological background of this thesis. As a researcher, I am drawn to locate myself in the company of not only educational researchers, but also writer researchers/narrative storyteller researchers *and* creative writing researchers. My writer-researcher role is double agent(ish), as I research creative writing and utilise creative writing in my research. On top of that, an extensive amount of my research data consists of creative writings. However, my home is in the educational field, and this often pulls me away from networks of creative writing research: while many creative writing researchers focus on processes and experiences of creative writing itself (see Webb 2015), my focus is on the teachers who write and the professional, social, and personal outcomes of engaging in creative writing communities. Then again, most of my colleagues in the educational field with research interests in writing are engaged in pedagogical issues of writing and literary arts. I see my thesis homed in an interdisciplinary crossover of writing research and

According to Hyland (2015), our understanding of writing can be approached from three perspectives: text-oriented understandings, writer-oriented understandings, and reader-oriented understandings. This thesis is positioned at the writer-oriented approach, which Hyland (2015) further divides into three strands: expressivist, cognitivist, and situated. Bringing Hylands' three strands of writer-oriented approach together, my thesis examines writing as personal expression and self-discovery, but also as a cognitive process of telling, transforming, and reflecting knowledge and experiences. Writing is explored as a situated act that is impacted by the writers' past experiences and the socio-cultural context of the present writing situation (Hyland 2015, 12–20). Lillis (2013, 160–161), on the other hand, divides the theorisation of writing into eight domains: poetic-aesthetic, transactional-rationalist, process-expressionist, social semiotic, socio-discursive, social practice, participatory culture, and socio-cognitive. Of these, my research is mostly set in the socio-cognitive domain, where emphasis is on social actions and learning, and in the social practice domain, which further moves the researchers' attention from texts towards practices and approaches writing from the perspective of the use and meaning of language in everyday practices (Lillis 2013, 158–161). However, each of the eight domains in Lillis's (2013) description overlap on some levels, and domains such as the poetic-aesthetic are visible in this study.

To further specify the standpoint of this thesis, I use the following citation, where Gilbert and Macleroy (2020, 3) describe the evolution of research on creative writing, emphasising the difference between literary criticism (focusing on the product of creative writing) and the enquiry of writing as a process.

> 'Creative writing has been researched in the form of literary criticism for centuries. However, analysing a piece of creative writing is, in some ways, quite different from investigating the creative writing process, which is the act of a person either preparing to write or writing something. Therefore, exploring creative writing involves first looking at a writer's processes and, then latterly, the finished product. The focus can be different from the literary critic, who tends to look at the finished product of a writer or writers.'

In Figure 1, I portray the theoretical and methodological background of this thesis. As a researcher, I am drawn to locate myself in the company of not only educational researchers, but also writer researchers/narrative storyteller researchers *and* creative writing researchers. My writer-researcher role is double agent(ish), as I research creative writing and utilise creative writing in my research. On top of that, an extensive amount of my research data consists of creative writings. However, my home is in the educational field, and this often pulls me away from networks of creative writing research: while many creative writing researchers focus on processes and experiences of creative writing itself (see Webb 2015), my focus is on the teachers who write and the professional, social, and personal outcomes of engaging in creative writing communities. Then again, most of my colleagues in the educational field with research interests in writing are engaged in pedagogical issues of writing and literary arts. I see my thesis homed in an interdisciplinary crossover of writing research and

educational research, with a strong foundation built on narrative research tradition.

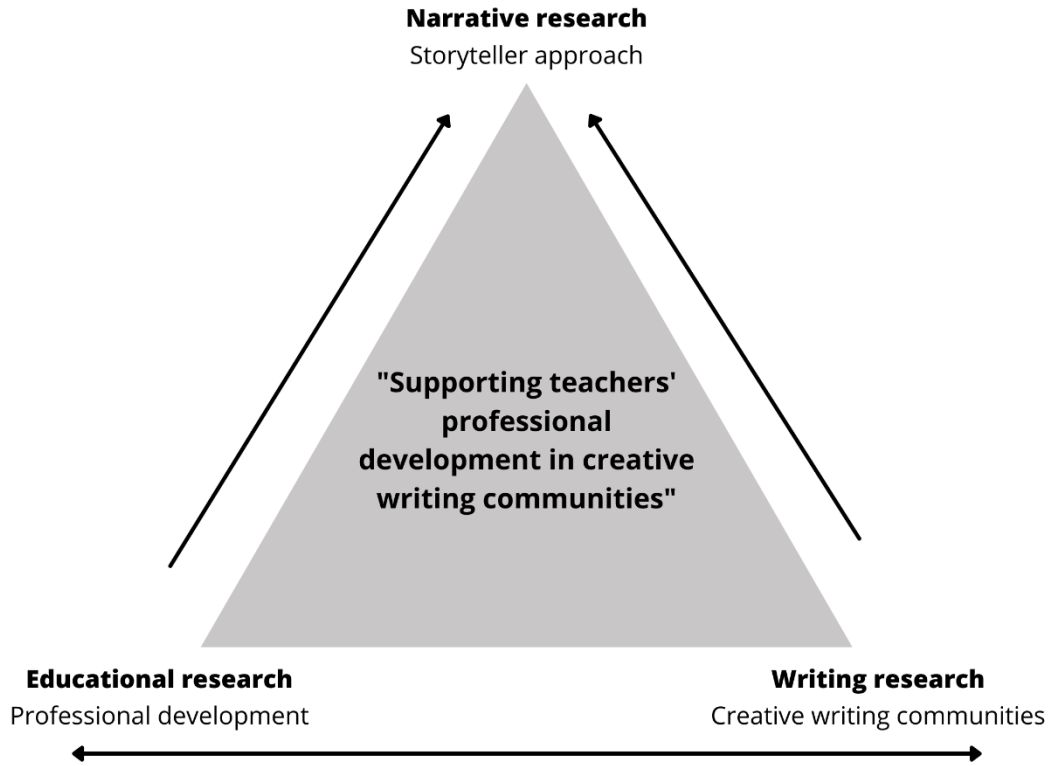

Figure 1. The research context of the thesis

If I start to vision the imaginary setting of my research, I see a house on a hill, close to a crossing of two roads that both lead to different big cities. From the crossroads, a small trail leaves and takes you to my house. This home is located in a somewhat challenging area, where storms and rains occur at times, and at those times, my home feels like a warm and safe place, but when the skies are clear, you can step outside and see a beautiful lake view. From this place, we can start to inspect the view more closely, and maybe take some trips to the close cities, knowing that at the familiar junction down the hill we can always find our way back home by following the footprints we left earlier.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this thesis is to study teachers' professional development through creative writing, and in particular, through two writing communities: the Teachers' Creative Writing Group and the open university Studies in Writing course. In the sub-studies, I explore teachers' narrated experiences of

participating in the writing communities and their perceptions of using different kinds of creative, literary methods to express and develop themselves. In order to achieve this aim, I use the teachers' creative texts and individual interviews as data. By studying teachers of two different writing communities, I seek to find descriptions of good practices and elements that can be utilised in future in-service teacher education. Finally, my aim is to utilise creative writing methods (poetry, prose, drama) to illustrate teachers as writers and to give voice to teacher stories on creative writing from a holistic view that takes into account social and pedagogical aspects as well as personal growth.

I approach teachers' professional development from socio-constructivist views of learning: the epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundation of this research lie in the social constructivism paradigm that is discussed in the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978). This paradigm, where narrative research is also rooted, views learning as an active process of constructing knowledge by processing and reflecting upon new and previous information and experiences of social interactions in various cultural contexts (Gogus 2012; Simina 2012). These experiences can be narrated to self and others via language. Thus, this research explores teachers narrated stories of their experiences professional development.

The thesis aims to answer the following research question:

1. What kinds of experiences a) of being a creative writer and b) on professional development are narrated by the teachers in the two writing communities, the Teachers' Creative Writing Group and Studies in Writing programme?

In addition, the research questions of the sub-studies are as follows:

Article 1: How do the teachers a) describe themselves as writers in their narratives from the writing group, and b) narrate their expectations for their professional and personal development in the creative writing group?

Article 2: What kinds of stories of professional development do the teachers narrate regarding their experiences in the writing group?

Article 3: What kinds of stories do the teachers from Studies in Writing tell about their experiences of creative writing in terms of their development as teachers and writers?

The context, research questions, and methodology of the original studies of this thesis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of the original studies

	Title	Research question	Data	Analytic method	Data collected
Study I	Exploring Teachers' Stories of Writing: A Narrative Perspective	How do the teachers 1) describe themselves as writers in their narratives from the writing group, and 2) narrate their expectations for their professional and personal development in the creative writing group?	Creative writing assignments from the participants of the teachers' creative writing group (N=11)	Thematic analysis Narrative analysis: Word image /Found poetry (poetry)	2016
Study II	Narratives of Professional Development in a Teachers' Creative Writing Group	What kinds of stories of professional development do the teachers narrate regarding their experiences in the writing group?	Semi-structured interviews and creative writing assignments from the participants of the teachers' creative writing group (N=11)	Reflexive thematic analysis Narrative analysis: Creative nonfiction (prose)	2017
Study III	Teachers as Creative Writing Students: Narratives of Professional Development	What kinds of stories do the teachers from Studies in Writing tell about their experiences of creative writing in terms of their development as teachers and writers?	Semi-structured interviews and application letters of teachers (N=5) who participated in Studies in Writing at an open university	Reflexive thematic analysis Narrative analysis: Ethnodramatic dialogue (drama)	2017

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

> 'Research practices can invigorate writing; creative practices can invigorate research; and−if properly organised and managed—creative writing can operate as a mode of knowledge generation, a way of exploring problems and answering questions that matter in our current context.'

The author of this quote, Webb (2015, X), beautifully connects creative writing and research by inspecting the etymology of the word 'research': a compilation of prefix *re*, which in Old French adds intensity to a word, and *cerchier*, translated as 'to search', and can therefore be interpreted as 'to look intensely'. Webb argues that research thus becomes relevant to creative writers, who, in the activity of making a literary work, look intensely beyond the surface, peeling back layers of the surface and testing out ideas and approaches in order to create new ways of seeing, thinking, and telling. Webb (2015, 6–7) concludes that 'by looking intensely, and then reflecting on what is known and what is being made, it is possible to craft a piece of work that is not only original, but also accessible by, and able to connect with, its readers'.

2.1 Defining teachers' professional development from a holistic view

2.1.1 Professional development

Defining teachers' professional development in a general and satisfactory way is not an easy task. There are multiple definitions of teachers' professional development, and some researchers even argue that a generally accepted definition is lacking entirely (see Desimone 2009; Sancar et al. 2021). Here, I will first define professional development generally, and then move on to discussing teachers' professional development in particular and how professional development is understood in this research.

Historically, the term 'professional development' has been used to describe learning and knowledge building of skills related to work. Some descriptions refer to learning activities offered to workers. For example, the Cambridge online dictionary [1] defines professional development as 'training that is given to managers and people working in professions to increase their knowledge and skills'. A broader understanding of professional development views it as a process of work-related learning, and considers not only knowledge but also other competences needed for work. The Oxford online dictionary Lexico [2] defines professional development as 'the development of competence or expertise in one's profession; the process of acquiring skills needed to improve performance in a job', and the Macmillan online dictionary [3] offers a similar description: 'The process of obtaining the skills, qualifications, and experience that allow you to make progress in your career'. The latter two descriptions take into consideration the fact that professional development takes place not only in formal training, but also in different informal and nonformal settings: we learn and develop not only in formal education but also through personal life experiences; friends and relatives; books, media, and the internet; and everyday work situations and discussions with colleagues (Heikkinen et al. 2012; Tynjälä and Heikkinen 2011).

In the field of educational research, the concept of teachers' professional development is used in the following ways:

1) An organised formal or informal event, course, or other activity that aims at supporting pre- or in-service teachers' learning/development. This definition includes formal training (pre-service teacher training, in-service education programmes); book clubs and study groups (Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth 2001); mentoring and peer groups (Geeraerts et al. 2015; Kiviniemi et al. 2020); and art communities and art/narrative groups (e.g. Elbaz-Luwisch and Pritzker 2010).
2) Development of teachers' skills and content knowledge (subject knowledge and pedagogical, instructional, and classroom management skills) that aim at increasing and supporting pupils' learning (e.g. Avalos 2011)
3) A part of building a learning organisation; a collaborative process that aims at the development of the workplace but also considers teachers' individual needs and passions (Senge et al. 2012)
4) A holistic process of extending self-knowledge and strengthening agency through reflecting on professional and personal life experiences (Eteläpelto et al. 2014; Jokinen et al. 2014).

The aforementioned understandings of teachers' professional development sometimes overlap. What is common to all these approaches is the idea that teacher development does not happen in a vacuum. It is influenced by social connections and cultural contexts. The social nature of learning is considered

1 https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/professional-development?q=professional+development+
2 https://www.lexico.com/definition/professional_development
3 https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/professional-development

important in teachers' professional development, and the literature suggests that professional development practices could take place at the school and in collaboration with colleagues, so researchers are encouraged to conduct intervention studies at the school (Postholm and Boylan 2018). On the other hand, however efficient at-school professional development may be, there is still room for developing as autonomous professionals in outside-of-school networks as well (Spencer et al. 2017). Nowadays in educational research, emotions are also considered to have a significant connection to teacher development (Tynjälä, Virtanen, Klemola, Kostiainen & Rasku-Puttonen 2016; Uitto, Jokikokko & Estola 2015a). It is suggested that teacher education should not only promote teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge, but also self-regulatory, emotional, and social knowledge (Tynjälä et al. 2016).

This research approaches teachers' professional development as a continuum where social, personal, and professional dimensions are interwoven in the processes of teacher development, acknowledging that teacher development should be seen as a whole and examined using holistic research methods (Bell and Gilbert 1996; Geeraerts et al. 2014). One model that takes into account all these aspects of teacher development is integrative pedagogy (e.g. Tynjälä 2008; Tynjälä et al. 2016, 2019, 2021). Drawing from a socio-constructivist view of learning and professional development (e.g. Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993; Eraut 2004; le Maistre and Paré 2006; Patterson 2015, 121–127), the model of integrative pedagogy emphasises the importance of creating learning spaces and situations that integrate the four basic components of expertise—theoretical, practical, self-regulative, and sociocultural knowledge—with an emotional, personal dimension (see Figure 2, Tynjälä et al. 2016). This model of integrative pedagogy can be utilised in different contexts of work life and education (Tynjälä et al. 2016, 2019, 2021), such as pre-service teacher education (Tynjälä et al. 2016) and peer-mentoring groups (Kiviniemi et al. 2020; Tynjälä et al. 2019).

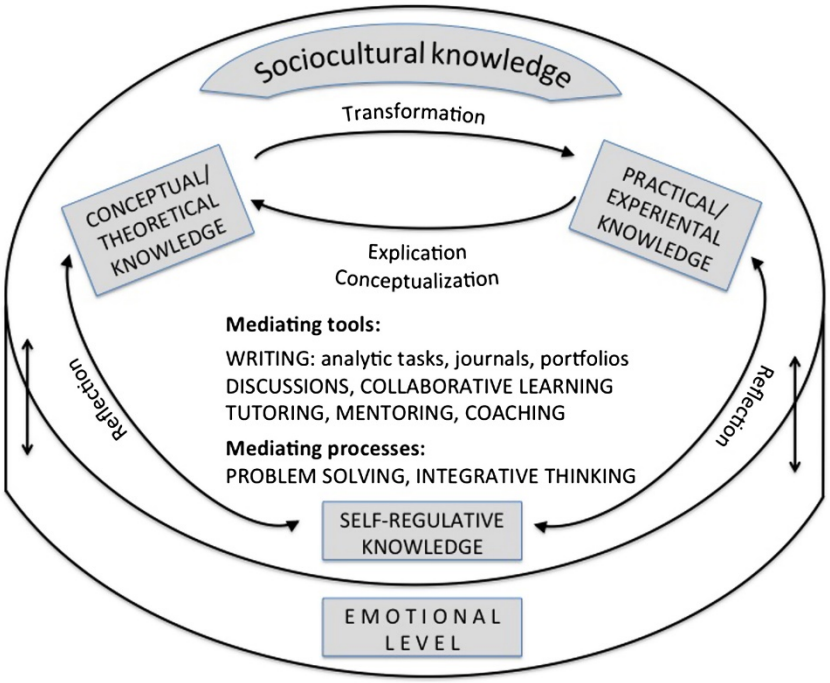

Figure 2. Model of integrative pedagogy by Tynjälä et al. (2016)

Over the last few decades, research on teacher development has indeed moved beyond the 'teachers' acquisition of "assets," such as knowledge, competencies, or beliefs as the basis of professional development' (Akkerman and Meijer 2011, 308) towards a more holistic understanding of being a teacher, a shift that intertwines teacher development with teacher identity. This Vygotskyan development is in line with modern psychology that critiques the dichotomy of 'cognition' and 'affect/emotions' and approaches the two as dialogical (McLeod 1997).

To sum up, teachers' professional development in this study is understood as a life-long process of growth, learning and holistic development, where teachers develop their sociocultural, theoretical, practical and self-regulative knowledge extend their self-knowledge, which includes reflecting teacher identities and emotions, and involves both personal and professional elements.

2.1.2 Teacher identity

In this research, teacher identity and identity work are considered to be essential for professional development. Indeed, the active building of teacher identity is generally considered to be an essential part of continuous professional development (Eteläpelto et al. 2014; Geeraerts et al. 2014; Jokinen et al. 2014). However, teacher identity is not easy to define in one universal way, as there are different understandings of the concept.

Identity in general has several descriptions; for example, it is defined by the Cambridge online dictionary[4] as 'who a person is, or the qualities of a person or

[4] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identity

group that make them different from others' and, by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary[5], as 'the distinguishing character or personality of an individual', 'the relation established by psychological identification'. Identity answers the question: 'Who am I?', that is, the qualities that make us what we are and how we differ from everybody else, and on the other hand, how we are similar to or the same as others, as Macmillan online dictionary[6] sums it up. Most views of teacher identity agree that it is a continuous process that involves professional and personal elements (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009; Goodson and Gill 2011; Uitto, Kaunisto, Syrjälä & Estola). In this study, teacher identity is understood as dynamic and involving both personal and professional elements (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009).

This thesis approaches identity holistically, as teachers' identity cannot be clearly divided into 'professional' and 'personal' (Alsup 2019). In teacher identity, the personal and professional are interconnected: identity is simultaneously multiple and unified, continuous and discontinuous, and social and individual (see Akkerman and Meijer 2011). To emphasise the contextual and changing nature of our understanding of ourselves, Ivanič (1994) prefers the plural term 'identities' over 'identity', as we humans identify and position ourselves simultaneously with a variety of social groups. These groups vary from being a daughter, a mother, a teacher, a writer, and a Finnish woman, for example, and are often intertwined and sometimes contradictory (see Ivanič 1994).

This study acknowledges that identity is not fixed nor solely individually constructed, but changing and socially constructed (Ivanič 1998). Indeed, teachers' identity work is a process of expanding self-knowledge through reflecting on personal and professional identity and experiences (Stenberg 2010) in the socio-cultural context in which the teachers are living their lives.

2.1.3 Narrative view of identity

> 'On one hand, self is a product of the conditions and contexts in which it operates. On the other hand, self is constructed and transformed through the stories it receives, creates and shares.'

This citation by Monteagudo (2011, 299) describes the understanding of identity against which this thesis leans. Narrative identity can be described as follows: the building blocks of identity consist of personal history and experiences, which take a narrative form in our spoken and written stories (Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001; Bruner 1987;). Narrative identity can be described as an autobiographical continuum that we build through interpretations we have of our experiences (e.g. Ricoeur 1991). In other words, we construct our own identities as we narrate our lives and share those narratives with others, and our identities are shaped and reformed by narratives told by our families, friends, colleagues, and society (e.g. Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001; Bruner 1987; Ricoeur 1991).

---

5 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity
6 https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/identity

Narrativity is a constructed cognitive structure that helps us understand, build, and represent our identities, experiences, the people around us, and the world (Smith 2012, 204). Furthermore, the narrative view of identity is always an approach that considers language: through language, we tell and discuss our life events and experiences as forms of stories. The following quote from Bolton (2010, 20) beautifully sums up this conflict between our *narrated* and *lived* life: 'Situations can be narrated as story, with beginning, middle, and end; characters demonstrate intentions and interact over a specified time period; events occur in specific places.' However, she goes on to say that 'life as lived is not a story, mostly because it is all middle with no real beginnings or endings' (Bolton 2010, 20).

The narrative understanding of identity draws from the social constructivist paradigm, which is founded particularly on the work of Vygotsky (1978). In educational contexts, social constructivism discusses our learning as an active process, where we construct new knowledge by combining new and previously held information by reflecting on experiences of social interactions with the surrounding world and in the cultural contexts we function in (Gogus 2012; Simina 2012). Thus, the social constructivist paradigm emphasises the impact of others on our learning.

The socio-constructivist narrative paradigm views teacher identity as story-formed manifestations of both personal and professional experiences (Stenberg 2010). When one begins to narratively explore their identity, they are faced with stories told about themselves by their families, friends, teachers, colleagues, media, and political forces (see e.g. Ivanič 1998; McKinney and Giorgis 2009, 109). In addition, narratives are not passive, but active. They shape our understanding of ourselves, of how others see us, and of the world, but on the other hand, we can choose which stories we tell and how we use them: narratives are active and embodied, and have the power to change us and our view of the world (Smith 2016, 205–206).

Narrative researchers often use narratives in practical applications that are primarily aimed at making a change and benefiting the participant, and narratives have been used, for example, in practices of education, health care, pedagogy, social work, and marketing (Heikkinen 2002). Storytelling promotes identity work by serving both a regressive and progressive function: the regressive function helps bring into awareness the memories and emotions that have been silenced, and the progressive function provides a way of dealing with and learning from these life experiences on a higher level of integration (Breault 2010). For example, storytelling can give teachers a voice in the educational research field, and therefore teacher stories can also develop the teaching profession itself (Breault 2010).

Narrative identity work can be used as a tool for professional development (e.g. Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves 2014; Stenberg 2010). Dealing with personal school memories is a part of teachers' identity work (Uitto 2011). A tradition of storytelling and autobiography has been rooted in Finland as well. For example, the narrative formation of identity is considered in many in-service teacher

practices, such as peer group mentoring, where teachers' professional development and wellbeing are supported in small groups of peer colleagues (e.g. Heikkinen, Jokinen, and Tynjälä 2012; Kaunisto, Estola, and Leiman 2013). These types of practices for in-service teachers are rooted in ideas of peer support and narrativity, acknowledging holistic aspects of professional development (Geeraerts et al. 2015; Heikkinen and Syrjälä 2007). In addition, socio-constructivists and narrative views of identity are visible in pre-service teacher education, where, for example, teacher students write reflective learning journals and construct their teacher identities in discussions with their peers and personal academic writing assignments (e.g. Tynjälä et al. 2016). One interesting example of narrativity as a part of professional development is the Finnish model of peer-group mentoring, where small groups of educational professionals (teachers, principals, or pre-service teachers) get together once a month to discuss their experiences of being a teacher and share ideas that support didactic, personal, and professional development (Kiviniemi et al. 2020; Tynjälä et al. 2019). There have been other similar narratively engaged teacher education projects producing encouraging results on the meaningfulness of narrating teachers' own life stories (i.e. Estola, Kaunisto, Keski-Filppula, Syrjälä & Uitto 2007).

2.2 Creative writing as a means for professional development

2.2.1 What is creativity?

> 'Without explaining creativity, it's easy to fail to recognize and nurture individuals with important creative abilities. If we hope to solve all of the pressing problems facing our society and our world, we must take advantage of the creative talents of everyone.'

Creativity is a trendy word used everywhere, from education to marketing, from arts to politics. However familiar and commonly used it is as a word, defining creativity is not easy, as there are numerous different descriptions that have shifted and changed over time. In the above citation, Sawyer (2012, 5) emphasises the importance of explaining creativity in order to support the creativity of every person. Creativity was originally seen as something divine and sacred, which still resonates in today's myths of an artist unveiling a secret knowledge when inspired and creating a new piece of art. Kampylis and Valtanen (2010, 209) narrate the change in the concept of creativity by naming three eras: the metaphysical era from antiquity and Renaissance, the aristocratic era that ended in the middle of the 20th Century, and the modern democratic era. Nowadays, all human beings are perceived to be able and wise enough to create meaningful and useful things and ideas that benefit society, and Kampylis and Valtanen (2020) suggest that we are moving forward to an era of conscientious creativity where ethical creation is emphasised and pursued.

The online Cambridge dictionary[7] defines creativity as 'the ability to produce or use original and unusual ideas'. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary[8] describes creativity as the 'ability to create' and as 'the quality of being creative'. Furthermore, Merriam-Webster's definition of the word create is as follows: 'to bring into existence; to make or bring into existence something new; to produce through imaginative skill', and creative as 'having the quality of something created rather than imitated'. These definitions leave much open for interpretation. They also leave me with questions such as the following: In arts, how can we tell where mimicking ends and creation begins, if we agree with the socio-constructivist views of the world, where we are all impacted by our surrounding world and inspired by what we see, hear, read, and experience?

Drawing together previous decades of creativity research, Sawyer (2012) explores creativity from an interdisciplinary approach, which consists of personality, cognitive, and sociocultural approaches. Sawyer (2012, 7–10) defines creativity from two differing approaches: individualist and sociocultural. The individualist approach views creativity as 'a new mental combination that is expressed in the world': through combining previous knowledge, thoughts, and concepts, we do, express, build, or manifest something that is novel and not strictly copied or repeated from before (Sawyer 2012, 7–8). These individualist creative functions are not only performed by artists or genius scientists, but they can be seen even in our everyday lives, such as altering a cupcake recipe or writing a song. This everyday creativity is often referred to as 'little c', whereas 'big C' refers to socially valuable products, such as significant works of art or problem solving that extends our everyday thinking (Sawyer 2012, 7–8). A songwriter does not create a new song from thin air, but draws inspiration from the musical genre, playing to its rules and still managing to compose new elements to make it stand out from others.

From a sociocultural perspective, creativity can be defined as 'the generation of a product that is judged to be novel and also to be appropriate, useful, or valuable by a suitably knowledgeable social group' (Sawyer 2012, 8), or as interaction between 'characteristics of people and communities, creative processes, subject domains and wider social and cultural contexts' (Loveless 2007, 2012, 110). Individuals can benefit from creativity in everyday situations such as problem-solving and work life, whereas at a sociatel level, creativity can lead to 'new scientific findings, new movements in art, new inventions, and new social programs' (Sternberg 2003, 89).

One of the most famous creativity researchers, Csikszentmihályi, has inspected creativity through the lens of *flow*. Unlike most mundane everyday tasks, when experiencing flow, our focus is solely on the present activity: worries about our lives and negative feelings, such as anxiety or sorrow, vanish from the mind as we concentrate wholly on the task at hand (Nakamura & Csikszentmihályi 2014). We are not afraid of failure, and we feel secure and in control as we step out of our comfort zone and find that we can meet the

7 https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/creativity
8 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/creativity

challenge that we have set for ourselves (Boniwell 2012). In addition, our sense of time can change: hours can pass without being noticed, minutes can feel like forever. We are intrinsically motivated and, therefore, we do not think about external influences, demands, or goals (Csikszentmihályi 1990). Csikszentmihályi (1996) compiles the elements of flow as follows: 1) having a clear vision of what we should do next, 2) having a distinct idea of which steps we must take to proceed towards a specific destination, 3) instinctively knowing that we are doing well and that the task at hand is going as planned, 4) perceiving the task at hand as challenging, but not too difficult for our own level, and 5) feeling like we are operating in our optimal performance level.

2.2.2 Creative writing and narrative identity work

All writing can be considered creative on some level (McVey 2008). However, here, the term *creative writing* is a synonym for literary arts, or writing that utilises literary methods. In this thesis, literary arts is a synonym for creative writing. In addition, there are some concepts, such as expressive writing, which are most often referred to in the field of psychology and therapy and which emphasise the process and not the outcome (e.g. Bolton 2010, 187), that come close to the definition of creative writing. In this thesis, expressive/reflective writing is not considered a synonym, as creative writing is perceived as both the process and the outcome: the artwork. However, I use the term expressive/reflective writing when I refer to the emotional process of creative writing when the teachers are writing about their own lives. I am particularly interested in creative writing when it deals with the personal lives of teachers. Hunt (2000) uses the term autobiographical creative writing (also creative autobiography), referring to practices where, using techniques of fiction and literacy, experiences and memories of the writer's own life are used to create a literary end product. In other words, in autobiographical creative writing, the writers use, for example, fictional and poetic techniques to capture and reflect on their experiences and memories (Hunt 2010) To sum up, in this thesis approachess creative writing from the perspective of the writing process itself (instead of only the literary end result) and how the writing processes are connected to professional development.

Although creative writing has, as other forms of art, been traditionally seen as something mystical and free of control, Sawyer (2012, 320–323) argues that writing is in fact hard work and can be developed by training, active doing, and education. It is a collaborative and socially embedded activity that is always, on some level, impacted by previous work, it is conscious and directed, and it can take place without divine inspiration. The creative writing process is a social process, even when we are writing alone (Gilbert and Macleroy 2020; Sawyer 2012). It is a process of unconscious inspiration and conscious editing (Sawyer 2012, 324).

Creative writing researchers see writing as a way to support narrative identity work. It allows us to express ourselves in novel ways and deal with our experiences and emotions from different perspectives, changing those

perspectives, and stepping back from or zooming into a certain experience, thought, or emotion (Bolton 1999; Hunt 2000; Kosonen 2015).

Literary methods (e.g. poetry, fiction, and drama) can help us change perspectives, step back from or zoom into a certain experience or emotion, and find new ways of expressing and processing them (Hunt 2000; Kähmi 2015; Kosonen 2015). For example, in poetry, literary rules of grammar, spelling, and prose can be thrown 'out of the window, so the writing is not hindered by the such niceties as a sentence needing a verb' (Bolton 1999). Furthermore, the use of metaphor can help us in expressing ourselves through literary imagery, and through prose, we can approach our inner child or write stories based on our personal experiences (Bolton 1999). Creative writing allows us to cross and even break some language structures upheld in academic or professional writing, and helps us seek new ways of communicating our thoughts.

Creative writing researchers suggest that writing can enhance teachers' professional development through narrative identity work. Telling, writing, and sharing stories about our life experiences allows us to stop and reflect on our lives from different perspectives, and can thus have a long-lasting positive impact on our development and our lives (Ihanus 2019; Pennebaker and Chung 2007). In addition, creative writing can enhance our learning capability: Sexton and Pennebaker (2009) suggest that expressive writing can enhance the writers' working memory functions, as expressing stressful thoughts can free space in their working memory. Creative writing is a natural way of reaching flow, the optimal experience, where one feels enjoyment and intrinsic motivation towards the task at hand, so much that they might lose sense of time or otherwise feel emotionally elevated (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Experiencing flow can enhance wellbeing (Boniwell 2012) by helping us recover and recharge from work, lowering stress levels, and motivating us to develop and ourselves.

Although multiple studies show that expressive writing about challenging experiences and traumas can significantly improve writers' health and wellbeing, it is difficult to acknowledge or name any single cause or theory for this, as the writing–health relationship is a complex phenomenon (Pennebaker and Chung 2007). It is nevertheless evident that telling, writing, and sharing stories about one's life experiences, thus breaking the chains of silence and forcing one to stop and reflect on one's life from different perspectives, can have a long-lasting positive and profound life impact (Ihanus 2019; Pennebaker and Chung 2007).

Ihanus (2019, XII–XIII) sums up the healing and empowering power of writing by saying that 'the one who listens to silence can find the hidden voices and the suppressed shame. The powerless and wordless can start a journey of words, from an awkward stalemate to passionate flows… We can start to grow with our own and others' words.' In their meta-analysis, Pennebaker and Chung (2007, 772) argue that 'there is reason to believe that when people transform their feelings and thoughts about personally upsetting experiences into language, their physical and mental health often improves'.

2.2.3 Writing as professional development and identity work

> The changes or outcomes arising through engaging in writing are not just associated with writing. -- Considering ideas, forming concepts and extending propositional associations can mediate learning for the further development of an individual's professional knowledge that is the focus of the written work.

In the citation above, Billet (2016, 12–13) describes how expressing ourselves through written language is about more than just producing an outcome. It also impacts our thinking and learning. This thesis draws from the idea that the power of (creative) writing in professional development is in the processes of writing, and not the creative outcome, that is, the written text. Still, relatively few researchers have studied the impact and implications of writing as a tool for professional development (Bétrancourt et al. 2016). One investment in this field of research is the book *Writing for Professional Development*, by editors Billet, Bétrancourt, and Ortoleva (2016), which approaches the topic through presenting many interesting studies and perspectives. Educational literature acknowledges writing as a significant tool for professional development (see, e.g. Bétrancourt et al. 2016; Locke 2014; Tynjälä, Mason, and Lonka 2001). Writing can indeed be an effective method for reflection (Kurunsaari, Tynjälä & Piirainen 2015), and reflective writing assignments (i.e. learning journals and portfolios) can be efficient in supporting pre- and in-service teachers' learning (Johnson and Golombek 2011; Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate 2016; Woodard 2015). Billet (2016) describes reflection, or 'sense-making', as construing and constructing our experiences through observation, imitation, introspection, and action, arguing that these processes are at the foundation of human learning processes. Reflective practices, such as reflective writing, are about 'paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively' (Bolton 2010, XVIIII).

Reflection is an in-depth consideration of events or situations, and it involves reviewing or reliving the experience in order to explore it (Bolton 2010). Reflexivity means becoming aware of 'the limits of our knowledge' and is about 'standing outside the self' to examine and renegotiate our roles in creating and upholding structures of a social or professional nature (Bolton 2010, XVIIII). Through writing as a reflective practice, practitioners can view events, emotions, structures, and experiences from different perspectives, thus transforming their practices and developing professionally (Bolton 2010). Although no stories we live, tell, or write can be completely objective, reflection and reflexivity can broaden our views and help us grow (e.g. Bolton 2010, 16). Creative expression can support this broadening by allowing us to harness 'material such as memories which we do not know we remember' and by opening access to 'the possible thoughts and experiences of others' (Bolton 2010, 17). Thus, it can be suggested that we can benefit from the reflective practice of creative writing in various ways: using our imagination and creativity can help us emphasise with others, imagine different perspectives, and harness our language to create metaphors that help us understand and share our experiences on different levels. For example, fiction 'removes the straitjacket of what really happened' and

allows us to examine our intuitive knowledge of the world that surrounds us, and sharing these pieces of fiction with colleagues can be a tool for further reflection and open yet another perspective for ourselves and our colleagues as well (Bolton 2010, 17–18). In their work on teachers' narrative writing workshops, Elbaz-Luwisch and Pritzker (2010) discovered that the liberation of academic language structures was motivating to the pre- and in-service teachers as it allowed them to reflect upon their experiences and share and discuss their stories with their peers.

Like Bolton and Latham (2006), I also see that the process of writing and learning by writing does not begin when we start writing or stop at the moment we stop writing. It starts as we live, think, talk, plan, and reflect, and continues as we re-read and re-compose our texts and discuss them with others. Although the activity of writing is often solitary, writing is social in nature, and its power grows through social interactions. As Bolton (2011, 192) summarises, 'expressive, explorative, reflective creative writing is a route to listening to oneself, and then to others.' Thus, taking part in creative writing communities may offer teachers an opportunity to meet other writers and learn from each other. Previous research on teacher development through written narratives (see, e.g. Huber et al. 2013; Johnson and Golombek 2011) and teachers' narrative identity writing groups (Schultz and Ravitch 2012) emphasise the importance of storytelling and the sharing of stories in teacher development.

Recent studies have presented encouraging results for using autobiographical writing, such as journal writing or reflective narrative writing, to support teacher development (e.g. Anspal et al. 2011; Selland 2016; Smith 2011; Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman 2017). However, these studies are often focused on student teachers, and research on the possibilities for integrating creative writing in the practices of in-service teachers' professional development is still relatively scarce.

Creative writing methods can enhance teachers' professional development through narrative identity work and the therapeutic effects of writing (Bolton 1999; Hunt 2000; Kosonen 2015). For example, metaphors can help the writer to express difficult experiences and emotions using images (Bolton 1999; Kähmi 2015). One way teachers can support their own professional development through creative writing is to keep a journal. Thompson (2004) describes journal writing as a way to create, rebuild, and maintain one's relationship to oneself and others, using writing methods such as listing, mind mapping, letter writing, dialogues, and free writing, which can help the writer to express themselves. Thompson's description of journal writing methods and their benefits are close to autobiographical creative writing in general, in which the writer draws from their own life experiences to create new literary texts (see Hunt 2000).

Expressive and explorative writing in a facilitated group 'offers a sufficiently safe environment to explore professional issues, relationships with colleagues, and the work/home interface' (Bolton 2011, 190). Furthermore, as teachers embark on creative writing, they construct their writer identities and work on their wellbeing. Riva (2015) suggests that meaningful flow experiences

can support our personal growth and learning if we draw upon them to find new resources within ourselves. In addition, experiencing flow can enhance wellbeing (Boniwell 2013) by helping us recover and charge from work, and can lower stress levels and motivate us to develop ourselves. Therefore, it can be suggested that teachers may benefit from writing through its positive effects on their wellbeing.

2.3 Teachers as creative writers in creative writing communities

2.3.1 Teacher-writers or teachers' writer identities

So far, in this chapter, I have discussed teacher identity and explored writing as a way of supporting teachers' professional development, which includes identity work. A question remains that I find intriguing and rather important in this thesis: What is it like being a teacher and a writer, or being a teacher who is engaged in writing? Through discussing being a writer and one's relationship to writing, the term *writer identity* is explored. According to Ivanič (1994, 23–29), writer identity can be approached from four intertwining aspects: autobiographical self, discoursal self, self as author, and possibilities for selfhood. Ivanič (1994, 4) is interested in the way writers position themselves in their writing, that is, 'how writers are positioned by the discourse(s) they draw on as they write'. These written discourses, which refer to the texts and the processes and conventions of writing the specific text, are impacted by unconscious decisions impacted by the context and the expected readers, and by the discourses of the socio-cultural context in which the writer lives and writes (Ivanič 1994). Therefore, when discussing writer identity, we cannot blindly focus on the writer themselves; we must also pay attention to the context in which the writer lives their life. Writing can be seen as a way of positioning oneself, but also as a way of critically exploring the positions and contexts one writes in (e.g. Vassilaki 2017).

Teachers' writer identities have been studied mostly in the context of academic writing teacher education (e.g. Morgan and Pytash 2014). In other words, research on teachers' writing identity has mainly focused on pre-service teachers who aim specifically at becoming teachers of writing. This study, however, focuses on in-service primary teachers, subject teachers, and special education teachers. As teachers of different subjects, they are all also teachers of language (e.g. Aalto 2019) and thus, teachers of writing (Peterson 2008). As the construction of teacher students' writing identities runs across 'the academic through the professional to the personal' (Vassilaki 2017), I have included research literature on pre-service teachers in the following theoretical review on teachers' writer identities.

In their literature review, Morgan and Pytash (2014) suggest that pre-service teachers' beliefs of themselves as writers and the writing instruction they received influenced their decision-making in the induction phase. In short, pre-

service and induction phase teachers seem to develop as writing teachers if they have gained confidence and a broader understanding of writing during their teacher studies (e.g. Street 2003). In the Finnish context, researchers of pre-service teachers' multimodal writing skills suggest that future teachers' holistic understanding of writing should be promoted in their studies (Torvelainen et al. 2019). However, there are other factors that influence writing teachers' enthusiasm and capability to be 'good at teaching writing', such as peer role models and support (or lack thereof), and the culture of the school community (e.g. Wang and Odell 2003). In addition, because there is a strong tendency towards academic, formal writing in pre-service teacher education, it may be difficult to engage in reflective writing, even though it may support the identity work of future teachers (Vassilaki 2017). All in all, the review by Morgan and Pytash (2014) emphasises the need to offer (pre-service) teachers opportunities to explore different writing methods and be educated in writing pedagogy in order for them to develop a positive relationship to writing or a positive writer identity. However, it must be noted that most research in their review is relatively small-scale, with data collected from just one or a few participants, and therefore no reliable generalisations can be made.

According to a literature review by Cremin and Oliver (2017), pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes can influence teachers' pedagogical practices as well as their perceptions of themselves as writers by providing opportunities to reflect on personal writing histories, engage in writing, discuss textual processes, and participate in a writing community of practice. Furthermore, taking part in a teachers' creative writing workshop, instructed by professional writers, encouraged the teachers to increase creative writing in their own classrooms, which seemed to positively impact their students' motivation and confidence towards writing (Cremin, Myhill, Eyres, Nash, Wilson & Oliver 2020). Teachers' confidence as writers appears to influence their pedagogical choices about, for example, whether to offer a more reflective approach to their teaching of writing (Cremin and Oliver 2017). Indeed, engaging teachers as creative writers can enhance their professional development and inspire them to develop their pedagogical practices (Yoo 2018). In her research on three teacher-writers who participated in different communities of writing, Woodard (2016) found that through exploring their personal emotional writing processes, the teachers developed their classroom instruction. Participating in writing communities, such as writing groups, involves emotional work for the teachers and might enable them to help their students become aware of emotions in writing (Woodard 2016). In light of these findings, teachers' writer identities and the role of emotions in creative writing processes deserve increased recognition and attention in future research (Cremin and Oliver 2017).

What is it like to be a creative writer and a teacher? Loveless (2012) researched creative practitioners in the educational field, for example writer-teachers and artist-teachers, and discovered that there were strong connections between being creative and being an educator: creativity seemed to bring new perspectives into their pedagogical thinking and teaching actions.

2.3.2 Creative writing communities

We can all write on our own. Nothing is stopping us from picking up a pen and a paper, or opening the laptop, and starting to write something creative. It is that simple, and yet, we most often do not. Most of us need some kind of inspiration and support for our writing. This is because even though writing may seem like a solitary practice, it is in fact impacted by the socio-cultural contexts in which we learn to write. It is because most of us do not actually write to ourselves, but to an imaginary or real reader we have in mind. And, assumably, it is because our daily lives are so hectic that we may find it hard to 'just start writing'. There are many reasons why so many of us who have a passion for writing seek out communities where we can write. We seem to have a need for sharing and telling our stories, and even if we are not willing to share our writings, we may be willing to be inspired and motivated by others or receive writing instruction. In addition, most of us need a specific time and place where we can focus on writing, that is, a space for writing, which may be difficult to arrange in the midst of our everyday lives.

In this thesis, I approach teachers' professional development from the perspective of creative writing communities. So far, I have discussed teachers' professional development and creative writing as a means to holistically support it. I have illustrated teacher development as a life-long, simultaneously personal and social process, where teachers build and (re)negotiate their identities, work on their classroom practices and the development of their school communities, and interact with the social context in which they live and work. Furthermore, I have attempted to define what creative writing means in the context of my thesis and sought previous literature on creative writing as a means for professional development. Next, I illustrate what a creative writing community means in the context of my thesis.

I am studying individual teachers' experiences of professional development through writing. In the first and second articles, I explore teacher narratives in a teachers' creative writing group, and in the third, I study teachers' experiences of Studies in Writing at an open university. One thing that is common to each sub-study of this thesis is the social nature of the context where writing happens. As a conjunctive definition, I call the two social contexts (the Teachers' Creative Writing Group and Studies in Writing) writing communities.

There is no clear definition for a writing community, and it seems that different communities of writing are referred to with differing names according to their goals and attendees. A writing community can be formal, such as academic studies or courses that follow a specific curriculum and are attached to formal organisations such as universities. There are also informal and non-formal writing communities, such as different courses offered by entrepreneurs or non-profit organisations. Informal and non-formal writing communities are often accessible to people outside academia, whereas formal writing communities are often applied to or gained access to through specific formal steps. Within formal, informal, and non-formal communities, assignments and practices can be similar

or very different from each other. For example, there may be similar functions in writing workshops, such as a university course and a therapeutic arts-based writing retreat. The writing communities may be free of charge or accessible via a fee.

One of the most common terms used to refer to a writing community is 'creative writing workshop'. The research on workshops in adult creative writing is most often related to the academic or otherwise professional training of aspiring novelists and creative writing students (e.g. Donnelly 2010; Glover 2010; McAbee 2019; Mimpriss 2009). However, a writing workshop can be very different according to its purpose and aims, varying from a) an open workshop which has no specific agendas except for bringing work-in-progress and giving and receiving feedback, or b) a set-agenda workshop with a previously given writing tasks, aims, and models for discussion and assessment, to c) a writing-and-sharing workshop, where the idea is to write according to a given assignment then share and discuss the writings right away, and d) an ideas workshop, where the focus is on sharing ideas and planning future writings (Gross 2010, 55). What is common to each type of writing workshop is that it has aims and structures: it is not merely a group of friends hanging out and writing, nor a trial for aspiring writers (Gross 2010). Furthermore, a writing workshop differs from 'any writing course' in that it is relatively small-scale, and each member has the opportunity to be equally heard and seen (Gross 2010, 56).

Many writing communities do not aim merely at improving the writing skills of the participants, but attempt to support writers in a more holistic manner. In addition to writing workshops, this thesis draws from research on therapeutic writing groups. Bolton (2011, 212) sees writing groups as communities where both the instructor/facilitator and members play important roles: 'Groups don't happen: they are actively nurtured and supported by both facilitator and participants. A successful group is run for its members and as far possible by them.' Bolton (2011, 212–213) further explicates the role of a facilitator as a silent but active observer, who creates a safe place by offering structures and instructions while being flexible and emphasising confidentiality.

Hunt (2000) describes the dual nature of autobiographical creative writing courses: participants are given tools to develop themselves on both an educational level, which refers to developing writing skills, and a personal level, which denotes self-exploration and therapeutic aspects. I suggest that for teachers, there is a third level that motivates teachers to join writing groups or courses; that is, the pedagogical level.

3 METHODOLOGY

> 'Most simply put, narrative is a story.'
>
> -Patricia Leavy (2020, 45)

3.1 Methodological framework

3.1.1 My path to becoming a narrative researcher

What is it like to do narrative research? What is narrative analysis? This is a question I face when discussing my work with colleagues or friends. Even more often, I ask this question in silence, seeking a deeper understanding and a clearer vision. The following quote by Brett Smith (2016, 203; see also Huttunen, Heikkinen, and Syrjälä 2002, 5), echoes of my own feelings:

> 'I felt unconfident and worried when I first started thinking how to do analytic work with stories. I am not alone here. Numerous conversations over the years with both students and well-established, esteemed academics have revealed that there are many other people who have also experienced bewilderment and anxiety when it comes to narrative research.'

This is partly due to the fact that there are no clear, step-by-step procedures a narrative researcher can rely on, nor is there a clear unified definition of narrative analysis (i.e. Smith 2016). Smith, however, reminds us, that doing qualitative research is not meant to be an easy technique that one learns, but it is indeed a craft one can slowly start to master by reading, discussing, and doing (Smith 2016, 203).

Frankly, I did not plan to wander this deep into the world of narrative research. My original plan was to use as clear and structured analysis methods as possible, because the data and the study setting were 'already hippy-dippy enough'. Furthermore, I quickly realised that there is a risk of becoming 'marginalised as a researcher' if embarking on narrative, creative expression in

my research (see, for example Heikkinen, Huttunen, Syrjälä and Pesonen 2012, 11). I felt that the mere fact that I was going to do a complete doctoral thesis on something that I deeply love and am passionate about was already making me a bit of a weirdo, especially as the object of my love was not easily measured or analysed.

I did however understand from the beginning that my research was indeed narrative: it was a thesis on creative writing, based on the creative writings of teachers and their interviews, where they would narrate their lives and experiences. However, in my original research plan, I argued that I would conduct each study using only the procedure of thematic analysis. I figured that I would be safer that way. I would have a clear format on how to analyse my narrative data in a structured and reliable manner. It should be noted that at that time I had not read enough reflexive thematic analysis either (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2019), and was not as aware as I am today of the fact that all qualitative research is, on some level, a creative process where the researcher's background affects the way they interpret the data at hand.

It was only when I was finishing the first draft of my first article that my two instructors, Mirja and Päivi, confronted me on the matter. They were reading through the thematic analysis and the findings I had written down. 'There is something missing here', Päivi said. I saw Mirja nodding. 'The voice of the teachers, it is not here in these pages', Päivi continued. 'We know you want to rely on thematical analysis, but I feel like this method is not giving us enough depth', Mirja confirmed. 'You have such rich data. How could you make use of it and make sure that your study reflects that data?'

At that very moment, I knew they were right. I had been given a chance to venture deep into the teachers' own creative writings, and those writings were filled with emotions, beautiful expressions, and descriptive language. I needed to find a way to deepen the analysis further, to step beyond the themes, and to bring my analysis to life. With the help of some of my colleagues, especially doctor Johanna Terävä (whose previous narrative research on fatherhood inspired me and who gave me practical tips on narrative analysis), and doctor Anna Rytivaara (who pointed out that the way I had organised citations from the data after the thematic analysis looked like I had written a poem, and introduced me to Clandinin and colleagues' work on word images), I found the courage to try my wings as a full-on narrative researcher. I also came to realise that the narrative approach would give me the opportunity to enjoy the best of both worlds, educational research and creative writing, as it would enable me to compose narratives based on my analysis in a creative manner. I had to learn more about narrative analysis, and finally, I had to face the fact that this was going to be a research-based, critical, mindful, and yet creative narrative analysis process.

3.1.2 Defining narrative research and narrative analysis

In this study, I am taking the standpoint of a narrative researcher with a storyteller position. In this section, I will try to shed light on the previous

literature on doing narrative research, thus explaining how I found that it suited my research.

So, how would I describe narrative research now, looking through the lens of arts-based research, creative writing and educational research? I would agree with Bochner and Herman (2020), who suggest that narrative research is set within an intermediate zone between art and science, and a way to bring humanity into human sciences. Leavy (2020, 67) describes narrative research as a way to make research 'more truthful, meaningful, useful, accessible, and human'.

Narrative research can be positioned under the umbrella of social constructivism, which seeks to 'capture diverse understandings and multiple realities about people's definitions and experiences of the situation' (Patton 2015, 122). According to Smith (2016, 204), narrative research can be approached from the view of narrative constructionism, a socio-cultural approach that sees humans as 'meaning-makers who use narratives to interpret, direct and communicate life and to configure and constitute their experience and their sense of who they are'. Narratives are passed down to us from our social and cultural worlds (Smith 2016). According to Patton (2015, 131), stories with beginnings, middles, and endings are meaning-making structures that we create and tell via interacting with each other. Narrative researchers often refer to the term 'story', as it is easy to understand and approach, but narrative research is much more than just telling stories. Patton (2015, 128) discusses the distinction between stories and narratives as follows:

> 'One distinction is to treat the story as data and the narrative as analysis, which involves interpreting the story, placing it in context, and comparing it with other stories. Another distinction is that the story is what happened and the narrative is how the telling of what happened is structured and scripted within some context or purpose.'

As Heikkinen (2002, 15) explains, 'narrativity is not a method, nor is it a school or thought. Rather, it is a fragmented formation of research related to narratives'. Heikkinen (2002, 15) further explicates that in research, narrative can refer to the narrative data at hand, or to the aim of producing new narratives of the world. This division is visible in the work of many narrative researchers and has different names: analysis on narratives vs. narrative analysis (Polkinghorne 1995), and story analyst vs. storyteller (Smith 2016). In my work, I am more drawn to the storyteller standpoint, where the researcher's aim is to produce analytical reports as written, visual, or performed creative narratives that retell the participants' stories and share key aspects of their experiences (Smith 2016, 209). As Smith (2016) points out, there are tens of versions of narrative analysis, from structural or dialogical narrative analysis to musical performance. For example, in the original studies, the analysis process was a combination of story analyst standpoint (reflexive thematic analysis) and storyteller (poem/word image, Clandinin et al. 2006; prose/creative nonfiction, Sinner 2013; Leavy 2020; and drama/ethnodramatic dialogue, Saldaña 2011).

There are different research methodologies that are similar to narrative research. For example, Gilbert and McElroy (2020) discuss the various qualitative research methods into creative writing, suggesting that, for example,

autoethnography and action research are relevant ways to explore creative writing in teaching settings. They state that their students have utilised these methods among multimodal and psychoanalytic methods in their PhD studies, and encourage researchers to utilise these methods. Narrative research is missing from Gilbert and McElroys' range of methodologies, but I do acknowledge that narrative research is often intertwined with action research (e.g. Heikkinen 2002) and autoethnography (Hamilton, Smith and Worthington 2008) and other qualitative methods that approach phenomena from personal, participatory, or storytelling angles. My research is not focused on my personal experience (cp. Autoethnography), but my personal experiences do have an impact on how I implemented my studies. Furthermore, my research, as probably all research, aims at making a difference, and two of my studies do focus on a pilot that was developed in order to find new ways of supporting teachers' professional development holistically. Therefore, my research setting does have action research, such as goals and functions.

This discourse of narrative research as 'artsy-fartsy', not serious, or something one can pursue only after making a career in more traditional research, has been identified by several researchers in the field (Bowman 2006; Kim 2008; Sinner 2013; Smith 2016). Narrative research may, for example, face critique as it emphasises the researcher's role as a subjective interpreter and composer. It aims at moving 'away from positivism, the traditional epistemological paradigm that views the very nature of knowledge as objective and definite' (Kim 2008, 251), enabling qualitative research to be engaging, emotional, evocative, and accessible to broader audiences, and to bring out the voices of people behind the data. Narrative research aims not at objectivity or generalisation, but at personal and subjective knowledge (e.g. Heikkinen 2002). Thus, positivist criteria for measuring validity and reliability are not appropriate ways to understand narrative or arts-based methods (Bowman 2006; Leavy 2020).

In order to validate narrative research as an approach that is critical, mindful, and justifiable, there are steps researchers can take. There are many researchers who have made suggestions on how to develop the field of narrative research. For example, drawing from Bruners' work and mirroring it to the current narrative research discourses, Monteagudo (2011) suggests that in today's narrative works, we should collaborate with colleagues in order to bring different perspectives into the narrative analysis process and to inspect events from micro and macro levels. Kim (2008, 257–261) suggests that narrative researchers should 1) emphasise the contexts of the story by combining theory and lived experiences, 2) consider narrative research as aesthetic enquiry that can help researchers reach broader audiences and make new connections, and 3) expand the horizons and challenge the current views of readers by telling new stories with new perspectives, thus bringing about social and educational change. In the following quote, Sinner (2013, 4) further describes the possibilities of narrative research, while still demanding responsibility and recognising the power of narratives in making a change in the world.

> 'Establishing storytelling as a method of inquiry that does not conform to dominant theories or genres creates conditions to reconsider, rethink and redefine how information is understood and what knowing should be at the forefront in scholarship as a means to move toward greater social, political and intellectual consciousness.'

Furthermore, Kim (2008, 256–257) encourages narrative researchers to adapt Bakhtinian novelness (polyphony, chronotropy, and carnival) in their work: that is, using different voices and presenting partial truths of equally treated participants (polyphony), placing the voices or stories in time, space, and in context (chronotropy), and considering counternarratives equal to the mainstream narratives (carnival). Kim (2008, 253) describes the previously mentioned steps and the exploration of Bakhtinian novelness as 'narrative theorising', intentional process of questioning and interrogating the nature of narrative enquiry, aiming at re-establishing and re-affirming its significance.

Smith (2016) sums up the strengths of narrative analysis as follows:

1) It provides rich and deep insight into our subjective past, present and future and thus narrates our lives in time.
2) It considers social and cultural impacts on our lives and tells our stories in context.
3) It allows us to explore our emotions and experiences in an embodied way.
4) It can reveal the power that stories have on us and, for example, enable us to recognise which stories help us grow and which hold us down.
5) It takes into account our physical bodies and how they are intertwined with stories as we live and experience our lives.
6) It can produce compelling and complex theoretical knowledge.
7) It can reach broader audiences, especially when operating as a storyteller.
8) It recognises us as forever growing and changing.

3.1.3 Reflexive thematic analysis in narrative research

> 'The starting-point of narrative thinking is that the research report is a narrative story produced by the researcher, not an image-like replica. It is a researcher's virtue to be aware of how he/she produces reality—and to explicate his/her personal process of knowing in the text.'

The citation above underlines the importance of reflexivity in narrative research (Heikkinen, Huttunen, and Syrjälä 2007, 11). Reflexivity is also emphasised in the thematic analysis approach I have followed in this research. As I began to deepen my understanding of narrative research and allow creativity to step into the analysis process, I started to see the benefits of applying thematic analysis in the methodology (see further description of phases of reflexive thematic analysis in Chapter 5.3, Analysis). Indeed, according to Lainson, Braun, and Clarke (2019), thematic analysis can be a practical medium for narrative analysis. It allows the researcher to critically view the data in a broader context and gives space for the researcher's previous knowledge. I position thematic analysis into Smith's (2016) standpoint of story analyst, or as analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne 1995),

where 'the research conducted is *on* narratives where narratives are the object of study and, in analysis, are placed under scrutiny' (Smith 2016, 209).

One important discovery that has helped me justify the use of thematic analysis is the *creation* of themes. Qualitative analysis methods are often criticised for being too vague and mystical. My aim was to remove the mysticality of the analysis process and perform my analysis in a way that could be argued clearly, while still taking into consideration that the unique research history of myself and the members of my research team in each study has an impact on how we see the data at hand. In the following quote, Braun and Clarke (2019, 591) clarify the role of themes and, at the same time, put effort into trying to remove the mystique from doing qualitative analysis.

> 'For us, qualitative research is about meaning and meaning-making, and viewing these as always context-bound, positioned and situated, and qualitative data analysis is about telling 'stories', about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the 'truth' that is either 'out there' and findable from, or buried deep within, the data. For us, the final analysis is the product of deep and prolonged data immersion, thoughtfulness and reflection, something that is active and generative.'

In other words, themes do not emerge; they are created via an active interpretation of the data and influenced by the researchers' previous knowledge, research problem, and theoretical assumptions. This understanding has become clearer to me as I have gone further into this research, and it is one feature that has evolved from my first article. In this dissertation, I have emphasised my understanding of the active generation of themes by choosing verbs such as 'create' and 'choose' instead of 'appear' or 'rise'. I have also described the analysis processes of my research as active and aware, instead of portraying the results of the analysis as some kind of 'fixed and indisputable truth' that ascends from the data like a hidden monster from a swamp. This verbalisation is also an attempt to clarify the fact that qualitative thematic analysis, even when carried out with a creative and narrative perspective, is based on the researchers' professionalism, thus taking away the mystical, intuitive fog surrounding the analysis process.

3.2 Implementation of the study

3.2.1 Research settings and participants

This research was conducted in two different creative writing communities. The first research setting consists of the first and second articles. In the first two studies, I focused on the Teachers' Creative Writing Group, which I facilitated and instructed in the academic year 2016–2017. The second research setting is described in the third article, which explores Studies in Writing in a Finnish open university.

The writing communities differed on many levels. First, whereas the Teachers' Creative Writing Group was specifically targeted for teachers of

primary and secondary school and consisted of 11 teachers, Studies in Writing took place at an open university and was open to anyone interested in writing. Second, the Teachers' Creative Writing Group was free of charge for all participants and welcomed everyone who was interested in the group, whereas Studies in Writing came with a small tuition fee and the students were elected based on their application letters. The Writing Group consisted of seven three-hour meetings, while Studies in Writing consisted of a range of courses, altogether forming consistent studies of 30 ECTS.

Despite their differences, there are also several similarities between the Teachers' Creative Writing Group and Studies in Writing. For example, the length of the Creative Writing Group was similar to the regular length of Studies in Writing, usually completed within a year, and both writing communities emphasised the importance of social factors, such as peer feedback, peer support, presence and support of the instructor(s), and offering a concrete place (either physical or online), where writers could learn together and share their experiences. Furthermore, both communities were partially structured according to the model of integrative pedagogy (Tynjälä 2008; Tynjälä et al. 2016; Tynjälä, Pennanen, Markkanen & Heikkinen 2019; Tynjälä, Heikkinen & Kallio 2021), which emphasises the importance of creating learning spaces and situations where theoretical, practical, self-regulative and sociocultural knowledge, and personal emotions and experiences are taken into account. Finally, in both writing communities, the participants were allowed to explore various writing practices and familiarise themselves with different genres of writing.

Next, the characteristics of these two research settings or writing communities, that is, the Teachers' Creative Writing Group and Studies in Writing, will be individually discussed, and the participants of the studies will be introduced.

Research setting 1: The Teachers' Creative Writing Group–teachers as writers

The Teachers' Creative Writing group, comprising 11 teachers from primary and lower secondary schools in a middle-sized Finnish city, met seven times, three hours each time, to engage in creative writing, discuss writing pedagogy, and share experiences of being a teacher and a writer. I was the instructor-facilitator of the group, which means that in addition to planning and instructing the actual meetings, it was my responsibility to set up the meetings, arrange and book the time and place for the meetings, and take care of practical issues such as emails. The teachers' (three men and eight women) ages ranged from 30 to 60, and their in-service teacher experience varied from five to more than 30 years. The teachers were recruited via an email invitation that was sent by the local education provider to all teachers in the area. The first orientation meetings, where the group was divided into two due to their schedules, took place in late spring 2016. Twelve teachers joined the orientation, but one teacher dropped out after the first meeting. In autumn 2016, the two groups were joined together into a group of eleven teachers, who all stayed in the group until the last meeting in spring 2017.

In the writing group, teachers wrote autobiographical creative assignments using literary genres (prose, drama, diaries, letters, and poetry) to express themselves and to explore their identities. With their peers, the teachers also discussed the pedagogy of writing and shared their writing experiences. To help them develop as writers, I gave the teachers feedback of their texts.

In addition to supporting the teachers' personal writing, the social aspect and opportunities for peer support were acknowledged in instructing and facilitating the writing group. Drawing from personal experience as a peer-group mentor and from theoretical knowledge on peer-group mentoring for teacher development (Pennanen, Heikkinen & Tynjälä 2018; Tynjälä et al. 2020), I wanted to create a positive experience for the participants. Methods of supporting the success of the group were physical, such as serving refreshments and arranging the meetings at a convenient time in an aesthetic, pleasant space with good air quality; social, such as giving time for open conversation; and structural, such as creating a clear structure for the meetings (Tynjälä et al. 2020).

Each group meeting started with a short warm-up writing assignment and introductions, followed by one to three longer writing assignments (see Table 2). Each meeting featured discussions on writing and pedagogy. The teachers mostly wrote by themselves and did not share their writings with their peers. However, in most meetings, they were also given opportunities to read some texts they had written aloud, and in one of the meetings, they participated in a collaborative online writing drama assignment. In the last two meetings, they were divided into small groups to give and receive peer feedback on their writings. As the Creative Writing Group was a part of my research, I took copies of most of the writing assignments, but emphasised that sharing their writings with me was always optional, and that they were allowed to choose which ones I could take copies of. The teachers were also allowed to continue their writing tasks at home and then send them to me via email after they were finished.

Table 2. Creative writing group meetings, themes, practices, and activities

Group meetings	**Themes**	**Practices and activities**
1. May 2016	Orientation	Discussing group practices. Five-minute current vibes poem. Me as a writer: a letter or a journal page, instructions included prompt questions such as 'Why I joined this group', 'The role of writing in my work', and 'My expectations for the group'.
2. September 2016	Grouping, childhood memories	10-minute reflection on the topic Me and writing. Introduction and getting to know other members in the group Practical issues and discussion. Zooming assignment: Third-person story of myself as a child at school. Reflection on the writing assignment.
3. October 2016	Teacherhood, being a teacher	Free writing assignment (applying Hunt 2000): 3x5 mins. Discussion on pedagogy of writing. Zooming assignment: Third-person story of myself as a teacher. Discussion, feedback, and ideas for upcoming meetings.
4. November 2016	Creative collaboration, teacher stereotypes	Exploring teacher stereotypes in an online improvisation drama: 2 small groups, each teacher was given a short role description. 10-minute written planning of my role: name, behaviour, background. Online chat discussion (30 minutes), where, in their given roles, the teachers planned a Christmas party. Instructor played the role of principal, giving prompts and plot twists. Discussion on the experience, sharing pedagogical ideas.
5. January 2017	Roles and identity	Discussion on current writing identity. Two short autobiographical stories from two different roles and perspectives, such as news article, memorial, professional story, family story, villain story, hero story. Discussion: Inner conflict-dialogue practice: fictitious discussion of two opposing roles of my personality. The Perfect Teacher–comic short story: start writing a day of a perfect teacher, but closing in on the end, revealing some imperfections and making them more normal or even 'awful' human beings.

continues

TABLE 2 continues

6. March 2017	Empowerment, peer feedback and peer support	A list of or freewriting about things that stressful things in life; picking 2–4 things from the list and transforming these things into a poem, thus creating something new or something negative. Peer feedback discussions in small groups. Discussion on peer assessment and sharing texts with peers. Introduction to the peer feedback session of the last meeting. Empowerment through writing: In a chosen literary form (poem, drama, prose, journal, letter), writing about surviving a challenging personal life event; the instructor provided prompts and support.
7. April 2017	Reflecting the past and the future	In small groups, reading and commenting on peers' texts (one of the texts written in the group, texts were chosen beforehand). The year of creative writing: Reflecting the experiences in the group in a chosen literary form. Discussion and feedback of the past year in the writing group. A letter to myself: To be sealed in an envelope and opened in a chosen period in life, or after 2, 5, or 10 years, for example.

Research setting 2: Studies in Writing–Teachers as writing students

Studies in Writing programme (30 ECTS, that is,The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), consisting of several courses, are accessible to anyone, from aspiring writers to professional authors (see Table 3 below). The application process is open twice a year. The studies provide an extensive introduction to the concept of writing. In addition to practicing writing, students are introduced to a broader view of writing, including the common and varying literary traits of different genres and the socio-cultural aspects of writing. Studying practices include writing (e.g. essays, prose, fiction, drama, and learning journals), feedback, reworking texts, reading academic and creative literature, online learning, group work, and discussions. Theoretical knowledge of writing is interwoven into the studies. During the time of conducting the study (2017), approximately 100 people were accepted every year into Studies in Writing programme.

I had participated and finished the Studies in Writing programme one year prior to conducting this sub-study. During the data collection, I was taking some intermediate courses in Writing at the same open university. I did not know beforehand any of the teachers who I interviewed, as we had not taken the Studies in Writing programme (the basic studies), at the same time. Anne Mari Rautiainen, who was the second author the third article, works as a university teacher at Studies in Writing.

All the writing students of a specific academic year, who were at the end of their basic studies and worked as teachers, were contacted by Anne Mari and myself via an email invitation. The teachers were asked to participate in interviews about writing and professional development. They were also asked for permission to use their application letters as data. Five of the contacted teachers responded and agreed to take part in the study, with the exception that one teacher could not send us their application letter. The teachers worked in basic or upper secondary education in different areas of Finland. Their work experience ranged from a few years to several decades of teaching experience.

The teachers were all individually interviewed in autumn 2017. According to the participants' schedule and availability, two teachers were interviewed face-to-face, and three interviews took place via Skype. The content of the interviews will be further discussed in the data section of this chapter. I personally interviewed each teacher.

Table 3. Studies in Writing curriculum (Basic studies, 30 ECTS)

Mandatory studies for all	Orientation: Writers' communities (5 ECTS)
	Fact and fiction in writing (5 ECTS)
	Autobiography (5 ECTS)
Genres (choose two)	Prose (5 ECTS)
	Drama (5 ECTS)
	Poetry (5 ECTS)
	Non-fiction (5 ECTS)
Writing process (choose one)	Writing as a creative process (5 ECTS)
	Text collection (5 ECTS)

3.2.2 Narrative data

From the very early stages of my doctoral research process, I knew I wanted to study the written texts of teachers. I was keen on the opportunity to explore teachers' creative writings, as it would allow me to adventure in the world that was most beloved to me: the world of reading. It would also give me a chance to look at different uses of language and creative expression, and reveal to me something that is often difficult to express in spoken language. As the idea of piloting a creative writing group for teachers started to form, my initial idea was to focus solely on the creative writings that the teachers would produce during the group meetings. What an intriguing world of metaphors, voices, and small stories I would be able to explore through their writings!

However, as I became more acquainted with the field of narrative research, I started to wonder whether discussions and interviews would help me define and discover the practices that supported the teachers' professional development. After all, my goal was not to merely study teachers as writers, nor did I position myself as a researcher of language per se, but rather as an educational researcher with an interest in creativity and writing. Thus, I decided to combine two types of data, written (writing assignments) and spoken (interviews), in order to paint a clearer picture of the questions I had: How do teachers narrate their lives from

the lenses of being a teacher and a writer? How do the teachers feel about teaching creative writing to their students? In what kinds of ways could creative writing support the teachers in their everyday lives and their processes of professional development? Combining written narratives and interviews felt like the best way of giving voice to the teachers and allowing me to ask specific questions in the interviews, while still giving them space in their individual creative writings. This can be seen as one way to increase the validity of narrative (action) research, as using different data 'gives space to different voices and interpretations of the same events' (Heikkinen et al. 2007, 13). Here, the data used for each sub-study is summarised:

1) Study 1: 22 written texts
2) Study 2: 11 written texts, 11 transcribed interviews
3) Study 3: Four written texts, five transcribed interviews

In the following section, the data collected and used in each study are presented.

Study I. The data of the first study consist of the teachers' written narratives (22 texts, each text length varying from one to two pages) from the first two meetings of the writing group. The first is an orientation narrative in the form of a letter or a journal about themselves as writers and their goals regarding developing themselves in the writing group meetings. The teachers were given prompts, such as: 'Why have you joined the writing group?'; 'What role does writing play in your life?'; and 'What kind of expectations do you have for the writing group?' The second is a writing assignment, using a literary genre of their choice, that focuses on a specific meaningful moment or experience that describes them as writers. The teachers' writings consist of both handwritten texts and texts written with laptop computers or tablets. The handwritten texts were later transcribed into Word documents.

Study II. The data of the second study consist of creative writing assignments (one from each of the 11 participants) written by the teachers who participated in the Teachers' Creative Writing Group and 11 teacher interviews (150 pages of transcribed interviews, 30-60 minutes per interview).

The written data were collected in the last meeting of the group, where teachers were asked to write about their experiences of their 'year of creative writing' and reflect on how the group had met their expectations and what they had learned and achieved in the group. They were instructed to write freely, for example, in the form of a journal page, a story, or a letter. After collecting this data, I transcribed the handwritten texts into Word files.

After the last meeting, each teacher took part in an individual semi-structured interview in which they were asked about their perceptions of the writing group regarding their holistic development as writers and teachers. The structure of the interview was deductive, in the way that my previous theoretical knowledge guided me to ask about their professional development from personal, professional, and social perspectives. At the beginning of each

interview, I encouraged the teachers to discuss freely and step beyond the classroom, as my study's view on professional development was holistic. The semi-structured interview questions were the following:

1) Can you remember what kinds of hopes and aspirations you had in the beginning of the Creative Writing Group and can you reflect how you feel about those expectations today?
2) How have you perceived this group from the perspectives of 1) your identity work and emotions; 2) your development in your work as a teacher; and 3) yourself as a writer?
3) What is the impact of the writing community, that is, the social atmosphere, meeting and communicating with others etc. to your development?
4) What kinds of aims do you have for the future regarding creative writing?
5) How would you sum up the impact of this programme on yourself as a teacher?

Study III. The data of the third study consist of five semi-structured thematic teacher interviews with lengths varying from 35 to 60 minutes, and four creative application letters (2–4 pages each), which the teachers had written when they had applied to Studies in Writing. The interview structure was based on the same themes as in Study II, and it was further developed based on the teachers' creative application letters. The themes in their application letters helped us steer the individual interview processes. One participant was not able to send us a copy of her application letter, and therefore we asked her to, before the interview, reminisce about her motives for applying to Studies in Writing. The topics of the interview dealt with the teachers' professional development from personal, professional, and social perspectives.

After the thematic interview structure was complete, the interviews were conducted. The interviews produced 66 pages of transcribed text. The semi-structured interview questions were the following:

1) Can you remember what kinds of hopes and aspirations you had in the beginning of the Studies in Writing programme and can you reflect how you feel about those expectations today?
2) How have you perceived these studies from the perspectives of 1) your identity work; 2) your development in your work as a teacher; 3) your well-being and emotions; and 4) yourself as a writer?
3) What is the impact of the writing community, that is, the social atmosphere, meeting and communicating with others etc. to your development?
4) Future regarding creative writing?
5) How would you sum up the impact of this programme on yourself as a teacher?

3.2.3 Exploring and telling stories: Analysis

In this thesis, the analysis is data-driven but theory-informed (Bernard and Ryan 2010; DeGuir-Gunby et al. 2011). In each sub-study, the analysis consisted of a

two-phased process, which started with reflexive thematic analysis and was followed by a more intuitive, narrative process (see Figure 3). Although the combined process can be called narrative analysis, I prefer to distinguish the two, thus clarifying the process. It can be said that I have conducted narrative research from two different approaches simultaneously: First, in the analysis of narratives, data in the form of narratives or stories are analysed to produce classifications and typologies (Bruner 2004; Polkinghorne 1995). Second, in narrative analysis, researchers produce explanatory stories based on the data (Polkinghorne 1995). This division can be traced back to Bruner (1985), who separated two types of cognitive understanding: narrative and paradigmatic, of which the first refers to producing logical stories from reality, and the latter to categorising and precise definitions (see also Heikkinen 2002). Smith (2016) approached this distinction from the positioning of a narrative researcher, who can be in the position of a 'story analyst' or a 'storyteller', or adopt both in order to best serve the purpose of the research at hand. Heikkinen (2002) found that in many research projects, these two approaches were, at least on some level, combined. In the three studies, I have been more inclined to adopt the storyteller or analysis of narratives approach. However, I acknowledge the story analyst role as a good supplemental approach, which is visible in the preliminary coding phase of this study, and has helped me justify my interpretations and validate my analysis process. Adapting both standpoints has helped me gain a broad and deep understanding of the teachers' perceptions of creative writing as a means to support professional development.

In conclusion, my aim has been to combine thematic analysis and narrative analysis in a way that gives voice to the teachers and their stories, and allows me to stand behind my analysis process, as it is clearly structured yet has allowed space for creative expression. Next, I will further describe the analysis process of each original study.

Figure 3. Methodological overview of the thesis

Study I. As the instructor and facilitator of the writing group, I started processing the data after it had been written by the teachers, and gave them feedback about their texts, as was the tradition in the Teachers' Creative Writing Group. In the beginning of the actual analysis process, I read the data multiple times and discussed the content of the writings with the co-authors of the first article. After this in-depth familiarisation with the narratives, the analysis continued, following the thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006), which I later specified as reflexive thematic analysis (e.g. Braun and Clarke 2019). The qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti was used to support the analysis process. Next, I will present the steps of reflexive thematic analysis as a starting point and a guiding light of my narrative analysis, which I also utilised and further developed during the later phases of my doctoral research (original studies II and III).

1) Based on the active, in-depth familiarisation with the data, initial codes were created from the narratives using Atlas.ti.
2) These codes, highlighting different aspects of the teachers' relationships to writing, were compiled into preliminary broader themes.
3) Preliminary themes were reviewed and modified.
4) Excerpts from the teachers' written narratives were chosen to illustrate the themes.

In the first sub-study, seven themes were created: 1) Inspiration, 2) Therapeutic effects of writing, 3) Learning and discovering about oneself and the world, 4)

Teaching writing, 5) Finding an individual voice, 6) Negative emotions, and 7) Time and place for writing.

After the thematic analysis phase (or 'analysis on narratives'), a second phase (or 'narrative analysis') followed. In order to communicate the teachers' stories, a word image was created (Clandinin et al. 2006). The word image, a narrative account similar to a poem, aimed at giving voice to the teachers' life stories from the perspective of being a creative writer. The word image can also be described as found poetry, a method by which researchers compose a poem based on their analysis of research data (Patrick 2016). However, the term word image reflected the study design and the social process of data collection, where, as is often the case in narrative research, the aim was not only to collect data but also to actively encourage the teachers to participate in the research process.

As explained earlier, the last phase of the thematic analysis was to choose excerpts from the teachers' texts that helped illustrate the themes. In this study, I created the word image by selecting some of those excerpts and placing them one below the other to create an aesthetic and poetic structure. Within the word image, the themes generated in the thematic analysis appeared in the descriptions of the different phases of the teachers' lives, representing the non-linear aspect of the teachers' narratives. Each line of the poem/word image were original phrases from the teachers' creative writings. Finally, the word image was translated from Finnish to English.The word image was constructed in chronological order, beginning with childhood memories and ending with the teachers' expectations of the future. Most of the teachers' written narratives were chronological, and in respect to this, composing a chronological word image was a data-driven decision in line with Ricoeur (1991), who saw narrative identity as an autobiographical, plot-like continuum.

Although I personally composed the word image, the Finnish version was shared with the participants and discussed further in the writing group meeting. This allowed me to hear their thoughts about the word image, and see if they familiarised themselves with it. The teachers did not comment the word image in much detail, but in general, the teachers perceived the word image / poem to capture their thoughs and their experiences, although not all had shared the same life experiences. The teachers also used this word image as an inspiration as they started to reflect on their 'year of creative writing' during the group's last meeting.

Study II. The two-phase data analysis began with carefully reading the transcribed interviews multiple times. The first phase of the analysis, that is, 'analysis of narratives', was again conducted applying the reflexive thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2019). This phase of the analysis started with deep familiarisation with the data and generating codes that identified important features of the data regarding the research question. The analysis proceeded to create and name themes that represented different perspectives or facets of creative writing as a means for supporting professional development. The themes were 1) aspects of writer identity, 2) aspects of personal growth and emotions, 3) pedagogical aspects, and 4) social aspects. Within those concepts, 15

subthemes were created. Excerpts were chosen to illustrate the themes and subthemes.

In the second phase, the 'narrative analysis' phase, a short story called A Year of Creative Writing was composed through a 'reflective, participatory, and aesthetic process' (Leavy 2020). This narrative storytelling method can be described as 'creative nonfiction', where findings from the empirical data are conveyed in the form of a story that uses techniques of fiction (Sinner 2013; Smith 2013). Of the three sub-studies, composing this story was the most creative process and allowed me to whirl myself into a creative writer role. I chose to narrate the story in a chronologic order same to the actual Creative Writing Group, starting from summer and ending up with spring.

Creating the story aimed at a holistic approach, moving from merely dividing the themes of professional development in the teachers' stories into distinct aspects. I wrote the original story in English, but used my personal Finnish notes as a starting point. I incorporated the teachers' own phrases from their creative writing assignments as an attempt to elaborate the story and bring out and respect the teachers' own unique voices and word choices. In the article, those phrases were marked with italics, so that they could be separated from my writing. Once the story was completed, I contacted the former members of the creative writing group, offering them a chance to read the storey and comment if, for example, they wished for their own phrase to be removed or they did not feel connected to the story. Only three teachers responsed. This might be due to the years that had passed since the Creative Writing Group had ended. Of the teachers who responded, each described positive emotions and memories that reading the story, and they felt that the story did feel familiar to their experience.

According to Sinner (2013), creative nonfiction renders content (fact and events) with form (the conventions of fiction writing), including narrative voice, persona, authentic characterisation of place and settings, and pursuit of an idea or goal. It aims at creating conditions to 'reconsider, rethink, and redefine how information is understood and what knowing should be at the forefront in scholarship', thus moving 'toward greater social, political, and intellectual consciousness' (Sinner 2013, 4). Using fiction as a research practice allows us to 1) portray the complexity of lived experience through details, nuance, specificity, contexts, and texture; 2) cultivate empathy and self-reflection through relatable characters; and 3) disrupt dominant ideologies or stereotypes by showing and not telling, all building critical consciousness and raising awareness (Leavy 2020). At its core, utilising fiction in narrative research aims at making a change and broadening the readers' views through appealing to their imagination and challenging their ideas about educational phenomena (Kim 2008).

In this study, my co-writers and I aimed at giving voice to the teachers of this study, while inspecting their stories within the framework and context of the cultural and political atmosphere in the educational field of the time. Through this approach, we hoped to combine 'theory and stories' (Kim 2008, 257), or, in other words, shift from micro (teachers' personal experiences of the creative writing group) to macro (theoretical perspectives of professional development

during educational reforms), thus bringing validity to our work (Leavy 2020). In the nonfiction piece, I adapted Kim's (2006, 2008) Bakhtinian novelness, which refers to using different voices that present partial truths of equal participants (polyphony), placing the stories in context (chronotropy), and placing counternarratives as equals to the mainstream ones (carnival).

Study III. The analysis of the narratives was carried out following the reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006; 2019) and continued with a narrative analysis perspective. In exception to the previous two studies, I conducted most of the analysis phases in active collaboration with Anne Mari Rautiainen, a doctoral researcher and a teacher on Studies in Writing. The theory-informed but data-driven process produced the following main themes: 1) Writer identity, 2) Writing and emotions, and 3) Teaching and pedagogy. Seven sub-themes were also created.

In the narrative analysis phase of the data analysis, we sought for the most suitable ways to give voice to the teachers' unique experiences. After many discussions on the nature of the data, we settled on applying a narrative analysis method called ethnodrama (Saldaña 2011) and, more specifically, an ethnodramatic dialogue. Saldaña (2011, 13) describes ethnodrama as 'a written play script consisting of dramatised, significant selections of narrative' collected from interview transcripts, field notes, journal entries or other narrative sources, consisting of two or more characters in verbal action, reaction, and interaction. Our approach was to investigate the excerpts from the themes and to arrange them so that they would form a dialogue. In other words, we chose parts of the transcribed interviews that described the themes, and used these citations to compose a new text, in the form of a dialogue, that would describe the teachers' narrated experiences.

In this study, we applied an adaptation approach, where unedited material is used but edited, for example, by selecting portions and rearranging the original text into a more aesthetic shape (Saldaña 2011). The composition of the ethnodramatic dialogue proceeded as follows: 1) reviewing excerpts (selected as examples of the three main themes in the thematic analysis) in order to collect and present a broad variety of opinions and experiences from the teachers' interviews; 2) organising the excerpts from the teachers according to the subthemes; and 3) adopting an adaptation approach by shortening the original excerpts and re-organising them in an even more dialogical structure (Saldaña 2011). This work produced three Finnish texts (one for each theme), in which the teachers are engaged in a fictional conversation with each other, and they were translated into English. In order to protect the teachers' autonomy, they were given pseudonyms, which in this study are also called character names.

Finally, we completed the dialogue by storylining and plotting to compose a story-like dialogue instead of simply presenting one interview excerpt after another. This last phase was inspired by Saldaña's (2011, 117) description of his method: 'My personal way of working is admittedly a holistic, heuristic process. I cut and paste interview transcript and field note excerpts in a word processor

file into an initial skeletal structure. It is literally like painting a blank canvas improvisationally with words.'

4 FINDINGS

> 'I have been collecting stories, experiences, great and small moments that I am about to tell others.'
>
> -An anonymous member of the Teachers' Creative Writing Group

4.1 Stories of teacher development: Overview of the articles

As a narrative educational researcher with a storyteller standpoint (Smith 2016), I not only analysed narratives of being a teacher and a writer, I also composed the data into new narrative stories using literary forms. The outcomes of my analysis are presented in the Results chapters of each original paper.

In the following sections, I will briefly discuss the most significant findings of each original study.

4.2 Study I: 'I Never Stopped Thinking about Writing'

In the first study of this thesis, the research question was: How do the teachers 1) describe themselves as writers in their narratives from the writing group, and 2) narrate their expectations for their professional and personal development in the creative writing group? The aim of this study was to examine the stories the teachers tell about their relationships to writing and the goals they set for their professional and personal development in the Teachers' Creative Writing Group. Through reflexive thematic analysis, seven descriptive themes were chosen based on the teachers' narratives of writing. These themes were: 1) Inspiration, 2) Therapeutic effects of writing, 3) Learning and discovering about oneself and the world, 4) Teaching writing, 5) Finding an individual voice, 6) Negative emotions, and 7) Time and place for writing. Furthermore, based on the narrative analysis, a poem-like word image was composed. The word image, representing the narratives of teachers' stories of writing, including personal, professional, and

social aspects, started with descriptions of childhood and proceeded throughout the teachers' lives, ending with hopes for the future.

> I was a child
> no chains of self-criticism
> I would fling myself into enjoyable writing
> build a world inside my mind
> felt like knowledge became a part of me
> the pencil had to be constantly sharpened
> writing stories was the best thing at school
> the universe opens the curtains of inspiration slightly and a story starts flowing into my mind
> pages filling, the story would go on
>
> (Excerpt from the word image)

The findings shed light on teachers as creative writers and emphasise the connection between writing and wellbeing, learning, teaching, and relationships. Overall, the personal, professional, and social aspects of teacher development and narrative identity work were intertwined. The teachers recognised the power of writing in their social lives, such as writing letters to express feelings to a family member, and in their personal lives, such as dealing with difficult emotions through writing.

The teachers described their relationship to writing as changing over time. They reflected on their school memories (both positive and negative), the sense of losing touch with writing in adolescent or adulthood years, and the yearning to write more. They reminisced the enjoyable moments of flow and inspiration as a child and in adulthood. The teachers narrated their childhood relationship to writing as positive: it was a way to make sense of the real world and on the other hand, a way to use their imagination and espace the everyday-life. Their school memories were both positive and negative: some teachers wrote about their own childhood teachers' encouraging impact on them, while one teacher wrote about their childhood writers' block in the classroom. Some also described a sense of insecurity and a harsh inner critic that sometimes got in the way of writing. One occurring theme was the longing for a time and place for writing: in their hectic everyday-lives, the teachers were too busy to get back to writing.

In terms of expectations from the Teachers' Creative Writing Group, the teachers hoped to develop their expressive language, to learn new methods, and to receive tools for writing. They also emphasised the wish to find their 'own voice' as writers. The hope of finding their own voice as a writer and being brave enough to start creative writing after a long pause was described in many of the teachers' texts. On a personal level, the teachers aimed to enhance their wellbeing and explore their identities. Many described their teaching jobs to be stressful and demanding, and they expressed the need to bounce back and manage stress. They also hoped to discover new pedagogical tools and find new perspectives

for teaching writing to their students. One important hope mentioned by several teachers was to encourage their students to creatively express themselves, and to find ways of supporting the students' well-being through writing.

> I could ponder my teacher identity
> clarify the big questions and oddities of being a teacher
> Could writing help me recognise the things I still want to do in life?
>
> I would draw with words
> write myself
> a chance to process work and personal life
> I could share something about myself with others
> learn to know the others better
> step in front of people and truly be myself
> I would see myself in their eyes
> the image starting to shape in my eyes as well
>
> (Excerpt from the word image)

The word image illustrates not only the teachers' personal narratives, but also the broader contextual narrative of the culture and everyday life of Finnish school teachers, from their deep commitment to addressing their students' needs and developing themselves professionally, to handling stressful demands and hectic work days. Through the word image, the teachers' need for time and space to relax and unwind, and to express their thoughts became apparent.

One interesting discovery was the rich and descriptive way in which the teachers expressed themselves. Literary methods diversified teachers' narratives and enriched their use of language, which is visible in the word image composed from the teachers' original excerpts (although translated and with some small aesthetic changes). Engaging in creative writing seemed to allow the teachers to bravely and openly express themselves without the fear of not fitting into a strict box of academic or formal writing. For example, some teachers' wrote about their childhood experiences in present tense, which allowed them to speak with a child's voice, and some used dialogue as a form of narrating their experiences.

4.3 Study II: 'A Year of Creative Writing'

The aim of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of the Teachers' Creative Writing Group in their professional development. The research question in the second study of this thesis was: What kinds of stories of professional development do the teachers narrate regarding their experiences in the writing

group? Reflexive thematic analysis was applied, followed by the composition of a nonfiction piece that describes the teachers' experiences of the 'year of creative writing'. The nonfiction piece illustrates the teachers' perceptions of the creative writing group through the perspective of a fictional first-person narrator. The nonfiction piece is divided into four chapters, each of which portrays the teacher-writer's experiences from the viewpoint of one theme drawn from the reflexive thematic analysis: Summer - Aspects of writer identity, Autumn - Aspects of personal growth and development, Winter - Pedagogical aspects, and Spring - Social aspects.

> After making sure we all know what to do, the instructor gives us the cue to begin. I open my notebook, and the first thing I write is 'Writing is a way to fill emptiness with words, to create a new world, to give birth to a new world, if nothing else.' The frantic work day pours onto the paper like the rain outside. A strange lightness settles in my heart with each word I write, and I suddenly forget what I was so stressed about.
>
> (Excerpt from the creative nonfiction piece)

Theme 1 (writer identity) involved subthemes Developing as a writer; Reflecting on my own voice; Creativity and bravery; and Ambivalence and criticism. Some of the most commonly used expressions the teachers used when asked about what they had gained, as writers, from the writing group were bravery, freedom, enjoyment, flow, and encouragement to engage in creative writing. . Trying out different writing excercises helped the teachers to seek for their own unique voice and to set new goals as writers.

Theme 2 (personal growth and development) featured subthemes My life story; Expressing and reflecting on emotions and thoughts; Bouncing back, Enjoyment and flow; and Searching for Me. Expressions that came up most often within this theme dealt with empowerment, bouncing back, self-discovery, and having their own time and space for calming in the middle of their hectic every-day lives. Many teachers expressed that the exercises in the group helped them deal with their emotions and opened up new perspectives to their life stories.

Encouraging creativity; Classroom practices; and Developing assessment were the subthemes of Theme 3 (pedagogy). Finding new pedagogical ideas, discussing with peers, and clarifying the importance of assessment and encouragement for their teaching were some of the most important discoveries that the teachers mentioned in the interviews. The teachers also described tensions between supporting their pupils' creativity and following textbooks and not getting left behind on their teaching.

Within Theme 4 (social aspects), subthemes were This is my dear hobby; Peer feedback and instructors' assessment; Peer support and belonging; and Alone together. Overall, the teachers enjoyed the positive, communal and open atmosphere of the group and the encouraging feedback from the instructor/facilitator. For some, the social factor and peer support were the best parts of the group. For others, personal growth and individual writing were more important, but they still recognised that peer discussions had opened them up to new perspectives and that they had enjoyed the conversations in the group.

> The group has given me new perspectives on teaching writing and helped me understand my pupils a little bit better. Most importantly, though, writing has opened my eyes to parts of me that I wasn't connected with before. Allowing myself to be creative and vulnerable has also taken courage. I think I started out with the intention of finding my teacher and writer identity. I ended up at the edge of myself, a point of no return that taught me new things about myself. At times, it has been a painful, demanding, agonising road. But, on the other hand, it has been liberating. And I haven't walked it alone.
>
> (Excerpt from creative the nonfiction piece)

According to the results, the teachers met the goals they had set for themselves in the group in terms of developing as writers and writing teachers. In the interviews, the teachers described their experiences in the Creative Writing Group to be positive. They expressed that the writing group offered them social, personal, and professional support and gave them the time and space for writing that they had longed for. It should be noted, however, that writing about and sharing their personal life stories was not always easy, and it evoke emotions such as sorrow and sadness. Some of the teachers underwent challenging times in their personal and work lives, which echoed in their writings. On the other hand, writing enabled them to process those challenges.

To sum up the results, writing and reflecting on their writing experiences helped the teachers to see themselves as 'writing teachers' and to stop and think about their own ways of teaching. Furthermore, the teachers communicated that the writing group offered them support on social, personal, and professional levels. The creative nonfiction piece illuminates the diverse and meaningful narratives of the teachers and supporting the claim that teachers' professional development should be examined as a whole, using holistic methods and respecting the integrative nature of different aspects of identity and professional development. The nonfiction piece also illustrates the teachers' experiences during curriculum reform, which challenged them to develop professionally.

4.4 Study III: 'It's More About Encouraging'

In the third and final study of this thesis, my aim was to answer the following research question: What kinds of stories do teachers from Studies in Writing tell about their experiences of creative writing in terms of their development as teachers and writers? Three main themes were identified. To illustrate our findings, we composed a creative narrative in the form of an ethnodramatic dialogue based on the teachers' own stories. These dialogues give voice to the teachers' versatile experiences and bring out subthemes, such as experiencing flow and enjoyment, developing pedagogy and classroom practices, and shaping writer identity.

> Helena: Well, I've always felt like I'm a bit of an average writer.
>
> Olivia: I sort of never saw myself as a writer.

> Joanna: I'm such a nit-picker. It's been one of my main goals to get rid of the idea that commas always have to be in their right places, because sometimes doing it wrong can even be a literary decision. You're allowed to break the boundaries of language.
>
> Helena: My own identity as a writer is a lot stronger now. Even though I still can't always get those commas and all the small grammarly stuff right.
>
> Everyone laughs.
>
> (Excerpt from the ethnodramatic dialogue)

The first theme included the subthemes Me as a writer and Developing as a writer. When compared to the teachers in the Teachers' Creative Writing Group, the teachers in Studies in Writing emphasised their willingness to develop as writers more. In the interviews, the teachers narrated their unique writer paths and described how Studies in Writing supported their writer development. All teachers described their relationship to writing as positive, albeit they did have different assumptions of themselves as writers. Some were especially unsure of their writer skills in the beginning, but as their studies progressed and they were challenged in different ways to reflect on their writer identity and build their theoretical knowledge about writing, they became aware that each person has their own writing path and that writing is a personal process. The studies thus encouraged them to seek for their own voice and to strengthen their writer identities.

In theme Writing and emotions, some preliminary codes from the thematic analysis were wellbeing, relationships, identity work, enjoyment, and therapeutic effects of writing. In this study, we have compressed these codes under the subthemes Effects on wellbeing and Personal life stories. In Studies in Writing, the teachers were given assignments to write about their lives and things that were important to them. In addition, they wrote a biography of someone close to them, such as a parent or relative. These assignments seemed to open up new perspectives on their own life stories, thus rebuilding their identities.

In the third theme, Teaching, and emotions, three subthemes were created: Teacher identity, Pedagogical development, and Re-thinking teaching. Although the teachers' main motivation was to develop their skills as writers, they perceived that Studies in Writing had also had an impact on their teacher development. These impacts varied from gaining a more positive attitude towards teaching writing to trying different pedagogical ideas and identifying with the pupils' emotions. For example, as the teachers personally experienced the therapeutic effects of writing, they began to consider whether creative writing could help their students as well.

> Joanna: I think I've become more empathetic towards the students. I somehow understand their perspectives better.
>
> Helena: True. When you think that we as adults were given all of these helpful prompts, frames and clear writing assignments on the course, to think that the children are just given a title and told to start writing... (shaking her head).

Sofia: I've become a lot more merciful towards their writing.

Erika: When we do creative writing in class, I don't look for mistakes in the writing. It is more about encouraging.

(Excerpt from the ethnodramatic dialogue)

One intriguing finding of the study was the teachers' similar accounts of experiencing flow. The teachers' descriptions of flow were very close to those of Csikszentmihályi (1990), who saw writing as an activity in which flow is often experienced. For example, through poetry, one can be released from the norms and frames of language and hurl oneself into playing with words (Bolton 1999; Csikszentmihályi 1990). We considered the long-lasting impact of flow in the teachers' stories to be interesting and meaningful: stepping out of their comfort zones and throwing themselves into the flow of enjoyable writing seemed to strengthen the teachers' perceptions of themselves as good writers. Furthermore, the positive emotions brought about by the writing sessions enabled them to unwind, relax, and forget their concerns, thus helping them recover from daily stress. The Studies in Writing course also included some assignments that took some teachers beyond their comfort zone. Overcoming challenges, such as the feeling of insecurity, was highly satisfying and empowering in the end.

Erika (smiling): Writing is kind of liberating, and I've discovered the experience of flow again.

Sofia: I don't, for example, notice time passing. It's a harmonious state.

Olivia (nodding): Like, how's it possible, time just flies by!

Sofia: Exactly! But then when I stop writing and get up, I feel energised.

Erika: And when I go back to what I've written and look at my work, I sometimes can't even believe that I actually wrote this.

Helena: Each time I started, I enjoyed it and afterwards I felt lighter in every way.

Olivia (sits quietly for a while): When you experience that feeling of succeeding, it definitely has a positive impact on your mood and so on your wellbeing, too.

(Excerpt from the ethnodramatic dialogue)

Within their narratives, we discovered small stories about being a teacher and teaching. These stories often included negative emotions such as stress, powerlessness, and uncertainty, and had to do with everyday working life situations as well as job contracts, future plans as teachers, and unemployment. Amid the everyday demands and stresses of teaching, the teachers longed for time and space for their own personal development and relaxation. Studies in Writing offered this. Additionally, the studies gave the teachers opportunities to express and deal with current challenges, both personal and professional.

4.5 Synthesis of the findings

Finally, drawing together the findings of this thesis as a whole, the following figure describes the teachers' narrated experiences of what the writing communities offered them in terms of professional development.

Figure 4. The synthesis of the findings

In Figure 4, three main storylines lead to holistic aspects of professional development, which were enabled by the practices that the writing communities provided. These practices included different writing excercises and various assignments that challenged the teachers to write about their lives from different perspectives and to try out different writing styles and genres; encouraging and (especially in the Studies in Writing programme) critical feedback from peers and instructors that helped the teachers develop their writing voice and creative expression; discussions about writing itself and (especially in the teachers' Creative Writing Group) on being a teacher and the pedagogy of writing; sharing texts and experiences with others, which gave the teachers a sense on being seen

and heard; and giving and receiving emotional and practical support from their peers.

The three storylines can be named as the storyline of bouncing back and recovering, the storyline of developing and learning, and the storyline of (re)building identities. First, with the practices in the writing community, teachers were able to bounce back and recover from their work and everyday lives through positive emotions, such as enjoyment and inspiration, and the experience of flow. These positive emotions were awaken when, for example, a teacher got over their fear of the empty page by trying out a new writing technique such as freewriting and discovered that there were, after all, words coming out, or when a teacher got inspired by a writing assignment so much that they did not even notice the passing of time and, certainly, did not worry about 'stressful work stuff'.

Second, the writing communities promoted the developing and learning of the study participants, both as teachers and as writers, through practices that promoted reflection. The teachers developed their writing skills, practices the conventions of different genres, tried out assignments that helped them let loose and get playful with language, and sought for their unique voices as writers. This inspired and challenged the teachers to reflect and develop their own teaching practices: some tried out new assignments with their pupils or renewed their assessment practices. As the teachers had experienced peer assessment in their creative writing communities, they started reflecting on how to utilise peer assessment more in their classrooms. Some found that their attitude towards creativity in general and especially creative writing changed and this affected their attitudes and values as teachers: for example, the impact of creative writing on well-being became visible for the teachers and this motivated them to encourage their own students' creative expression. On the other hand, some teachers pondered the tensions between 'teaching by the book' and using more time for supporting pupils' creativity.

Thirdly, through participating in the practices of the writing communities, the teachers engaged in narrative identity work, that is, (re)building their identities through writing, sharing and telling their life stories. The teachers' narrative identity work was supported by assignments where they had to write about their own lives from different perspectives. Using literary methods allowed them to zoom into meaningful life events, for example to inspect their childhood school memories by writing a story based on their own experiences and to reflect upon important relationships by using dialogue.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusions and theoretical implications

This narrative thesis set out to explore teachers' narrated experiences of professional development in two creative writing communities, a Creative Writing Group for teachers and an open university Studies in Writing programme. In addition, my aim was to research teachers' stories of their relationship to creative writing. The data were a combination of teachers' written creative texts and interviews. The analysis phase of each sub-study was two-phased. After the thematic analysis, a narrative analysis, with a storyteller standpoint, followed. The findings were reported using creative writing methods in order to speak to the audience and evoke emotional responses in the readers. Heikkinen and colleagues (2007, 2012) refer to this as the principle of evocativeness, which is one of the ways to increase the validity of narrative (action) research. The teachers' experiences were illustrated in the poem-like word image (Article I), in the nonfiction piece (article II), and in the ethnodramatic dialogue (Article III).

Professional development cannot always be separated from the everyday-lives of the teachers, as different life events and emotions impact their teaching and their teacher identities. The teachers narrated not only their hopes and goals for the writing group (Article I) and experiences in the creative writing communities (Articles I and II), but also in their lives in a broader sense. They shared their memories of childhood and youth, discussed their growth as teachers, and narrated stories that went beyond working life, such as losing their loved ones, going through divorces, and discovering new ways of living. Thus, this research narrates teachers' stories of not only teachers' experiences in creative writing communities (Articles II and III), but also of being a teacher in the context of educational and curriculum reform (articles I, II) and finally, of the everyday lives of the teachers (Articles I, II, and III). The findings of this thesis (Articles I, II, and III) support the idea of examining teachers' professional development as a whole, using holistic methods and respecting the integrative

nature of different aspects of professional development (e.g. Akkerman & Meijer 2011; Alsup 2019; Bell & Gilbert 1996; Geeraerts et al. 2015).

The teachers' narratives, in the form of creative writings, written application letters, and interviews, illustrate the complexity of being a teacher and developing as an educational professional (articles I, II, and III). In their narratives, the teachers were not always able to distinguish teacherhood from personal life stories or emotions from learning. This finding mirrors the model of integrative pedagogy, which approaches professional development through integrating the four basic components of expertise (theoretical, practical, self-regulative, and sociocultural knowledge) with emotions and personal life stories (Tynjälä et al. 2016). The creative writing practice used in the two writing communities seemed to engage each of the components above, supporting not only the teachers' development as writers or writing teachers, but also in a holistic sense.

According to Hunt (2000), who is an expert on autobiographical creative writing courses, creative writing communities usually offer the participants tools to develop themselves on both an educational (developing as writers, writer identity, writing skills) and personal level (self-exploration, identity work). Accordingly, these two levels were visible in Articles I, II and III as well: while the teachers hoped to develop their expressive language, to learn more about writing itself, and to find their 'own voice' as writers, they also aimed to enhance their wellbeing and explore their identities. One hypothesis of this thesis was that there is a third level that motivates teachers to join writing groups or courses, that is, the pedagogical level. This third level was visible in each article: discovering new pedagogical tools and finding new perspectives for teaching writing to their pupils was important for the teachers. For example, we discovered that although the teachers' main motivation for taking part in Studies in Writing was personal (developing as a writer), they also found themselves developing as teachers (Article III). Furthermore, teachers' expectations for the Creative Writing Group were not only personal, but most teachers also wished to develop their skills as creative writing teachers (articles I and II). From a pedagogical perspective, writing and reflecting on their writing experiences helped the teachers to see themselves as 'writing teachers' and to stop and think about their own ways of teaching (Articles II and III). This discovery is in line with previous research (e.g. Cremin et al. 2020; Cremin & Oliver 2017; Yoo 2018).

The writer-teachers strongly believed that creative, literary methods could and should be utilised in their teaching: they hoped to encourage their students to express themselves more freely, thus finding joy and new enjoyment in writing. Many forms of writing come with a set of rules and boundaries, but in creative writing these rules and boundaries can be broken (Bolton 1999; Csikszentmihályi 1990). This finding implies that utilising creative writing methods in lifelong teacher education might broaden teachers' perceptions of writing and encourage them to include literary arts in their teaching. As teachers' confidence as writers appears to influence their pedagogical choices (Cremin & Oliver 2017), it would be beneficial to support teachers' writer identities and to help them develop as

writers. Creative writing can be seen as a part of promoting multiliteracy, that is, the competence to interpret, produce, and evaluate different texts, where text refers to 'verbal, visual, auditory, numeric, and kinaesthetic symbol systems and their combinations' (FBNE 2014; Rasi, Kangas & Ruokamo 2019, 98). Multiliteracy skills can promote the building of one's identity and the understanding of cultural communication (Rasi et al. 2019).

The findings of this research go beyond classroom practices and pedagogical insights. The teachers stated that the writing communities offered them social, personal, and professional support. The practices of the Creative Writing Group seemed to serve as a means of silencing the controlling inner critic, facing their fears, and listening to their inner world, and offered an opportunity to share and tell their stories and discuss writing with their peers (Article II). Similarly, the Studies in Writing programme offered the teachers chances to write about their lives and to process their emotions and experiences, and to share those experiences with peers and the instructors (Article III). In Article II, the teachers perceived that they had met the goals they had set for themselves in the Creative Writing Group in terms of developing as both writers and writing teachers, but also as individuals. Similar discovery was made in Article III. This research is thus in line with previous findings indicating the holistic benefits of creative writing for individual growth (Bolton 1999; Hunt 2000; Ihanus 2019; Kosonen 2015). Taking part in a creative writing community supported the teachers' narrative identity work, that is, the (re)building and (re)negotiating one's identity through telling (narrating) our lives and perceptions of ourselves with ourselves and others (Brockmeier & Carbaugh 2001; Bruner 1987; Ricoeur 1991), which supported their professional development (see also Stenberg 2010). According to narrative identity researchers, professional identity is constructed by examining our life stories through narratives of our own lives and work (Bruner 1987; Clandinin et al. 2006; Ricoeur 1991; Stenberg 2010). The building, (re)negotiating, and strengthening of identities though creative writing was narrated by the teachers in Articles II and III.

One important factor of creative writing communities is the social aspect. Previous research on teacher development and identity work through written personal stories (see, e.g. Huber et al. 2013; Johnson & Golombek 2011) and in teachers' narrative identity writing groups (Schultz & Ravitch 2012) emphasise not only the importance of storytelling itself, but also the sharing of stories in teacher development. Participating in writing communities, such as writing groups, involves emotional work for the teachers (Woodard 2016). In a creative writing community, these feelings can be shared with others, with the notion that it is voluntary and not always necessary. Indeed, writing is one of the most important methods for learning and reflection (Bétrancourt et al. 2016; Tynjälä 1999), and its power grows through social interaction such as group discussions (i.e., Tynjälä et al. 2016).

The social aspect is important in narrative identity work: we build our own identities as we narrate our lives and share those narratives with others, and our identities are shaped and reformed by narratives told by our families, friends,

colleagues, and society (see e.g. Ivanič 1998; McKinney & Giorgis 2009, 109). Writing is often perceived as a lonely activity, but it is actually at the same time a private and interactive: a shared action that often involves some level of social dimension. Even when we write to ourselves and by ourselves, we may have an unknown reader in mind, and at the very least we have adopted something from the outside world into our writing. If the written text itself feels like too private to share, we can always discuss the writing process of the text with others. When sharing these stories, we continue to learn, find new perspectives, and develop our thinkinh. We may even recognise ourselves in others' stories and not feel so alone. This idea is portrayed in the tenth verse of the word image (Article I) as follows:

> I would draw with words
>
> write myself
>
> a chance to process work and personal life
>
> I could share something about myself with others
>
> learn to know the others better
>
> step in front of people and truly be myself
>
> I would see myself in their eyes
>
> the image starting to shape in my eyes as well

According to the teachers, creatively expressing themselves via different genres and writing assignments enabled them to new insights on their lives and their identities (Articles II and III). The teachers perceived creative writing in the writing communities as a way of expressing and reflecting on their experiences from different perspectives (Articles I, II, and III). Using literary mediums such as dialogue, positioning (i.e. third-person narration), and metaphors in their writing allowed the teachers to narrate their lives in illustrative ways (articles II and III). For example, prose allowed them to place themselves in a child's position (remembering a childhood event) and explore an event as an outsider (fictionalising themselves) Aarticle II). These findings are in line with previous research that suggests that through literary methods, we can change perspectives, zoom into an event, or approach a certain experience or emotion from afar, thus finding novel ways to express and process those experiences and emotions (Hunt 2000; Kosonen 2015; Kähmi 2015). Furthermore, taking different writing assignments also built a new understanding of writing as a creative process, where the process is essential and not the outcome (Articles II and III).

The findings in each article are encouraging and offer new insights of teachers' as creative writers and of teacher's professional development in creative writing communities. It should be noted, however, that the teachers in this study had a positive relationship to writing, which guided them to take part in a creative writing community. This is not the case for all adult learners. Some might

perceive writing as 'a useless task' and see reflective writing assignments as 'irritating, displeasing, unnatural, and fake', and even those who perceive writing as 'a tool for deepening understanding', that is, a tool for learning, might not see it as a pleasant task or as a way of reflectively and actively promoting their professional development (Kurunsaari et al. 2016, 136–138). Creative writing is only one way to support teachers' professional development holistically through creative expression, and it might not suit everyone. In the field of arts-based research, literature recognises that practising visual arts, theatre, dancing, and music can have similar impacts on professional and personal growth and development (Porokuru & Huntus 2016; Rantala & Korhonen 2012) than creative writing in this research.

The two creative writing communities of this study offered the participants space and time to think and act creatively, which is something many of us crave in our hectic everyday lives. According to the teachers in Articles II and III, this positively influenced their lives on both a personal and professional level. Simultaneously, for some teachers, dealing with difficult experiences was at times straining, and writing brought up insights and emotions that were not always positive or empowering. They described some of these experiences in the interviews and in the written data: for some, a specific writing assignment awoke hurtful memories that the teachers found overwhelming, and at times, the practices or assignments did not inspire the teachers, and they were not pleased with some of their works. In retrospect, however, the teachers approached these writing experiences as opportunities for growth.

The teachers perceived writing to be therapeutic and supportive of their well-being. In the interviews, the teachers were asked to reflect on the writing community's impact on their wellbeing as teachers and in general, but I intentionally did not use the term 'therapeutic' in my questions. This is because the two writing communities studied in this thesis were not of therapeutic intention. The instructors in Studies in Writing were experts on writing, not therapists, and as the instructor-facilitator of the Teachers' Creative Writing Group, I was in the position of a teacher and an educational researcher. As creative, reflective writing that draws from personal experiences (or autobiographical creative writing) can raise many emotions and be a tool for narrative identity work, it is natural that many teachers experienced it to be therapeutic. Indeed, there is literature on the therapeutic effects of creative writing groups (e.g. Kähmi 2015), but it should be noted that this thesis does not approach creative writing from the perspective of writing in, or as, therapy. Nora Ekström, a Finnish writing teacher and researcher, reminds us that a writing instructor may not have expertise on mental health or capability nor validation to provide therapeutic support for the writers, and suggests that autobiographical writing courses could benefit from the presence of a therapist (2011).

5.2 Practical implications

> 'Around here, however, we don't look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things, because we're curious...and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.'
>
> - Walt Disney

As highly educated academics (e.g. Sahlberg & Hargreaves 2010), Finnish teachers are used to expressing themselves through written discourse, as their academic studies have required them to write complex bachelor's and master's theses, numerous academic essays, and learning diaries. However, in light of the findings of this study, it could be beneficial to include forms of creative writing in pre-service and in-service teacher education.

This thesis suggests that teachers' professional development can be promoted through creative writing practices, especially in creative writing communities such as writing groups or studies. Creative writing groups and studies in writing can offer teachers not only a space and time to write and engage in narrative identity work, but also opportunities for meeting other writers, discussing writing experiences, and sharing pedagogical ideas, thereby continuing the process of writing and learning. Creative writing can bring new perspectives to both pre- and in-service teacher education practices. Utilising literary art might help teachers express and reflect on their emotions and experiences, thus rebuilding and (re)negotiating their narrative identities through biographical storytelling. Although academic writing is dominant in teacher education, adding literary methods could provide teachers with more holistic ways of expressing and exploring themselves and the surrounding world. Furthermore, the findings of this thesis support the idea of creative writing as a medium for supporting teachers' wellbeing, as it offers a time and space for bouncing back from work and dealing with stressful life situations.

The first and second articles studied teachers' expectations towards and experiences of a teachers' creative writing group. The findings portray teachers' narratives of professional development that take into account social, personal, and professional (or 'teacherhood') aspects. However, these groups can only include a small number of teachers, and it may be difficult to get funding for running creative writing groups on a larger scale in the future. The third article of this thesis explores teachers' experiences of participating in an open university's Studies in Writing course. These sub-studies offer a broad insight into writing and include courses and assignments that can be beneficial for the holistic growth of teacher-writers. Furthermore, the teachers found that the integrative nature of Studies in Writing helped them in their personal and professional development, as they combined elements of peer support and feedback, writing about personal life and emotions, and providing both theoretical and practical knowledge on writing and creativity. However, not all teachers have the motivation or possibility to commit themselves to extensive academic studies, which may be expensive as well.

In order to support a larger number of teachers in their work through creative writing methods and communities, it would be beneficial to bring creative writing to them in an easily accessible way, for example, by integrating creative writing into in-service teacher training programmes. The study strengthens the idea that utilising creative writing methods in in-service teacher training can be a valuable way to support teachers' professional development. Ways of supporting the success of a writing group can be physical, such as serving refreshments and arranging the meetings at a convenient time in an aesthetic, pleasant space with good air quality; structural, for example creating a clear structure for the group meetings; and social, such as giving time for open conversation (Tynjälä et al. 2020). Indeed, as professional development is strengthened by social elements, including social activities like peer discussion or sharing of texts and stories in writing practices can be fruitful.

Although the primary goal of the group was supporting professional development or promoting pedagogical ideas, most writers wished to share their writings and receive feedback. According to the results of the two writing communities studied in this thesis, the teacher-writers' hopes for feedback varied a lot. Motivation for participating in a writing community varied from developing their own writing skills or enhancing their personal growth, to becoming better teachers or finding a nice hobby. Therefore, the teachers wanted different things from feedback. When comparing the teachers from the two writing communities, it seems in general that the teachers who participated in the Studies in Writing group were more eager to develop their writing skills and receive constructive feedback, whereas the teachers in the Creative Writing Group were more focused on developing themselves as teachers. There were, however, varying expectations towards and experiences of feedback within these groups. Taken together, these findings suggest that providing peer and instructor feedback should be discussed with the group. Listening to the teachers' hopes and expectations will help the instructor/facilitator to plan and execute feedback in a way that suits the group's needs. The participants could be asked, for example, whether they want to give and receive critiques of their writings, or rather discuss the feelings that arise from the writing assignments. If possible, the instructor could vary the feedback based on each teacher's personal expectations: some teacher-writers wish to receive 'harsh critique' to help them improve their texts, while others may need more encouragement and the feeling that they have been seen and heard through their writing.

Based on the findings of this thesis and prior literature on creative writing in professional development, I have congregated recommendations for organising a teachers' creative writing community. Drawing from the model of integrative pedagogy (Tynjälä et al. 2016), Table 4 presents elements and mediating tools that should be taken into consideration when planning, executing, and evaluating a creative writing group (or other community) for supporting teachers' professional development. These creative writing groups can be independent courses or peer groups, or a part of a broader pre- or in-service teacher education programme. In the first row of the table, four

components of expertise and an emotional level are presented. The second row specifies different elements of writing in relation to the knowledge components and the emotional level. These elements should be considered when organising a creative writing group. When planning a writing group, the facilitators and instructors can ask themselves questions, such as those presented in the third row. Finally, the fourth row brings together mediating tools that help the teachers reflect on what they have experienced, conceptualise their practical knowledge, transform their practical knowledge into theory that they can utilise in their own teaching, and help them deal with the emotions that writing brings up.

Table 4. Recommendations for teachers' creative writing communities

	Socio-cultural knowledge	**Theoretical knowledge**	**Practical knowledge**	**Self-regulatory knowledge**	**Emotional level**
Elements of writing	Rules and shared understandings Facilitation of the group Roles Structure and atmosphere	Writing as a process Writer myths Genres and methods Writing and learning Discourses in writing	Pedagogical experiences of teaching writing Personal experiences of writing Skills in writing	Reflecting on the texts and writing processes Reflexivity Agency: me as a writer and a writing teacher Meta-cognitive skills	Motivation Attitudes Values Emotions in writing Empathy Life story

continues

TABLE 4 continues

Examples of questions to be asked	What is the role of the instructor/ facilitator in the group? What rules and structure should we set for the group (e.g. meeting time, committing to each meeting)? What tools should the teachers bring to the meetings? How to support a creative atmosphere?	Should the instructor / facilitator present theory slides in each meeting? What kinds of theoretical themes could be incorporated into the meetings? How can a variety of genres and styles be presented? How can theory be transformed into practice?	How can the teachers share their experiences? What can we learn from each other's experiences? What kinds of writing skills should the group support? How to conceptualise practical knowledge?	What kind of goals should we set for ourselves and for the group? How can… the teachers' reflection of their practical and theoretical knowledge be supported? we create an atmosphere where we can learn from our mistakes? the teachers evaluate their personal strengths and weaknesses?	How to… support teachers' motivation? help teachers get past a writer's block? recognise and manage the emotions that arise? How can the teachers learn to support their students emotionally?
Mediating tools	Creative writing assignments, instructor feedback Peer discussions and support, peer feedback, sharing of experiences and ideas Pedagogical ideas, pedagogical discussions, pedagogical experimenting				

5.3 Reflecting the research

5.3.1 Ethical considerations and researcher positioning

Ethical questions have been taken into consideration following the advice of the National Advisory Broad on Research Ethics (2009). The ethical principles by the Finnish National Board of Research Integrity (2009) that guided this thesis involve respecting the autonomy of research participants, avoiding harm, and ensuring privacy and data protection. Each participant in this thesis gave written consent to participate in the study. Each participant was informed of the nature, aims, and methods of this study, and of the usage of the data collected. Data relating to individuals and schools has been made anonymous through the allocation of pseudonyms and code names. The names of each participant have been altered. All data has been treated confidentially. After coding and reliability checking, data has been entered into computer data files that are protected with a passcode that only I am aware of. Data relating to individuals will not be released without the written consent of the individuals concerned.

Narrative researcher Josselson (2007) emphasises the importance of the 'explicit contract' which all participants agree to, but notes that it is equally important to have an 'implicit contract' which is based on the relationship between the researcher and the participant. The researcher should be equipped with empathy and respect when collecting data, especially in narrative research, where emotions can come up when the research participant narrates their life (Josselson 2007). It is natural that emotions can arise when people narrate their lives, and the researcher should respect the fact that emotions are not harmful or something to be scared of: 'Interviewees control what they share, and experiencing painful feelings in an interview, while distressing, may for them be in the service of integration and growth' (Josselson 2007, 7). In order for the participants to narrate their lives, there should indeed be room for feeling safe enough to also be emotional.

Josselson (2007, 8) suggests that researcher could discuss with the participants in the end of the interview (or other data collection) if there are some parts of the data that the participant wishes to exclude from the research. This could have been a good practice to add to my research. On the other hand, the research participants were in any phase allowed to drop out of the research, and they were allowed to choose which creative writings they shared with me and which they kept private. As I wanted to protect the autonomity of the teachers, I did exclude a lot of information from the articles if I felt that it would compromise their privacy, and in some cases I contacted the research participant to ask how they would like me to write about a specific life event they narrated.

The qualitative, narrative analysis of this thesis has been performed following the steps of reflexive thematic analysis and continued through a creative writing process. I am aware that my position and experiences as a researcher and my passion for and positive experiences of creative writing have

influenced this research in many ways (e.g. Berger 2015). I am critically aware that my (and the co-writers' of the original papers) professional roles and previous experiences have influenced the way the data is interpreted, as researchers' theoretical assumptions, analytic resources, and the data itself influence the process of our thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke 2019). For example, I may have been more open to research literature on the positive impacts of creative writing and on arts-based methods than other qualitative researchers with no personal interest in creative expression. Moreover, my previous work and research experience in the field of professional development through peer group mentoring has guided my interest in social processes of professional development and socio-constructivist views of learning. On the other hand, as an insider, it has been easy for me to understand which writing tasks the teachers were referring to when describing their experiences in writing communities. Nevertheless, my collaboration and discussions with colleagues throughout each step of this study, from planning the group to discussing the analysis and the creative nonfiction piece, helped me shift the focus from being an instructor to being a researcher.

Studies I and II. As a instructor and facilitator of the Creative Writing Group and a researcher of the Creative Writing Group, I was in a double agent role. I was piloting the group, researching it, collecting data, and working as an instructor of creative writing for the first time. This might have influenced the teachers' answers in the interviews of Study II, as there is a possibility that some of them did not want to express their critique face-to-face about my way of facilitating the group or instructing the writing assignments. However, many of the teachers did openly provide me with some feedback on how to redevelop and better creative writing groups in the future. I welcomed any comments and feedback via email, if something came up. It might also be argued that knowing me beforehand and knowing that I had read their writings for the past year made it easier for the teachers to open up and share their personal experiences and emotions with me. If the interviews had been conducted by a researcher they did not know, the depth of the interviews might have been different. As someone who had met the teachers seven times during the year, there was a sense of relatedness and ease in the interviews, and I was able to ask each participant questions that considered their unique experiences.

Study III. As the second author of this study worked as a teacher in Studies in Writing, we decided that I would conduct the interviews. The participants were informed from the start that one of the researchers in this study was their teacher from Studies in Writing. We acknowledged, however, that this connection with one of the course teachers might have influenced the participants' answers to some degree. For example, it could be assumed that had a participant had a negative experience of a course led by Anne Mari, they might not be willing to openly speak about it, even though Anne Mari was not present in the interviews. On the other hand, the structure of the interview allowed the

teachers to express their experiences at a general level and only discuss specific courses if they wanted to.

There is also the position of myself as an interviewer and a researcher in this study to be considered. I had participated in Studies in Writing before, and at the time of the interviews and data collection, I was doing intermediate studies (35 ECTS) on writing at the open university. I was therefore very familiar with Studies in Writing, which helped me understand, for example, what course the teachers were talking about and what types of social interactions were set in the online courses. However, my role as both a writing student and a researcher may have influenced my interpretation of the data in various ways, some of which I may not be completely aware of. I did not emphasise or underline my student position in the interviews, unless the teachers, for example, forgot about the name of a specific course. In the interviews, I kept the role of researcher, but my personal knowledge may have helped me create an intimate and trustful discussion with aspects of peer understanding.

5.3.2 Strengths and limitations of the thesis

In this research, I have sought for a 'way to combine narrative expression and validity' (Heikkinen et al. 2012, 6). Narrative action researchers Heikkinen, Huttunen and Syrjälä (2007) suggest that the validity of narrative action research can be approached by the following five principles:

1) Historical continuity (recognising the historical background and the canonical script or the cultural pool of the research topic; reporting the research as a chronological and cohesive narrative);
2) Reflexivity (i. e. being transparent about the researchers' role in the research, being aware of and reflecting on researchers' ontological and epistemological presumptions);
3) Dialectics (giving room for and respecting the different voices of the research, discussing the research with participants);
4) Workability and ethics (considering the ethical consequences of the research; making a change in the social action, for example empowering the research participants) and
5) Evocativeness (evoking the readers' mental images, memories and emotions linked to the theme through linquistic expression, aesthetics of the research reports, creative analytic practices)

Especially the importance of the principle of evocativeness is often neglegted in doing, reporting and assessing research. As Heikkinen and colleagues (2007, 10) remind us, aesthetic criteria are present in the norms concerning the manners of writing, presentation and layout of the traditional research reports. The principle of evocativeness goes beyond mere traditional aesthetics, as it invites researchers to express their research in ways that touch the readers on emotional level. This can be achieved when the reader perceives the research to be credible, logical, and emotionally engaging so that the reader can re-live others' experiences and discover new perspectives (Heikkinen et al. 2007, 16–17).

It has been my attempt to narrate the research process as a story. In this story, there are two levels: the level of reporting this research and the level of narrating my professional growth and development during the research process. This choice has given me a change to be reflexive throughtout the thesis. I have followed the principle of historical continuity by placing the research in the historical contexts of research on professional development and creative writing in the theoretical part of this thesis, and by later discussing the possible future ventures on creative writing as a means for professional development. Although there are elements of action research in the first two sub-studies (the researcher as an active instructor/facilitator with a goal to develop and make changes in the creative writing group), this thesis as a whole is not action research, and thus some parts of the workability and ethics principle are not applicable to this thesis as a whole.

According to Patton (2015, 653–654), engaging in a systematic and conscious search for alternative themes, divergent patterns such as negative cases, and rival explanations enhances credibility and should be a starting point of a rigorous research design. In this thesis, I have attempted to find differing narratives from the teachers' stories. Although most of the writing community experiences narrated by the teachers were positive, I have sought to show negative writing experiences and, for example, illustrated that not all teachers emphasised the social aspects of the Creative Writing Group or Studies in Writing. My aim, throughout the data collection, analysis process, and reporting of the findings of the analysis, has been to shed light on teachers' versatile experiences of writing instead of painting a picture of only the 'good sides of writing'.

Patton (2015, 661) encourages researchers to enhance their enquiry credibility through triangulation on 1) qualitative sources, 2) mixed qualitative-quantitative methods, 3) analyst triangulation, and 4) theory/perspective triangulation. Of these four, I have used mixed qualitative methods, analyst triangulation, and theory triangulation. In the analysis of the sub-studies of the current thesis, I have utilised three different narrative approaches: a) a word image/found poem, b) creative non-fiction, and c) ethnodramatic dialogue. In addition, each analysis process began with phases of (reflexive) thematic analysis. Combining these two analysis methods gave me a chance to inspect teacher stories from multiple views and helped me create a broader picture of the teachers' experiences. I also gave the teacher participants of the Creative Writing Group a chance to read and comment on the poem (first original article) and the nonfiction piece (second original article) and asked them to let me know if they found it to not 'match' their experiences or if they wished to add something to them. In this way, I tried to make sure that I had included the differing voices of the teachers in the narratives that I composed based on their personal experiences. For analyst triangulation, I discussed and planned the data collection and analysis of each sub-study with my colleagues and supervisors whose experience helped and guided me. This experience is in line with Monteagudo (2011), who emphasises researcher triangulation in narrative research as it brings different perspectives into the analysis process and helps to inspect events from micro and

macro levels. Analyst triangulation allowed me to make sure that my personal interpretation of the data could be considered trustworthy, and the collaboration helped me find, merge, and (re)name the themes and choose descriptive excerpts in the analysis. Finally, as my narrative thesis is set in the crossing of two disciplines, education and writing, I approached the topic of this thesis from varying theoretical perspectives, which can be referred to as theory triangulation.

Reflecting on my research, I recognise that I could have utilised triangulation of qualitative sources, that is, for example, my field notes and personal experiences or conducting a fourth sub-study that compares the experiences of the teachers in the two writing communities, the Creative Writing Group and the Studies in Writing, which would have strengthened the credibility of this thesis. Nevertheless, I have combined two types of teacher data, written (creative writings) and spoken (interviews), in the thesis.

One limitation of this thesis is that the participants were a relatively small group of teachers with a positive interest in and a personal relationship with creative writing. As many teachers may not be motivated towards or have a positive relationship to creative writing, the results cannot be generalised to all teachers. However, as narrative researchers, we aimed not at objective generalising, but rather at bringing out the voices of the participants, seeking shared meanings in their stories (e.g. Patton 2015), and telling their stories in ways that are relatable and speak to a broader audience (Bochner & Herman 2020; Leavy 2020). Another limitation is that the interviews were conducted using a semi-structured thematic interview, which was theory-informed. At the beginning of the interviews, I explained to the teachers that my view of professional development included many aspects of personal development as well, encouraging them to talk about their experiences freely, not only focusing on, for example, classroom instruction. Therefore, the questions in the interviews helped teachers to discuss their professional development on a more holistic level. The results might have been different with an open narrative interview, as teachers' understanding of professional development as a concept might vary.

In this thesis, I have respected the teachers' autonomy in various ways, such as creating pseudonyms and sharing their personal information only when necessary for understanding the context of their stories (for example, years of experience in teaching). Protecting autonomy is important for the integrity of any qualitative research. Still, when dealing with the teachers' creative writings, I have pondered their ownership of their writings (see also Josselson 2007). Opposing the common agreements on autonomy, Gilbert and Macleroy (2020) argue that creative writing researchers must consider whether to publish the names of the study participants whose creative writings are used in the study. Indeed, there is a need to consider questions of ownership and acknowledgement, and how to celebrate the creative works of others in researchers' studies (Gilbert & Macleroy 2020). I, as a researcher, do wish to acknowledge that my work would lack its deep and meaningful nature without the work of the teachers who participated in this research. In fact, this study would not exist in this form, as the creative writings of others form a rich and meaningful part of my data.

However, it goes without saying that the need for autonomy remains when studying the personal lives of others and discussing private, sensitive matters. In the three sub-studies, the teachers not only spoke about their writing processes, but opened up to me in highly personal topics such as family, relationships, wellbeing, personal tragedies, and moments of extreme happiness and sorrow. They gave me permission to use their writings in this research. In order to respect the written works of study participants, I have tried to express clearly which parts of the results are composed from excerpts of the teachers' writings. I have also tried to make it visible that the creative narratives composed in each article are a product of the analysis processes of my researcher colleagues and myself. They were formed and composed through a creative process of interpretation and discussions on the data collected.

5.4 Recommendations for further research

The findings of this thesis support the idea that utilising narrative, creative methods such as creative writing groups can be beneficial for holistically supporting teachers' professional development. From creative writing studies to narrative writing groups, further research on utilising different methods of creative writing to support teachers' professional development is needed in order to form a more cohesive narrative of teachers' experiences of writing and professional development. Moreover, as creative writing is just one way of adapting narrative, arts-based approaches, it would be interesting to zoom into other socially engaged, narrative, arts-based activities as means of promoting teacher development.

The role of emotions and well-being in professional development was identified in each article of this research. When studying teachers' professional development, emotions and wellbeing often emerge as significant experiences (see Tynjälä et al. 2016; Uitto et al. 2015a). Moreover, it seems not only impossible but also unreasonable not to consider the role of emotions in learning and development, as teacher identities and teacher development do not happen in a vacuum, but are intertwined with other life experiences, emotions, and mental processes. This is taken into consideration in today's teacher education. For example, in my workplace, the department of teacher education at the University of Jyväskylä, well-being skills are considered to be one of teachers' core skills. In future research, it would be interesting to continue to explore the role of emotions and well-being in teacher development and in creative writing communities.

In this study, an issue that was not addressed was supporting those teachers who are not willing or motivated to write, or whose prior writing experiences have been mostly negative. As all teachers are writing teachers, it could be beneficial to seek ways of motivating and inspiring teachers with negative relationships to writing. Leaning on prior research on teacher-writers (e.g. Cremin & Oliver 2016; Woodard 2016; Yoo 2018) I suggest that strengthening teachers' relationships to creative writing could help them become better writing

teachers, thus supporting the development of their students' creative writing skills. In the future, it would be worthwhile to also study the impacts of creative writing methods in in-service teacher training programmes that aim at holistically supporting teachers' professional development. This way, the research will not only focus on teachers with a strong and mostly positive relationship to creative writing. In addition, it could be beneficial to conduct research on creative writing communities' instructors and facilitators, and to explore the expertise needed to run effective writing groups.

I join Kim (2008) in encouraging narrative researchers to engage in narrative theorising, that is, the intentional process of questioning and interrogating the nature of their narrative work, which aims at re-establishing and re-affirming its significance. In this thesis, I have found Kim's (2008) Bakhtinian novelness (polyphony, chronotype, and carnival) a valuable way to assess and deepen my narrative research process. Should other researchers choose to inspect their work in this manner, they can ask themselves the following questions:

1) Polyphony: Does the work portray different voices and present partial truths of equally treated participants (e.g. the word image/found poem in the first sub-study was composed of 22 creative writing by 11 teachers)?
2) Chronotype: Does the work place the voices or stories in time, space, and context (e.g. the nonfiction piece in the second sub-study was composed so that each part, summer—writer identity, autumn—personal growth and emotions, winter—pedagogy, spring—social aspects, was set in different seasons and environments and with notes on the Finnish educational reform of that time)?
3) Carnival: Does the work consider counternarratives as equal to the mainstream narratives (e.g. the ethnodramatic dialogue in the third sub-study introduces new perspectives and views brought up in the data by the five teachers, portraying their different views and experiences)?

Finally, as storytelling can give teachers a voice in the educational research field, thus developing the teaching profession itself (Breault 2010), I warmly encourage educational and writing researchers to bravely try different storyteller approaches (Smith 2016). Breault (2010) encourages teacher researchers to be creative in telling teachers' stories, suggesting that instead of traditional scholarly writing, researchers could create impactful stories in the forms of poetry, fiction, or drama. Indeed, utilising creative writing methods in narrative research can raise and highlight otherwise hidden voices and experiences that may be difficult to express through the academic language used in traditional journal articles.

5.5 Making research accessible as an act of change

I strongly believe that art belongs to everyone. Throughout this journey with my doctoral thesis, starting with the first courses I took at the open university and ending with pondering the sharing of my research results, this belief has strengthened. What I have discovered in my explorations in the fields of education and writing research is that in both being a writer and being a teacher, there is often a narrative of being and working alone—the suffering artist-genius, the lonely exhausted teacher. In my work as a teacher educator, project researcher, and doctoral student, I have come to think that what we need more is sharing. Sharing of knowledge, sharing of support, sharing of stories that bring us towards change, empathy, and understanding. What the teachers in this study have taught me is that through creative expression, things can get better. Through sharing our creativity and our stories, we are building new narratives. I sincerely hope that my research will be a part of a narrative of change, peer support, creativity, and growth. I also wish that science and research were easier to access, as it is so easy these days to get caught up in rumours and hear-says.

In this thesis, I have sought to find ways of communicating research results in an arts-based method, that is, creative writing. Through poetry, prose, and drama, I have attempted to transform teachers' stories into approachable forms, which speak to not only academics, but also to teachers in the field (see also Bochner and Herman 2020; Leavy 2020). However, ordinarily, teachers do not have access to university libraries or academic journals, as they are mostly not open access, and even if journal articles are accessible to an average reader, the language is not (e.g. Leavy 2020). It can be argued that most teachers do not have the time, interest, or access to academic journals.

In her book *The Oxford Handbook of Methods for Public Scholarship*, Leavy raises the notion of academic knowledge being difficult to access for people outside academia. Leavy (2020, 6) suggests that formats such as blogs, vlogs, podcasts, social media, and art can help researchers reach a broader audience for their research. Meanwhile, public literary projects such as Poetry on Metrocards in New York and Poems in Public Transportation during the Finnish Runokuu event in Helsinki aim at making art and poetry present for a broad audience. Events such as the researchers' night at the University of Jyväskylä each autumn offer researchers chances of reaching a wider audience. For example, at the 2019 researchers' night event, my colleague Janne Fagerlund and I created an online word game, where participants could form poems, messages, and short stories using 'virtual word magnets'.

Inspired by this discussion, I will share the artistic parts of my thesis as independent creative writing pieces online, both in English and Finnish in autumn 2021. This allows people to explore art created in the research analysis process of this thesis.

YHTEENVETO (FINNISH SUMMARY)

> 'Sydän etsii kynää, löytää ajatuksille muodon, maalaa maisemia kirjaimilla ja lauseilla. Kirjoittamalla näkymätön saa värit. Kirjoittamalla hahmoton saa hahmon. Kirjoittamalla olen olemassa.'
>
> - Maria Pajusilta

Tutkimuksen tausta

Tutkin väitöskirjassani opettajien ammatillisen kehittymisen tukemista luovan kirjoittamisen keinoin. Erityisesti keskityn luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöihin, joissa opettajilla on mahdollisuus paitsi saada aika ja paikka itsenäiselle kirjoittamiselle, myös jakaa kokemuksiaan ja ajatuksiaan vertaistensa kanssa. Tutkimus on narratiivinen, mikä tarkoittaa sitä, että yleistyksien ja luokittelujen sijaan pyrin kertomaan tarinoita opettajien kokemuksista syvällisen aineistoanalyysin pohjalta. Väitöstutkimukseni koostuu kolmesta kansainvälisestä, vertaisarvioidusta artikkelista sekä teoreettisen viitekehyksen, metodit ja tulokset esittelevästä ja niistä keskustelevasta yhteenvedosta. Osatutkimuksissani omaksun ns. tarinankertojan roolin, ja hyödynnän luovan kirjoittamisen muotoja tutkimuksen tuloksia raportoidessani: ensimmäisessä artikkelissa esittelen tuloksia runon muodossa, toisessa proosan ja kolmannessa draamadialogin.

Kasvatustieteellinen työni ammentaa humanistisesta kirjoittamisen tutkimuksesta ja taidepohjaisesta tutkimuksesta. Kuviossa 5. kuvailen tutkimukseni teoreettista viitekehystä kolmion kärkien avulla: Ammatillisen kehittymisen tutkimus nojaa kasvatustieteisiin, kun taas luovan kirjoittamisen tutkimus ammentaa humanistisista tieteistä. Edellämainitut tuodaan yhteen narratiivisen tutkimustradition myötä, ja erityisesti taideperustaisesta tarinankertojapositiosta (storyteller).

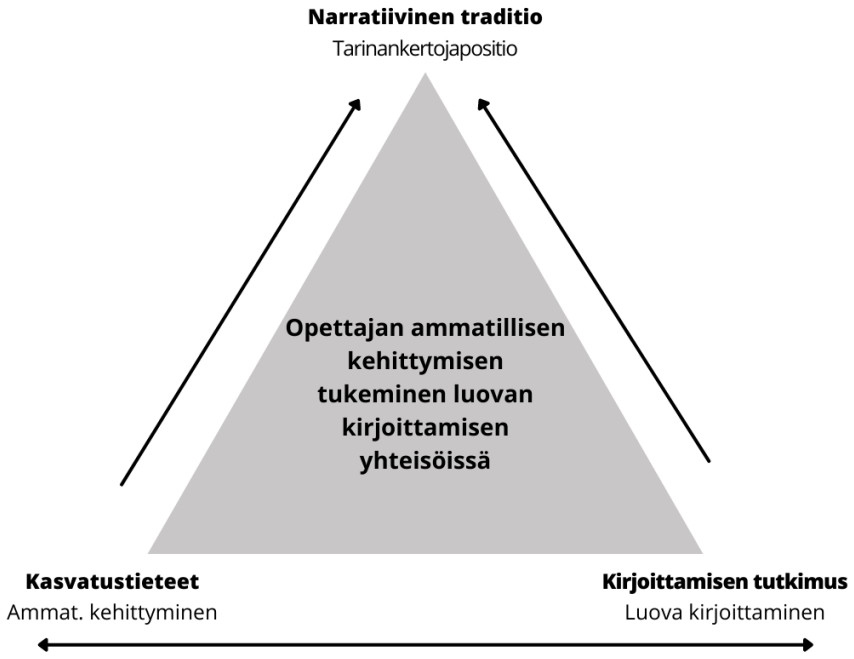

Figure 5. Tutkimuksen viitekehys

Tarkastelen väitöstyössäni opettajan ammatillista kehittymistä kokonaisvaltaisesti, huomioiden paitsi pedagogisen kehittämisen, myös identiteettityön ja hyvinvoinnin. Työni taustalla on sosiokonstruktivistinen oppimiskäsitys: opimme aikaisemman tietomme ja kokemustemme pohjalta, ja niissä sosiaalisessa ja kulttuurisissa konteksteissa, joissa elämme. Opettajan ammatillinen kehittyminen on prosessi, jossa sosiaaliset, yksilölliset ja ammatilliset elementit linkittyvät toisiinsa. Myös tunteet, henkilökohtaisen elämän tapahtumat, oma tausta, asenteet ja esimerkiksi motivaatio vaikuttavat opettajan kehittymiseen, ja siten pelkkään pedagogiseen luokkahuonetoimintaan keskittyminen ei näkemykseni mukaan kata riittävästi ammatillisen kehittymisen määrittelyä tai tukemista. Tukeaksemme ammatillista kehittymistä meidän täytyy huomioida jokaisen opettajan oma elämänpolku, sillä esimerkiksi kotona ja koulussa opitut asenteet voivat vaikuttaa opettajan toimintaan luokassa, ja tunne-elämää koettelevat vaikeat elämäntilanteet voivat vaikeuttaa opettajan työstä palautumista. Puhunkin siksi tutkimuksessani kokonaisvaltaisesta ammatillisesta kehittymisestä. Nojaan tutkimuksessani erityisesti integratiivisen pedagogiikan malliin. Sen mukaan asiantuntijuus kehittyy neljän tiedon osa-alueen (käsitteellinen eli teoriatietoa, käytännöllinen eli kokemustieto, sosio-kulttuurinen tieto ja itsesäätytieto) integroituessa toisiinsa sekä emotionaaliseen tasoon, joka pitää sisällään tunteet, motivaation ja henkilökohtaiset arvot ja asenteet.

Yksi olennainen osa opettajan ammatillista kehittymisen prosessia on identiteettityö. Opettajaidentiteetti nähdään tässä tutkimuksessa läpi elämän kehittyvänä ja narratiivisena: identiteetin rakennuskappaleet koostuvat elämänkokemuksistamme, jotka ottavat narratiivisen muodon, kun kerromme ja jaamme

niitä. Ympäristö, kuten läheiset ihmiset, kulttuuri ja politiikka, vaikuttaa identiteettimme kehittymiseen ja muodostumiseen. Identiteetissämme limittyvät erilaiset roolimme, kuten vaikkapa omalla kohdallani opettajankouluttaja, tutkija, vanhempi, suomalainen nainen, lapsi ja kirjoittaja. Opettajan identiteettityöllä tarkoitetaan prosessia, jossa käsitys omasta minästä ja opettajuudesta kehittyy, muuttuu ja laajenee henkilökohtaisia ja ammatillisia kokemuksia reflektoimalla.

Selvitän tutkimuksessani opettajien kokemuksia ammatillisesta kehittymisestä luovan kirjoittamisen keinoin. Vaikka kaikki kirjoittaminen voidaan nähdä jollakin tasolla luovaksi, tässä tutkimuksessa rajaan käsitteen synonyymiksi sanataiteelle tai laajasti käsitettynä kaunokirjalliselle ilmaisulle. Luovaa kirjoittamista voi olla esimerkiksi pohdiskeleva blogiteksti, päiväkirjamerkinnät, runot, näytelmätekstit, kirjeet ja proosa kuten novellit ja romaanit. Omassa tutkimuksessani olen erityisen kiinnostunut omaan elämään pohjautuvien tekstien tuottamisesta. Luovan omaelämäkerrallisen kirjoittamisen menetelmiä ovat esimerkiksi listojen kirjoittaminen ja niistä runojen muodostaminen, oman elämänkokemuksen kirjoittaminen lastensadun muotoon tai tajunnanvirta eli nk. flow-kirjoittaminen, jossa kirjoitetaan yhtäjaksoisesti ajatustenjuoksua tietty aika ilman tietoista editointia tai tekstin kontrolloimista. Tällaiset luovan kirjoittamisen menetelmät voivat tutkimusten mukaan auttaa käsittelemään erilaisia tunteita ja kokemuksia uusien näkökulmien avulla. Luovan kirjoittamisen avulla opettaja voi etäännyttää tunteitaan tai lähentää tiettyyn tapahtumaan ja tarkastella sitä intensiivisesti.

Kirjoittamista pidetään yhtenä tehokkaimmista oppimisen keinoista, sillä se antaa välineet esimerkiksi koetun tilanteen sanallistamiselle ja käsitteellistämiselle, sekä mahdollistaa omien tunteiden ja kokemusten reflektoinnin. Monen tutkimuksien mukaan sosiaalisen elementin sisällyttäminen kirjoittamiseen voi olla erityisen tehokas keino vahvistaa oppimista ja identiteettityötä. Tällaisia ovat esimerkiksi terapeuttiset kirjoitusryhmät, opettajien kerronnallisten menetelmien vertaisryhmät ja tekstityöpajojen vertaispalautekeskustelut.

Tutkimuksen tavoitteet

Tutkimuksen tavoite oli valaista opettajien kokemuksia kahdesta eri luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöstä: 1) Ope kirjoittaa! -luovan kirjoittamisen ryhmästä ja 2) Jyväskylän yliopiston avoimen yliopiston kirjoittamisen perusopinnoista. Tavoitteeni oli selvittää, miten luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöt ovat tukeneet opettajien ammatillista kehittymistä. Koska kaikki opettajat ovat myös kirjoittamisen opettajia, halusin oppia lisää siitä, miten kirjoittamisen yhteisöt voivat tukea opettajien pedagogista kehittämistä. Tutkimuskysymykseksi muotoutui:

Millaisia luovan kirjoittajuuden ja ammatillisen kehittymisen tarinoita opettajat kertovat kokemuksistaan luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisössä?

Väitöstutkimukseni koostuu kolmesta kansainvälisestä, vertaisarvioidusta artikkelista sekä teoreettisen viitekehyksen, metodit ja tulokset esittelevästä ja niistä keskustelevasta yhteenvedosta. Ensimmäisessä artikkelissa kuvasin opettajien toiveita ja odotuksia luovan kirjoittamisen Ope kirjoittaa! -ryhmästä sekä

heidän suhdettaan luovaan kirjoittamiseen. Toisessa artikkelissa palasin Ope kirjoittaa -ryhmän opettajien kokemuksiin ja selvitin, miten luovan kirjoittamisen ryhmä tuki heidän kokonaisvaltaista ammatillista kehittymistään. Kolmannessa artikkelissa tutkin opettajien kokemuksia avoimen yliopiston kirjoittamisen perusopinnoista suhteessa heidän ammatilliseen kehittymiseensä.

Tutkimuksen toteutus

Tutkimuksen aineisto on kerätty kahdessa eri kirjoittamisen yhteisössä. Ensimmäisen ja toisen osatutkimuksen konteksti on opettajien luovan kirjoittamisen Ope kirjoittaa! -ryhmä, jonka toteutin lukuvuonna 2016–2017. Ryhmään osallistui 11 peruskoulun opettajaa (luokan- ja aineenopettajia), ja ryhmä kokoontui seitsemän kertaa. Kolmetuntisissa tapaamisissa oli kussakin opettajuuteen liittyvä teema, jonka ympärille kirjoitustehtävät rakentuivat. Luovan omaelämäkerrallisen kirjoittamisen tehtävät vaihtelivat lyhyistä ”verryttelytehtävistä” laajempiin kaunokirjallisiin teksteihin. Teksteissä käsiteltiin omaa elämää laajasti, ja pohdittiin sekä reflektoitiin omaa opettajuutta. Tekstejä myös luettiin ääneen ja niiden kirjoittamisesta keskusteltiin, ja kahdella kerralla opettajat antoivat toisilleen vertaispalautetta. Lisäksi ryhmän ohjaajana annoin opettajille heidän teksteistään palautetta.

Kolmannen tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin viideltä opettajalta, jotka osallistuivat avoimen yliopiston kirjoittamisen perusopintoihin. Kyseessä on 30 opintopisteen laaja kokonaisuus, jonka kurssien teemat vaihtelevat kirjoittajien yhteisöistä ja kirjoittajaidentiteetistä eri genreihin ja esimerkiksi omaelämäkerralliseen kirjoittamiseen. Kirjoittamisen opintoihin haetaan vapaamuotoisella hakukirjeellä kahdesta vuodessa, ja opintoja voi suorittaa oman aikataulun mukaan lähi-, etä- ja itsenäisinä opintoina.

Ensimmäisen osatutkimuksen aineisto koostuu opettajien luovista kirjoitelmista (22 tekstiä), jotka keräsin Ope kirjoittaa -ryhmän ensimmäisessä ja toisessa tapaamisessa. Näissä pohdiskelevissa teksteissä opettajat reflektoivat ja sanoittavat suhdettaan kirjoittamiseen, kirjoittamisen opettamiseen ja kertovat, miksi ovat hakeutuneet kirjoitusryhmään ja millaisia toiveita heillä on tulevaa ”luovan kirjoittamisen vuotta” kohtaan.

Toisessa osatutkimuksessa haastattelin kutakin Ope kirjoittaa! -ryhmän opettajaa ryhmän viimeisen tapaamisen jälkeen. Haastattelut olivat puolistrukturoituja teemahaastatteluja, joiden rakentumisessa hyödynnettiin aikaisempaa teoriatietoa ammatillisesta kehittymisestä ja kirjoittamisesta. Haastatteluaineistosta muodostui 150 sivua litteroitua tekstiä, jossa opettajat pohtivat luovan kirjoittamisen ryhmän vaikutusta omaan kokonaisvaltaiseen ammatilliseen kehittymiseensä. Lisäksi keräsin opettajilta viimeisessä tapaamisessa lyhyet kulunutta vuotta reflektoivat vapaamuotoiset tekstit.

Kolmannen osatutkimuksen aineisto koostuu viiden opettajan puolistrukturoidusta teemahaastattelusta. Haastattelut olivat retrospektiivisiä, eli opettajat kertoivat kokemuksistaan avoimen yliopiston kirjoittamisen perusopinnoista ja niiden yhteydestä omaan ammatilliseen kehittymiseensä, hyvinvointiinsa ja

identiteettiinsä kirjoittajana. Haastattelujen rakentamisessa hyödynnettiin paitsi teoriatietoa, myös opettajien hakukirjeitä (yhden opettajan hakukirje ei ollut tallessa), jossa he kertovat itsestään kirjoittajina ja syistään hakea opintoihin. Haastatteluista kertyi 66 sivua litteroitua tekstiä.

Kunkin osatutkimuksen aineiston analyysi oli kaksivaiheinen prosessi, jota edelsi huolellinen ja syvällinen aineistoon tutustuminen. Narratiivisessa tutkimustraditiossa analyysimenetelmät jaotellaan 1) narratiivien analyysiin, jossa aineisto on kerronnallista, mutta analyysi voi olla esim. luokittelua tai teemoittelua, ja 2) narratiiviseen analyysiin, jossa aineistosta muodostetaan kertomuksia, tarinoita. Tutkimuksessani ensimmäinen vaihe noudatti refleksiivisen temaattisen analyysin askeleita ja sitä voidaan kuvailla narratiivien analyysiksi. Toisessa vaiheessa sovellettiin narratiivista analyysiä. Tässä jälkimmäisessä vaiheessa temaattisen analyysin tuottamat aineistolainaukset muokattiin tarinalliseen muotoon.

Tämä väitöskirja yhdistelee tutkimusta ja taidetta luovan kirjoittamisilmaisun muodossa. Narratiivisen tutkimustradition kentällä tutkijapositiotani voidaan kuvata tarinankertojaksi, sillä hyödynnän tutkimuksen tekemisessä ja raportoinnissa sanataidetta. Ensimmäisessä artikkelissa esittelen tuloksia runon muodossa, toisessa proosan ja kolmannessa draamadialogin. Nämä sanataidetekstit ovat syntyneet vuorovaikutuksessa alkuperäisten aineistojen kanssa: runo on muodostettu kokonaan opettajien tekstiotteiden pohjalta, proosatekstiin olen lainannut opettajien ilmauksia, ja draamadialogi on muokattu haastattelujen aineistolainauksien pohjalta niitä esteettisesti muokkaamalla ja uudelleenjärjestelemällä.

Tuloksia

Ensimmäisessä tutkimuksessani tutkimuskysymyksenä oli, miten opettajat kuvailevat itseään kirjoittajina ja kirjoittamisen opettajina, ja millaisia odotuksia heillä on luovan kirjoittamisen ryhmältä suhteessa kokonaisvaltaiseen ammatilliseen kehitykseensä. Analyysissa muodostin aineiston pohjalta seitsemän teemaa, jotka olivat: 1) Inspiraatio, 2) Kirjoittamisen terapeuttiset vaikutukset, 3) Itsestään ja maailmasta oppiminen, 4) Kirjoittamisen opettaminen, 5) Oman kirjoittajaäänen löytäminen, 6) Kielteiset tunteet ja kokemukset sekä 7) Aika ja paikka kirjoittamiselle. Artikkelissa näitä teemoja käsitellään runomuotoisen kertomuksen avulla. Tämä runo kuvailee opettajien kasvua lapsuudesta nykyhetkeen, ja valaisee heidän tulevaisuuden toiveitaan. Tutkimuksen tuloksista kävi ilmi, että opettajien suhde kirjoittamiseen on hyvin monimuotoinen, ja kirjoittaminen nähtiin niin oppimisen välineenä kuin tärkeänä itseilmaisun muotona. Yhteistä opettajille oli se, että he kaipasivat lisää keinoja oppilaidensa kirjoittajuuden tukemiseen, motivoimiseen ja rohkaisemiseen. Lisäksi opettajat pitivät arvokkaana mahdollisuutta saada ikään kuin kirjoittamisharrastus, jossa he saattoivat käydä kerran kuussa purkamassa ja jäsentämässä ajatuksiaan luovan ilmaisun kautta.

Toisessa osatutkimuksessa selvitin, millaisia ammatillisen kehittymisen kokemuksia opettajilla oli heidän osallistuttua vuoden ajan luovan kirjoittamisen ryhmään. Temaattisen analyysin tuloksena syntyi neljä teemaa: 1) Kirjoittajaidentiteetti, 2) Henkilökohtainen kasvu ja emootiot, 3) Pedagogiikka ja 4) Sosiaaliset tekijät. Näistä teemoista muodostin proosatarinan, fiktiivisen novellin joka kertoo yhden opettajan lukuvuodesta kirjoittamisen ryhmässä. Opettajat kokivat pääosin saavuttaneensa ryhmälle asettamansa tavoitteet, jotka liittyivät laajasti ammatilliseen kehittymiseen, hyvinvointiin ja kirjoittajuuteen. Moni koki erityisen tärkeäksi sosiaaliset tekijät, kuten vertaistuen, tekstien jakamisen ja ohjaajan antaman palautteen. Opettajien kaipaama aika ja paikka kirjoittamiselle piti sisällään rakenteita, jotka tukivat kehitystä. Lisäksi opettajat olivat saaneet lukuvuoden aikana monia uusia pedagogisia ideoita, ja osa oli jo lisännyt luovan kirjoittamisen opettamista omassa työssään.

Kolmannessa artikkelissa kysyttiin, millaisia ammatillisen kehittymisen tarinoita opettajat kertovat avoimen yliopiston kirjoittamisen perusopinnoista. Teemoitteluanalyysin tuloksena muodostettiin seuraavat teemat: 1) Kirjoittajaidentiteetti, 2) Kirjoittaminen ja emootiot ja 3) Opettaminen ja pedagogiikka. Näiden teemojen aineistolainauksien pohjalta muodostettiin kolme fiktiivistä draamadialogia, joissa opettajat keskustelevat ammatillisen kehittymisen kokemuksistaan. Vaikka avoimen yliopiston opinnot keskittyvät enemmän kirjoittajana kehittymiseen, opettajat saivat opinnoista myös pedagogisia ideoita ja oppilaaseen samastumisen kokemuksia. Opettajat kuvailivat paitsi positiivisia kirjoittamisen kokemuksia kuten flow-tilaa, myös negatiivisia tuntemuksia jotka liittyivät oman mukavuusalueen ylittämiseen ja vaikeista asioista kirjoittamiseen. Toisaalta moni kertoi negatiivisten tuntemuksien liittyneen siihen, että joutuu haastamaan itseään, ja siten monella tunne kääntyikin voimaannuttavaksi kasvukokemukseksi tai itsensä ylittämisen iloksi.

Näiden kolmen osatutkimuksen tuloksista käyvät ilmi opettajuuden monet puolet iloineen, onnistumisineen ja vaikeuksineen. Lisäksi ne havainnollistavat sitä, millaista on olla opettaja nykypäivänä, ja miten oman arjen ja henkilökohtaisen elämän tilanteet heijastuvat opettajuuteen. Luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöt koettiin merkityksellisinä kasvun ja kehittymisen paikkoina, jotka tukivat myös työstä palautumista. Monipuoliset kirjoittamistehtävät tarjosivat mahdollisuuden tarkastella ja käsitellä omaa elämää erilaisista näkökulmista. Toisin kuin vaikkapa kotona yksin kirjoittaminen, kirjoittamisen yhteisöt tarjosivat mahdollisuuden vertaistukeen, kollegiaaliseen ideointiin ja palautteen saamiseen. Arvokkaaksi koettiin myös samastuminen oppilaaseen: kun oli itse kirjoittajana ja ohjattavana, alkoi paremmin ymmärtää, miltä oppilaista tuntuu, jos teksti ei lähde sujumaan. Opettajille konkretisoi tehtävänantojen selkeyden merkitys, ja esimerkiksi kannustavan ohjaajan palautteen arvokkuus.

Yhteenvetona, opettajien kokemukset kirjoittamisen yhteisöjen annista voidaan tiivistää seuraavasti: Kirjoittamisen yhteisöt (eli opettajien luovan kirjoittamisen ryhmä sekä kirjoittamisen opinnot) tukivat opettajien ammatillista kehittymistä kokonaisvaltaisesti tarjoamalla ajan ja paikan

1) palautumiselle positiivisten tunnekokemusten, kuten nautinnon, inspiraation ja flown kautta
2) kehittymiselle ja oppiselle sekä opettajana (pedagogiset ideat, asenteet ja arvot, samastuminen oppilaisiin) että kirjoittajana (oman äänen ja tyylin tutkistelu, genret) sekä
3) identiteetin rakentamiselle narratiivisen identiteettityön (omien elämäntarinoiden kirjoittamisen, kertomisen ja jakamisen) kautta

Johtopäätöksiä ja pohdinta

Tämä laadullinen tutkimus on keskittynyt kuvaileman opettajien kokemuksia ammatillisesta kehittymisestä luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöissä. Narratiivisen tutkimusperinteen mukaisesti olen pyrkinyt tuomaan esille erilaisia opettajaääniä ja monipuolisia kokemuksia. Tuloksia ei voi yleistää koskemaan kaikkia opettajia, sillä tutkimuksen opettajilla oli positiivinen suhde ja motivaatio kirjoittamista kohtaan, ja toiseksi tutkimukseen osallistuneiden opettajien määrä oli pieni. Tutkimuksen pohjalta voidaan kuitenkin tehdä joitakin johtopäätöksiä ja suosituksia.

Tämä tutkimus osoittaa, että luovan kirjoittamisen avulla voidaan tukea opettajan kokonaisvaltaista kehittymistä. Luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöissä, kuten ryhmissä ja opinnoissa, ammatillista kehittymistä voidaan tukea monipuolisten kaunokirjallisten tehtävien, selkeiden ohjeiden, vertais- ja ohjaajan palautteen sekä soljuvien keskustelujen avulla. Kirjoittamisen ryhmiä suunnitellessa ja kehittäessä olisi tärkeää huomioida niin sosiaaliset ja emotionaaliset tekijät, opettajien aikaisempi tieto ja tiedon käsittelemistä tukevat itsesäätelytaidot sekä sosiokulttuuriset tekijät. Pohjaten aikaisempaan teoreettiseen ja empiiriseen tietoon sekä tämän väitöstutkimuksen tuloksiin, olen koostanut väitöskirjani Practical implications -alalukuun suosituksia huomioon otettavista asioista, kun suunnitellaan erilaisia luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöjä.

Kaikilla opettajilla ei ole aikaa tai mahdollisuuksia osallistua luovan kirjoittamisen yhteisöihin. Koska luova kirjoittaminen näyttäisi olevan erinomainen lisä ammatillisen kehittymisen tukemisessa, voisi luovan kirjoittamisen elementtejä sisällyttää enemmän opettajien perus- ja täydennyskoulutuksiin. Tulevaisuudessa voitaisiin tutkia ja kehittää esimerkiksi täydennyskoulutuksen muotoja, joissa luova kirjoittaminen olisi osana muuta koulutusta ja vertaisryhmätoimintaa, monipuolistamassa ja rikastamassa opettajien ilmaisua ja antamassa uusia näkökulmia tuttuihinkin kokemuksiin ja tilanteisiin.

Olen toteuttanut tämän tutkimuksen ammentaen taideperustaisesta tutkimuksesta ja narratiivisesta tutkimusperinteestä. Tarinankertojan rooli on mahdollistanut sen, että olen voinut raportoida tutkimukseni tuloksista luovin menetelmin. Nämä sanataidetekstit voivat tavoittaa laajemman yleisön ja havainnollistaa opettajien kertomuksia syvällisemmin kuin perinteinen akateeminen teksti. Luovan kirjoittamisen avulla olen voinut tuoda opettajien ääntä esille ja nostaa sellaisia tarinoita ja kokemuksia, joiden sanoittaminen akateemisella kielellä on vaikeaa.

6 ALL STORIES MUST END

> 'Stories have a way of changing faces. They are unruly things, undisciplined, given to delinquency and the throwing of erasers. This is why we must close them up into thick, solid books, so they cannot get out and cause trouble.'

The quote above is from a lovely book called *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making*, by author Katherynne M. Valente. (I read the book a few years ago. It was a gift from one of my best friends, and she truly has a way of knowing which books I will enjoy - thank you Tiila!) In the book, an omniscient narrator tends to slip funny and insightfull notes about, not only the particular story at hand, but also stories in general. I feel that the narrator really hits the mark here, reminding us that we cannot completely trust any narrative, as they are constructed and everchanging. This is true to the present study too: Were I to write this dissertation again, it would be different; or were I to have some other teachers as research particants in my substudies, the outcomes may have differed. If I had interviewed a participant on another day, they might have chosen different stories to share with me. Furthermore, if my life's storylines had led me somewhere else, this entire research would never have come to life. Finally, once this research reaches you, the reader, the story always changes a bit, as you bring new insights and echoes into it.

In the beginning of this thesis, I wrote that my aim was, in all simplicity, to tell a story and to share it with others. The story was about teachers who embarked themselves into the world of creative writing, and about a researcher who wanted to know what happened to those teachers in the process. It turned out that while experiencing different lows and highs of writing the teachers learned a little something about themselves, the surrounding world and especially about being a teacher and a writer. As for the researcher, time has come to follow the advice by Valente's narrator, and close this story up to a few thick, solid books and to an electric form of JYU dissertations (before it changes its ways or gets outs and causes any more trouble to the happy yet tired researcher).

I know that acknowledgements are at the beginning of dissertations, but I would like to take this space to thank you, the reader, for taking the time to join me and learn about narrative research, creative writing and teachers'

professional development. I will leave you with the following words from Valente's book, and let the narrator bid farewell on my behalf:

> 'All stories must end so, with the next tale winking out of the corners of the last pages, promising more, promising moonlight and dancing and revels, if only you will come back when spring comes again.'

REFERENCES

Aalto, E. 2019. Pre-service subject teachers constructing pedagogical language knowledge in collaboration. Doctoral dissertation. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Aarto-Pesonen, Leena and Päivi Tynjälä. 2017. Dimensions of professional growth in work-related teacher education. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 42 (1), 1. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2017v42n1.1

Akkerman, S. F., & Meijer, P. C. 2011. A dialogical approach to conceptualizing teacher identity. Teaching and Teacher Education, 27 (2), 308–319. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.013

Alsup, J. 2019. Millennial Teacher Identity Discourses: Balancing Self and Other. New York and London: Routledge

Anspal, T., Eisenschmidt, E. & Löfström, E. 2012. Finding myself as a teacher: Exploring the shaping of teacher identities through student teachers' narratives. Teachers and Teaching 18 (2), 197–216. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2012.632268

Atkinson, P. & Delamont, S. 2006. Rescuing narrative from qualitative research. Narrative Inquiry 16 (1), 164–172. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.16.1.21atk

Avalos, B. 2011. Teacher professional development in teaching and teacher education over ten years. Teaching and Teacher Education 27 (1), 10–20. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007

Beauchamp, C. & Thomas, L. 2009. Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. Cambridge Journal of Education 39 (2), 175–189. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640902902252

Bell, B. & Gilbert, J. K. 1996. Teacher development: A model from science education. London: Psychology Press.

Bereiter, C. & Scardamalia, M. 2003. Learning to work creatively with knowledge. In E. De Corte, L. Verschaffel, N. Entwistle, & J. van Merriënboer (Eds.) Unravelling basic components and dimensions of powerful learning environments. EARLI Advances in learning and instruction series, 55–68.

Bereiter, C. & Scardamalia, M. 1993. Surpassing ourselves: An inquiry into the nature and implications of expertise. Chicago: Open Court.

Berger, R. 2015. Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. Qualitative Research 15 (2), 219–234. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475

Bernard, H. & Ryan, G. 2010. Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bétrancourt, M., Otroleva, M. & Billett, S. 2016. Writing for professional development: An introduction. In G. Ortoleva, M. Bétrancourt & S. Billett (Eds.), Writing for professional development. Leiden: Brill

Bochner A. P. & Herrman, A. F. 2020. Practicing narrative inquiry II: Making meanings move. In P. Leavy (Ed.) The Oxford handbook of qualitative research (second edition). DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190847388.013.19

Bolton, G. 2021. Take care once you start writing. A poem. Retrieved 16.8.2021 from https://www.gilliebolton.com/?page_id=612

Bolton, G. 2011. Write yourself: Creative writing and personal development. London; Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Bolton, G. 2010. Reflective practice: Writing and professional development. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Bolton, G. 1999. The therapeutic potential of creative writing: Writing myself. London; Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Boniwell, I. 2012. Positive psychology in a nutshell: The science of happiness. (3rd edition) GB: Open University Press.

Bowman, W. D. 2006. Why narrative? Why now? Research Studies in Music Education 27 (1), 5–20. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X060270010101

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2019. Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health 11 (4), 589–597. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

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

Breault, R. A. 2010. Distilling wisdom from practice: Finding meaning in PDS stories. Teaching and Teacher Education 26 (3), 399–407. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.04.013

Brockmeier, J. & Carbaugh, D. 2001. Narrative and identity: Studies in autobiography, self and culture. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Bruner, J. 1987. Life as narrative. Social Research, 11–32.

Clandinin, D. J. et al. 2006. Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers. London: Routledge

Clift, S. 2012. Creative arts as a public health resource: Moving from practice-based research to evidence-based practice. Perspectives in Public Health 132 (3), 120–127.

Cremin, T. & Baker, S. 2014. Exploring the discursively constructed identities of a teacher-writer teaching writing. English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 13 (3), 30–55.

Cremin, T. & Locke, T. 2016. Writer identity and the teaching and learning of writing. Taylor & Francis.

Cremin, T., Myhill, D., Eyres, I., Nash, T., Wilson, A., et al. 2020. Teachers as writers: Learning together with others. Literacy 54 (2), 49–59.

Cremin, T. & Oliver, L. 2017. Teachers as writers: A systematic review. Research Papers in Education 32 (3), 269–295. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2016.1187664

Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1990. Flow: The psychology of optimal experience. New York: Harper & Row

Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1996. Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention. New York: Harper Collins

Dawson, C. M. 2017. The teacher-writer. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Language and literacy series.

DeCuir-Gunby, J., Marshall, P. & Mcculloch, A. 2011. Developing and using a codebook for the analysis of interview data: An example from a professional development research project. Field Methods, 23, 136–155. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X10388468

Delamont, S. & Atkinson, P. 2014. Narratives and accounts: Their collection and analysis. In Theory and method in higher education research II. Emerald Group Publishing Limited. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628(2014)0000010008

Desimone, L. M. 2009. Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. Educational Researcher 38 (3), 181–199. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08331140

Ekström, N. 2011. Kirjoittamisen opettajan kertomus: kirjoittamisen opettamisesta kognitiiviselta pohjalta. Doctoral dissertation. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä

Elbaz-Luwisch, F. & Pritzker, D. 2010. Writing workshops in teacher education: Making a space for feeling and diversity. Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education 30 (3), 277–289. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866022000048420

Eraut, M. 2004. Informal learning in the workplace. Studies in continuing education 26 (2), 247–273. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/158037042000225245

Erra, S. 2020. Minä kirjoittajana, lukio ympäristönä. Näkökulmia kirjoittamisen opetukseen. Doctoral dissertation. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä

Estola, E., Kaunisto, S-L., Keski-Filppula, U., Syrjälä, L. & Uitto, M. 2007. Lupa puhua. Kertomisen voima työssä ja arjessa. Jyväskylä: PS-Kustannus

Eteläpelto, A., Vähäsantanen, K., Hökkä, P. & Paloniemi, S. 2014. Identity and agency in professional learning. In S. Billet, C. Harteis & H. Gruber (Eds.) International handbook of research in professional and practice-based learning. Boston: Springer, 645–672.

Finnish National Board of Education. 2014. National core curriculum for basic education 2014. Helsinki: Finnish National Board of Education.

Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. 2016. Bringing the profession back in: Call to action. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Geeraerts, K., Tynjälä, P., Heikkinen, H. L. T., Markkanen, I., Pennanen, M. & Gijbels, D. 2015. Peer-group mentoring as a tool for teacher development. European Journal of Teacher Education 38 (3), 358–377. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2014.983068

Gilbert, F. & Macleroy, V. 2020. Different ways of descending into the crypt: Methodologies and methods for researching creative writing. New Writing, 1–19. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2020.1797822

Glover, S. 2010. Cohort-based supervision of postgraduate creative writers: The effectiveness of the university-based writers' workshop. New Writing 7 (2), 123–136. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2010.482670

Gluschkoff, K., Elovainio, M., Kinnunen, U., Mullola, S., Hintsanen, M., Keltikangas-Järvinen, L., & Hintsa, T. 2016. Work stress, poor recovery and burnout in teachers. Occupational medicine, 66 (7), 564–570. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqw086

Gogus, A. 2012 Constructivist learning. In: Seel N.M. (Eds.) Encyclopedia of the sciences of learning. Boston: Springer.

Goodson, I. F., Loveless, A. M. & Stephens, D. 2013. Explorations in narrative research. Springer Science & Business Media.

Graham, S. 2019. Changing how writing is taught. Review of Research in Education 43 (1), 277–303. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X18821125

Gross, P. 2010. Small worlds: What works in workshops if and when they do? In D. Donnelly (Ed.) Does the writing workshop still work? Bristol; Buffalo; Toronto: Multilingual matters, 52–62.

Grossman, P., Wineburg, S. & Woolworth, S. 2001. Toward a theory of teacher community. The teachers' college record 103, 942–1012.

Guskey, T. R. 2002. Professional development and teacher change. Teachers and Teaching, 8 (3), 381–391. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/135406002100000512

Hamilton, Mary Lynn, Laura Smith, and Kristen Worthington. 2008. Fitting the methodology with the research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and auto-ethnography. Studying Teacher Education 4 (1): 17–28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/17425960801976321

Heikkinen, H. L. T. 2002. Whatever is narrative research? In R. Huttunen, H. L. T. Heikkinen and L. Syrjälä (Eds.), Narrative Research. Voices of teachers and philosophers. Jyväskylä: University Press, 12-28.

Heikkinen, H.L.T., Huttunen, R. & Syrjälä, L. 2007. Action research as narrative: Five principles for validation. Educational Action Research 15(1), 5–19. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790601150709

Heikkinen, H. L., Huttunen, R., Syrjälä, L., & Pesonen, J. 2012. Action research and narrative inquiry: Five principles for validation revisited. Educational Action Research, 20(1), 5-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2012.647635

Heikkinen, H. L. T., Jokinen, H. & Tynjälä, P. (Eds.) 2012. Peer-group mentoring for teacher development. London: Routledge.

Heikkinen, H. L. T., Pennanen, M., Markkanen, I. & Tynjälä, P. 2020. A brief history of the peer-group mentoring model in Finland: Struggling for space in a contested niche. In K-R Olsen, E. M. Bjerkholt & H. L. T. Heikkinen (Eds.) New teachers in Nordic countries: Ecologies of mentoring and induction. Oslo: Cappelen Damn Akademisk, 107–128.

Heikkinen, H. L., Tynjälä, P. & Kiviniemi, U. 2011. Integrative pedagogy in practicum: Meeting the second order paradox of teacher education. In A practicum turn in teacher education. Leiden: Brill, 91–112.

Hellgren, J. & Kauppinen, M. 2020. Kirjoitan, siis ajattelen. Näkökulmia kirjoittamisen opettamiseen. Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. Retrieved 23.3.2021 from https://karvi.fi/publication/kirjoitan-siis-ajattelen-nakokulmia-kirjoittamisen-opetukseen/

Huber, J., Caine, V., Huber, M. & Steeves, P. 2013. Narrative inquiry as pedagogy in education: The extraordinary potential of living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience. Review of Research in Education 37 (1), 212–242. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12458885

Hunt, C. 2010. Therapeutic effects of writing fictional autobiography. Life Writing 7 (3), 231–244. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2010.514142

Hunt, C. 2000. Therapeutic dimensions of autobiography in creative writing. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Huttunen, R., Heikkinen, H. & Syrjälä, L. 2002. Narrative research. Voices of teachers and philosophers. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä

Hyland, K. 2015. Teaching and researching writing. London: Routledge.

Ihanus, J. 2019. Transformative words: Writing otherness and identities. Hauppauge, New York: Nova Science Publisher's, Inc.

Ivanič, R. 2004. Discourses of writing and learning to write. Language and Education 18 (3), 220–245. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780408666877

Ivanič, R. 1998. Writing and identity: The discoursal construction of identity in academic writing. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Ivanič, R. 1994. I is for interpersonal: Discoursal construction of writer identities and the teaching of writing. Linguistics and Education 6 (1), 3–15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/0898-5898(94)90018-3

Johnson, K. E. & Golombek, P. R. 2011. The transformative power of narrative in second language teacher education. Tesol Quarterly 45 (3), 486–509. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5054/tq.2011.256797

Johnson, S., Cooper, C., Cartwright, S., Donald, I., Taylor, P., et al. 2005. The experience of work-related stress across occupations. Journal of Managerial Psychology 20 (2), 178–187. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940510579803

Jokinen, H., Taajamo, M., Välijärvi, J., Honkimäki, S., Keurulainen, H., et al. 2014. Pedagoginen asiantuntijuus liikkeessä ja muutoksessa: huomisen haasteita. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä

Josselson, R. 2007. The ethical attitude in narrative research. Principles and practicalities. In Clandinin, D.J. (ed.) Handbook of narrative inquiry. Mapping a methodology. Thousand Oaks: Sage: 537–566.

Kallionpää, O. 2017. Uuden kirjoittamisen opetus: Osallistavaa luovuutta verkossa. Doctoral dissertation. Scriptum: Creative writing research

journal 4:1. Retrieved 23.3.2021 from https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/52704

Kulmala, J. 2020. The letter is only a poor expression of what heart overflows: Family letters from the 20th century Czechoslovakia. Doctoral dissertation. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä

Kähmi, K. 2015. Advances in poetry therapy. Scriptum Creative Writing Research Journal, 2 (4), 30–43.

Kampylis, P. G. & Valtanen, J. 2010. Redefining creativity—analyzing definitions, collocations, and consequences. The Journal of Creative Behavior 44 (3), 191–214. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2162-6057.2010.tb01333.x

Kim, J. 2008. A romance with narrative inquiry: Toward an act of narrative theorizing. In B. S. Stern (Ed.) Curriculum & teaching dialogue 10 (1–2).

Kiviniemi, U., Tynjälä, P., Heikkinen, H. L. T., & Martin, A. 2020. Running a hybrid: mingling in-service and pre-service teachers in peer-mentoring groups. European Journal of Teacher Education, 1–17. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1766442

Kosonen, P. 2015. Creative autobiography, from self-knowledge to the teaching of writing. Scriptum Creative Writing Research Journal 2 (2), 14–45.

Kurunsaari, M., Tynjälä, P. & Piirainen, A. 2016. Students' experiences of reflective writing as a tool for learning in physiotherapy education. In G. Ortoleva, M. Bétrancourt & S. Billett (Eds.), Writing for professional development. Leiden: Brill, 129–151.

Lainson, K., Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2019. Being both narrative practitioner and academic researcher: A reflection on what thematic analysis has to offer narratively informed research. International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work (4), 86–98. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.846799716151082

Le Maistre, C. & Paré, A. 2006. A typology of the knowledge demonstrated by beginning professionals. In P. Tynjälä, J. Välimaa, and G. Boulton-Lewis Higher (Eds.), Education and Working Life. Collaborations, Confrontations and Challenges. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 103–113.

Leavy, P. 2020. Method meets art: Arts-based research practice. Guilford Publications.

Leitch, R. 2006. Limitations of language: Developing arts-based creative narrative in stories of teachers' identities. Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice 12 (5), 549–569. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600600832270

Lillis, T. 2013. The sociolinguistics of writing. Edinbugh: Edinbugh University Press

Linna, V. 1959. Täällä Pohjantähden alla. Helsinki: WSOY

Locke, T. 2015. Developing writing teachers: Practical ways for teacher-writers to transform their classroom practice. New York: Routledge.

Loveless, A. 2012. Body and soul: A study of narratives of learning lives of creative people who teach. In Explorations in narrative research. Leiden: Brill, 107–121.

McAbee, D. 2020. Shifting the power dynamics in the creative writing workshop: Assessing an instructor as participant model. New Writing 17 (3), 244–252. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2019.1586959

McKinney, M. & Giorgis, C. 2009. Narrating and performing identity: Literacy specialists' writing identities. Journal of Literacy Research 41 (1), 104–149. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10862960802637604

McLeod S. H. 1997. Notes on the heart. Affective issues in the writing classroom. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Ilinois University Press

McVey, D. 2008. Why all writing is creative writing. Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 45(3), 289–294. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290802176204

Mimpriss, R. 2009. Writing and the problem of will: The creative writing workshop and the Stanley Milgram paradigm. New Writing 6 (1), 57–66. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14790720802582559

Monteagudo, J. G. 2011. Jerome Bruner and the challenges of the narrative turn: Then and now. Narrative Inquiry 21 (2), 295–302. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.21.2.07gon

Morgan, D. N. & Pytash, K. E. 2014. Preparing preservice teachers to become teachers of writing: A 20-year review of the research literature. English Education 47 (1), 6–37. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24570895

Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. 2014. The concept of flow. In M. Csikszentmihalyi (Ed.), Flow and the foundations of positive psychology. Dordrecht: Springer, 239-263.

Niemi-Pynttäri, R. 2007. Verkkoproosa: Tutkimus dialogisesta kirjoittamisesta. Doctoral dissertation. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä

OECD. 2019. TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I). Paris: OECD Publishing

OECD. 2020a. TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II). Paris: OECD Publishing

OECD. 2020b. School education during COVID-19: Were teachers and students ready? Finland. Retrieved 23.3.2021 from http://www.oecd.org/education/coronavirus-education-country-notes.htm

OAJ, The Trade Union of Education in Finland. 2018. Opetusalan työolobarometri 2017. Retrieved 25.3.2021 from https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/julkaisut/2018/opetusalan-tyoolobarometri/

Orland-Barak, L., & Maskit, T. 2011. Novices 'in story': What first-year teachers' narratives reveal about the shady corners of teaching. Teachers and Teaching, 17 (4). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2011.580520

Ortoleva, G., Bétrancourt, M. & Billett, S. (Eds.) 2016. Writing for professional development. Leiden: Brill.

Paré, A. & Le Maistre, C. 2006. Active learning in the workplace: Transforming individuals and institutions. Journal of Education and Work 19 (4), 363–381. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080600867141

Patrick, L. D. 2016. Found poetry: Creating space for imaginative arts-based literary research writing. Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice, 65(1), 384–403. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2381336916661530

Patton, M. Q. 2015. Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Pennanen, M., Heikkinen, H. L. T. & Tynjälä, P. 2020. Virtues of mentors and mentees in the Finnish model of teachers' peer-group mentoring. Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research 64 (3), 355–371. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2018.1554601

Pennebaker, J. W. & Chung, C. K. 2007. Expressive writing, emotional upheavals, and health. In H. S. Friedman & R. C. Silver (Eds.) Foundations of health psychology, 263–284. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Peterson, S. S. 2008. Writing across the curriculum: All teachers teach writing. Winnipeg: Portage & Main Press.

Polkinghorne, D. E. 1995. Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education 8 (1), 5–23. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839950080103

Porokuru, V. & Huntus, A. 2016. (Eds.) Taiteen menetelmät kehittämisessä ja tutkimuksessa. Esiselvitys. Helsinki: eduskunnan tulevaisuusvaliokunta

Postholm, M. B. & Boylan, M. 2018. Teachers' professional development in school: A review study. Cogent Education 5 (1). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1522781

Ramsey-Wade, C., Malyn, B. & Thomas, Z. 2020. Reading and writing for well-being: A qualitative exploration of the therapeutic experience of older adult participants in a bibliotherapy and creative writing group. Counselling and Psychotherapy Research 20 (4). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12304

Rantala, P & Korhonen, S-M. 2012. Uutta osaamista luomassa. Työelämän kehittäminen taiteen keinoin. Lapin yliopiston yhteiskuntatieteellisiä julkaisuja. Retrieved 24.8.2021 from https://lauda.ulapland.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/61818/uutta_osaamista_luomassa.pdfA.pdf?sequence=4

Rasi, P., Kangas, M. & Ruokamo, H. 2019. Promoting multiliteracy in the Finnish educational system. In M. Paksuniemi & P. Keskitalo (Eds.), Introduction to the Finnish educational system. Leiden. Brill, 96–157.

Ricoeur, P. 1991. Narrative identity. Philosophy Today 35 (1), 73–81. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday199135136

Riva, G. 2015. Phenomenology of positive change: Personal growth. In Enabling positive change: Flow and complexity in daily experience. Warsaw: De Gruyter Open, 18–38.

Ruohotie-Lyhty, M. & Moate, J. 2016. Who and how? Preservice teachers as active agents developing professional identities. Teaching and Teacher Education, 55, 318–327. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.01.022

Sahlberg, P. & Hargreaves, A. 2011. Finnish lessons. New York: Teachers College Press.

Saldaña, J. 2011. Ethnotheatre. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Sancar, R., Atal, D. & Deryakulu, D. 2021. A new framework for teachers' professional development. Teaching and Teacher Education 101, 103305. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103305

Sawyer, R. K. 2012. Explaining creativity: The science of human innovation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schultz, K. & Ravitch, S. M. 2013. Narratives of learning to teach. Taking on Professional Identities. Journal of Teacher Education 64 (1), 35–46. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487112458801

Selland, M. K. 2017. The edge of messy: Interplays of daily storytelling and grand narratives in teacher learning. Teachers and Teaching 23 (3), 244–261. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1205016

Senge, P. M., Cambron-McCabe, N., Lucas, T., Smith, B. & Dutton, J. 2012. Schools that learn (updated and revised): A fifth discipline fieldbook for educators, parents, and everyone who cares about education. Crown Business.

Sexton, J. D., Pennebaker, J. W., Holzmueller, C. G., Wu, A. W., Berenholtz, S. M., Swoboda, S. M, Provonost, P. & Sexton, J. B. 2009. Care for the caregiver: Benefits of expressive writing for nurses in the United States. Progress in Palliative Care 17 (6), 307–312. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1179/096992609X12455871937620

Simina, V. K. 2012. Socio-constructivist models of learning. In: Seel N.M. (Eds.) Encyclopedia of the sciences of learning. Boston: Springer.

Sinner, A. 2013. Unfolding the unexpectedness of uncertainty: Creative nonfiction and the lives of becoming teachers. Boston: Springer.

Smith, B. 2016. Narrative analysis. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.) Analysing qualitative data in psychology second edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 202–221.

Smith, D. 2012. Supporting new teacher development using narrative-based professional learning. Reflective Practice, 13 (1), 149–165. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2011.626020

Spencer, P., Harrop, S., Thomas, J. & Cain, T. 2018. The professional development needs of early career teachers, and the extent to which they are met: A survey of teachers in England. Professional Development in Education 44 (1), 33–46. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2017.1299028

Steinhardt, M. A., Smith Jaggars, S. E., Faulk, K. E. & Gloria, C. T. 2011. Chronic work stress and depressive symptoms: Assessing the mediating role of teacher burnout. Stress and Health 27 (5), 420–429. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.1394

Stenberg, K. 2010. Identity work as a tool for promoting the professional development of student teachers. Reflective Practice 11 (3), 331–346. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2010.490698

Sternberg, R. J. 2003. Wisdom, intelligence, and creativity synthetized. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Street, C. 2003. Pre-service teachers' attitudes about writing and learning to teach writing: Implications for teacher educators. Teacher Education Quarterly 30 (3), 33–50. Retrieved 24.8.2021 from https://www.jstor.org/stable/23478439

Taajamo, M. & Puhakka, E. 2019. Opetuksen ja oppimisen kansainvälinen tutkimus TALIS 2018. Perusopetuksen vuosiluokkien 7-9 ensituloksia, osa 1. Raportit ja selvitykset 2019:8. Helsinki: Finnish National Agency for Education.

Thompson, K. 2004. Journal writing as a therapeutic tool. In G. Bolton (Ed.) Writing cures. London and New York: Routledge, 90–102.

Toom, A., & Husu, J. (2012). Finnish Teachers as 'Makers of the Many'. In H. Niemi, A. Toom and A. Kallioniemi (Eds.) Miracle of education, Leiden: Brill, 39.

Torvelainen, P., Tarnanen, M., Hankala, M., Kainulainen, J. 2019. Miten luokanopettajaopiskelijat arvioivat itseään tekstien tuottajina? In M. Kallio, H. Krzywacki, S. Poulter, (Eds.) Arvot ja arviointi, Ainedidaktisia tutkimuksia, 16. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 28-50. Retrieved 14.8.2021 from http://hdl.handle.net/10138/308813

Tynjälä, P. 2008. Perspectives into learning at the workplace. Educational research review, 3 (2), 130–154. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2007.12.001

Tynjälä, P., Heikkinen, H. L. T. & Kallio, E. K. 2021. Integrating work and learning in higher education and VET: Theoretical point of view. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, B. O'Connor, & K. Evans (Eds.) The SAGE handbook of learning and work. Thousand Oaks: Sage. (in print)

Tynjälä, P. & Heikkinen, H. L. T. 2011. Beginning teachers' transition from pre-service education to working life. Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft, 14(1), 11–33. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11618-011-0175-6

Tynjälä, P., Mason, L. & Lonka, K. 2001. Writing as a learning tool: An introduction. In Writing as a learning tool. Boston: Springer, 7–22.

Tynjälä, P., Pennanen, M., Markkanen, I. & Heikkinen, H. L. T. 2019. Finnish model of peer-group mentoring: Review of research. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1483 (1), 208–223. DOI: 10.1111/nyas.14296

Tynjälä, P., Virtanen, A., Klemola, U., Kostiainen, E. & Rasku-Puttonen, H. 2016. Developing social competence and other generic skills in teacher education: Applying the model of integrative pedagogy. European Journal of Teacher Education 39 (3), 368–387. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2016.1171314

Uitto, M., Jokikokko, K. & Estola, E. 2015a. Virtual special issue on teachers and emotions in Teaching and teacher education (TATE) in 1985–2014. Teaching and Teacher Education 50, 124–135. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.05.008

Uitto, M., Kaunisto, S., Syrjälä, L. & Estola, E. 2015b. Silenced truths: Relational and emotional dimensions of a beginning teacher's identity as part of the micropolitical context of school. Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research 59 (2), 162–176. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2014.904414

Uitto, M. Storied relationships: Students recall their teachers. Doctoral dissertation. Oulu: University of Oulu.

Valente, K. M. The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making. A novel. New York: Feiwell and Friends.

Vassilaki, E. 2017. Reflective writing, reflecting on identities: The construction of writer identity in student teachers' reflections. Linguistics and Education 42, 43–52. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2017.08.001

Vygotsky, L. 1978. Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. MA: Harvard University Press.

Wang, J. & Odell, S. J. 2003. Learning to teach toward standards-based writing instruction: Experiences of two preservice teachers and two mentors in an urban, multicultural classroom. The Elementary School Journal 104 (2), 147–174. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/499747

Webb, J. 2015. Researching creative writing. Frontius Press.

Woodard, R. 2016. The dialogic interplay of writing and teaching writing: Teacher-writers' talk and textual practices across contexts. Research in the Teaching of English 50 (4), 35–59. Retrieved 24.8.2021 from https://www.jstor.org/stable/24889904

Yoo, J. 2018. Teachers as creative writers: Needs, desires and opportunities for growth. New Writing 15 (3), 300–310. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2017.1391296

Zulfikar, T. & Mujiburrahman. 2018. Understanding own teaching: Becoming reflective teachers through reflective journals. Reflective Practice 19 (1), 1–13. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2017.1295933

ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

EXPLORING TEACHERS' STORIES OF WRITING: A NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

by

Martin, A., Tarnanen, M. & Tynjälä, P. 2018

Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 24 (6), 690–705.

DOI: 10.1080/13540602.2018.1462790

TEACHERS AND TEACHING: THEORY AND PRACTICE
2018, VOL. 24, NO. 6, 690–705
https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2018.1462790

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Exploring teachers' stories of writing: a narrative perspective

Anne Martin[a], Mirja Tarnanen[a] and Päivi Tynjälä[b]

[a]Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland; [b]The Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

ABSTRACT

This study takes a narrative perspective to examine teachers as writers and autobiographical creative writing as a way for promoting teachers' professional development. In a creative writing group for Finnish primary and secondary school teachers, the teachers expressed themselves and explored their lives and identities through autobiographical creative writing. The aim of this study was to examine the stories the teachers tell about their relationship to writing and the goals they set for their professional and personal development in the writing group. Through thematic analysis, seven descriptive themes were found in teachers' narratives of writing. Furthermore, based on the narrative analysis, a poem-like word image was composed. This study illustrates how literary methods diversify teachers' narratives. The findings shed light on teachers as creative writers and emphasise the connection between writing and well-being. Creative writing groups can be beneficial for teachers' professional development, identity work and well-being.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 15 February 2017
Accepted 5 April 2018

KEYWORDS
Creative writing; teachers' professional development; narrative research

Introduction

This article examines autobiographical creative writing as a way to promote teachers' professional development. A lifelong career in a complex, diverse and unpredictable world calls for teachers' continuing professional development. Finding the means, let alone time and place for self-exploration and growth in teachers' hectic work life can be difficult. Because of time management issues, stress and fatigue, teachers may feel restrained from actively developing themselves. Meanwhile, supporting teachers' identity work is considered to be one of the most essential contents of induction support and in-service training for teachers (Geeraerts et al., 2015; Martin & Pennanen, 2015; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008).

Finland is well known for its high-quality teacher education and students' good achievement record (e.g. Sahlberg, 2011). However, there is a need for seeking ways to promote in-service teachers' professional development and identity from induction to retirement (Heikkinen, Jokinen, & Tynjälä, 2012; Kallioniemi, Toom, & Niemi, 2012; Martin & Pennanen, 2015). Although there is a global concern for teachers leaving their jobs after a few years of working in schools (OECD, 2005), teachers' professional mobility rates are

CONTACT Anne Martin anne.martin@jyu.fi

low in Finland. Finnish teachers are given a lot of freedom and a prominent role in schools' decision-making, e.g. in terms of pedagogical practices, assessment and teaching materials, but on the other hand, the increasing responsibilities can burden the teachers (Toom & Husu, 2012). Many of the primary and secondary teachers in Finland who consider leaving the teaching profession do it partly for reasons related to job satisfaction: some perceive teaching to be stressful and demanding, and feel there is a lack of support from the work community and superiors (Martin & Pennanen, 2015).

Recent educational reforms in Finland challenge teachers to continuously develop themselves and to re-evaluate and renegotiate their professional identities (Ministry of Education & Culture, 2016). While learning has traditionally been associated to teacher-led and textbook-based pedagogies in closed physical settings (e.g. Hopkins & Tarnanen, 2017), the new Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014) emphasises broadening learning environments outside the school and developing generic skills, such as creative thinking, interaction and multiliteracy. To be able to pass these competencies on to the students, teachers need to develop themselves in these areas themselves. Furthermore, teachers are no longer seen as 'lone riders', but as multitalented professionals working in collaborative networks. Thus, the new curriculum communicates and underlines the importance of today's multifaceted teacher profession.

Creative thinking is recognised as an important twenty-first-century skill (Fadel, Bialik, & Trilling, 2015). Although Finnish teachers consider creative thinking to be one of the most important skill areas in their profession (Martin & Pennanen, 2015), there are not enough opportunities to develop creative skills. Writing in general and reflective writing in particular are perceived to be a significant tool for professional development (see, e.g. Ortoleva, Bétrancourt, & Billett, 2015; Locke, 2014; Tynjälä, 2001). Applying autobiographical and literary methods to writing can bring new perspectives to exploring and supporting teachers' identity work and professional development (Huber, Li, Murphy, Nelson, & Young, 2014; Schultz & Ravitch, 2013).

Although creative writing is considered to be effective in supporting both personal development and well-being (Bolton, 1999; Hunt, 2000; Kähmi, 2015; Thompson, 2006) as well as professional development (e.g. Huber et al., 2014; Schultz & Ravitch, 2013), there is a lack of research on teachers as writers and on in-service teachers' development through creative writing groups. This article is based on a study on a peer writing group of teachers, in which Finnish primary and secondary school teachers used autobiographical creative writing methods to develop themselves. Our aim is to deepen the understanding of how the teachers' narrate their relationship to writing and their expectations towards the writing group.

Supporting teachers' professional development

Teaching is considered to be one of the most stressful occupations (Johnson et al., 2005). Due to the social and challenging nature of the profession, teachers have a deeply emotional relationship to their work. As they are strongly committed, their professional and personal identities merge in the classroom. Therefore, when teachers are able to exercise their professional skills and act according to their personal beliefs and values, which are at the core of identity, they feel more satisfied with their work (Nias, 1996). Schultz and Ravitch (2013) argue that teachers' professional identity is developed in connection to the communities in

which they work and learn, and through interaction with colleagues, pupils and parents. Consequently, it has been shown that supporting teachers' professionalism can influence their work satisfaction and decrease work-related stress (OECD, 2016; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005), especially when the support comes in the form of increased professional knowledge or increased peer networks (OECD, 2016).

Social, personal and professional dimensions are intertwined in the processes that support teachers' professional development (Bell & Gilbert, 1996). Because of the intertwined nature of the dimensions, teacher development should be seen as a whole and examined using holistic research methods (Geeraerts et al., 2015). In line with this thinking, the active building of teacher identity is generally considered to be an essential part of continuous professional development (Geeraerts et al., 2015). Teachers' professional development can be seen as a process of extending their self-knowledge, including reflecting on their teacher identity involving both personal and professional elements. Therefore, teacher education should not only promote teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge, but also self-regulatory, emotional and social knowledge (Tynjälä, Virtanen, Klemola, Kostiainen, & Rasku-Puttonen, 2016).

Creative writing as a means of teacher development

Writing is perceived to be a significant tool for professional development (see, e.g. Bétrancourt, Ortoleva, & Billett, 2015; Locke, 2014; Tynjälä, 2001). One reason for this is that writing can be an effective method for reflection (Kurunsaari, Tynjälä, & Piirainen, 2015). Reflective writing assignments, such as learning journals and portfolios, have proven to be efficient in supporting student-teachers' and in-service teachers' learning (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016).

Studies about teacher development and identity work through written narratives (see, e.g. Huber et al., 2014) and teachers' narrative identity writing groups (Schultz & Ravitch, 2013) emphasise the importance of storytelling and the sharing of stories in teacher development. Recent studies have presented encouraging results for using autobiographical writing to support teacher development (e.g. Anspal, Eisensmchmidt, & Löfström, 2012; Selland, 2016). However, these studies are often focused on student-teachers. Therefore, the possibilities for also integrating arts-based, creative methods in the process of in-service teachers' professional development and narrative identity work through writing are still relatively scarce.

To date, many researchers investigating teachers' development and identity work have utilised autobiographic writing in study designs and in data collection (e.g. Anspal, Eisenschmidt, & Löfström, 2012; Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2011; Pennanen, Bristol, Wilkinson, & Heikkinen, 2016). This approach has allowed researchers to gain in-depth knowledge about teacher development and identity work. However, much less is known about teachers' perceptions of and relationships to writing, and especially creative writing. Therefore, the main research focus of this study was on teachers' relationship to writing itself, and their expectations of how they can benefit from writing in their professional development.

In the present study, professional development is approached from the viewpoint of autobiographical creative writing in the context of narrative research. In line with Hunt (2000), we use the term *autobiographical creative writing*, which refers to writing where

the writer draws on experiences and memories from his or her own life to create a literary end product using the techniques of literacy and fiction. In autobiographical creative writing, the writer uses fictional and poetic techniques to capture and reflect his/her experiences, memories and relationships (Hunt, 2010). Hunt (2000) highlights the dual nature of autobiographical creative writing courses: the participants are given tools to develop themselves on both an educational and personal level. The educational level refers to developing writing skills, whereas the personal level denotes self-exploration and therapeutic aspects (Hunt, 2000).

Teachers in Finland are highly educated academics (e.g. Sahlberg, 2011). It can be said that Finnish teachers are used to expressing themselves through written discourse, as their academic studies have involved writing numerous academic essays, keeping regular learning diaries, as well as writing complex Bachelor's and Master's theses. Although all writing is creative (McVey, 2008), in this study the term *creative writing* is used as a synonym for literary arts, or writing that utilises literary methods. Literary methods, such as poetry and fiction, can help the writer change perspectives, step back from or zoom into a certain experience or emotion and find new ways to express and process those experiences and emotions (Hunt, 2000; Kähmi, 2015; Kosonen, 2015). Bolton (1999) acknowledges many beneficial effects of creative writing on personal development and well-being. For example, in poetry, literary rules of grammar, spelling and prose can be thrown 'out of the window, so the writing is not hindered by such niceties as a sentence needing a verb' (Bolton, 1999). Furthermore, the use of metaphor enables writers to express difficult things through literary imagery. Through prose, writers can approach their inner child or write stories based on personal experiences. (Bolton, 1999.) Creative writing allows them to let go of some the barriers upheld in academic or professional writing, and seek for new ways of communicating their thoughts.

While some research has been conducted on in-service teachers' creative writing groups (e.g. Schultz & Ravitch, 2013), there is a gap in the research on autobiographical creative writing groups. Similarly, teachers' expectations of writing groups are still relatively unknown. Therefore, the goal of our research was to examine in-service teachers' creative writing in a peer group and to find out what kinds of goals the teachers set for their development in the writing group, and how they describe their relationship to writing.

Research questions

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' stories about writing and their expectations of creative writing in a peer group. The following research questions were addressed:

(1) How do teachers describe themselves as writers in their narratives from the writing group?
(2) How do teachers narrate their expectations for their professional and personal development in the creative writing group?

Methodology

Narrative research

The theoretical and methodological basis of this study was narrative research. Narrativity is closely related to constructivist theory, according to which knowledge is built continuously via individual experiences and social interaction.

In this study, identity is understood as 'narrative': building blocks of identity consist of personal history and experiences, which take a narrative form in individuals' spoken and written stories (Bruner, 2004; Carbaugh & Brockmeier, 2001). Defined as *narrative,* identity is considered as an autobiographical continuum built by the interpretations we have of our experiences (e.g. Ricoeur, 1991).

Literature recognises the importance of storytelling and autobiographical reflection by teachers on their personal and professional development, well-being and self-understanding (e.g. Nias, 1996). In today's teacher education, there is a strong tradition of storytelling and autobiography in supporting teacher development. This is often referred to as the 'narrative turn'. The narrative formation of identity is taken into consideration in many support systems for teachers, such as peer group mentoring, in which teachers share their experiences in groups that support their professional development and well-being (e.g. Heikkinen et al., 2012; Kaunisto, Estola, & Leiman, 2013). In-service training that draws on the ideas of peer support and narrativity acknowledges the three aspects (personal, social, professional) of professional development and identity work (Geeraerts et al., 2015).

Following Stenberg (2010), this study argues that teacher identity is manifested through narratives of personal and professional experiences. Clandinin and colleagues (2006) understand teacher identity as the embodiment of a unique life story that is ever changing and shaped by the landscapes of an individual's past and present life. In narrative identity building, an individual examines him or herself by highlighting specific meaningful experiences from his/her chronological life story. Narrative research on teachers examines teachers' personal stories and experiences, and draws from the perception that it should benefit the teachers as well as the researchers. Teachers are not simply passive research objects, but they also take active part in the research.

As the teachers' autobiographical creative writings are narrative in nature, it is logical to use narrative methods in this study. Furthermore, narrative research aims at giving a voice to the research participants' stories. As teachers and researchers engage in a reflective research process, teachers' stories are retold and changed through sharing of these stories with the group. In this study, the researchers were the sharers of the teachers' stories, attempting to give a voice to the participant's experiences of writing. Teachers' stories of writing help us understand their relationship to creative writing in the context of professional development in the Finnish school system.

Study design and participants

This study is based on teacher narratives written in a Finnish teachers' creative writing group ($N = 11$) facilitated by the first author of this article. The writing group was comprised of teachers teaching at primary school and lower secondary school levels. Three of the teachers were men, and eight were women, and their age ranged from 30 to 60 years, and they had

been in-service teachers for five to more than thirty years. The participants were recruited in one Finnish city via an email invitation sent to all teachers working in the city at the time. Although no specific requirements were set for joining the group, such as writing as a hobby or perceiving oneself to be talented in writing, the invitation sought teachers who were 'interested' in creative writing and wished to express and develop themselves through writing. Therefore, the group consisted of teachers who identified themselves as having a rather positive connection to writing.

The group met seven times during the academic year 2016–2017. In the writing group, teachers wrote autobiographical creative texts using different methods of poetry, drama and prose to express themselves and to explore their identities and reflect on their lives and profession. They also discussed pedagogical aspects of writing and shared their writing experiences with their peers. To help them develop as writers, the teachers were given feedback by the facilitator of the group.

A written consent to participate in the study was collected from each teacher. To protect the anonymity of the teachers, the names used in this study are pseudonyms.

Narrative data and methods

Data analysis of this study followed two methodological approaches: (1) the *analysis of narratives* in which the data, in the form of stories, are analysed to produce classifications and typologisations (Bruner, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1995) and (2) *the narrative analysis* which involves producing explanatory stories on the basis of the data (Polkinghorne, 1995). The data consist of the teachers' written narratives (22 texts, each text's length varied from one to two pages) from the first two meetings of the writing group. In the first meeting, the teachers wrote an orientation narrative in the form of a letter or a diary page about themselves as writers and their goals regarding developing themselves in the writing group meetings. The teachers were given prompts, such as: 'Why have you joined the writing group?'; 'What role does writing play in your life?' and, 'What kind of expectations do you have for the writing group?' In the second meeting, the teachers were asked to use a literary genre of their choice to focus on a specific meaningful moment or experience that describes them as writers.

The teachers' writings consisted of both handwritten texts and texts written with laptop computers or tablets. The handwritten texts were transcribed. As the facilitator of the writing group, the first author made notes of each written narrative, and also gave feedback to the teachers about their texts. The data were then read multiple times and the content of the writings was discussed among the researchers. After this in-depth familiarisation with the narratives, the actual analysis of narratives was carried out using the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti was used to support the thematic analysis process. Based on the active, in-depth familiarisation with the data, initial codes were created from the narratives. These codes, highlighting different aspects of the teachers' relationship to writing, were then compiled into preliminary broader themes, which were then reviewed and modified. Seven themes that emerged throughout the teachers' narratives were identified. These are: (1) *Inspiration,* (2) *Therapeutic effects of writing,* (3) *Learning and discovering about oneself and the world,* (4) *Teaching writing,* (5) *Finding an individual voice,* (6) *Negative emotions* and (7) *Time and place for writing.* Finally, examples from the teachers' narratives were chosen to illustrate the seven themes.

After the thematic analysis, a narrative analysis process followed. The descriptive citations, featuring essential themes identified in the teachers' stories during the thematic analysis process, were arranged in chronological order, beginning with childhood memories and ending with the teachers' expectations of the future. A *word image* (Clandinin et al., 2006), which can be described as a narrative account similar to a poem, was created as an end result of the narrative analysis. The word image aims at giving a voice to the teachers' life stories from the perspective of being a creative writer. The word image was then translated from Finnish to English.

The word image created in the analysis can also be described as *found poem*. *Found poetry* is a method by which the researchers compose a poem based on their analysis on research data (Patrick, 2016). However, the term *word image* was adopted in this research, as it better reflects the study design and the social process of data collection through which the first author of this article facilitated and instructed the writing group. As a researcher and writing instructor, the first author engaged in the teachers' discussions and encouraged them to participate in the research process. Although the word image itself was composed by the researchers, it was then shared with the participants and discussed further in the writing group. Furthermore, the teachers used this word image as an inspiration as they started to reflect on their 'year of creative writing' during the group's last meeting.

Autobiographical narratives do not necessarily need to be chronological. For example, the word image can be non-linear and based on the narrative story's main themes. However, most of the teachers' written narratives were chronological. Composing a chronological word image was therefore a data-driven decision and is in line with Ricoeur (1991), who sees narrative identity as an autobiographical, plot-like continuum. The *word image* was constructed in a chronological order, beginning with childhood memories and ending with the teachers' expectations of the future. Within the word image, the themes that were identified in the thematic analysis appeared in the descriptions of the different phases of the teachers' lives, representing the non-linear aspect of the teachers' narratives.

Findings

The word image below represents the narratives of teachers' stories of writing, including personal, professional and social aspects. The first part of the storyline illustrates the teachers' childhood memories of a natural and positive relationship to writing. The word image then continues to describe the teachers' youth, portraying self-doubt and critique. Proceeding to adulthood, teachers describe how writing is visible in their everyday lives and teaching. As the word image continues, teachers start gazing forward, expressing the hopes they have for the writing group in relation to their identity building and professional development.

I was a child
no chains of self-criticism
I would fling myself into enjoyable writing
build a world inside my mind
felt like knowledge became a part of me
the pencil had to be constantly sharpened
writing stories was the best thing at school
the universe opens the curtains of inspiration slightly and a story starts flowing into my mind
pages filling, the story would go on

High school required of me to be the kind of writer I was not
I gave up, let go
started to think my voice did not matter
writing letters came to an end little by little while walking toward adulthood
'Now that you are studying Finnish you must be reading my letters with a blue pen in hand.'

I found poetry
those lovely evenings when the kids were still small and I would sit down and start writing a letter
I wrote stories when my students were writing theirs
the first years of marriage brought things too impossible to even mutter, so I wrote a letter to my husband
my mother's death, the emotions that emerged
started this writing process back then, but never finished
I stopped writing but I never stopped thinking about writing

These days I don't write that much
things related to school and studying
sharing news with friends
communication with colleagues
statements, assessments, comments, messages, assignments
Rewarding? No way.
I teach my students to write prose
I myself can only achieve scratches and scribbles.
How I miss writing.

My voice is lost
fear is keeping me from starting again
I would cross the great wall of criticism
write without forcing it, focusing solely on writing
catch a creative flame of my own
find my voice as a writer
dare to start again
let the words come
not overthink
to realise I have something to write about
that it's not that bad or pathetic
to light the spark again
a thought, free and flying
turn on the flow
the joy of writing

To learn something new and exciting
new ideas for work
to find ways to help the students as they wonder how to write
so that each child could experience the skill of writing
each child could say that they learned to express themselves through writing in school
they would not consider themselves as poor writers,
not put too much weight on their mistakes
to lower the threshold for everyone

Too busy
the bar set too high
thoughts get trampled on in the hurry to speak my mind
how could I find the time
a suitable moment in the rush hour of my life

a moment of me time
if even just one time and place only
in the stillness of my own thoughts
shut myself away in writing

Ways to unravel the overburdened heart and mind
clear my thoughts
put my life in order
it feels easier after expressing my thoughts
taking care of my wellbeing
finding help for coping
strength
ease and lightness
finding space in myself for something more
I would not be full to the brim

Offload my worries about not being able to help
process the emotions of inadequacy
write about the bubbling joy
the atmosphere and pressures at my workplace
about change
I could ponder my teacher identity
clarify the big questions and oddities of being a teacher
Could writing help me recognise the things I still want to do in life?

I would draw with words
write myself
a chance to process work and personal life
I could share something about myself with others
learn to know the others better
step in front of people and truly be myself
I would see myself in their eyes
the image starting to shape in my eyes as well

A year of creative writing
Just for me, from myself

Next, each of the seven themes identified in the analysis of narratives are discussed. Examples of how the teachers utilised literary methods to illustrate and deepen their narratives are also given. Names of the teachers have been altered for anonymity.

The first theme, which emerged throughout the teachers' life stories, was *Inspiration*. Teachers' childhood memories were characterised by a positive and natural relationship to writing, free of self-criticism and filled with inspiration. This finding is in line with Csikszentmihalyi (1990), who sees creative writing as a natural way of reaching enjoyment and flow. Playing with words, organising one's thoughts into poems and discovering new stories from within can bring enjoyment into lives of people of every age (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Indeed, some of the writing experiences described by the teachers can also be defined as experiences of flow. Many mentioned being active writers of letters, diaries and stories in their childhood. Some described their childhood writing experiences using present tense. This allowed them to speak with a child's voice and to relate to the child they once were. To Eva, the best thing school had to offer were writing lessons, where she wrote stories and built her identity as a writer. Her teacher encouraged her to read her stories to the class and even

suggested that she might become a professional writer one day. In their narratives, teachers reminisced on moments of inspiration and flow in adult years as well: Olivia's passion for journal writing inspired her family to start writing collective travel diaries, and John, in his early adulthood, discovered a way to express himself through poetry.

In their narratives, teachers emphasised the *Therapeutic effects of writing*. Teachers hoped to enhance their well-being through writing. Words such as 'unloading', 'expressing' and 'processing' were repeatedly found in the narratives.

Indeed, the therapeutic potential of writing seems to rise from expressing, organising and re-telling one's thoughts and emotions with one's own individual way and voice (See also Hunt, 2000). Writing was seen as a tool for expressing and dealing with emotions and life experiences, such as the death of a family member, relationship problems and work stress. Alex, for example, wrote his two narratives, which dealt with the therapeutic effects of writing, in the form of fiction. His use of metaphors was lucid: Alex described his situation in life as 'crossroads' and the writing event as 'a fireplace', where his character can sit down and ponder his life. Furthermore, Mary, whose job as a special education teacher is demanding and emotionally tiring, expressed her need to find ways of 'unloading' her worries and feelings of inadequacy. Although the teachers perceived writing to be effective for well-being and personal development, they described often being too busy or otherwise occupied to 'take care' of themselves via writing.

Writing was not only described as enjoyable and therapeutic, but also as a tool for *Learning and discovering about oneself and the world*. From early on, John perceived writing as a tool for adopting and building knowledge. He copied interesting statistics and facts from his parents' encyclopaedia on the pages of his notebook. He felt as if he was 'building the matters of the world' inside his mind. John exploited humour and created a strong image in his narrative, portraying how he would constantly have to sharpen his yellow pencil during his long writing projects. This interest in knowledge building later accompanied John in his educational career: in the subject John teaches, writing has an active part in knowledge building. Writing is indeed considered to be a powerful tool for supporting learning (see, e.g. Bétrancourt, Ortoleva, & Billett, 2015; Locke, 2014; Tynjälä, 2001). For example, Sexton and Pennebaker (2009), based on their research on expressive writing's effects to health, argue that expressive writing can enhance the writers' working memory functions: by expressing their stressful thoughts, the writer deals with their stress and memories, therefore freeing space in their working memory. In addition to learning about the world, writing was perceived as a tool for self-exploration. In the writing group, teachers shared their thoughts and experiences with others, thus negotiating and working on their identities. Alex considered the chance to interact with others a strong reason for joining the group. Through the interaction with the teachers, he hoped to strengthen his own identity.

The word image also sheds light on the teachers' experiences of *Teaching writing*. The teachers actively try to encourage their pupils to be creative and brave writers. In her narrative, in the form of a letter, Helen described her passion for supporting children to find ways of self-expression: 'At work, I motivate kids to write different texts. I am constantly seeking new ways to help get them going'. Still, the teachers' own workdays are mostly filled with 'dull' writing tasks, such as filling in forms and making evaluations. The teachers hoped to gain new pedagogical ideas and perspectives related to teaching writing to their students.

Finding their own *Individual voice* as writers was one of the repetitive themes as teachers expressed their hopes and goals in the writing group. In her youth, Karen perceived that her high school expected her to be the kind of writer that she was not. She could not find her voice in the 'concepts that were used to analyse, itemise and interpret', and in her diary-like narrative from the second meeting, she asks: 'Where was the fun, the creativeness – where was I?' Instead of processing her own voice with determination, she started to think that her unique voice didn't matter. As a teacher, she found a contradiction between her wish to help her students seek their own voices and the demands of the school: 'I instruct others to write texts in a way similar to what killed me: *Each word and sentence must be polished and perfected; kill your voice, adapt, obey the rules.*'

Although the teachers' narratives mostly described a positive relationship to writing, *Negative emotions* were also reported. In Hannah's narratives, the tension between writer's block and inspiration followed her from childhood to the present day. Hannah described experiencing writer's block in her writing classes at school. As a child, she often found it difficult to get started, which made her feel stressed. She would be aware that, 'I only have a little over half an hour left, and I have an empty paper in front of me'. Hannah's story began to take a positive turn as she continued describing the sudden emotion of flow from her childhood: 'Then it happens again. The universe opens the curtains of inspiration slightly and a story starts flowing into my mind faster than I can write. […] The story leads me, and as the bell rings it's on my paper'. Growing up, Hannah actively wrote prose and letters but she often found herself 'paralysed' by 'some kind of fear', which she discussed in her narrative written in a form of an imaginary letter to an old friend. This fear, Hannah wrote, to her friend in her imaginary letter, was one of the main reasons for her joining the writing group. Furthermore, Helen utilised poetry to describe her struggle of being overly critical of her own writing. Sarah, on the other hand, wrote her second narrative in the form or a dialogue. This dialogue consisted of a conversation she once had with her old pen pal, who told her that she had become nervous about writing letters to Sarah. Sarah's friend assumed that since Sarah had started her studies as teacher on Finnish at university, she probably checked all the letters for spelling and grammar errors. Instead of explaining her emotions bluntly and directly, Sarah used dialogue to allow her emotions to be revealed interlinearly, between the lines.

In the teachers' narratives, one of the most apparent reasons for joining the writing group was finding a *Time and place for writing.* As teachers' stories moved on to adulthood and the present day, they narrated that in their daily life they mostly used writing to carry out mundane chores and stay in touch with friends, family and colleagues. Creative writing was described as something dear and longed for, yet unobtainable oftentimes. In their hectic life, having time to write was perceived as a precious moment for relaxing, reflecting and learning. Although the storyline chosen for this word image describes a gradual distancing from writing when growing up, there were alternative stories in the teachers' narratives as well. From writing blogs, poems and diaries to taking prose courses and song writing, some teachers mentioned having always been active writers. For example, Peter wrote that during his adulthood studies 'creative writing has remained in the background, but nevertheless, I have always written something: short stories, school plays and song lyrics'.

The longing for creative and expressive writing was very visible in the teachers' narratives. For example Elsa, who used to be an active writer as a child, gave up creative writing when she faced big challenges in her adolescence. Later in life, Elsa discovered writing to be a

way of dealing with difficult experiences, from the challenges of work life to the passing of her mother. She had yearned for a time and place to write, and after the writing groups first meeting she put her experience to words: 'It is rare to have time to just be still and quiet with one's own thoughts. […] It makes things so much lighter and easier when one does it. Who else is going to listen to me, if not me, myself?'

Discussion and implications

The current study investigated how in-service teachers narrated their relationship to and expectations of writing in an autobiographical creative writing group. By combining *analysis of narratives* and *narrative analysis* (Polkinghorne, 1995), a *word image* was composed from each teacher's narrative, beginning with his or her childhood story and concluding with his/her hopes and goals for the future. The word image illustrates the culture and everyday life of Finnish school teachers, from their deep commitment of addressing their students' needs and developing themselves professionally to handling stressful demands and hectic workdays. Through the word image, the teachers' need for time and space to relax and unwind as well as to reflect upon their work and express their thoughts became apparent. Themes related to teachers as writers, their well-being as well as learning and teaching were also examined. As noted by Clandinin and colleagues (2006), creating a word image is a highly interpretive process and may portray a unidimensional account of teachers' lives. Nevertheless, by conjoining thematic analysis and the word image, we were able to present an in-depth narrative in which the teachers are 'given voice'. Thus, the study adds to the growing body of literature on narrative methods in educational research.

In the narratives of this study, the personal, professional and social aspects of teacher development and identity work were intertwined. According to Hunt (2000), participants of autobiographical creative writing courses usually seek to develop not only as writers, but also on personal level. This is visible in the teachers' written narratives and stories as well. The teachers hoped to develop their expressive language, to learn new methods and receive tools for writing. They also emphasised the wish to find their 'own voice' as writers. On a personal level, the teachers aimed to enhance their well-being and to explore their identities. The teachers also hoped to discover new pedagogical tools and to find new perspectives for teaching writing to their students.

In addition to being a medium for development, the teachers also saw writing as therapeutic and as a way to support their well-being. This was one of the main findings of this research and emphasises the importance of taking emotions and personal experiences into account when supporting teachers' professional development and learning (see Tynjälä et al., 2016). The therapeutic effects of, for example, writing stories and poems or keeping a journal are indeed well recognised in the field of creative writing research (Bolton, 1999; Thompson, 2006). Many of the teachers underlined writing's potential for dealing with troubling matters in both one's personal and professional life. Furthermore, the teachers saw the writing group as an opportunity to share life experiences and discuss writing with their peers. Through writing and sharing their experiences in the writing group, the teachers expected to strengthen and support their identity work and well-being.

The teachers in the writing group saw creative writing as a way of expressing and reflecting on their experiences from different perspectives. Indeed, the data of this study consist of 22 very different creative narratives, written in different formats as letter, poems, diary

pages, dialogue and stories. For instance, many of the teachers' narratives were written in the form of a letter addressing an old friend or even the facilitator of the group. These letters illustrated the teachers' longing for writing, and shed light on their previous writing experiences. In this article, some examples have been given to illustrate the teachers' use of literary language. Using different literary mediums such as positioning (third-person narration), metaphors and dialogue in their writing helped the teachers narrate their lives in illustrative ways. For example, using prose allowed the teachers to explore an event as an outsider (fictionalising themselves) or putting themselves in a child's position (memorising a childhood event). Literature on creative writing argue that through literary methods, a writer can change perspectives, take a distance from or zoom into a certain experience or emotion and find new ways to express and process those experiences and emotions (Hunt, 2000; Kähmi, 2015; Kosonen, 2015).

An encouraging addition to the small but slowly growing body of literature on utilising creative writing methods in teacher development, the findings of this study suggest that autobiographical creative writing can be a valuable way to support teacher development. Nevertheless, there are some limitations to this study. The participants of the present study were a relatively small group of voluntary teachers with a positive interest to writing. An issue that was not addressed in this study was how to support those teachers who are not willing or motivated to write. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalised to all teachers. However, as professional, social and personal aspects of teacher development and identity were clearly intertwined in the teachers' narratives, this study supports the idea that teacher development and identity should be examined as a whole, taking into consideration all three aspects (Geeraerts et al., 2015). Furthermore, the findings of this study shed new light on teachers' relationship to writing suggesting that autobiographical creative writing groups can support in-service teachers' development.

Creative writing can bring new perspectives to pre-service and in-service teacher training. As academic writing is dominant in teacher education, adding literary methods can provide teachers more holistic ways to express and explore themselves. Furthermore, creative writing can be used as a medium for supporting teacher well-being. However, more research is needed to further explore the benefits and challenges of creative writing and writing groups for teachers. Future research could concentrate on teachers' perceptions and experiences of autobiographical creative writing groups as medium for supporting teacher identity and development.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Kalle Rademacker for proofreading the manuscript and Jenna Jokinen for translating the Finnish word image into English.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Anne Martin, MA, Educ., is a project researcher and PhD student at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her research interests are teacher education, teacher development and multidisciplinary research on creative writing.

Mirja Tarnanen, PhD, is a professor at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her research interests are teacher education, curriculum reform and language education.

Päivi Tynjälä, PhD, is a professor at the Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her research interests are learning at the interface of education and work, and teacher development.

References

Anspal, T., Eisenschmidt, E., & Löfström, E. (2012). Finding myself as a teacher: Exploring the shaping of teacher identities through student teachers' narratives. *Teachers and Teaching, 18*, 197–216.

Bell, B., & Gilbert, J. K. (1996). *Teacher development: A model from science education*. London: Falmer Press.

Bolton, G. (1999). *The therapeutic potential of creative writing: Writing myself*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Bruner, J. (2004). Life as narrative. *Social research, 71*, 691–710.

Carbaugh, D. A. & Brockmeier, J. (Eds.). (2001). *Narrative and identity: Studies in autobiography, self, and culture*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Huber, M., Murphy, M. S., Murray-Orr, A., Pearce, M., & Steeves, P. (2006). *Composing diverse identities. Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow. The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Fadel, C., Bialik, M., & Trilling, B. (2015). *Four-dimensional education: The competencies learners need to succeed*. Boston, MA: Center for Curriculum Redesign.

Finnish National Board of Education. (2014). *National core curriculum for basic education 2014*. Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture.

Geeraerts, K., Tynjälä, P., Heikkinen, H. L. T., Markkanen, I., Pennanen, M., & Gijbels, D. (2015). Peer-group mentoring as a tool for teacher development. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 38*, 358–377.

Heikkinen, H. L. T., Jokinen, H., & Tynjälä, P. (2012). *Peer-group mentoring for teacher development*. London: Routledge.

Hopkins, N., & Tarnanen, M. (2017). Democracy and the Curriculum: English and Finnish Perspectives. In A. Raiker & M. Rautiainen (Eds.), *Educating for democracy in England and Finland: Principles and culture* (pp. 69–80). London: Routledge.

Huber, J., Li, Y., Murphy, S., Nelson, C., & Young, M. (2014). Shifting stories to live by: Teacher education as a curriculum of narrative inquiry identity explorations. *Reflective Practice, 15*, 176–189.

Hunt, C. (2000). *Therapeutic dimensions of autobiography in creative writing*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Hunt, C. (2010). Therapeutic effects of writing fictional autobiography. *Life Writing, 7*(3), 231–244.

Johnson, S., Cooper, C., Cartwright, S., Donald, I., Taylor, P., & Millet, C. (2005). The experience of work-related stress across occupations. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 20*, 178–187.

Kähmi, K. (2015). Advances in poetry therapy. *Scriptum Creative Writing Research Journal, 2*(4), 30–43.

Kallioniemi, A., Toom, A., & Niemi, H. (Eds.). (2012). *Miracle of education: The principles and practices of teaching and learning in Finnish schools*. Rotterdam: Sense.

Kaunisto, S.-L., Estola, E., & Leiman, M. (2013). 'I've let myself get tired' – One teacher's self-reflection process in a peer group. *Reflective Practice, 14*, 406–419.
Kosonen, P. (2015). Creative autobiography, from self-knowledge to the teaching of writing. *Scriptum Creative Writing Research Journal, 2*(2), 14–45.
Kurunsaari, M., Tynjälä, P., & Piirainen, A. (2015). Students' experiences of reflective writing as a tool for learning in physiotherapy education. In G. Ortoleva, M. Bétrancourt, & S. Billett (Eds.), *Writing for Professional Development* (pp. 129–159). Leiden: Brill.
Locke, T. (2014). *Developing writing teachers. Practical ways for teachers-writers to transform their classroom practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
Martin, A., & Pennanen, M. (2015). *Mobility and transition of pedagogical expertise in Finland.* Retrieved from http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-6098-8
McVey, D. (2008). Why all writing is creative writing. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 45*(3), 289–294.
Ministry of Education and Culture. (2016). *Teacher education development programme*. Retrieved from http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4183002/Teacher+Education+Development+Programme+2016
Nias, J. (1996). Thinking about Feeling: The emotions in teaching. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 26*, 293–306.
OECD. (2005). *Teachers matter: Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*. Paris: Author. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/attractingdevelopingandretainingeffectiveteachers-finalreportteachersmatter.htm
OECD. (2016). *Supporting teacher professionalism. Insights from TALIS 2013*. Paris: Author. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/publications/supporting-teacher-professionalism-9789264248601-en.htm
Orland-Barak, L., & Maskit, T. (2011). Novices 'in story': What first-year teachers' narratives reveal about the shady corners of teaching. *Teachers and Teaching, 17*, 435–450.
Ortoleva, G., Bétrancourt, M., & Billett, S. (2015). Writing for professional development. Leiden: Brill.
Patrick, L. D. (2016). Found poetry: Creating space for imaginative arts-based literary research writing. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice, 65*(1), 384–403.
Pearson, L. C., & Moomaw, W. (2005). The relationship between teacher autonomy and stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. *Education Research Quarterly, 29*(1), 38–54.
Pennanen, M., Bristol, L., Wilkinson, J., & Heikkinen, H. (2016). What is 'good' mentoring? Understanding mentoring practices of teacher induction through case studies of Finland and Australia. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, *24*(1), 27–53.
Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 8*, 5–23.
Ricoeur, P. (1991). Narrative identity. *Philosophy Today, 35*, 73–81.
Ruohotie-Lyhty, M., & Moate, J. (2016). Who and how? Preservice teachers as active agents developing professional identities. *Teaching and teacher education*, *55*, 318–327.
Sahlberg, P. (2011). *Finnish lessons: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
Schultz, K., & Ravitch, S. M. (2013). Narratives of learning to teach: Taking on professional identities. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *64*(*1*), 35–46.
Selland, M. K. (2016). The edge of messy: Interplays of daily storytelling and grand narratives in teacher learning. *Teachers and Teaching, 71*(3), 1–18.
Sexton, J. D., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2009). The healing powers of expressive writing. In S. B. Kaufman & J. C. Kaufman (Eds.), *The psychology of creative writing* (pp. 264–274). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Stenberg, K. (2010). Identity work as a tool for promoting the professional development of student teachers. *Reflective Practice, 11*, 331–346.
Thompson, K. (2006). Journal writing as a therapeutic tool. In G. Bolton, S. Howlett, C. Lago, J. K. Wright, & I. MacMillan (Eds.), *Writing cures: An introductory handbook of writing in counselling and therapy* (pp. 72–84). New York, NY: Routledge.

II

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A TEACHERS' CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

by

Martin, A., Tarnanen, M. & Tynjälä, P. 2021

New Writing.

DOI: 10.1080/14790726.2021.1900274

NEW WRITING
https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2021.1900274

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Narratives of professional development in a teachers' creative writing group

Anne Martin [a], Mirja Tarnanen [a] and Päivi Tynjälä [b]

[a]Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Jyvaskyla, Finland; [b]Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Jyvaskyla, Finland

ABSTRACT

This paper explores teachers' experiences of professional development in a creative writing group. The data was collected in a teachers' creative writing group and consist of semi-structured interviews and creative writing assignments. Reflexive thematic analysis and narrative analysis were applied to compose a nonfiction piece that describes the teachers' experiences of a 'year of creative writing'. Within the nonfiction piece, four themes were presented as findings of the study: social aspects, personal and emotional aspects, writer identity aspects, and pedagogical aspects. The results suggest that utilising creative writing methods in qualitative research can raise otherwise hidden voices and experiences that may be difficult to express through the academic language.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 15 November 2020
Revised 17 February 2021
Accepted 1 March 2021

KEYWORDS
Creative writing; teachers' professional development; narrative research; creative nonfiction

Introduction

The changing world challenges educational systems around the globe to develop innovative approaches to support teachers' professional development. For example, in Finland, the current curriculum for basic education introduces transversal competences such as creative, multiliterate and self-regulative skills (FNBE 2014) that demand teachers to develop their pedagogical skills to support their pupils' learning. In order to pass on these skills, teachers could be offered, as one experimental solution, opportunities to develop themselves using creative methods, such as creative writing. Furthermore, all teachers are writing teachers, regardless of the subjects they teach or their students' age or writing skills (Peterson 2008). Therefore, teachers could benefit from opportunities that help them develop themselves as writers and writing teachers. Although teachers' relationship to writing and the pedagogy of writing has been studied in recent years (i.e. Cremin and Oliver 2017; Martin, Tarnanen, and Tynjälä 2018; Yoo 2018), there remains a gap in the research on teachers as writers and as writing teachers, and the dynamic interplay between these two roles (e.g. Cremin et al. 2020).

Both the academic literature and educational policy documents have emphasised that in order to support teachers' professional development, teachers should be offered both

CONTACT Anne Martin anne.martin@jyu.fi

individual and personally inspiring education that facilitates the development of both teachers and school communities (OECD 2019; Senge et al. 2012). Therefore, in addition to supporting teachers personally, teachers' professional development should aim at developing schools and supporting pupils' learning (e.g. Avalos 2011; Senge et al. 2012). Furthermore, despite the rewarding and motivating nature of teaching, teacher stress is a global challenge for education (Johnson et al. 2005; Steinhardt et al. 2011) and, therefore, several studies have suggested that teachers' professional development should incorporate support for bouncing back and dealing with emotions. This paper thus views teachers' professional development holistically, taking into consideration different aspects of teachers' lives, such as personal experiences, classroom pedagogy, school development, and social aspects (Akkerman and Meijer 2011; Alsup 2019; Beauchamp and Thomas 2009; Bell and Gilbert 1996).

According to recent studies, teachers perceive that writing about their lives can support their professional development (e.g. Anspal, Eisenschmidt, and Löfström 2012; Schultz and Ravitch 2013; Selland 2017). Overall, creativity and creative expression might bring new perspectives to teachers' pedagogical thinking and teaching actions (Loveless 2012). However, more research is needed on concrete practices that can support teachers' professional development as a whole through creative writing as a creative arts-based method (e.g. Martin, Tarnanen, and Tynjälä 2018; Selland 2017).

To fill the research gap described above, this paper studies supporting teachers' professional development in a teachers' creative writing group. Aiming at contributing to the growing area of qualitative arts-based research, the present study utilises narrative methods to illustrate the teachers' unique experiences and to bring out their voices as writers and teachers. This article presents a creative nonfiction piece called A Year of Creative Writing, where the first author has conveyed the findings from the empirical data in the form of a story that uses techniques of fiction (Sinner 2013; Smith 2016).

Holistic approach to teachers' professional development through creative writing practices

During the last few decades, research on teacher development has moved beyond the 'teachers' acquisition of "assets", such as knowledge, competencies, or beliefs as the basis of professional development' (Akkerman and Meijer 2011, 308) towards a more holistic understanding of being a teacher, a shift that integrates teacher development with teacher identity. For example, Bell and Gilbert (1996) have stated that the social, personal and professional dimensions are intertwined in the processes that support teachers' professional development (see also Geeraerts et al. 2015). On the other hand, teachers' professional development can be depicted as processes of learning, growth and development of teachers' expertise, leading to changes in their practice to support their pupils' learning (Avalos 2011). Taken together, this paper views teachers' professional development as a process of extending teachers self-knowledge, including reflecting on identity, and simultaneously, as a process of developing pedagogical, social and personal skills that aim at supporting learning.

The present study underlines that teacher identity cannot be clearly divided into 'professional identity' and 'personal identity' (Alsup 2019). This interconnectedness between the personal and professional is highlighted in the dialogical approach to teacher identity,

which views the complex nature of identity as simultaneously multiple and unified, discontinuous and continuous, and social and individual (see Akkerman and Meijer 2011). When leaning towards the idea of teacher identity as constantly shaping and dynamic and involving both personal and professional aspects of identity (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009), teachers' identity work is understood as a process of expanding self-knowledge through reflecting on personal and professional experiences (Stenberg 2010). In sum, the holistic approach to professional development includes a holistic understanding of teacher identity.

This paper examines creative writing as a means for supporting teachers' professional development. Next, taking into consideration the holistic nature of teacher development, we will discuss writing from the perspectives of narrative identity work (me as a person; a writer and a teacher), and pedagogical development as writing teachers (me as a writing teacher).

The present study views professional development from a narrative perspective: we build our own identities as we narrate our lives and share those narratives with others, and our identities are shaped and reformed by narratives told by our families, friends, colleagues and society (e.g. Bruner 1987; Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001; Ricoeur 1991). In addition to supporting teacher development, storytelling can give teachers a voice in the educational research field, and therefore teacher stories can also develop the teaching profession itself (Breault 2010).

Creative writing researchers suggest that writing can enhance teachers' professional development through narrative identity work: creative writing allows us to deal with our experiences and emotions from different perspectives, change perspective, step back from or zoom into a certain experience or emotion, and find new ways to express ourselves (Bolton 1999, 2006; Hunt 2000; Kosonen 2015). Telling, writing and sharing stories about our life experiences allows us to stop and reflect on our lives from different perspectives, and can thus have a long-lasting positive impact on our development and our lives (Ihanus 2019; Pennebaker and Chung 2007). In addition, creative writing can enhance our learning capability. Based on their research on expressive writing's effects on health, Sexton et al. (2009) suggest that expressive writing can enhance the writer's working memory functions, as expressing stressful thoughts can free space in their working memory. Finally, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) sees creative writing as a natural way of achieving a flow state, an optimal state in which the individual experiences such high enjoyment and intrinsic motivation towards the task at hand that they lose their sense of time or feel otherwise emotionally elevated. Experiencing flow can enhance well-being (Boniwell 2012) by helping recover from work and recharge, which, in turn, lowers stress levels and motivates self-development.

According to a literature review by Cremin and Oliver (2017), pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes that give opportunities to reflect on personal writing histories, engage in writing, discuss textual processes and participate in a community of practice, can influence teachers' pedagogical practices as well as their perceptions of themselves as writers. Furthermore, taking part in a teachers' creative writing workshop, instructed by professional writers, encouraged the teachers to increase creative writing in their own classrooms, which seemed to positively impact their pupils' motivation and confidence towards writing (Cremin et al. 2020). Cremin and Oliver (2017) suggest that teachers' confidence as writers influences their pedagogical choices regarding, for

example, whether to offer more reflective approaches to their teaching of writing. Moreover, engaging teachers as creative writers can enhance their professional development and inspire them to develop their pedagogical practices (Yoo 2018). In the light of these findings, teachers' identities as writers and the role of emotions in creative writing processes deserve increased recognition and attention in future research (Cremin and Oliver 2017).

Aim of the study and the research question

The current study aims at shedding light on teachers' experiences of professional development in a teachers' creative writing group. The aim is to give voice to teachers' diverse stories of being a creative writer and a teacher. The research question is as follows:

(1) What kinds of stories of professional development do the teachers narrate regarding their experiences in the writing group?

In addition, the methodological aim of the current study is to utilise creative writing an integral part of the narrative analysis process in order to compose a narrative nonfiction piece that illustrates the important themes in the teachers' stories.

Methodology

The context, participants, and study design

During the academic year 2016–2017, 11 Finnish teachers participated in a teachers' creative writing group. The group included three men and eight women, with an age range from 30 to 60 years, who had served as in-service teachers for five to more than thirty years. The writing group, comprising lower and upper comprehensive school (age 7–13 and 13–16, respectively) teachers in a middle-sized Finnish city, met seven times, three hours each time, to engage in creative writing, discuss writing pedagogy and share experiences of being a teacher and a writer. The teachers were recruited via an email invitation sent by the municipal educational administration to all teachers in the school district.

In the writing group, teachers wrote different autobiographical creative texts using literary genres to express themselves and to explore their identities. In each session, the teachers did short writing exercises (e.g. freewriting, lists, poems), broader literary exercises (e.g. short stories, letters, dialogues) and discussed their experiences of writing and of teaching writing. The topics of the writing assignments drew on personal experiences that varied from childhood memories to life as a teacher, and they can be described as 'autobiographical creative writing', where the writer draws on experiences and memories from his or her own life to create a literary end product (Hunt 2010). To help them develop as writers, the teachers were given feedback by the instructor. Teachers also had opportunities for giving and receiving peer-feedback.

In addition to supporting the teachers' personal writing, the social aspect and opportunities for peer support were acknowledged in facilitating the writing group. Drawing from personal experience as a peer-group mentor and theoretical knowledge of

peer-group mentoring for teacher development (Pennanen, Heikkinen, and Tynjälä 2020; Tynjälä et al. 2019), the instructor of the writing group and the first author of this paper sought to create a positive experience for the participants. Ways of supporting the success of the group were physical and practical, such as serving refreshments and arranging the meetings at a convenient time in an aesthetic, pleasant space with good air quality; social, such as giving time for open conversation; and structural, such as creating a clear structure for the group meetings (Tynjälä et al. 2019).

Each group meeting started with a short warm-up writing assignment and introduction round, followed by one to three longer writing assignments. Each meeting featured discussions on writing and pedagogy. The teachers mostly wrote by themselves and did not share their writings with their peers. However, in most meetings the teachers were also asked if they wanted to read aloud one of the texts they had written that day, and in one of the meetings, the teachers participated in a collaborative online-writing drama assignment. In the last two meetings, the teachers were divided into small groups in order to give and receive peer feedback on their writing. As the writing group was a part of the instructor's research process, she took copies of most of the writing assignments, but emphasised that sharing their writings with her was optional. During the year, the instructor kept the teachers informed of how she was planning to utilise the data she had gathered, and shared with them, for example, a narrative poem she had composed from the teachers' creative writing assignments (Martin, Tarnanen, and Tynjälä 2018).

Ethical questions were taken into consideration following the principles of the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics. Participants gave written consent to take part in the study, and the names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

Data and methods

The data of the current study consist of (1) creative writing assignments (one from each11 participants) written by the teachers who participated in the writing group, and (2) interviews of each 11 participants (150 pages of transcribed interviews). Firstly, the written data were collected in the last meeting of the group. The teachers were given an assignment to freely write about their experiences of the creative writing group, reflecting on how the group had met their expectations and what they had learned and achieved in the group. This assignment was free form, meaning that the teachers were able to decide what literary genre to use. These creative writings varied from journal pages to letters and poems. Secondly, after the group's last meeting, each teacher took part in an individual semi-structured interview in which they continued to reflect on their perceptions of the writing group with respect to their development as writers and teachers.

A narrative researcher can take on a position of (1) a 'story analyst' or (2) a 'storyteller', which are equivalent to (1) 'analysis of narratives' and (2) 'narrative analysis' (Polkinghorne 1995; Smith 2016). However, Smith (2016) reminds us that a researcher can simultaneously operate both as a story analyst and a storyteller in order to best serve the purpose of the research at hand. In the current study, the analysis can be divided into two phases, in which the first utilised the 'story analyst' or 'analysis of narratives' approach, and the second the 'storyteller' or 'narrative analysis' approach. Combining

these two standpoints, we were able to form a deep and profound understanding of the data and to compose a nonfiction narrative of the teachers' stories.

The data analysis proceeded as follows. First, the data was carefully read multiple times. Transcription, preliminary notes and codes were carried out shortly after collecting the data. The primary analysis was conducted by applying reflexive thematic analysis as developed by Braun and Clarke (2019), which, according to Lainson, Braun, and Clarke (2019), can be a practical medium in narratively informed research. This part of the analysis started with deep familiarisation with the data and generating codes that identified important features of the data regarding the research question. The next phases aimed at creating and naming themes that represent different perspectives or facets of creative writing as a means for supporting professional development. The themes were: (1) Aspects of writer identity, (2) Aspects of personal growth and emotions, (3) Pedagogical aspects, and (4) Social aspects. Within those concepts, 15 subthemes were created.

Finally, with respect to each theme, the first author of this article composed a short story called A Year of Creative Writing through a 'reflective, participatory, and aesthetic process' (Leavy 2020). This narrative method can be referred to as 'creative nonfiction', where findings from the empirical data are conveyed in the form of a story that uses techniques of fiction (Sinner 2013; Smith 2016). According to Sinner (2013), the literary form of creative nonfiction renders contents (facts and events) with form (the conventions of fiction writing), including narrative voice, persona, authentic characterisation of place and settings, and pursuit of an idea or a goal. It aims at creating conditions to 'reconsider, rethink and redefine how information is understood and what knowing should be at the forefront in scholarship', thus moving 'toward greater social, political and intellectual consciousness' (Sinner 2013, 4).

In this study, creating the nonfiction piece aims at a holistic approach, thus moving from merely dividing the themes of professional development in the teachers' stories into distinct categories. In the nonfiction piece, the first author has incorporated the teachers' own phrases from their reflective creative writing assignments to elaborate, bring out and respect the teachers' own unique voices. Once the creative nonfiction piece was completed, the first author contacted the former members of the creative writing group, offering them a chance to read it and comment, if, for example, they wished their phrases to be removed, or felt unable to identify with the piece.

The composing on the creative nonfiction piece joins this study into the tradition of narrative 'storytelling', that is, incorporating fiction and qualitative research. Leavy (2020) argues that using forms of fiction as a research practice allows us to (1) portray the complexity of lived experience through details, nuance, specificity, contexts, and texture, (2) cultivate empathy and self-reflection through relatable characters, and (3) disrupts dominant ideologies or stereotypes by showing and not telling, thus building critical consciousness and raising awareness (Leavy 2020). At its core, utilising fiction in narrative research aims at making a change and broadening the readers' views through appealing to the readers' imagination and challenging the readers' ideas about educational phenomena (Kim 2008).

In this study, we have aimed at giving voice to the teachers while examining their stories, in forms of the creative writing assignments and the interviews, within the framework and context of the cultural and political atmosphere in the educational field of the time. Through this approach we hope to combine 'theory and stories' (Kim 2008, 257), or,

in other words, shift from the micro level (teachers' personal experiences of the creative writing group) to the macro level (theoretical perspectives of professional development during educational reforms), thus bringing validity to our work (Leavy 2020). In order to combine art and research, we have adapted Kim's (2008) Bakhtinian novelness in our narrative work, which refers to using different voices that present partial truths of equal participants (polyphony), placing the stories in context (chronotope), and placing counternarratives as equals to the mainstream ones (carnival).

Findings

The findings of this study are presented in the form of a creative nonfiction piece called A Year of Creative Writing. The nonfiction piece illustrates the teachers' perceptions of the creative writing group through the perspective of a fictional first-person narrator. The nonfiction piece is divided into four chapters, each of which portrays the teacher-writer's experiences from the viewpoint of one of the theme drawn from the reflexive thematic analysis. Within the nonfiction piece, phrases from the teachers' original creative writing assignments are highlighted in *italic* font. It should be noted that in the data of this study, the different themes or aspects of professional development were often intertwined. Therefore, each theme is present on some level in each chapter. Following the creative nonfiction piece, the themes and subthemes of the teachers' narratives are further discussed.

A year of creative writing

Summer [Aspects of writer identity]

Why did I stop writing?

I've been asking myself that question over again for the past few years, but this is the first time I've actually sat down and written about it. It'd be easy to answer this question on a shallow level. It'd be easy to point an accusing finger at the hurries and worries of everyday life, to explain that most of my time nowadays goes on taking care of my pupils, my kids, the home. Taking care of myself is limited to exercising when I can and the odd night out with friends. There's simply no time for writing. But I know, though, that the real answer isn't that simple. There's a deeper reason for my absence from writing. I'm scared of what I might discover if I go back to the pen and a blank page. *What if nothing comes*? *What if my dream is nothing* but an empty shell? I am afraid, afraid that writing will bring back hurtful memories and invoke painful feelings.

Until recently, I believed that if I just keep a distance from it and stay busy, it would stay under control. I used to fear that if I stop rushing and start listening to myself I'd lose that precious control and break down. But what if, actually, it's the opposite? What if facing myself and allowing myself time to reflect on my life would help me become a better person? What if being brave and creative could help me become a better teacher to the kids who need me to encourage them? *When I heard about this group, I immediately felt it was meant for me*. I had to come, no matter how scared I was.

Now I am here, in a peaceful classroom in the university's newest building, where everything is white, with a subtle scent of new timber in the air. *Instead of driving the kids to their hobbies, I now have my own hobby marked and circled on my calender.* I am

here, because a voice inside me has been begging to be heard for a long time. When we all introduce ourselves, I realise that the other teachers in the group have similar thoughts to me. The first writing assignment, a five-minute poem, feels intimidating at first. The others start writing. I am not a poet, I am a teacher, I think to myself. Maybe coming here was a mistake. The instructor suggests that, if nothing comes to mind, we write about how it feels to be here. 'Don't think, just write,' she says, 'this is just a short exercise and you don't have to share it with anyone.' I close my eyes, breathe deeply and start again, this time with an open mind. Words start rushing in, and in two minutes, there is a poem in front of me. *So what if the text isn't perfect!*

When the first meeting is over I feel *euphoric and want to keep writing more*. Maybe this year of creative writing will be just what I needed. *Maybe this isn't rocket science after all*.

Autumn [Aspects of personal growth and emotions]

I step quickly past the museum towards the white campus building. It's raining; perfectly not-perfect Finnish late autumn weather is flushing through the emptying parking lot, throwing brown leaves and large drops of slushy rain at me. I'm in a hurry, running late, so I quickly make my way inside. Right now, I feel like there isn't a creative bone in my body; all I can think about is the confusion from today's curriculum training. Was I the only one out of all my colleagues who didn't understand how the school district's new assessment protocols were meant to help my pupils learn? On top of all that, I've been feeling those familiar blues in the autumn air, lately.

My jacket leaves a trail of drips on the stairs, my feet ache, and I feel a dull pain rising in the back of my skull. I leave the wet jacket outside the classroom, too stressed to care if it makes a puddle on the pristine floor. The moment I make my way inside the room, though, a small change begins to happen inside me. It starts from my heart, still beating from exhaustion, but slowly recovering, and then moves to my lungs. I start taking deeper breaths. I smell coffee and tea. I check the time on my phone; I'm actually only a few minutes late, it seems.

'Feel free to grab a cup of tea', our instructor says. I pour tea into white porcelain and sit down next to one of my new classmates, who smiles at me and asks how I am. Her effortless gesture helps me calm down. Forgetting my stressed and hasty appearance, I take out my pen and a little notebook. I remember that here I am *allowed to stop and stay quiet, and allowed to get excited and be loud*. I am here as a member of a group, but more importantly, I am here to be alone with myself.

'Today we are going to get right to it with a little freewriting exercise. We've practised this before, but just to remind you, these writings are just for you. Just let yourself go, write whatever comes to mind and don't worry about the grammar or making mistakes. This is just a warm up, which I think we all need in this weather.' After making sure we all know what to do, the instructor gives us the cue to begin.

I open my notebook, and the first thing I write is '*Writing is a way to fill emptiness with words, to create a new world, to give birth to a new world, if nothing else.*' The frantic work day pours onto the paper like the rain outside. A strange lightness settles in my heart with each word I write, and I suddenly forget what I was so stressed about. When the allotted five minutes are up, we all raise our eyes from our writing and put down our pens. *I feel good, and light*.

Winter [Pedagogical aspects]

The child in front of me is struggling with school and taking his frustration out on anyone who gets in his way. With small steps, I have started to encourage him to express his feelings by drawing and writing. 'Put those feelings and that rage on paper', I carefully suggest, and hand him a pen. The pupil in front of me is restless with self-doubt. 'I'm not a good writer', he says, 'I can't even get started.' He starts drawing angry lines and cranky stickmen. I encourage him to forget about the rules of school writing: the titles, the planning, the goals. 'Just write something, write whatever comes to mind. Write what makes you angry. And don't worry, I won't read what you write. This is for you, not for me or the school.' He sighs, but then leans over the table and starts writing.

I've started mirroring my writing group experiences in my teaching. If creative writing has worked for me, why not for my pupils, too? Strengthening self-regulation skills and self-knowledge are important themes in the new curriculum. Alongside subject knowledge, transversal competences have been emphasised and expressed more clearly. Wellbeing isn't just pretty words in the curriculum, but an important contributor to learning. I'm trying to see that supporting my pupils to express themselves and deal with difficult emotions is not time away from learning but, in fact, an important part of what I can teach them.

Now that I've been in the writing group, I've experienced how difficult, yet rewarding, writing can be. I can also see the importance of being guided and scaffolded. *I don't think I would have been able to see other perspectives without being prompted by the writing group instructor.* I've also been reminded how much potential lies in peer support and feedback. *The instructor's feedback has felt especially elevating, and at times even made me feel slightly embarrassed, that my writing wasn't worth such great feedback.* Giving experiences of support, encouragement and praise to my pupils seems even more important now that I've experienced their power myself. *But how to help pupils develop their skills in receiving and giving feedback as a natural part of the writing process?*

Words have a strange might. When you let them loose, new perspectives and insights can appear. Memories are transformed into stories that we can see and read. When you learn to let go of your inner critic and release control, unexpected words and thoughts can be born. The outcome doesn't have to be a piece of art, not even a diamond in the rough. It's enough just to give ourselves those small moments – time and place for peaceful soul-searching.

Spring [Social aspects]

In the final group meeting I'm forced to leave my comfort zone, as we share our writing and give peer feedback in small groups. *How hard it is to read my own text aloud and be peer-assessed!* Then I realise that we are just teachers who are here not to judge but to share. We end up discussing less about the writing and more about being a teacher. There is a sense of belonging, even though I haven't always been eager to share my inner thoughts with the other teachers in the group.

Once again, I have learned something new and gained new building blocks for this adventure called life. For the past year, *I have been collecting stories, experiences and great and small moments within me to share with others.* These meetings have given me a chance to write and discuss writing with other teacher-writers. I came here on my own, but I discovered that there is a special power in sharing and peer support. It has been important to

see that others are faced with the same questions, that others carry something within themselves as well.

We are asked to reflect on the past year. The genre is optional. *Shall I have a go at poetry, prose, or prose poetry this time, to perhaps illuminate some of the dark matter weighing on me?* Maybe I'll just try and be myself, let the words come. After all, that's what I've been doing all year: *trying different creative writing methods, different genres*, while at the same time *trying to look more kindly at myself as a writer*. Writing about my life has helped me grow. It has been something *heavy, aching, beloved, my own*. I can now say that I have a dear hobby, that I am, indeed, a writer.

As the meeting comes to an end, I feel nostalgic in a grateful way. Part of me wishes we could continue these meetings, but another part feels ready to move on and let go. The group has given me new perspectives on teaching writing and helped me understand my pupils a little bit better. Most importantly, though, *writing has opened my eyes* to parts of me that I wasn't connected with before. Allowing myself to be creative and vulnerable has *also taken courage*. *I think I started out with the intention of finding my teacher and writer identity. I ended up at the edge of myself, a point of no return that taught me new things about myself*. At times, it has been *a painful, demanding, agonising road*. But, on the other hand, it *has been liberating*. And I haven't walked it alone.

As I step outside, I sense the warmth of the sun on my skin; I close my eyes and breathe. A new story is on its way. *The gateway has been opened*.

Elaborating the themes

Most present in the Summer chapter, the first theme, (1) *Aspects of writer identity* deals with the teachers' relationship to writing itself. The subthemes within this theme were Developing as a writer; Reflecting on my own voice; Creativity and bravery; and Ambivalence and criticism. In their narratives, the teachers' described experiencing self-doubt and uncertainty when first joining the group. Some soon discovered that the writing assignments were mostly easy to complete and described experiencing enjoyment and empowerment. However, some described that they sometimes struggled with starting assignments, and at times felt that they did not achieve their desired level of aesthetics in their writing. However, some of the most commonly used expressions the teachers used when asked about what they had gained from the writing group were bravery, freedom, enjoyment, flow, and encouragement to engage in creative writing. In addition, the writing group gave the teachers opportunities to try different genres and assignments. Although the teachers were not primarily motivated to join the group for purposes of developing their writing skills, many of them mentioned that it was useful and inspiring to try out different writing methods and explore different genres, some of which were not initially 'their cup of tea'. This, for some, aided in finding what they called their 'own voice', such as using a specific dialect, or in discovering their own future plans and goals as writers, such as writing autobiographical short stories about childhood to be shared with future generations.

Within the theme (2) *Aspects of personal growth and emotions*, most clearly illustrated in the Autumn chapter, the following subthemes were created: My life story; Expressing and reflecting on emotions and thoughts; Bouncing back, enjoyment

and flow; and Searching for Me. In the writing group, the teachers were given assignments in different genres to write about their lives, from childhood to future hopes. In addition, each meeting featured short warm-up assignments, such as freewriting, where the teachers were able to unload their thoughts. The assignments seemed to open up new perspectives on their life stories, thus rebuilding their identities holistically. Expressions that came up most often within this theme dealt with empowerment, bouncing back, self-discovery, and having their own time and space for calming in the middle of their hectic every-day lives. One teacher beautifully described their experiences of creative writing as similar to meditation, with the difference that 'writing leaves a concrete mark'. Some of the teachers experienced burdensome situations in their professional and personal lives during the year of creative writing, which they were able to deal with in the meetings.

In theme (3) *Pedagogical aspects*, the focus is on being a teacher and teaching writing. This theme is demonstrated in the Winter chapter. Three subthemes were generated: Encouraging creativity; Classroom practices; and Developing assessment. The teachers' thoughts on pedagogy were partly linked to the curriculum reform (FNBE 2014), which was especially relevant in the primary school teachers' lives at that time as it had been put into practice during that year, and there was still a lot of development work underway, for example regarding the new assessment system. Finding new pedagogical ideas, discussing with peers, and clarifying the importance of assessment and encouragement for their teaching were some of the most important discoveries that the teachers mentioned in the interviews. Although teachers acknowledged the importance of supporting creativity, they often felt forced to leave creativity in the background and focus on other subject content. This pressure was often related to textbooks, illustrating the teachers' fear of being 'left behind'. On the other hand, teachers felt that offering different creative assignments could lower the threshold especially for those pupils who struggle with writing. Thus, they appreciated the concrete ideas they were able to apply in their classrooms, and a few mentioned that they could have benefited from even more pedagogical ideas and discussions.

Finally, the subthemes within the theme (4) *Social aspects* were named as follows: This is my dear hobby; Peer feedback and instructors' assessment; Peer support and belonging; and Alone together. The theme was portrayed in the Spring chapter. The teachers described the group atmosphere as communal, positive, broad-minded, and encouraging. For some, the social nature of the writing group and the peer support it provided were among the most crucial factors. On the other hand, some preferred to focus on their own work, and did not experience a strong connection with the other group members. Between the previous two, were a group of teachers who enjoyed the peer discussions and sharing knowledge, but mostly were 'alone together'. Having a 'real writing hobby' and a set time and space for writing in a group was essential for many: the positive effect of group pressure helped them stick with writing and increased their writing activities.

Discussion and implications

The aim of this paper was to study creative writing as a means to support teachers' professional development. Furthermore, this study aimed at exploring the use of creative

writing in the qualitative, narrative data analysis and the reporting of the results. Using the data collected in this study, the methodological aim was to compose a creative nonfiction piece, a story of being a teacher and of embarking on creative writing in the setting of a teachers' writing group. Based on the thematic data analysis process, the creative nonfiction piece illuminates the diverse and meaningful narratives of the teachers. It also paints a picture of being a teacher in the midst of educational curriculum reform in Finland, which took place during the year of data collection.

From a pedagogical perspective, writing and reflecting on their writing experiences helped the teachers to see themselves as 'writing teachers' and to stop and think about their own ways of teaching. This discovery is in line with previous research (e.g. Cremin et al. 2020; Cremin and Oliver 2017; Yoo 2018). However, the findings of this study go beyond classroom practices and pedagogical insights.

According to the results, the teachers met the goals they had set for themselves in the group in terms of developing as both writers and writing teachers, but also as individuals. Creatively expressing themselves via different genres and writing assignments seemed to support their narrative identity work (Stenberg 2010; see also Bruner 1987; Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001; Ricoeur 1991). This study is thus in line with previous findings indicating the holistic benefits of creative writing for individual growth (Bolton 1999; Hunt 2000; Ihanus 2019; Kosonen 2015). Furthermore, the teachers stated that the writing group offered them social, personal and professional support and offered them the time and space for writing that they had longed for. For the teachers, the practices of the creative writing group seemed to serve as a means of silencing the controlling inner critique, facing fears and listening to their inner world. Furthermore, the group offered an opportunity to share and tell their stories, and discuss writing with their peers.

The results, including the themes, subthemes and the nonfiction piece, support the claim that teachers' professional development should be examined as a whole, using holistic methods and respecting the integrative nature of different aspects of identity and professional development (e.g. Akkerman and Meijer 2011; Alsup 2019; Bell and Gilbert 1996; Geeraerts et al. 2015). We suggest that creative writing groups can offer teachers not only a space and time to write and engage in narrative identity work, but also an opportunity to meet other writers, discuss their writing experiences, and share pedagogical ideas, thereby continuing the process of writing and learning.

Kim (2008) encourages narrative researchers to engage in narrative theorising, that is, the intentional process of questioning and interrogating the nature of their narrative work, aiming at re-establishing and re-affirming its significance. One way to do this is by examining the analysis process and the results of the study through the lens of Bakhtinian novelness (polyphony, chronotope, carnival) (Kim 2008). We argue that this study, and especially the creative nonfiction piece: (1) portrays different voices and presents partial truths of equally treated participants (polyphony), as the nonfiction piece is composed of the stories told by 11 teachers; and (2) places the voices or stories in time, space and context (chronotope), as the nonfiction piece is put together so that each part (Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring) is set in different seasons and environments and with notes on the Finnish educational reform of that time; and (3) considers counternarratives as equal to the mainstream narratives (carnival), as the nonfiction piece introduces new perspectives and views brought up in the data by the 11 teachers, and was also sent

to each participant of the writing group to allow them an opportunity to add something or to state if they did not identify with the nonfiction piece. In the more traditional part of the Results section, we further discuss the themes, thus deepening and enriching our interpretation of the data. Based on this analysis, we suggest that utilising creative writing methods in narrative research can raise and highlight otherwise hidden voices and experiences that may be difficult to express through the academic language used in traditional journal articles.

One limitation of the study is that the participants were a relatively small group of teachers with a positive interest in and a personal relationship with creative writing, and as many teachers may not be motivated towards creative writing, the results cannot be generalised to all teachers. We are also critically aware that our professional roles and previous experiences have influenced the way the data is interpreted, as researchers' theoretical assumptions, analytic resources and the data itself influence the process of our thematic analysis (see Braun and Clarke 2019). Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the first author of this paper has a twofold position as both the facilitator and instructor of the group, and a researcher of this study. Sharing the experience of the teachers in the group and having an insider position (e. g. Berger 2015) might have impacted this study in many ways. For example, it has been easy to understand which writing tasks the teachers were referring to when describing their experiences in the group. On the other hand, the first author's personal relationship to the teachers might have made it difficult to observe the data from 'the researcher lens'. Nevertheless, our, that is, the three authors of the article, collaboration and discussions throughout each step of this study, from planning the group to discussing the analysis and the creative nonfiction piece helped the first author in shifting the focus from being an instructor to being a researcher. Lastly, as narrative researchers, we aimed not at objective generalising, but rather at bringing out the voices of the participants, seeking shared meanings in the data, and telling their stories in a form of a creative nonfiction piece in a way that is relatable and speaks to a broader audience.

The findings of this study support the idea that utilising narrative, creative methods such as creative writing groups can be beneficial for teachers' holistic professional development. Consequently, utilising creative writing methods in in-service teacher training could be a valuable way to support teachers' professional development. Based on the findings of the study, we suggest that utilising the social aspect, such as peer discussion, in the writing practices would be beneficial. Finally, as storytelling can give teachers a unique voice in the educational research field, thus developing the teaching profession itself (Breault 2010), we encourage educational researchers to bravely try different storyteller (Smith 2016) approaches such as creative nonfiction. Further research on creative writing groups and other socially engaged narrative activities is recommended in order to form a more cohesive narrative of teachers' experiences of writing and professional development.

Acknowledgements

We wish to express our gratitude to the 11 teachers who participated in the creative writing group and gave us permission to use their writings and interviews in this study. We are also thankful to Vesa B. Moate for language editing.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Anne Martin is a researcher at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She has worked in several projects in the educational field, and her recent publications focus on supporting teachers' professional development. Her doctoral thesis explores supporting teachers' professional development in creative writing communities. Her research interests are narrative research, lifelong teacher education, teachers' professional development, and creative writing.

Mirja Tarnanen, PhD, is a professor at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her research interests are teacher education, language education, and teaching and learning communities. Her recent publications deal with (multi)literacy and assessment practices across the curriculum; migrant integration and education; policies and practices in adult second language teaching; and development of teacher education.

Päivi Tynjälä, PhD, is a professor at the Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her research area is learning and teaching in higher education. Her studies focus particularly on learning at the interface between higher education and the world of work, and the professional development of teachers. She has published widely both nationally and internationally and served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Educational Research Review*. Currently, she is an editorial board member of *Educational Research Review*, and *Vocations and Learning*.

ORCID

Anne Martin http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4434-4975
Mirja Tarnanen http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4585-4822
Päivi Tynjälä http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2158-8988

References

Akkerman, S. F., and P. C. Meijer. 2011. "A Dialogical Approach to Conceptualizing Teacher Identity." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27 (2): 308–319.

Alsup, J. 2019. *Millennial Teacher Identity Discourses: Balancing Self and Other*. New York: Routledge.

Anspal, T., E. Eisenschmidt, and E. Löfström. 2012. "Finding Myself as a Teacher: Exploring the Shaping of Teacher Identities Through Student Teachers' Narratives." *Teachers and Teaching* 18 (2): 197–216. doi:10.1080/13540602.2012.632268.

Avalos, B. 2011. "Teacher Professional Development in Teaching and Teacher Education Over Ten Years." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27 (1): 10–20.

Beauchamp, C., and L. Thomas. 2009. "Understanding Teacher Identity: An Overview of Issues in the Literature and Implications for Teacher Education." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 39 (2): 175–189.

Bell, B., and J. K. Gilbert. 1996. *Teacher Development: A Model from Science Education*. London: Psychology Press.

Berger, R. 2015. "Now I See It, Now I Don't: Researcher's Position and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Research* 15 (2): 219–234.

Bolton, G. 1999. *The Therapeutic Potential of Creative Writing: Writing Myself*. London: Jessica Kingsley. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=117506.

Bolton, G. 2006. "Narrative Writing: Reflective Enquiry into Professional Practice." *Educational Action Research* 14 (2): 203–218.

Boniwell, Ilona. 2012. *Positive Psychology in a Nutshell: The Science of Happiness*. 3rd ed. London: Open University Press. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/[SITE_ID]/detail.action?docID=1037310.

Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2019. "Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis." *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 11 (4): 589–597. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806.

Breault, R. A. 2010. "Distilling Wisdom from Practice: Finding Meaning in PDS Stories." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26 (3): 399–407. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.04.013.

Brockmeier, J., and D. Carbaugh. 2001. *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Bruner, J. 1987. "Life as Narrative." *Social Research* 54 (1): 11–32.

Cremin, T., and L. Oliver. 2017. "Teachers as Writers: A Systematic Review." *Research Papers in Education* 32 (3): 269–295.

Cremin, T., D. Myhill, I. Eyres, T. Nash, A. Wilson, and L. Oliver. 2020. "Teachers as Writers: Learning Together with Others." *Literacy* 54 (2): 49–59.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1990. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper & Row.

FNBE (Finnish National Board of Education). 2014. *National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014*. Helsinki: Finnish National Board of Education.

Geeraerts, K., P. Tynjälä, H. L. T. Heikkinen, I. Markkanen, M. Pennanen, and D. Gijbels. 2015. "Peer-group Mentoring as a Tool for Teacher Development." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 38 (3): 358–377. doi:10.1080/02619768.2014.983068.

Hunt, C. 2000. *Therapeutic Dimensions of Autobiography in Creative Writing*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Hunt, C. 2010. "Therapeutic Effects of Writing Fictional Autobiography." *Life Writing* 7 (3): 231–244.

Ihanus, J. 2019. *Transformative Words: Writing Otherness and Identities*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2043482.

Johnson, S., C. Cooper, S. Cartwright, I. Donald, P. Taylor, and C. Millet. 2005. "The Experience of Work-Related Stress Across Occupations." *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 20 (2): 178–187. doi:10.1108/02683940510579803.

Kim, J. 2008. "A Romance with Narrative Inquiry: Toward an act of Narrative Theorizing." *Curriculum & Teaching Dialogue* 10: 1–2.

Kosonen, P. 2015. "Creative Autobiography, from Self-Knowledge to the Teaching of Writing." *Scriptum Creative Writing Research Journal* 2 (2): 14–45. https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/46473.

Lainson, K., V. Braun, and V. Clarke. 2019. "Being Both Narrative Practitioner and Academic Researcher: A Reflection on What Thematic Analysis has to Offer Narratively Informed Research." *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work* 2019 (4): 86.

Leavy, P. 2020. *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*. New York: Guilford Publications.

Loveless, A. 2012. "Body and Soul: A Study of Narratives of Learning Lives of Creative People who Teach." In *Explorations in Narrative Research*, edited by I. F. Goodson, A. M. Loveless, and D. Stephens, 107–121. Brill Sense.

Martin, A., M. Tarnanen, and P. Tynjälä. 2018. "Exploring Teachers' Stories of Writing: A Narrative Perspective." *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 24 (6): 690–705.

OECD. 2019. *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*. Paris: OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/1d0bc92a-en.

Pennanen, M., H. L. Heikkinen, and P. Tynjälä. 2020. "Virtues of Mentors and Mentees in the Finnish Model of Teachers' Peer-Group Mentoring." *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 64 (3): 355–371.

Pennebaker, J. W., and C. K. Chung. 2007. "Expressive Writing, Emotional Upheavals, and Health." In *Foundations of Health Psychology*, edited by H. S. Friedman and R. C. Silver, 263–284. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Peterson, S. S. 2008. *Writing Across the Curriculum: All Teachers Teach Writing*. Winnipeg: Portage & Main Press.

Polkinghorne, D. E. 1995. "Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 8 (1): 5–23. doi:10.1080/0951839950080103.

Ricoeur, P. 1991. "Narrative Identity." *Philosophy Today* 35 (1): 73–81.
Schultz, K., and S. M. Ravitch. 2013. "Narratives of Learning to Teach: Taking on Professional Identities." *Journal of Teacher Education* 64 (1): 35–46.
Selland, M. K. 2017. "The Edge of Messy: Interplays of Daily Storytelling and Grand Narratives in Teacher Learning." *Teachers and Teaching* 23 (3): 244–261. doi:10.1080/13540602.2016.1205016.
Senge, P. M., N. Cambron-McCabe, T. Lucas, B. Smith, and J. Dutton. 2012. *Schools that Learn (Updated and Revised): A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone who Cares About Education*. New York: Crown Business.
Sexton, J. D., J. W. Pennebaker, C. G. Holzmueller, A. W. Wu, S. M. Berenholtz, S. M. Swoboda, and J. B. Sexton. 2009. "Care for the Caregiver: Benefits of Expressive Writing for Nurses in the United States." *Progress in Palliative Care* 17 (6): 307–312.
Sinner, A. 2013. *Unfolding the Unexpectedness of Uncertainty: Creative Nonfiction and the Lives of Becoming Teachers*. Boston: Springer.
Smith, B. 2016. "Narrative Analysis." *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* 2: 202–221.
Steinhardt, M. A., S. E. Smith Jaggars, K. E. Faulk, and C. T. Gloria. 2011. "Chronic Work Stress and Depressive Symptoms: Assessing the Mediating Role of Teacher Burnout." *Stress and Health* 27 (5): 420–429.
Stenberg, K. 2010. "Identity Work as a Tool for Promoting the Professional Development of Student Teachers." *Reflective Practice* 11 (3): 331–346. doi:10.1080/14623943.2010.490698.
Tynjälä, P., M. Pennanen, I. Markkanen, and H. L. Heikkinen. 2019. "Finnish Model of Peer-Group Mentoring: Review of Research." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, doi:10.1111/nyas.14296.
Yoo, J. 2018. "Teachers as Creative Writers: Needs, Desires and Opportunities for Growth." *New Writing* 15 (3): 300–310.

III

TEACHERS AS CREATIVE WRITING STUDENTS – NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

Martin, A., Rautiainen, A. M., Tarnanen, M. & Tynjälä, P. 2021

Teacher Development

In peer review

Request a copy from the author.