WHO AM I?:

The Teacher Identity Construction of Student Teachers

Master's thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Opettajaidentiteetti on tutkimusaiheena varsin ajankohtainen ja viime vuosina huomiota on aiempaa enemmän alettu kiinnittää myös opettajaopiskelijoiden ammatti-identiteettiin, sillä tämän rakennusprosessin osatekijät vaikuttavat varsin eri tavoin lopulliseen identiteettiin. Aiempien tutkimusten pohjalta voidaan huomata, että opettajaidentiteetin muodostumisprosessissa on useita eri osatekijöitä, jotka tässä tutkielmassa on jaettu kahteen faktoriryhmään: henkilökohtaisiin ja opettajankoulutuksellisiin faktoreihin. Kirjallisuuskatsauksen perusteella kävi myös ilmi, että useat opettajaopiskelijat kokevat ristiriitaa henkilökohtaisten näkemystensä ja opettajankoulutuksen painotuksen välillä.

Tämä tutkielma pyrki määrittelemään, millä tavalla erään suomalaisen yliopiston opettajaopiskelijat näkivät henkilökohtaisten ja opettajankoulutuksellisten faktorien roolin identiteettinsä muodostumisessa. Toteutetussa kyselytutkimuksessa 76 pedagogisten opintojensa eri vaiheissa olevaa opiskelijaa vastasivat väittämiin liittyen näkemyksiinsä edellä mainittujen faktorien merkityksestä opettajaidentiteettinsä kehityksessä ja tarjosivat lisäksi avaavia kommentteja avoimiin kysymyksiin.

Tulokset osoittivat, että osallistujat kokivat henkilökohtaisten taustojensa vaikuttavan voimakkaasti identiteettinsä kehitykseen. Ystävien, työkokemuksen, harrastusten ja aktiivisen reflektoinnin lisäksi osallistujat korostivat opettajankoulutuksen tarjoaman palautteen ja vertaiskeskustelun merkitystä tässä prosessissa. Näiden faktoreiden välillä havaittiin ajoittain konflikteja, mutta varsin usein nämä kyettiin ratkaisemaan neuvottelemalla ohjaavanopettajan kanssa molempia osapuolia tyydyttävästä ratkaisusta.

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Contents

1 Introduction

Identity has been at the forefront of interest in the field of psychology for decades and the topic has been researched from various angles. As the world changes, so does academic research and this has brought about new approaches to defining and looking at identity. One of these modern takes on the topic is professional identity which looks at people's representations and views of self in their line of work. In the field of education and pedagogics, the appropriate term for professional identity would be teacher identity. No one teacher works at the exact same environment as another and everyone comes from a very unique background of education and personal experience. Influence is drawn not only from formal education, but also from popular media such as movies and series that depict teachers in varying manners ranging all the way from the careless and foul-mouthed seventh grade teacher portrayed by Cameron Diaz in Bad Teacher (2011) to the inspiring English teacher John Keating in Dead Poets Society (1989). Additionally, the actions of teachers have been under careful scrutiny in the Finnish newspapers during the past few years, which further influence the everyday choices teachers make in their profession.

In relation to pedagogical identities, the focus of much of the research done in the past has been on practicing teachers and their views of what teacherhood entails. However, recent trends in the field suggest that a growing interest in the thoughts of student teachers is emerging and more studies are being conducted to explore the identities of future teachers (Lin 2012, Marter 2014). While student teachers' identities are being researched in ever-growing numbers, the majority of this research relies on qualitative methodology and relatively restricted sample sizes. Because of this tendency to focus on individual student teachers rather than research the population, the field lacks generalizable data on how the majority of student teachers of a given generation or location perceive themselves as future teachers. This research gap as well as the personal

interest of a future language teacher has molded the topic of this thesis to its current shape.

The focus of the present study is to look at the teacher identity construction process of student teachers, as they work to find their way through the pedagogical path and eventually emerge as competent teachers. The thesis builds heavily on a sociological view of identity, which emphasizes the role of others in defining oneself through interaction and the resulting self-reflection (Hall 2002: 21). Teacher identity, or the multiple teacher identities one might possess, is constructed based on a collection of factors that come both from the past and the present, which allows a division into personal and teacher educational factors. Although personal factors are not strictly limited to the past, they help illustrate how elements outside of and prior to the teacher education program also play a role in the teacher identity of student teachers. As future teachers reflect on their personal experiences and the guidelines of teacher education, they not only try to define the characteristics they crave to embrace, but also look for undesirable traits that they wish to avoid (Weinreich and Saunderson 2003: 54-61). Past research suggests that the ideals of the individual student teacher do not always correspond with those of the teacher education program, which might cause a conflict that these future teachers have to resolve during their pedagogical studies (Lacey 1977).

Teacher identity construction as well as the factors in this process are approached quantitatively in this thesis. Data on the perceptions of Finnish student teachers were gathered using an online questionnaire that was posted on various university mailing lists. The questionnaire consisted of three sections that researched participants' views on the significance of personal factors and teacher education factors as well as their perceptions on the possible conflicts that might arise between these two sets of factors. Building on the insights of previous research, the aim of this study was to better understand how student teachers feel teacher education shapes their teacherhood and how compatible the values of the teacher education program are with their own. In

addition, the different adjustment strategies student teachers apply to conflicts they face during teacher education were of particular interest.

This thesis will first offer a look at how identity can be approached from different perspectives and define it in the scope of the current research. In addition, Chapter 2 will present several other key concepts that are closely related to the theme of identity, such as identification and subjectivity. The thesis will then proceed to discuss teacher identity by exploring the roles, factors and phases that create this entity. A quick glance at the Finnish teacher education program is also offered to clarify the context in which this study is conducted. Chapter 4 introduces a selection of previous studies on the topic and discusses the implications of these studies in relation to the current thesis. Chapter 5 will dive into the methodology utilized in the reported research as well as the specific research questions. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the results of this study first in the form of statistical findings and then in a more interpretive manner focusing on the comments of the participants. Lastly, the conclusion section will summarize the major findings of the current research and reflect on their possible implications.

2 Identity and related key concepts

This section will offer a detailed discussion of the key concepts in this thesis. The theme of identity will be approached both as a psychological and a sociological phenomenon. Understanding identity and related key concepts is vital in order to grasp the dynamic field of teacher identity and the research that this thesis embarks on. The section will begin with an introduction to different definitions of identity and how the term will be used in this thesis. Additionally, terms such as identity construction and subjectivity that are closely related to identity are introduced shortly.

2.1 Identity from a psychological perspective

There are numerous ways of defining 'identity'. Such approaches as poststructuralism, socioculturalism, sociopsychology and sociolinguistics have offered their respective views on what identity consist of (Blackledge and Palvenko 2001: 244). As mentioned earlier, the focus of this paper is both on the psychological and the sociological nature of identity. In terms of psychology, one of the ways of looking at this construct is to look at identity as the concepts of self an individual possesses and the experiences, both social and cultural, that help shape these concepts (Bartlett & Erben 1996). In other words, identity is the product of a given individual's perception of his or her place within a certain community that is constantly shaped by the things one encounters in life and is fluid by nature - a dynamic subject to continuous change (Lin 2012: 13). Additionally, such permanent features as nationality, gender, race, ethnicity and class are acknowledged to contribute to the process identity construction (Bartlett & Erben 1996). Weinrech and Saunderson (2003: 26) describe identity as a sum of these individual features in the following manner:

> "A person's identity is defined as the totality of one's self-construal, in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future." (Weinrech and Saunderson 2003: 26)

This definition emphasizes the permanence of identity. On the one hand, such invariable characters as one's gender and ethnicity are always included in the totality that constructs one's identity, but it can also take into account such situational and momentary factors as occupational identity and marital status.

It is also noteworthy that each individual possesses more than one identity (Lin 2012: 1, Lawler 2014: 12). The field of psychology often underlines the different roles people take in different contexts and identities could be understood to act in a similar manner. Varghese et al (2005: 22) offer a division into such identity types as political, professional, cultural and individual. To further build on the diversity of interpretations of identity,

Wenger (1998) describes identity as not only the way one thinks or speaks about one's identity, but rather in the manner one lives day-to-day. The associations and differentiations we build define us, or in Wenger's terms, identify us, as belonging to a certain social group. The process of identification is built upon three models proposed by Wenger: *engagement*, *alignment* and *imagination*. Engagement refers to one's identification through the active participation in community and reflecting on oneself through the eyes of the community. Alignment deals with greater entities that bring individuals together, such as institutions. The shared goals and means of an institution force individuals to work together to establish shared rules and identities. Lastly, imagination indicates a broader level of processing than engagement in that individuals relate themselves to the world beyond a particular community of practice in which they are actively participating (Wenger 1998: 177).

Subjectivity is a term that one might encounter in the field of identity research. Since it is widely used even as a synonym for identity and also appears in the studies discussed in the current study, a quick glance will be offered to the meaning behind the term. To put it shortly, subjectivity, or subjectivities, can be understood to cover a wide range of conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions coupled with one's sense of self as well as the more reflexive view of how one sees oneself in relation to the world (Weedon 1987: 32). Weedon herself describes these subjectivities as something that are constantly redefined and reconstituted in discourse and interaction - much like we already defined in the previous paragraph with identity. An alternative interpretation of the relationship between subjectivity and identity divides the two to represent different factors in the formation of how people perceive themselves. In this model, identity is understood to associate with social aspects such as gender, nationality or race, while subjectivity deals with more complex and conflicting aspects of the process of defining self (Lawler 2014: 8). In essence, identity and subjectivity, according to this school of thought, can be interpreted as two simultaneous processes that help define self - alternatively they can be categorized as two aspects of identity. Another way of looking at the relationship

between the two terms is to understand subjectivity as the reflexive aspect of identity that is closely tied to social identity and social positioning (Menard-Warwick 2005: 257). The field of identity research is torn with different schools of thought and interpretations on the subject of subjectivity and, thus, this thesis will not draw a distinction between the different aspects of identity formation.

2.2 Identity from a sociological perspective

Whereas psychology focuses on identifying and describing the idiosyncrasies and traits that people build their identities upon, the field of sociology is more interested in the reflexive nature of the process of constructing one's identity. This perspective is formulated around the consensus of identity being more than an autonomous entity constructed within oneself. Instead, it is viewed to be dependent on interaction and the symbols, meanings and values that this interaction with, what the field calls, significant others conveys (Hall 2002: 21). The sociological theory understands identity as a means of closing the gap between an individual's inside and outside. In other words, identity connects an individual's subjective sentiments to the objective structure of the surrounding world (Hall 2002: 22).

Although many attempts have been made to eloquently describe and define identity through the lens of sociological theory, some authors believe that there is no one definition that thoroughly covers the term. Rather, identity could be divided into public and personal manifestations that help explain the duality of its nature (Lawler 2014: 7). At the same time, identity entails descriptions of oneself in terms of the roles or identity categories one assumes in the public eye as well as the distinctive markers of how people view themselves as individuals separate from others. To take this idea of individuality further in relation to identity, it could be said that identity is about both difference and sameness. On the one hand, people find shared attributes with others that define themselves on one level or another - such as their gender, nationality or race. On the other

hand, we as human being like to focus on our uniqueness on what makes us different from the person standing next to us (Lawler 2014: 10). In this sense, identity is a reflexive entity that not only tries to define us as something separate and different from everything else, but also tries to relate each individual to a common, shared context (Jackson 2002: 142).

Identity construction, also referred to as identity formation, could be discussed in relation to either of the two perspectives to identity. However, because of the focus of the current thesis is on the effects of teacher education on student teacher identities, I feel it is more appropriate to address this matter from a sociological perspective. As already defined, identity is not created in a vacuum, but one's experiences and surroundings, both past and present, constantly affect their identity formation. People reflect on their past experiences of other people and professions when defining the expectations for a particular role (Lin 2012: 1). What is also worth noting is the role of discourse and interaction with others. Identity is always a reflection of self as seen in the context of others and the role of interaction has been proven to play a pivotal role in identity construction (Brogden 2009: 77). Interaction can affect identity construction in two ways based on the object of observation. Firstly, a benign other is someone who possesses desirable characteristics as seen by the observer and engages the observer in, what is called, a process of idealistic identification. Malign others, however, possess undesirable characteristics that one wishes to dissociate from. This process is also known as defensive contra-identification (Weinreich and Saunderson 2003: 54-61). Although identification is not synonymous with identity, it is still through this process that people begin to construct their identities.

The theory of symbolic interaction further elaborates on the idea of the reflexive nature of identity construction. Humans seek to negotiate a shared vision of the world through interpreting the contextual meanings a given interaction provides for a particular concept (Martel 2014: 19). In terms of identity construction, symbolic interactionism has three

implications: the looking-glass self, role taking and role identity. The term *looking-glass self* refers to the process of learning to view oneself through the eyes of others. Much like mentioned earlier in this chapter, researchers in the field of symbolic interactionism also believe in the concept of continuous negotiation and shaping of one's identity (Martel 2014: 20). Role taking, in turn, makes use of the theory of looking-glass self by constructing expectations for a particular role through the process of stepping into someone else's shoes. It is said that only by viewing oneself through the eyes of others one is able to generate ideas of the expectations set for one based on the role one occupies (Blumer 1969: 2). Analyzing the expectations set forth by significant others and the generalized other helps one create a role identity. In essence, role identity covers all the meanings we have of ourselves in a particular role - such as that of a teacher's.

An interesting addition to the nature of interaction in relation to identity formation is offered by Morgan (2004), who notes that interaction constitutes identity instead of strictly determining it. He describes the latter term as having a Marxist notion of passiveness that suggests a one directional process of teachers accepting the role they are given in schooling (Morgan 2004: 173). However, constitution implies a self-aware and autonomous role for the subject who actively engages in defining, what is significant for their pedagogy in educational discourse.

2.3 Identity in this thesis

Drawing on the background literature reviewed above, this thesis will look at identity as a set of conceptions one has of oneself. Some aspects of this entity are relatively permanent, but other conceptions are reflexive and vary according to the different roles and situations one encounters in one's life. These conceptions of self are constructed in a social process, where an individual actively reflects on oneself by using others as a point of reference. Additionally, identity construction is largely shaped by social interaction, which helps an individual to not only define him or herself, but also discover the various

expectations others hold. In this sense, individuals use the cues social interaction provides to define themselves in terms of sameness and difference in relation to others.

3 Teacher identity

Having discussed identity on a general level, it is time to take a closer look at how these principles apply to teacher identities. Firstly, different factors in teacher identity construction will be discussed. This section will also seek to shed light on the process of constructing a teacher identity from a socialization perspective covering different phases from pre-training to in-service. The different roles that can be understood as a part of teacher identity are also discussed in this chapter. Lastly, this section will offer a quick look at the teacher education system of Finnish universities in order to provide a picture of the context in which teacher identity construction is studied in this particular thesis.

3.1 Factors in teacher identity construction

As we already discovered in Chapter 2, communication and interaction play a significant role in identity formation. This is also true for teachers who are said to heavily rely on dialectic processes in trying to define themselves as professionals (Schempp and Graber 1992: 329). A dialectic process refers to the negotiations between a social system and an individual, which in this case stems from the struggle of balancing one's own personality with the ideals of a given profession. In the case of teachers, this is most prominently seen in the interaction between a student teacher and his or her peers and mentors. The degree of negotiation that a given student participates in is dependent on how congruent his or her personal beliefs (personal factor) are with the ideals promoted by the teaching program (teacher educational factor) (Schempp and Graber 1992: 331). The narrower the margin between the two, the less negotiation is needed to solve the dissonance. The views that each individual holds can be constructed from various sources, but in terms of teachers, one should always remember that all student teachers have once been students

themselves. This means that they have all had an opportunity to construct an image of a teacher based on their own experiences and this, in turn, affects the role expectations in teacher education (Lin 2012: 1). It is also noteworthy that modern research emphasizes the role of student teachers as active agents in the process of negotiating these meanings (Zeichner and Gore 1990: 30). It is, therefore, sufficient to say that teacher education cannot solely be relied on in the socialization of a future teacher, but that students themselves hold responsibility for their own growth as professionals.

To take the idea of teacher educational factors in teacher identity construction further, research has managed to define some more general influences in this process. These influences can be attributed to education and cultural policy, economic processes and cultural-historical influences (Bartlett and Erben 1996). In their research, Bartlett and Erben refer to the aforementioned factors as macro considerations, pointing to the fact that they are more general by nature rather than being specific in the way they shape a teacher's professional identity. Although this particular research supports the idea of macro considerations as a set of broader, unspecific factors in identity construction, they do not rule out other influences that affect this process more explicitly, as pointed out by other studies (Zeichner & Gore 1990, Lin 2012, Wu 2012). In the model of macro considerations, education and cultural policy are further divided into such categories as official, mass, elite, popular and national culture - all of which vary in significance in relation to the respective role in a given situation. The role of elite and mass cultures in influencing people's perceptions of minority cultures and languages is an adequate example of how cultural policy affects identities. To relate this point to the context of education, it is worth mentioning the role of official state policies, or curricula, in teacher identity formation. These guidelines are heavily present in the day-to-day life of practicing teachers and teacher trainees, which obviously influences the choices they make in their teaching, thus affecting their perception of themselves as teachers. The second category presented by Bartlett and Erben (1996), economic processes, refers to incentives the dominant economic climate may have on educational policies. In their text,

they bring up the role of Asian trade in Australia, which encourages teaching Asian in their school system even more than they currently do. The last factor, cultural-historical influences, covers the varying range of ways that the past affects educational stresses and teacher identity. An easily relatable example of this for Finns would be the role of Swedish in Finnish education. Because of Finland's history with its western neighbor, Finns are taught Sweden from elementary school onwards, forcing Swedish teachers to consider the historical and cultural influences that they might witness, say, in the attitudes of learners (Bartlett & Erben 1996).

Although the earlier discussion may paint a harmonious picture of the relationship between the two main factors in teacher identity construction, individual beliefs and ideals of the teacher education program, the two do not always share the same values. As the ideals set forth by a social system and the beliefs of an individual clash, the two are not operating at even grounds. Normally in a dialectic exchange, the negotiation of the differences between an individual and an institution may cause both participants to shape their beliefs. However, the positions of power are not equal in the case of teachers, as the institution is superior and thus holds domination over a teacher (Lacey 1977). Previous research in the field suggests that as the result of this equation, the teacher has to adjust to the requirements set for by the institution and this adjustment process can be approached in three ways as suggested by Lacey (1977). Firstly, the teacher could resort to internalized adjustment and conform to status quo. The second option would be to adjust one's behavior without completely abandoning one's beliefs. This is called strategic compliance. The last alternative is strategic redefinition which refers to a situation, where the teacher is able to bring new knowledge and skills that help him or her bear the situation (Lacey 1977). To put it simply, whenever the beliefs of an individual teacher are in conflict with the teacher education program or the ideals of good education as perceived by society, it is often the teacher, or the student teacher, who conforms to the situation.

An alternative approach to defining the factors in teacher identity construction is offered by Wu (2012), who presents four categories of influences instead of the previously discussed division into personal and teacher educational factors. The first of these categories is the living environment which includes not only the physical surroundings of an individual, but also the social contacts in one's immediate environment. In the case of, for example, foreign language teachers, the amount of exposure to the target language at an early age could be attributed to this particular factor (Wu 2012: 93). Secondly, the role of family background is emphasized in this categorization. This can be seen as the values and attitudes that are bestowed upon an individual. These two categories combined closely resemble the earlier discussed categorization of personal factors. The third factor in teacher identity construction according to this model is learning experience. This category includes all experiences of the target subject ranging from early childhood to adult education. Both subject content and explicitly taught pedagogical ideals are in the heart of this factor. An example of the role of learning experience in identity formation is the belief in oneself as a competent teacher that is constructed through subject knowledge - language competence in the case of foreign language teachers. Lastly, Wu notes the influence of one's working context in one's teacher identity (Wu 2012: 94). This factor consists of one's colleagues and students as well as the tangible resources available for a particular teacher. A teacher in the primary school is equipped with different tools to practice his or her profession compared to a teacher who has a position in a university. Additionally, one's working context poses different expectations for one's pedagogical aims in that different levels of education value subject mastery and personal development differently.

3.2 Phases in teacher identity construction

The manner in which teacher identity is shaped over the course of teachers' lives is argued to vary in accordance to four phases: pre-training, pre-service, field experience and induction (Schempp and Graber 1992: 332, Martel 2014: 32). Different literary sources

refer to the aforementioned phases differently, as some prefer to combine the last two phases (field experience and induction) into what they refer to as in-service. The categorization to in-service will be used in this thesis, but the themes of field experience and induction will be discussed separately.

The first phase, pre-training, refers to all the knowledge future teachers accumulate prior to taking up the profession. This knowledge stems from a variety of sources such as one's parents and the teachers one has had when growing up. The ability to monitor teachers and their behavior from a student's point of view is proven to affect identity construction later on (McEvoy 1986, as cited in Schempp and Graver 1992: 334) and this process of gathering information from one's own classroom experiences is referred to as apprenticeship of observation (Schempp and Graber 1992: 333).

The second phase of the three step model covers the formal aspects of teacher education. In pre-service teacher socialization, the teacher training program is the most influential enactor in shaping teacher identity. As discussed previously in this chapter, this stage is the battleground for contradicting expectations and values of teacher education and individual beliefs. It is said that teacher education often sets out with the idea of students joining the program as blank canvases which they can then paint on with their pedagogic brushes (Schempp and Graber 1992: 336). What this disparity between the two sets of beliefs often leads to is that student teachers resort to so called studentship behavior which helps them pass through teacher education with greater ease and less stress (Graber 1991). An example of studentship behavior would be a student teacher projecting a false self-image to a mentoring teacher in order for the mentor to believe that the particular student is complying with the orientation of the program.

Teaching practice, or field experience, is often the very last stage of teacher education, where student teachers are offered a chance to put the skills they have acquired to use in a real life context. This also marks the beginning of the last phase of the three step model

proposed by Schempp and Graber (1992: 338). They argue that student teachers approach this stage rather differently from one another. In some cases, student teachers tend to internalize the orientation of the teacher education program to better cope with the expectations and stress this new environment offers, whereas others push back vigorously holding on to their personal preferences rather than complying with the methodologies of their instructors (Schempp and Graber 1992: 338). This particular phase of identity construction also forces student teachers to cope with unanticipated challenges that one has not been able to predict simply by the method of observation (Schempp and Graber 1992: 338). Additionally, the presence of pupils presents a new dialectic relationship that student teachers have not had in the pre-service phase. Every relationship that enables a student teacher to engage in interaction helps shape one's teacher identity by allowing one to reflect on one's own position and behavior (Martel 2014: 20). Field experience, thus, allows student teachers to use the pupils' reactions as a marker of how they succeed as teachers. Schempp and Graber (1992: 339) further emphasize the role of misbehaving students who push student teachers to reflect on the methods they need to utilize calling this process social shock therapy.

Once a student makes the transition from a student to a teacher, he or she also steps into the realm of induction. In essence, the stage of induction is very similar to that of field experience with the addition of increased autonomy and responsibility. The most notable change in this stage is the teaching landscape that a particular school provides. Whereas the orientation of the teacher education program heavily guided the direction of student teachers in the previous phases of teaching socialization, the culture upheld in a particular school sets its demands for practicing teachers. In addition to the educational emphases of schools, such factors as teacher-pupil ratio, level of resources and time constraints are found to affect identity formation (Schempp and Graber 1992: 340). The environment that these factors create, or the *ecology of the classroom*, is unique for each teacher and they demand teachers to adapt to the prevailing situation. If pupils presented student teachers with a new dialectic relationship in the stage of field experience, parents

do the very same for practicing teachers. The connections that a teacher has are not simply limited to the classroom, but the role of the community as a whole becomes more significant (Schempp and Graber 1992: 340). However, this does not mean that teacher educational factors would suddenly stomp over other constituents of identity construction, as students still play the most pivotal role in teacher socialization even in the in-service phase (Blase 1986: 104). In general, the beginning of the induction phase for new teachers is often quite challenging and this time is often described as a back and forth pendulum of survival and discovery (Huberman 1989). Teachers face new and perplexing situations which they then seek to survive and only later begin to find the pedagogical tools to establish functional relationships with their students.

3.3 Roles as a part of teacher identity

Discussing the different roles that teacherhood entails builds upon the multifaceted nature of identity, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. These roles serve to illustrate and concretize the theoretical view that one possesses more than simply one identity (Lin 2012: 1, Lawler 2014: 12). Foreign language teachers, and teachers in general, are not currently expected to merely pass on the knowledge of their subject, but multiple other role expectations have surfaced in recent years (Johnson 2001, Laine 2004, Sercu 2006). The roles that a subject teacher assumes are highly dependent on the subject that he or she teaches. To provide an example of this paradigm this thesis will look at the different roles a foreign language teacher often possesses. Although many possible roles could be distinguished, this thesis will discuss the roles of a language teacher, an educator and an intercultural teacher, as they provide an ideal set of roles that help exemplify the multifaceted nature of teacher identity. The following discussion is not meant to be exhaustive by any means, but rather a summary of the aforementioned roles and their significance in the entity that is teacher identity.

Teachers, and subject teachers in particular, are expected to act as representatives of their subject of expertise. The primary function of, for example, a language teacher is to pass on the knowledge of the target language to his or her students. In the role of a language teacher, a greater emphasis is put on language competence as well as the mastery of appropriate pedagogical methods. A division of language competence in a language teaching context is proposed by Johnson (2001: 16), who suggests that systemic, strategic and sociolinguistic competences are in the heart of successful language learning. Systemic competence refers to the knowledge of language as a functional entity consisting of such aspects as grammar, pronunciation and semantics. Although sociolinguistic competence could be interpreted as a part of the role of an intercultural teacher, it is closely knit to the grammatical and stylistic choices a speaker makes on a linguistic level. For example, the awareness of the connotations different greetings may have is important not only on a cultural level, but also in the sense that teachers prove their subject competence by being able to provide students with an ample number of alternative expressions in varying situations. The third competence suggested by Johnson (2001: 38), strategic competence, refers to the communication strategies students rely on their path towards mastering the target language. These strategies are used to compensate for the gaps in the learner's linguistic ability, which helps language users overcome unsuccessful word retrievals and errors.

Both student teachers and practicing teachers most likely possess implicit mastery of these three competences, but what is relevant for their identity as language teachers is the ability to pass this knowledge on. The ability to apply fitting pedagogical methods to a particular aspect of language competence is referred to as pedagogical competence. As already discussed in this thesis, teacher education programs are the primary source of pedagogical competence, as they seek to equip student teachers with the pedagogical tools that they need to teach the target language structures to students. However, the aims and orientation of a teacher education program are not the only factors in pedagogical competence, but such component as the tangible resources available to the

teacher and professional standards established by the law, such as the national curricula, can affect the pedagogical choices a teacher makes (Suciu and Mata 2011: 413). In general, both pedagogical and linguistic competence can greatly affect the way teachers perceive themselves as professionals. It is reported that teachers who feel they lack subject-specific knowledge may feel inadequate as teachers (Woolhouse et al 2011: 61).

Although subject teachers are hired to teach their subject, their role as educators is also acknowledged in society. In this thesis, an educator is understood as a person who is responsible for directing and rearing a child's development towards a generally accepted direction. Some literature refers to this role as a rearer, signifying the effect teachers have on the attitudes and values of children (Lindseth 2006: 588). However, the term educator better suits its Finnish counterpart and more appropriately notes the educational aims of teachers who work with older students. This process involves teaching social skills and manners, and familiarizing students with the values their culture emphasizes the most. This aim is explicitly communicated in the Finnish core curriculum, which states that teachers should help students understand their physical and psychological growth as well as assess the ethical implications of their behavior (*Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet* 2004: 38). This aim is evident also in teacher education, where student teachers are provided with pedagogical knowledge that emphasizes upbringing and educating instead of simply offering methodological tools to transfer their subject content to students. Teacher trainees are supplied with means to identify learning difficulties and help students overcome them. Additionally, a short glimpse into special education is offered to student teachers. It is noted that the roots of teacher education lie in educational psychology, philosophy of education and sociology of education (Laine 2004: 86). Although the role of an educator in more prevalent with class teachers, subject teachers are still expected to contribute to the overall development of students. The Finnish core curriculum notes that one of the aims of foreign language teaching is to equip students with a set of learning strategies. This process requires students to critically assess their own strengths and weaknesses as well as learning to operate responsibly in a learning

environment, which emphasizes the inner growth of a student (*Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet* 2004: 139).

The significance of cultural knowledge as a part of successful communication in foreign languages has led to the surfacing of yet another role expectation for subject teachers. Given that not all cultural knowledge can simply be implicitly acquired, teachers are expected to incorporate intercultural competence to their pedagogical repertoire. The theme of intercultural competence, or an intercultural teacher, can be approached as a set of skills that need to be mastered in order to appropriately consider the subtle inclinations cultural differences may have on communication. At this point, one should be reminded that although communicative competence is not explicitly mentioned as a part of intercultural competence, it is still understood as a vital part of the equation seeing how language is always a tool of communication (Sercu 2006: 57). Byram (1997) defines intercultural competence in terms of five *savoirs*. These *savoirs* cover not only the knowledge of social groups and their practices and the general norms of societal interaction, but also the ability to interpret documents and other material from a foreign culture and to relate it to a corresponding phenomenon in one's own (Byram 1997: 58, 61). Additionally, intercultural competence in Byram's terms requires one to be able to acquire new cultural knowledge and attune one's behavior to this new knowledge in a real-time interaction. The last *savoir* calls for curiosity and openness towards other cultures, which includes the ability to overlook disbeliefs not only about the target culture, but also of one's own (Byram 1997: 63). Based on this definition of intercultural competence, it is suggested that a culturally aware foreign language teacher should be knowledgeable of the intricate details of the target culture and preferably have frequent and varied connections to the culture (Sercu 2006: 57). Additionally, understanding one's own culture and that of the students will help teachers compare and contrast differences between the two cultures. Relating foreign cultural tendencies to one's own helps students acquire this knowledge. Sercu (2006: 58) also notes that these cultural aims

should also be visible in the choices a teacher makes with his or her teaching techniques and teaching materials.

3.4 Teacher education in Finland

On a broad view, teacher education refers to the complete and multifaceted process of equipping future teachers with the knowhow and expertise they will need in their job. Another term for this would be teacher training which is sometimes used in the Finnish educational context. However, since some of the previous research in the field understands teacher training only as the practical aspect of the education, this paper will refer to the entire schooling process as *teacher education* and its practical side will be dealt with as *teaching practice* to avoid any misunderstandings. The subjects of teacher education will be referred to as either teacher trainees or student teachers depending on the context.

The strategic goals of Finnish teacher training follow closely the themes and factors of identity construction, as defined in sections 3.1 and 3.2. On the one hand, the Finnish teacher education program provides student teachers with theoretical knowledge on learning and education in the earlier stages of the program. On the other hand, concrete tools for teaching and pedagogical knowhow is built upon the previously acquired theoretical framework ensuring the competence of student teachers (Department of Teacher Education of the University of Tampere). More explicit educational goals are offered by the University of Jyväskylä, who state that they aim to equip future teachers with tools for the challenges of lifelong education. This is done by promoting student autonomy and self-growth in a dialogical learning environment. The mission statement of the Department of Teacher Education also notes that both internal and external networks are present in the Finnish teacher education. This means that students are provided with working life contacts and experiences in addition to the academic aspects

of the training that are supplied by the university (Department of Teacher Education of the University of Jyväskylä).

In the Finnish educational context, qualifications for a teaching position are acquired through university level education. The Master's degree Finnish student teachers complete for their competence to practice the position of a class teacher or subject teacher consists of 300 ects that can be further divided into studies in their respective major subjects, pedagogics and minor subjects (Toomar 2014). The present paper will focus on the training of subject teachers, which consists of two pedagogic programs: basic and subject studies in pedagogics. The basic studies are usually completed over the course of the first two years of university education, whereas the subject studies in pedagogics are completed within a single study year. The entire program covers 60 study credits, 15 of which come from teaching practice. Although each university has a department of teacher education that is responsible for the pedagogic education of student teachers, both subject specific departments and teacher training schools join in on the process of educating future teachers to form a three way co-operation (Toomar 2014). In this entity, subject specific departments, such as the department of languages, are responsible for equipping students with knowledge of their major subject as well the application of these subject in terms of education (Department of Teacher Education of the University of Tampere). Teacher training schools, on the other hand, facilitate the practical aspect of teacher education and offer students a possibility to engage in teaching practice.

4 Previous research

This chapter will seek to relate the theoretical framework of this thesis to empirical case evidence. A selection of studies approaching the themes discussed in Chapter 3 will be introduced to form a coherent picture of the findings that research in the field of teacher identity has yielded. These findings will provide a framework for the current study and

help construct data collection. Divided into two sections, the following chapter will look at studies conducted on the factors of teacher identity construction as well as the conflicts that are a part of this process. The chapter will offer a short introduction to each study, explain the method of choice and discuss their results. Additionally, the implications of each study for this thesis will be looked at to further demonstrate the research gap that this thesis seeks to fulfill.

4.1 Studies on the factors of teacher identity construction

The theoretical framework for Bartlett and Erben's (1996) research lies in the factors of teacher identity formation. As discussed in Chapter 3, one can distinguish influences that are more general in their nature rather than specific in the way they affect teacher identities. These macro considerations as well as the identities of student teachers as a whole were the main areas of interest in this study. To quickly refresh one's memory, Bartlett and Erben defined such factors as education and cultural policy, economic processes and cultural-historical influences as macro considerations. Based on these three dimensions, Bartlett and Erben constructed their research to focus on two primary features: student-teacher subjectivity and identity as a sense of self, and how the structural processes in economic imperatives and cultural-historical factors influence identity formation. The data were gathered through observing in-depth interviews in small groups as well as analyzing diaries of individual students. The sample size of twenty consisted of first cohort students in a Japanese immersion program called LACITEP.

One of the most interesting findings in the research was that the participants who had previously received positive reinforcement and experienced an encouraging environment as well as had in-country experience of the target culture articulated their sense of self very differently from the others. This led the research team to the conclusion that one's personal development affects both one's professional development and one's

positioning of self. Bartlett and Erben also noted that the official status of the LACITEP program enabled the students to engage in a dialectic interaction that further helped them shape their identities as teachers. What they mean by this is that the state level authorization made it possible for the students to reflect on their own development as well as their thoughts on the program, which proved to play a major part in helping the students over the struggles they faced during the program. Additionally, the role of cultural-historical influences was witnessed in the way the participants operated in the intersection of Australian and Asian cultures.

In terms of this current thesis, the findings presented in Bartlett and Erben's paper support both the role of personal experiences as well as teacher educational factors such as the LACITEP program and cultural-historical influences in student teacher identity formation. As the results show, students felt that the chance of participating in dialectic interaction that was provided by the teacher education program helped them discover themselves as future teachers, which leads me to hypothesize that similar tendencies might be visible in the responses for the current thesis as well. Additionally, should the participants feel such a connection exists between teacher education and teacher identity formation, one could theorize that the stage of teacher education a specific participant is attending has an effect on their perceived professional identity. Participants at the later stages of teacher education have had more opportunities to engage in dialectic interaction both with their peers and mentors, which would suggest that they might report a further constructed sense of self as future teachers.

The second study focusing on the identity construction of teachers was conducted by Lin (2012), who sought to find out how professional discourse within courses helps student teachers construct their teacher identity. Additionally, the participants' (non)nativeness was of interest in relation to their enculturation process and the pedagogical decisions they made in choosing teaching practices (Lin 2012: 196). These two themes were approached from two distinctively different directions in the paper's research questions:

from a personal and teacher educational point of view, to use such terms. Firstly, Lin wanted to find out how the MATESOL program's philosophies as well as the current curriculum influenced the identity construction of future ESL/EFL teachers - the teacher educational factor. Secondly, attention was paid to the individuals and the way their backgrounds and personal beliefs affected their negotiation of teacher identity - the personal factor.

In her research, Lin chose an ethnographic approach of observing both non-native English speakers (NNES) and native English speaker (NES) student teachers in various contexts to construct an understanding of how the participants went about forming their identities (Lin 2012: 60). Lin's sample size of 26 consisted of ten NNES student teachers and 16 NES student teacher with varying backgrounds. Out of these 26 student teachers attending the course, four were followed in closer detail to compare and contrast different teaching styles and identities with one another. Based on the differences in gender, race, education and teaching experience, Lin assumed to find variations in the participants' identity construction processes (Lin 2012: 77). The participants were observed over the course of one academic year in their respective educational programs.

The results showed that student teachers found the general courses in different fields of linguistics helpful in the process of constructing their teacher identities (Lin 2012: 198). However, the research noted a desire for more courses that focused on teaching grammar. In other words, the role of pedagogically oriented education was seen as a vital part of constructing a teacher identity. The role of teaching internship also became evident in the MATESOL program. The students participated in two quarters of internship, which provided them with opportunities to not only observe teaching in an authentic context, but to also teach their own class and assist an experienced ESL teacher. The chance to engage in legitimate peripheral participation, or teaching in real contexts with limited responsibilities, can be seen as a reassuring factor in identity formation, as it offers student teachers a safe environment to hone their pedagogical skills and build confidence

(Lin 2012: 200). In relation to the second research question and the personal factors in identity formation, it was found that linguistic competence affected both the student teachers' identities and participation within the courses. Participants with non-native backgrounds drew from their cultural and linguistic backgrounds to situate themselves within the group. In addition to cultural factors, age was also used as marker in defining one's teacher identity. The study mentions a fifty-four-year-old student teacher who made adequate use of her age in constructing a teacher identity that relied heavily on her life experiences. It was said that this particular participant used her 'old' age as a means to validate her status as a teacher, and that students viewed this participant as capable and knowledgeable (Lin 2012: 211).

To sum up the findings of this research, it could be said that both individual and collective factors help construct teacher identities. Student teachers seem to draw upon their personal beliefs and backgrounds in this process, but they also put weight on the educational content offered to them by the program. For my thesis, this implies that teaching practice is likely to affect the way student teachers view themselves. Based on the findings by Lin, I hypothesize that the stage of teaching practice and the teaching background of my participants is likely to be reflected in their teacher identities and beliefs of self.

A look at the teacher identity construction through the eyes of symbolic interactionism is offered by Martel (2014). The theoretical framework for this study is set on the earlier discussed three tier model of symbolic interactionism that notes the roles of the looking-glass self, role taking and role identity. Additionally, the study makes use of the notion of teacher socialization, which refers to the process of acquiring the norms, values, attitudes, skills and behaviors that the teaching profession requires. As already covered in the teacher identity chapter (Chapter 3), scholars divide this socialization process into three phases: pre-training, pre-service and in-service (Schempp and Graber 1992: 332, Martel 2014: 32). Seeing how teacher socialization takes place through all of these three

phases, this theory can be said to advocate for lifelong learning and constant identity construction.

In his study, Martel made use an intrinsic approach of focusing on one participant and following her for six months collecting different forms of data. These forms included interviews, classroom observations, digital journals and post-observation recordings. The participant was an ESL/EFL student teacher in the field of foreign language teaching. The research led to a categorization of two positions based on the participant's teacher preparation program and her secondary student placement: a provider of target language input and an enactor of a particular approach to foreign language teaching (Martel 2014: 86). According to the study, the expectations for a teacher to provide her students with ample amount of target language input plays a significant role in shaping one's teacher identity. These expectations do not only surface from the student viewpoint, but they are also set by the teaching program. Martel notes that in his interviews, the participating student teacher communicated a desire to have at least 90 % of her lessons in the target language - something that did not appear to have happened in the participants' own experiences as a student (Martel 2014: 88). The paper reminds the reader about the dissonance between this expectation and the reality of the classroom situation with varying levels of proficiency among students. Although a teacher might feel that using the target language gives them a sense of credibility, some students might struggle if a sufficient amount of instruction are not offered in their first language. The second position of identity formation discovered in the study deals with the methodological approaches a given teacher chooses to use in a classroom context. With so many theories and styles of teaching being actively practiced in the present time, a teacher trainee might find oneself struggling to choose the one(s) that fit his or her style the best under the massive amount of pressure offered by peers and students. Martel reports how his participant felt that she had to comply to the taste of her mentoring teaching although she might not have felt comfortable choosing a particular method of teaching (Martel 2014: 97).

What one can conclude from Martel's findings is that forming one's teacher identity is anything but a linear process. A multitude of designated identities are offered by peers, mentors and supervising teachers, none of which might eventually fit a particular student teacher. The role of interaction is yet again present in this study, as the participant mentions the role of her university professors and supervisors, classmates, mentoring teachers and other teachers in the school of her teaching practice in offering a viewpoint from which she could reflect on her own identity. Keeping in mind the earlier discussed division into pre-training, pre-service and in-service phases, I hypothesize that the role of peer and supervisory input might vary in each stage of the identity formation process. The implication for my thesis is that these possible variations and different emphases put on feedback and group reflection should be researched in my questionnaire.

4.2 Studies on conflicts within teacher identity construction

Tsui (2007) approached the theme of teacher identity formation by examining the interplay between different aspects of professional identity. The research sought an answer to whether these different parts of the multifaceted nature of teacher identity are in harmony with one another or whether the struggle between these sub-identities is the basis for identity construction. More specifically, attention was directed to the relationship between personal and social dimensions of identity construction as well as the fluctuations between agency and social structure in relation to identity. The data in this particular study were gathered through narrative inquiry. The narrative was constructed over a period of six months including both face-to-face storytelling as well as personal diaries. The combined data were first sorted chronologically and then according to different conflicts that surfaced during the process of identity construction.

The research builds on the participant's, Minfang's, experiences both as a learner and a teacher to emphasize the role of competence in perceived identity. Tsui reports that

Minfang's competence as an EFL teacher was not fully recognized by the community, which resembled his experience of being singled out for his marginality in his days of youth as a student (Tsui 2007: 674). It is noted that it was only when the community started acknowledging Minfang's competence and trusting him with a greater responsibility in teacher education that Minfang began to perceive his own competence. This finding underlines the dual nature of competence in identity construction: individual recognition of competence and the legitimacy of access to practice (Tsui 2007: 675).

Both social and individual aspects of identity construction were witnessed in Minfang's narratives. The paper notes how Minfang heavily drew on his personal experiences as a learner, when defining the role of a teacher in classroom context. These beliefs were later challenged by the participant's peers in teacher education as well as the orientation of the education program. As these two aspects clashed, Minfang was reported to resist the alignments proposed by the institution and instead reclaimed ownership of meanings by combining different methods, when he was free of external pressure. This behavior closely follows the pattern of strategic compliance, as discussed earlier in this paper (Lacey 1977). In other words, Minfang felt that he was expected to act in accordance with the ideologies of the teacher education program despite the fact that he disagreed with those approaches.

The findings of this research do not seem to support the idea of harmonious interplay between different aspects of teacher identity. Instead, it seems that the conflicts that may arise along the process of defining oneself as a teacher are sometimes resolved by disengagement and nonparticipation (Tsui 2007: 678). Although this conflict has not been as explicitly addressed in other studies, it suggests that student teachers might often feel rather torn between their own beliefs and the expectations of the teacher education program. This discrepancy should also be examined in the current thesis and in the light

of these findings, participants should be given a chance to reflect on how they view the expectation that teacher educational actors pose on them.

The role of a subject teacher and conflicts that threaten perceived linguistic competence were at the heart of Woolhouse et al's (2011) study. In 2009, a new educational policy was introduced in England making modern language (ML) teaching compulsory to all pupils between the ages of 7 and 11. The result of this decision was that primary teachers with varying language backgrounds were now expected to take up the task of teaching a subject that they had not received training in. The research team sought to find out whether these primary school teachers felt that they would be capable of integrating modern languages to their teaching. This thesis has already discussed the role of a subject teacher and how linguistic competence is a vital part of a foreign language teacher's professional identity. The same significance is underlined by Woolhouse et al, who note that the lack of professional education in modern languages might threaten the epistemological and ontological security of primary teachers challenging their belief in themselves as competent teachers (Woolhouse et al 2011: 57).

The data were gathered by a series of online surveys mostly consisting of open-ended questions. These surveys were carried out in three phases each of which took place at a different stage of a CPD course that was designed to boost the linguistic knowledge of primary school teachers. The sample size of 43 primary school teachers included only four men, but 35 of the participants had at least 10 years of teaching experience. In addition to the surveys that all 43 participants completed, a series of interviews were also conducted for four teachers. The focus of the interviews was to observe the changes in their experiences of teaching French as a modern language.

The results of the research showed that 28 of the 43 participants felt that they lacked proper qualification for the newly defined post of a primary teaching which included teaching French. This sense of inadequateness was the main reason the participants had

enrolled on the CPD course which they hoped to increase their knowledge in French. Woolhouse et al (2011: 61) point out that subject knowledge and language pedagogy were not the only reason the participants took the course, but that they also wanted to boost their confidence in their own abilities as teachers. In terms of teacher identity, the research team argues that these primary teachers had to integrate the identity of a language specialist to their existing teacher identity. The surveys and interviews conducted in the two latter phases of the CPD course showed that the participants had started to view the addition of French to their primary teaching more favorably. This change is attributed to sense of success in integrating French to one's classroom teaching as well as one's perceived increase in linguistic competence (Woolhouse et al 2011: 63).

Fittingly for this thesis, the research team concludes that the professional identity of a teacher is a process of assessing prevalent circumstances and re-negotiating one's identity to suit that environment. As new requirements surface, teachers are challenged to redefine themselves and adjust their expertise in order to overcome insecurities about their competence. This study also emphasizes the significance of governmental policies on teacher identity. An individual teacher cannot construct his or her identity to simply suit his or her personal taste, but the legislative influences play a major role in directing the formation of teacher identity.

4.3 Summary of implications

Based on the research literature discussed in this chapter, the role of teacher education is more than evident in the identity construction processes of teacher students. Many of the studies seemed to attribute this fact to the interactional relationships student teachers form with their peers and mentors that allow them to reflect on their own identity (Bartlett & Erben 1996, Martel 2014, Tsui 2007). These findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of teacher education and its relation to identity formation. Rather than serving as formal machinery that seeks to implement its ideals to the minds of

student teachers, it also provides indirect influences that affect this process. This social dimension of teacher education will be further studied in this present thesis.

The different phases of teacher identity construction as well as the stages of teacher education offer another point of interest. Although none of the studies discussed above offer explicit insight into the differences between the identities of student teachers in the different stages of teacher education, some of the findings still suggest that looking at this process from a chronological viewpoint could provide us with data that help us understand the periodic nature of what student teachers undergo in their training. Thus, this thesis will seek not only to uncover the effects that teacher education has on student teacher's identities, but also to explain how these effects line up in the course of the entire program.

Lastly, the conflicted nature of identity construction became apparent in some of the studies introduced earlier (Martel 2014, Tsui 2007, Woolhouse et al 2011). On the one hand, discovering the different aspects in the lives of student teachers that cause these conflicts is of utmost interest and accurately describing the relationship between personal and teacher educational factors in identity construction would benefit the field greatly. On the other hand, finding out how student teachers cope with or even resolve these conflicts is an especially intriguing matter. The present study will, therefore, focus on defining the factors that cause conflict in the teacher identity construction process of student teachers as well as the coping mechanisms that student teachers use to deal with the conflicts.

5 Research and methodology

The thesis relies on the participants' ability to reflect on their own development - a method that was present in the background literature reviewed in Chapter 4 (Bartlett and Erben 1996, Martel 2014, Woolhouse et al 2011). Based on these authors' decisions of

analysing journal entries and using questionnaires as methods of data gathering and, thus, validating quantitative methods as proper tools of research in the field of teacher identity, I have made the decision to use a questionnaire as the means of gathering data in this study. In addition to its proven validity in previous research, the choice of a questionnaire is also supported by the ease of responding and the anonymity of its nature. As became evident in the review of past research in Chapter 4, much of the previous research relies on qualitative data that is often observed over the course of an entire academic year. However, the time frame for the thesis does not allow me to take an entire year to observe my participants in their studies. The fact that most previous studies have chosen a qualitative approach over quantitative methods also creates a research gap. With only a handful of participants in each study, the field lacks a general idea of how the majority of student teachers go about constructing their professional identities. By resorting to a quantitative approach and reaching a larger sample size, this thesis aims to provide the field with data that are not only more generalizable, but also better represent the beliefs of the current generation of teacher trainees in a given university.

This chapter will offer closer insight into the methods of data gathering and analysis. It will discuss the rationale behind the decisions of using a questionnaire in this particular study and explain the statistical methods of analyzing the data. Additionally, I will present general information about the participants and describe the data collection procedures. However, the chapter will begin with a quick glance at the research questions for this thesis.

5.1 Research questions

First and foremost, the current thesis aims to discover the factors behind teacher identity construction. Based on the background literature, the factors can be roughly split into two categories: personal and teacher educational. Personal factors refer to the individual

preferences that participants draw from their backgrounds, whereas teacher educational factors focus on such aspects as the orientations of a teacher education program as well as the peer influences that the program supplies student teachers with. As was discussed in the literature review in Chapters 3 and 4, the conflicting nature of teacher identity construction forces student teachers to adjust their behavior if personal and teacher educational factors are not cohesive. These perceived conflicts as well as the adjustment strategies are also under scrutiny in this research with additional focus on the role of one's work experience and stage of pedagogical study in defining one's approach to these conflicts. The research questions are constructed around these three aims and they stand as follows:

1. To what extent do participants attribute their teacher identity construction to personal factors?

2. How do participants view the role of the teacher education program in their identity construction?

3. What sort of conflicts do participants identify in the process of constructing their teacher identities? How do their work experience and stage of pedagogical studies affect the solving of these potential conflicts?

5.2 Questionnaire as a method of data collection

In general, quantitative methods are used for the purpose of reaching a broader base of participants and more generalizable results. As the sample size grows, the responses of the participants grow more diverse and variations between individuals begin to emerge. A questionnaire is described as an ideal tool for mapping these differences by employing empirical statements and supporting comparative agendas (Sukamolson 2010). One of the primary uses for questionnaires is the research of behavior. As a method of data

collection, questionnaires enable researches to examine the preferences, perceptions, attitudes and behavior of their participants (Gorrell et al 2011: 507). In the case of this particular study, the focus is on discovering the perceptions of the participants about their teacher identities. If used properly, questionnaires offer participants a chance to accurately reflect on their opinions rather than posing questions that expect participants to give a right or a wrong answer (Kalaja et al 2011: 148). The use of this particular method is also supported by the ease of administration that it requires, its low expense and relatively wide potential reach (Gorrell et al 2011: 508).

To adequately survey the perceptions and opinions of the participants, the current study makes use of the Likert scale in the questionnaire. Although many rating scales exist, the Likert scale is reported to be the most widely used of these scales (McLeod 2008). This particular scale makes use of statements that the participants are prompted to answer in relation to the extent to which they either agree or disagree with the statement. The number of possible responses can vary and an odd number of responses can be added to provide participants with a neutral point (McLeod 2008). Generally, the scale features 5 statements (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree) and a corresponding numerical value for each response is assigned. Measuring opinions and attitudes is the primary function of the Likert scale and its efficiency has been proven in academic research (Kalaja et al 2011: 150). Although the Likert scale is credited for its ease of construction and completion, it can be said to lack homogeneity that is often needed to accurately portray the distinctive differences between participants (Page-Bucci 2003). It has, thus, been criticized for not providing data for the underlying reasons behind the participants' responses (Gal et al 1994, as cited in Page-Bucci 2003).

5.3 Methods of data analysis: Student's t-test, nonparametric correlations and qualitative content analysis

The current thesis makes use of Student's t-test and nonparametric correlations to statistically analyze the results of the questionnaire. Student's t-test is designed to measure whether two predetermined groups of data are statistically different from one another (Trochim 2006). These two groups, or samples, can either be independent or paired (Rice 2006). Independent samples refer to the comparison of two sets of samples that are independent and identically distributed. Paired samples, however, measure the statistically significant differences between a pair of similar measurements making use of the additional information of the sample that the independent test lacks. In Student's t-test, the means of the two samples, paired or unpaired, are drafted and a ratio between these means and the dispersion of the scores is calculated (Trochim 2006). The t-value calculated in the ratio will be positive if the mean of the first sample has been greater than the mean of the second sample. In addition to calculating a t-value, one must test whether the ratio is large enough to call the difference between the two samples significant, which is done by referring to a table of significance (Trochim 2006). In the present thesis, Student's t-test, and its' independent samples variant, will be used to differentiate between the responses of participants in different stages of their teacher education. Additionally, the participants' work experience will be researched in a similar manner.

Nonparametric correlations, and correlations in general, are used to determine whether two separate variables can be proved to associate with one another. Alternatively, one could say that this method of statistical analysis attempts to discover whether these two variables covary - in other words, whether an increase in one variable is followed by either an increase or a decrease in the other (McDonald 2014). Although different types of commonly used nonparametric correlation coefficients exist, Spearman's rank correlation is perhaps the most widely used and this coefficient will also be the method of choice in this particular thesis (Statsoft 2014). One key feature of Spearman's rank correlation is that unlike, for example, Pearson correlation it does not assume that the data are normally distributed (McDonald 2014). Much like Pearson correlation, Spearman's rank correlation computes a value between -1 and +1 that signifies the

relative strength of the correlation between the two measures variables (Finnish Social Science Data Archive 2004). A negative value means that a negative monotonic relationship between the measured variables exists, whereas a positive value signifies a positive correlation. A verbal description of the numeric value for the relative strength of the correlation suggests that any correlation below .40 can be considered weak, whereas correlations over 0.60 are considered strong (Statstutor).

Qualitative content analysis can be understood in terms of various techniques used to enable a researcher to systematically analyze a given set of data in a textual form (Mayring 2000). Qualitatively analyzed data can take many forms such as transcripts of interviews, video tapes or observatory remarks, but in the present thesis the focus is on self-reflective comments on open-ended questions regarding various factors of teacher identity formation. Content analysis will allow one to better draw conclusions on the underlying mechanics of the perceptions participants hold on a given topic based on qualitative text interpretation. In order for this interpretation to be valid and reliable, a researcher is to follow what Mayring (2000) calls rules of analysis and categories in the center of analysis. In other words, a set of data needs to be devised into content analytical units and analyzed one step at a time. Additionally, attention should be paid to categorizing text interpretation based on research question and research aims to the extent that the findings suit them. However, forcing interpretation to preset categories is not in the nature of qualitative content analysis, but it is rather preferred to let the categories be shaped by the data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1279). The process of content analysis can be roughly split into two distinctive phases: immersion and coding. Firstly, the data are approached as an entity and the researcher reads the text as a whole prior to breaking it down to key concepts and thoughts which serve as the basis for further elaboration on the phenomena that arise from the data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1279). In this study, qualitative content analysis is used to interpret the elaborative comments of the participants on the open-ended questions regarding personal and teacher educational factors of teacher identity construction. These comments and their

subsequent analysis will provide additional insight into the thoughts of the participants that cannot be determined solely based on their responses to the multiple choice statements.

5.4 Data collection and participants

As discussed earlier, the method of choice for data collection in the case of this thesis was a questionnaire - more specifically, an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was drafted and piloted in early January 2015, during which I received feedback from both peers and my thesis supervisor. After slight alterations to the questionnaire based on this feedback, the official version was launched January 26th through various university mailing lists. These mailing lists were chosen so that a large variety of student teachers of different stages of pedagogical training and varying fields of expertise would be reached. Anonymous participation was encouraged in an open letter that was addressed to all future teachers regardless of their study year, major subject or work experience.

Based on the background literature discussed in Chapter 3, the questionnaire was divided into four sections. The first of these sections consisted of questions regarding the participants' personal variables, such as age, gender, work experience and stage of pedagogical training. These factors were chosen to better enable comparison between different variables in relation to how they reflect the participants' views on teacher identity construction. In the second section of the questionnaire, participants responded to statements regarding their views on the role of personal factors in teacher identity construction. These statements ranged from the values the participants had acquired in their childhood to the role their experiences from other teachers played in formulating their own professional identities. Whereas this second section dealt with statements relating to the personal factors of the participants, the next section targeted their views on the role of teacher education. These statements included such aspects of teacher education as peer feedback, the role of the mentoring teacher and teaching practice. The

last section of the questionnaire focused on the earlier hypothesized conflicts that may arise between personal and teacher education factors. This section featured statements regarding both the abstract (lectures) and concrete (teaching practice) levels of teacher education to supply participants with varying experience of teacher education with an opportunity to reflect on their perceptions - even those, who had not yet made it to the stage of teaching practice. These statements explored the participants' reactions to feedback on their lesson plans, their views on the compatibility of their own values comparing to those of the teacher education program's as well as the level of the attitudinal change the participants had made in conflict situations.

In the first two statement oriented sections of the questionnaire, the participants had to select their response from four options: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree or completely agree. In the last section, however, the scale of responses was slightly altered to suit the nature of the statements. These five responses measured the frequency of encountered behavior ranging from very rarely to very often and offering a neutral option for those participants who had not reached the stage of teaching practice by the time of the questionnaire. Additionally, participants were supplied with an open-ended question in both of the first two sections of the questionnaire to better allow them to elaborate on the various personal and teacher educational factors they see as contributing to their teacher identity construction. A more detailed breakdown of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix.

The sample (N= 76) consisted of Finnish university students of varying subjects of study. The ages of these participants ranged from under 20 to over 30, with the majority being between 20 and 24 years of age. The gender representation in this anonymous online survey ended up being rather lopsided, as 61 participants (80 % of the sample size) were female. Although the gender division was not as equally distributed as one would have hoped, the study years of the participants were much more versatile. The questionnaire was completed by 7 first year students as well as 7 students that have currently studied

for seven years or more. Moreover, the study years in between were rather evenly represented with the sixth year of studies being populated by most participants (26 %). The same even distribution was not seen in the amount of work experience reported by the participants. A combined total of 81 % of all participants reported to have either no experience from a formal teaching position or employments that lasted less than three months. The latter of these options included individual employments as a substitute teacher. Only 2 participants possessed more than two years of work experience in a teaching position. The last questions in the background section of the current questionnaire sought to map the stage of the participants' pedagogical studies. All of the 76 student teachers participating in the study had at least started their basic studies. The majority of these participants (70 %) were either currently completing their subject studies or had already done so during the time of the participation.

Table 1. Response distribution on the background section.

Question	Value	Frequency	Percent
Age	19 or under	1	1,3
	20-24	44	57,9
	25-29	27	35,5
	30 or over	4	5,3
Gender	Female	61	80,3
	Male	15	19,7
Study year	First	7	9,2
	Second	4	5,3
	Third	11	14,5
	Fourth	19	25
	Fifth	8	10,5
	Sixth	20	26,3
	Seventh or more	7	9,2
Work experience	No work experience	24	31,6

	Less than three months	37	48,7
	3-6 months	9	11,8
	7-12 months	4	5,3
	1-2 years	0	0
	2 years or more	2	2,6
Stage of pedagogical studies	Not yet begun	0	0
	Basic studies ongoing	16	21,1
	Basic studies finished	7	9,2
	Subject studies ongoing	25	32,9
	Subject studies finished	28	36,8

6 Results

This section will shed light on the numerical findings of the present study as well as offer analysis of the open-ended comments of the participants regarding personal and teacher educational factors. Divided into four parts, the chapter will discuss both personal and teacher educational factors in teacher identity construction, as conveyed by the participants. In addition, the attitudes of the participants concerning the possibly conflicting nature of this identity construction process are looked at. As discussed in Chapter 5, this thesis makes use of nonparametric correlations, Student's T-test and qualitative content analysis to further illustrate the underlying linkages within the data. For the sake of clarity and ease of interpretation, the statements and responses that can be found in the illustrations included in this chapter are all rough translations from the original questionnaire that was created in Finnish. Each section will begin with a discussion of the numerical findings of the questionnaire and then proceed to look at the comments of the participants.

6.1 Personal factors

Table 2 features the frequencies and percentages of responses on the statements regarding the participants' views on the role of personal factors in their teacher identity construction. The frequency column of the table provides the reader with the number of participants who selected a given response, whereas the percentages then tell the proportional size of these responses compared to the entire sample.

Table 2. Response distribution on personal factors.

Statement	Value	Frequency	Percent
I aim to actively reflect on my teacher identity	Completely disagree	1	1,3
	Somewhat disagree	9	11,8
	Somewhat agree	27	35,5
	Completely agree	39	51,3
I feel that my upbringing and the values I have acquired growing up to affect my teacher identity	Completely disagree	2	2,6
	Somewhat disagree	5	6,6
	Somewhat agree	41	53,9
	Completely agree	28	36,8
I base my teacher identity on my strengths	Completely disagree	0	0
	Somewhat disagree	5	6,6
	Somewhat agree	34	44,7
	Completely agree	37	48,7
	Completely disagree	1	1,3

	Somewhat disagree	1	1,3
I seek to orientate towards new information that enables me to improve myself as a teacher	Somewhat agree	36	47,4
	Completely agree	38	50

A quick glance at the table suggest that the majority of the participants either somewhat agreed or completely agreed with all of the four statements. Out of these statements, only the second one measuring the emphasis participants put on the values and upbringing they have received as children features the highest frequency of responses in the *somewhat agree* category with 41 counts and 53.9 % of all participants. The statements regarding the participants' active self-reflection, orientations towards information that help them improve themselves as teacher and the significance of personal strengths as a defining factor in pedagogical decisions and teacher identity showed the highest frequency of responses in the *completely agree* category. What is also noteworthy is the low frequency of responses in the *completely disagree* option for these four statements. None of the participants completely disagreed with building their teacher identity on their personal strengths. Similarly, only one participant completely disagreed with the statements about active self-reflection and orientating oneself towards new information.

More elaborate views on the diverse nature of the personal factors of teacher identity construction are offered through the participants' comments on the open-ended question that provided them with an opportunity to list additional factors that were not included in the statements. These comments did not only provide individual factors that were overlooked in the process of creating the questionnaire, but they also added depth to the analysis of the data by providing more explicit explanations to the ways in which these various factors have affected their teacher identity construction. These replies will be listed using the number of the question in the questionnaire form followed by the order

of the particular response. The original Finnish comment will be provided followed by the translation.

One of the factors that most prominently stemmed from the data was the role of work experience and how it influences the direction that one's teacher identity construction takes. Participants felt that experience from working as a teacher provided them with practice on matters that challenge their teacher identity and pedagogical decisions as well as the routines that are a key part of the life of a teacher:

> 7.1)
> Toimin kouluavustajana ennen omia opettajaopintojani, millä oli suuri merkitys oman pedagogisen ajatteluni kehityksessä. Työssä pääsin näkemään opettajan arkea opettajanpöydän toiselta puolelta ja tarkastelemaan sitä aika kriittisestikin.
> *I worked as a special needs assistant before my pedagogical studies, which had a huge effect on the development of my pedagogical thinking. In this line of work, I got to see the everyday routines of a teacher from the other side of the desk and reflect on it critically.*
> 7.2)
> Olen toiminut sivutoimisena tuntiopettajana kohta noin puoli vuotta ja työn tekeminen, siinä kohtaamani haasteet sekä opiskelijoita saamani palaute ovat vaikuttaneet hyvin paljon opettajaidentiteettini rakentumiseen, sillä rakennan sitä parhaillaan.
> *I have been working as a part-time teacher for half a year now and the job itself with all its challenges and the feedback I have received from my students have largely affected the construction of my teacher identity, as I am currently constructing it.*

However, work experience was not only seen as a means to learning about the job description of a teacher, but experience from others fields of practice were also seen as contributing to one's teacher identity:

> 7.3)
> Aikaisempi koulutus ja työkokemus myös muilta aloilta vaikuttaa.
> *Previous education and work experience from other lines of work has had an effect.*
> 7.4)

Kokemus ryhmänjohtamisesta monessa eri yhteydessä
Experience from team leadership in many different contexts.

These comments would suggest that work experience not only contributes to the set of pedagogical tools that one has at one's disposal, but it also provides insight into the routines that a teacher goes through on daily basis. Additionally, experience from others fields of practice assists participants with group control and leadership which came up as desirable characteristics in some of the comments. What is also worth noting is the emphasis that the second comment puts on student feedback. Although the role of feedback was researched in the questionnaire in the form of supervisor and peer feedback, its significance as a part of the everyday life of a practicing teacher was forgotten and the fact that future teachers value student feedback also brings another level of influence to the process of constructing one's professional identity.

The second personal factor of teacher identity construction that came up in many of the comments was the hobbies of the participants. Although hobbies cover a wide range of activities, the common denominator with these statements was the creativeness and uniqueness that one draws from their hobbies that they feel set them apart from the masses:

7.5)
Harrastuksista, esim musiikista koitan säilyttää luovuuden ja innovatiivisuuden.
Hobbies. I try to, for example, make use of the creativeness and inventiveness of music.
7.6)
Kiinnostus kaikenlaisiin erilaisiin ja harrastuksiin ja asioihin aukaisevat myös aika paljon opettajan silmiä näkemään hyötyä muussakin kuin perinteisessä pulpetissa pönöttämisessä.
An interest towards different hobbies and things help open the eyes of a teacher to see benefit in techniques and methods outside of the traditional approach of having students sitting tightly by the desks.
7.7)
Valmennustavat harrastuksissa.
Different methods of coaching in hobbies.

The first quote mentions music as a source of creativity and inventiveness for this particular participant. This creativeness, which can be interpreted as a virtue in the statements of these participants, is contrasted with what the second participant calls the traditional approach to teaching. This is a rather explicit manner of stating that hobbies can introduce the earlier mentioned creativeness and a personal touch to the repertoires of teachers that are more desirable characteristics than those offered by the traditional approaches that are, apparently, still valued. Intriguingly, the role of coaching, or leading, is also brought up again now in the context of hobbies in the third quote. The fact that this theme is repeated in various comments tells more about teacher identities rather than the construction process of these identities, but it is still worth noting that authoritativeness seems to be a key trait in an ideal teacher in the minds of these participants.

The third particularly eye-catching detail in the participants' comments was the value that was attributed to friendship as a means for reflecting on one's teacher identity. This category of comments included statements that explicitly mention friends and other such acquaintances that enable student teachers to engage in conversations regarding matters relevant to pedagogics:

7.8)

Keskustelut ystävien kanssa, myös muiden kuin opetusalalla olevien. Esim. yhteiskunnallisista ilmiöistä keskustelu toisten ihmisten kanssa voi antaa uusia ajatuksia ja perspektiiviä opetukseenkin liittyviin asioihin.

Conversation with friends, also with those who aren't in the educational field. For example, discussing phenomena related to society with another person might give you new ideas and perspective on pedagogical matters.

7.9)

Laaja ystäväpiiri: minulla on todella paljon ystäviä eri tieteenaloilta, mikä tietenkin antaa paljon laajemman näkemyksen kuin ryyppäävään kielenopiskelijaporukan kanssa hengailu.

A large circle of friends: I have a lot of friends from different disciplines, which gives me a broader perspective than hanging out with a bunch of drinking language students would.

7.10)

Ystävä/tuttavapiirin vaikutus (paljon opettajia/opettajaopiskelijoita).

The effect of friends/acquaintances (Lots of teacher/student teachers).

The first two comments point out that these relationships are not necessarily with other student teachers or student teachers of the same major subject, but rather people that offer new insight to the matters of interest. The second statement even emphasizes the significance of friends from others disciplines that provide a possibility to look at things from another perspective.

In summary, the responses to the current questionnaire provided support for the role of personal factors in the participants' teacher identity construction that was illustrated by a high frequency of agreement to the statements measuring these factors. In addition to the factors that were chosen for the questionnaire in advance, the participants' comments to the open-ended question regarding additional personal factors provided support for the influence that work experience, hobbies and friends have to one's teacher identity construction.

6.2 Teacher educational factors

As was the case with personal factors, the questionnaire results for teacher educational factors show a heavy emphasis on the participants' tendency to rate these factors highly on their effect on the participants' teacher identity. Table 3 contains statistical data on the frequencies and percentages of responses to statements regarding teacher educational factors.

Table 3. Response distribution on teacher educational factors.

Statement	Value	Frequency	Percent
Teaching practice has had a significant role in the construction of my teacher identity	Completely disagree	5	6,6
	Somewhat disagree	7	9,2
	Somewhat agree	22	28,9
	Completely agree	42	55,3
Supervisor feedback directs the development of my teacher identity	Completely disagree	1	1,3
	Somewhat disagree	9	11,8
	Somewhat agree	40	52,6
	Completely agree	26	34,2
I have acquired most of my pedagogical methods from teacher education	Completely disagree	2	2,6
	Somewhat disagree	16	21,1
	Somewhat agree	48	63,2
	Completely agree	10	13,2
I shape my teacher identity based on peer feedback and peer discussion	Completely disagree	1	1,3
	Somewhat disagree	10	13,2
	Somewhat agree	48	63,2
	Completely agree	17	22,4

When asked about the significance of teacher education in the construction of one's teacher identity, 42 of the 76 participants' completely agreed that teacher education plays a pivotal role in this construction process. At the same time, only 5 participants, or 6.6 % of the entire sample, completely disagreed with this particular statement. Statements regarding the role of instructor feedback, peer discussion and teacher education in

deciding one's pedagogical methodology provided a heavy concentration of responses on the *somewhat agree* option ranging from 40 to 48 responses. Both instructor feedback and peer discussions were deemed less influential by only one participant, whereas two future teachers felt that they choose their teaching methods based on influences outside of teacher education.

As we shift our attention from the statistical findings of the questionnaire to the comments of the participants, it can be noted that teacher education is not always viewed as entirely disconnected from one's personal preferences. As one of the participants points out, there are times when these two sets of factors overlap and work together to improve student teachers' identity development:

> 9.1)
>
> Opettajankoulutuksen teoreettinen puoli on enimmäkseen vahvistanut niitä arvoja ja toimintamalleja, jotka ovat muotoutuneet osaksi persoonaani jo aiemmin. Se on lujittanut uskoa omaan opetukselliseen näkemykseen, sillä OKL on korostanut opettajan oman persoonan roolia ja innovatiivisuutta.
>
> *The theoretical aspect of teacher education has mostly strengthened the values and methods that have already shaped to became a part of my identity. This has increased my belief in my own pedagogical visions, because the Department of Teacher Education has emphasized the role of the teacher's own persona and inventiveness.*

This statement brings up an important point: personal and teacher educational factors cannot always be analyzed separately from one another, but rather as an intertwined entity. One way of interpreting this participant's comment is to say that teacher education and its role in shaping one's teacher identity is also supplementary to the personal factors that one draws on to negotiate one's pedagogical path. Even though the background literature painted a rather one-dimensional picture of a juxtaposition between the teacher education program and the personal preferences of a student teacher, the conflict-ridden nature of this relationship might be less confrontational in reality. Rather than simply seeking to stomp on the preferences of a student teacher, teacher education seems to wish

to promote self-reflection and finding one's own way rather than following a predetermined path to teacherhood.

Out of the multitude of responses emerges yet another common theme: learning from an undesirable example. The following statements paint of picture of teacher education as a possibility to recognize malign others in the field of pedagogy and use these observations as cues for personal teacher identity construction:

> 9.2)
> On myös sellaisia "Tollanen nyt en ainakaan halua olla!" kokemuksia.
> *I also have experience of situations where I've felt "I most definitely don't want to be like that!".*
> 9.3)
> Harjoittelussa joutuu miellyttämään ohjaajia ja tekemään kuten he haluavat, joten tavallaan negaation kautta löytää tapoja, joita ei halua käyttää itse tai tunne luontevaksi.
> *In teaching practice, I feel like I have to please my instructors and do as they see fit, which helps me find ways that I don't want to use or feel unnatural using.*

These statements highlight the two ways in which teacher education, and teaching practice more specifically, can help student teachers learn using the idea of a malign other: observing and acting. On the one hand, the first statement describes a situation, where this particular student teacher has received theoretical suggestions on pedagogical methods during lectures or observed more concrete situations in teaching practice. This, in turn, has helped the participant define aspects that he or she wishes not to include in his or her teacher identity. On the other hand, one can also engage in the undesirable behavior oneself and use this experience to further shape one's pedagogical views. Because the two participants did not elaborate more on these statements, it is difficult to determine the exact situations, where they have faced these undesirable pedagogical decisions. Regardless of this ambiguity, the fact that teacher education and its values affect the construction of student teachers' professional identities by pushing them in the opposite direction provides support for the theorized conflicts between personal and

teacher educational factors of identity construction. Although the quote in the previous paragraph showed how teacher education can cater to needs of the individual and promote the discovery of personal preferences, the experience might be entirely the opposite for other student trainees.

As the results of the questionnaire are analyzed to determine the participants' perceptions on teacher education and teacher identity construction, it is worth keeping in mind that many of the participants have not yet begun their teaching practice due to the stage of their studies. Additionally, some of these respondents are also less immersed in the world of teacher education, as they are only completing the very first pedagogical courses. This was also noted in some of comments that were supplied in this section of the questionnaire:

> 9.4)
> Olen vielä niin alussa opettajaopintojani, että näihin kysymyksiin vastaaminen on hieman arvuuttelun varassa. Mutta olen jokseenkin samaa mieltä näiden asioiden suhteen siinä mielessä, mitä kuvittelen niiden vaikutuksen olevan.
> *I am still at such an early stage of my teacher education that answering these questions requires a bit of guessing. However, I can somewhat agree with these statements, when I try to imagine what their effect will be like.*
> 9.5)
> Opettajankoulutus on minulla vielä niin varhaisessa vaiheessa, että se ei ole päässyt vielä vaikuttamaan kovin paljoa.
> *Because I'm still only at the beginning of my teacher education, its effect has not yet had such a huge impact.*

As the thesis largely relies on self-reflection and the participants' ability to report their perceptions, the results will reflect the limited experience that some of the participants may still possess of key factors of teacher identity construction. The second statement also provides one explanation for the cautious responses to the statements regarding the role of teacher educational factors in the process of finding oneself as a teacher. As discussed above, a tendency to somewhat agree rather than completely agree with the

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statements was noted and the fact that many of the participants are only in the early stages of their teacher education might help explain this finding.

Having discussed the results for teacher educational factors, we can conclude that a perception of significance towards these factors was conveyed in the responses of the participants – especially towards the roles of teaching practice and supervisor feedback. The comments of the participants also noted that teacher educational factors can sometimes be rather cohesive with one's personal preferences and that the example that one draws from teachers during teacher training can steer one's development in the opposite direction.

6.3 Correlations for personal and teacher educational factors

In addition to the distributions presented in Table 2, a comparison of statements regarding the personal factors of identity construction and factors relating to teacher educational factors was conducted making use of nonparametric correlations. The relation of these personal factors to statements researching the participants' views on the possible conflicts that these sets of factors might bring forth was also a target of interest. Table 4 contains two sets of correlations that are formed around two chosen statements about the personal factors of teacher identity construction: "I base my teacher identity on my strengths" and "I aim to actively reflect on my teacher identity". These two statements were chosen for further analysis, as they effectively describe the nature of personal factors. These two statements, or variables, form the columns for Table 4, whereas the statements that these two factors are compared to form the rows. Under the two main variables chosen from the set of statements relating to personal factors are two separate columns that spell out the correlations between different variables and the statistical significance of these correlations.

Table 4. Nonparametric correlations on personal factors of teacher identity construction.

	1. I base my teacher identity on my strengths		2. I aim to actively reflect on my teacher identity	
	Correlation coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
A. The coordination of the interplay between my personal preferences and the emphases of the teacher education program has been effortless	0,042	0,721	0,188	0,105
B. I feel like I have to act against my own values in teaching practice	-0,188	0,104	0,070	0,548
C. I get to use the teaching methods of my choice in teaching practice even though my supervisor would not fully agree on them	0,026	0,822	0,073	0,534
D. I adapt to the suggestions made by my supervisor or mentoring teacher even though I would not fully believe in them	0,026	0,824	0,002	0,990
E. If my personal opinions conflict with the emphases of teacher education, I discard my personal views and embrace the techniques supplied by the teacher education program as my own	-0,047	0,687	0,094	0,421

For a correlation calculated by using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient to be statistically significant, the Sig. (2-tailed) value would have to be below .05. The statements included in Table 4 were chosen on the basis of the relative weight of the correlation they showed to the two pre-determined variables. Additionally, the three statements found at the bottom of the table were chosen to measure the relation of

personal factors to the chosen strategies of coping with the discrepancies arising from the assumed incohesion between personal and teacher educational factors. As can be seen in Table 4, no statistically significant correlations were found between the participants' views on the personal factors of teacher identity construction and the chosen variables. The strongest correlation was found between participants' tendency to build their teacher identity around their strengths and the feeling that they have had to act against their values in teaching practice (-0,188). As such, this correlation is weak and statistically insignificant.

Table 5 features the nonparametric correlations between statements regarding teacher education factors and strategies of coping with discrepancies between different factors. The two statements that were chosen from the set of teacher educational factors for nonparametric correlation focused on the role of teacher education in supplying participants with teaching methods (variable 1) as well as the significance of instructor feedback on constructing teacher identity (variable 2). These particular variables were chosen for because they provided statistically significant correlations with the statements

Table 5. Nonparametric correlations on teacher educational factors of teacher identity construction.

	1. I have acquired most of my pedagogical methods from teacher education		2. Supervisor feedback directs the development of my teacher identity	
	Correlation coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
A. The coordination of the interplay between my personal preferences and the emphases of the teacher education program has been effortless	-0,344**	0,002	-0,299**	0,009

B. I feel like I have to act against my own values in teaching practice	-0,378**	0,001	-0,453**	0,000
C. I get to use the teaching methods of my choice in teaching practice even though my supervisor would not fully agree on them	-0,006	0,961	-0,045	0,699
D. I adapt to the suggestions made by my supervisor or mentoring teacher even though I would not fully believe in them	-0,116	0,318	-0,364**	0,001
E. If my personal opinions conflict with the emphases of teacher education, I discard my personal views and embrace the techniques supplied by the teacher education program as my own	0,098	0,399	0,024	0,839

Much like with the statements regarding personal factors of identity construction, these two statements were compared to three coping strategies as well as a statement measuring how freely participants can make their decisions in teaching practice. Additionally, a general sense of cohesion between personal and teacher educational factors was targeted by studying the correlation between the two selected variables and statement A. To make the interpretation of the table more effortless, statistically significant correlations have been marked with two asterisks (**). Both of the chosen variables negatively correlated with the statement measuring the cohesion between personal preferences and the emphases of teacher education. Although the level of correlation for both of the two teacher educational statements were relatively similar, a stronger correlation (-0,344) was found between variable 1 and statement A. The strength of this correlation can, however, still be viewed as moderate at best. Similar negative correlations can also be found between the two variables and the participants' sense of having to act against their values in teaching practice. Especially the second variable

regarding the significance of instructor feedback is closely tied to this statement with a correlation of -0,453, which according to earlier definition of relative correlation strengths can be viewed as moderate. Out of the three statements evaluating different coping mechanics, only the one focusing on the participants' willingness to adapt to suggestions that they do not fully agree on shows a statistically significant correlation with the second variable. This negative correlation (-0,364) is again somewhat weak, but still provides a connection between variable 2 and statement D.

6.4 The effects of pedagogical studies and work experience on perceived conflicts between factors of teacher identity construction

Prior to examining the effects of the different stages of pedagogical studies and work experience on the process of constructing one's teacher identity, a general overview of the response distribution to statements regarding the conflicts of this process is offered. Table 6 presents a summary of the key statements in this section of the questionnaire including the frequencies and percentages induced from the data.

Table 6. Response distribution on the conflicts of teacher identity construction.

Statement	Value	Frequency	Percent
A. My personal opinions are not cohesive with the emphases of the teacher education program	Very rarely	7	9,2
	Rarely	29	38,2
	Sometimes	33	43,4
	Very often	2	2,6
	No personal experience	5	6,6
B. I feel like I have to act against my own values in teaching practice	Very rarely	27	35,5
	Rarely	16	21,1

	Sometimes	14	18,4
	Very often	1	1,3
	No personal experience	18	23,7
C. I get to use the teaching methods of my choice in teaching practice even though my supervisor would not fully agree on them	Very rarely	0	0
	Rarely	4	5,3
	Sometimes	29	38,2
	Very often	18	23,7
	No personal experience	25	32,9
D. I adapt to the suggestions made by my supervisor or mentoring teacher even though I would not fully believe in them	Very rarely	3	3,9
	Rarely	10	13,2
	Sometimes	30	39,5
	Very often	15	19,7
	No personal experience	18	23,7
E. If my personal opinions conflict with the emphases of teacher education, I discard my personal views and embrace the techniques supplied by the teacher education program as my own	Very rarely	13	17,1
	Rarely	26	34,2
	Sometimes	18	23,7
	Very often	2	2,6
	No personal experience	17	22,4

When questioned about the cohesion and coordination of personal and teacher educational factors (statement A), the majority of the participants' felt that these two sets

of factors are sometimes out of sync. While 33 participants chose this option, 29 felt that these two rarely conflict with one another. The next statement regarding the participants' experiences of having to act against their values in teacher practice showed a 35.5 % support for the option *very rarely.* At the same time, only one participant felt that he or she very often has to act against his or her values during pedagogical training. Out of the last three statements measuring the different coping strategies for factor conflicts, the most applied method of adjustment proved to be the strategy closely resembling the concept of strategic redefinition (statement C) with over 50 % of the participants reporting that they either sometimes or very often get to utilize the pedagogical methods of their preference. A rather similar response pattern can also been seen in the participants' reports of complying with their mentors' advice although they do not fully agree with them. 30 participants reported that they sometimes adapt to these advice although they conflict with their personal views. Lastly, a combined total of 39 participants out of the 76 reported to either rarely or very rarely abandon their personal preferences and assume the emphases of the teacher education program, when the two conflict. What is also noteworthy with these last three statements is that option *no personal experience* was rather popular among the respondents. This option was offered to participants who have yet to begin their teaching practice.

Having looked at the general distribution patterns of this section, it is time to direct attention to the ways in which the stage of pedagogical studies and one's work experience affects one's teacher identity construction. Table 7 contains the T-test result for a comparison between participants who are either currently attending to or have already completed their basic studies and participants who are either currently attending to or have completed subject studies.

Table 7. T-test results for stages of pedagogical studies.

	Stage of pedagogical studies	Mean	p
Teaching practice has had a significant role in the construction of my teacher identity	Basic studies ongoing or finished	2,70	0,000**
	Subject studies ongoing or finished	3,60	
I aim to actively reflect on my teacher identity	Basic studies ongoing or finished	3,43	0,612
	Subject studies ongoing or finished	3,34	
I feel like I have to act against my own values in teaching practice	Basic studies ongoing or finished	4,22	0,000**
	Subject studies ongoing or finished	1,85	
I adapt to the suggestions made by my supervisor or mentoring teacher even though I would not fully believe in them	Basic studies ongoing or finished	4,35	0,000**
	Subject studies ongoing or finished	3,08	
If my personal opinions conflict with the emphases of teacher education, I discard my personal views and embrace the techniques supplied by the teacher education program as my own	Basic studies ongoing or finished	3,52	0,002**
	Subject studies ongoing or finished	2,47	

I get to use the teaching methods of my choice in teaching practice even though my supervisor would not fully agree on them	Basic studies ongoing or finished	4,74	0,000**
	Subject studies ongoing or finished	3,45	

As discussed in Chapter 5, the distribution of responses to these background questions was uneven and, thus, different stages had to be combined into two separate categories. In addition to the statements and different rows for the two categorized stages of pedagogical studies, Table 7 includes the means for these two samples and a *p* value that determines the statistical significance of these means. To make the table more effortless to read, standard deviations, the degrees of freedom and the t-value will not be included in the visual representation, but they will be discussed in the written analysis. The first statement in Table 7 was chosen to represent the set of statements researching the role of teacher educational factors in teacher identity construction. A statistically significant difference can be found in the scores for participants in basic studies (M=2.70, SD=0.974) and participants in subject studies (M=3.60, SD=0.716); t(32.775)=4.024, p=0.000. In other words, participants who are either currently attending to or have already completed subject studies reported a greater perceived significance to teaching practice in forming their identity. When compared to the second statement that focuses on the personal factors of teacher identity construction, the participants' stage of pedagogical studies does not seem to have a statistically significant effect on the role they give to active self-reflection (p=0.612). A highly distinctive and statistically significant difference can also be found in the scores for participants in basic studies (M=4.22, SD=1.413) and participants in subject studies (M=1.85, SD=0.969) in regard to the number of times they have had to act against their values in teaching practice; t(31.340)=-7.327, p=0.000. To put it differently, participants in the basic studies stage of their pedagogical studies felt that they had to act against their values more often than participants in subject studies.

The last three statements in Table 7 provide data on the level of adjustment participants have had to show during the course of teacher education. What is particularly interesting is that all of these three adjustment techniques showed a statistically significant difference between the two combined stages of pedagogical studies. Firstly, participants in the basic studies sample (M=4.35, SD=1.027) reported a higher tendency to adapt to the instructions given by their supervisor than participants in the subject studies sample (M=3.03, SD=0.917). Very similarly, the basic studies sample (M=3.52, SD=1.442) proved to be more likely to abandon their personal preferences and take up the values and methods offered by the teacher education program if the two conflicted than the subject studies sample (M=2.47, SD=1.250). Quite surprisingly the third strategy also provides a greater means value for the participants in the basic studies group. The scores for the basic studies group (M=4.74, SD=0.689) and the subject studies group (M=3.45, SD=0.774) on the statement measuring how often the participants get to use the teaching methods that they personally believe in also yield a statistically significant difference between these two samples; $t(74)=-6.874$, $p=0.000$. In other words, the participants in the early stages of teacher education were also more likely to be able to argue their position and make use of the methodology of their preference.

The second variable chosen for closer analysis in the T-test was the participants' work experience and the ways in which it might affect their perceptions of teacher identity construction. Because the majority of the participants reported to have either no work experience at all or very little of it, a decision was made to divide the sample into two groups based on whether they had any work experience at all. Thus, participants with less than three months of work experience as a teacher were grouped up with the ones who possess over two years of practical experience. A summary of the results for this T-test are compiled into Table 8, which contains the means for the two groups as well as the p value that determines the statistical significance of the difference between the means.

Table 8. T-test results for work experience.

	Work experience	Mean	p
Teaching practice has had a significant role in the construction of my teacher identity	No work experience	3,38	0,764
	Short term or long term work experience	3,31	
I aim to actively reflect on my teacher identity	No work experience	3,29	0,578
	Short term or long term work experience	3,40	
I feel like I have to act against my own values in teaching practice	No work experience	3,04	0,109
	Short term or long term work experience	2,35	
I adapt to the suggestions made by my supervisor or mentoring teacher even though I would not fully believe in them	No work experience	3,83	0,047**
	Short term or long term work experience	3,29	
If my personal opinions conflict with the emphases of teacher education, I discard my personal views and embrace the techniques supplied by	No work experience	3,21	0,074

the teacher education program as my own	Short term or long term work experience	2,60	
I get to use the teaching methods of my choice in teaching practice even though my supervisor would not fully agree on them	No work experience	4,17	0,043**
	Short term or long term work experience	3,69	

The relation of work experience was compared to participants' perceptions of personal and teacher educational factors as was done with the previous T-test. As becomes evident from Table 8, neither the role of teaching practice; $t(74)=-0.301$, $p=0.763$, nor self-reflection; $t(37.399)=0.561$, $p=0.578$, provides a statistically significant difference between the responses of participants with no or some work experience. Adjustment strategies were again of particular interest, when researching the significance of one's work experience in teacher identity construction. A statistically significant difference was found in the responses of participants with no work experience (M=3.83, SD=1.049) and participants with short term or long term employment (M=3.29, SD=1.109) in regard to their tendency to adapt to the suggestions made by a mentoring teacher; $t(74)=-2.025$, $p=0.047$. The fact that the group with no work experience provided a greater means value for this statement suggests that they are more likely to adapt and alter their behavior in teaching practice based on advice they receive from supervisors. Another statistically significant difference was found in the likelihood that participants get to resolve conflicts between their personal beliefs and the values of their supervisors in their favor. This statement provided a greater means value for participants with no work experience (M=4.17, SD=0.917) than the group with short term or long term experience (M=3.69, SD=0.940); $t(74)=-2.060$, $p=0.043$.

The results for the conflicts between personal and teacher educational factors showed that the majority of the participants only sometimes sensed discrepancies between these two sets of factors, while only a fraction of them felt like they had had to act against their own will in teaching practice. In a similar manner, strong support was found for the ability to argue one's own position and get to use the methodology of one's liking. The influence of the participants' stage of pedagogical studies was noted in relation to their decreasing tendency to view conflicts between their personal preferences and those of the teacher education program as their studies progressed. Similarly, the two adjustment strategies that require the most compromise from the student teacher were more familiar to participants who had either completed their basic studies or were currently attending to them. Work experience, on the other hand, had very little to do with the perceived conflicts and participants with no work experience were more likely to either adapt to the suggestion of their instructors or to stick to their own lesson plans.

7 Discussion

Building on the results of the questionnaire, this thesis will proceed to discuss the implications of these findings in relation to the research questions presented in section 5.1. This section is split into three parts following the categories set forth in Chapter 6. In addition to the statistical data presented above, this section will draw from the participants comments on the open-ended questions to formulate a more coherent understanding of the perceptions in relation to teacher identity construction. Firstly, the role of personal factors in teacher identity construction will be discussed in detail prior to proceeding to look at teacher educational factors and their relative significance in the responses of the participants. Lastly, the roles of work experience and stage of pedagogical studies will be under scrutiny and the conflicting nature of this identity construction process will be looked at.

7.1 Personal factors

As discussed in the results section of this thesis in Chapter 6, participants were rather unanimous in their perception that their personal backgrounds heavily influence their teacher identity construction. Only a handful of participants reported to completely disagree with the role of active self-reflection, orientation towards new pedagogical information, their upbringing and personal strengths in this process. The fact that more than 80 % of the participants either somewhat or completely agreed with these statements proves that personal factors are highly significant factors of teacher identity construction - at least on the level of perceptions. As the questionnaire relies on self-reported data rather than observing the participants in a classroom environment, it is difficult to determine the extent to which these factors influence the actual pedagogical decisions that take place within classroom interaction, but it gives insight to the innermost reflections of the minds of the participants. However, the fact that the majority of participants view active self-reflection and orientation towards new information as a significant factor in constructing their teacher identities suggests that the notions of teacher identity that could be detected through observation are likely to be influenced by the active agency of these future teachers. This supports the modern view of teacherhood discussed earlier in this thesis, which emphasizes the role of active engagement in defining one's own ideal image of a teacher rather than idly waiting for society or the teacher education program to hand these ideas to student teachers (Zeichner and Gore 1990: 30).

What was most surprising about the questionnaire results was the fact that the personal factors of teacher identity construction did not correlate with any of the adjustment strategies surveyed in the research. It was hypothesized that a strong emphasis put on personal factors would suggest that participants are less willing to abandon their preferences and take up the influences of teacher education. However, no statistically significant correlations were found between statements regarding personal factors and

those measuring the three adjustment strategies. Reasons for the lack of connection might be diverse, but it is worth reminding oneself that perhaps the participants did not experience a strong enough conflict between the two sets of factors to force them to choose between their personal preferences and the teachings of the teacher education program. Because the questionnaire does not seek to uncover what the pedagogical values are that are influenced by the participants personal backgrounds, they cannot be compared to the emphases that are discussed in teacher education. No definitive conclusions can be made as to why a strong emphasis on the role of personal factors does not correlate with the tendency to discard the influence of teacher education, but in the light of this study, it is safe to say that the gap between participants' personal preferences and those of the teacher education program is not as great as the background literature perhaps suggested.

The results of this study also provide support for the significance of work experience, hobbies and friends in defining oneself as a teacher. Particularly interesting was the role that was explicitly attributed to feedback as a part of work experience. This constant exchange with one's students also supports the idea of dynamic and continuous shaping of one's teacher identity (Lin 2012: 13), because peer and supervisor feedback are likely to be less influential after teacher education. This decreasing influence is substituted with students and their feedback, which are important agents in the working lives of teachers. Similarly, connections can be drawn between the role of friends in the lives of future teachers and the theoretical views of symbolic interaction. The theory of symbolic interactionism supports the idea of a looking-glass self and reflecting on oneself through the eyes of others (Martel 2014: 19) and the same concept can be stretched to explain the significance of having friends outside one's own discipline in one's teacher identity construction process. This offers student teachers a better possibility of reflecting on the deeply rooted perceptions of good teacherhood and helps them question some of these habits that might, at times, be taken for granted.

7.2 Teacher educational factors

As already discussed in the results section of this thesis, the findings about the role of teacher education in the identity construction process of the participants were very similar to personal factors. Again, the majority of the participants perceived the selected statements as agreeable with their experience from teacher education. This response distribution gives a clear signal of the significance that teacher education plays in this stage of the lives of future teachers. However, the participants were more cautious in the emphasis they put to teacher educational factors, which can be seen in the tendency to have the highest frequency of responses to the *agree* option rather than completely agreeing with these statements. When we compare these findings to the response distribution on statements regarding the personal factors of teacher identity construction, it can be said that a greater number of participants were willing to completely agree with the statements on personal factors. Although this difference is visible, one could argue that it is not significant enough to jump to conclusions about the relative significance of these two sets of factors in the process of defining oneself as a teacher. What it does, however, mean is that participants greatly value the chance of engaging in peer discussions and receiving peer and supervisor feedback. Perhaps the most compelling detail in this section of the questionnaire was the fact that 42 out of the 76 participants felt that teaching practice had had a significant role in the construction of their teacher identities. Therefore, it seems like the practical phase of teacher education seems to serve the needs of future teacher best, according to the participants in this particular study.

The statistically significant negative correlations that were found between teacher educational factors and the coordination of the interplay between the two sets of factors suggest that participants do not see the relationship of personal and teacher education factors as harmonious. Instead, this communicates an agreement among student teachers that compromising is necessary to find an acceptable path to teacherhood that respects

both the preferences of the individual and the pedagogical aims of the teacher education program. However, the results do not support the hypothesized notion of student teachers having to completely abandon their values and act against them in teaching practice. This concept of compromise supports the theory of adjustment strategies (Lacey 1977) that provide explanations to the varying levels of accommodations student teachers are required to make during teacher education. As was reviewed in section 6.2, only one of the three statements targeting the different adjustment strategies provided a statistically significant correlation in relation to the significance of supervisor feedback. Because only one of the two variables correlated with this adjustment strategy, it would be far-fetched to claim that a connection exists between a general belief in the significance of teacher education and the decreased likelihood of adapting to suggestion made by supervisors. Even as an individual negative correlation it seems like a perplexing one, as one would assume that student teachers who think highly of the effects of teacher education on their teacher identity construction would actually be more likely to adapt to the values they encounter during teacher education - not less likely, as the results of this questionnaire would suggest.

While an artificial distinction between personal and teacher educational factors was created for the purposes of this study, a unity between these two sets of factors was noted by at least one participant. A strong belief in the significance of teacher education cannot therefore be interpreted to rule out the significance of personal preferences in defining one's teacher identity and it is more than likely that at least some student teachers feel that these two separate influences work towards a mutual goal. Comments regarding the undesirable examples set by other teacher were discussed in section 6.2, which could just as easily be stretched to fit the category of personal factors. Regardless of whether one draws these undesirable influences from one's background or one's experience in teaching practice, it provides support for the theme of malign others (Weinreich and Saunderson 2003: 54-61). Because the questionnaire used in this study did not specify the

nature of the perceived effect of a given factor, it is important to remember that this effect cannot be assumed to always be positive.

7.3 The effects of pedagogical studies and work experience on perceived conflicts between factors of teacher identity construction

The two previous sections of analysis prove that both personal and teacher educational factors are perceived as influential in the process of negotiating one's teaching identity in the eyes of this survey's participants. Some of the discrepancies between these two forms of influences have already come up in the text, but a glimpse of a more harmonious relationship has also been witnessed in the comments of the participants. Studying the possible conflicts that these discrepancies might cause as well as the adjustment strategies that the participants have had to resort to were two of the main aims of this thesis. The response distributions for the statements regarding conflicts showed that the majority of the participants did not feel that their personal opinions would often conflict with the emphases of the teacher education program. However, 43,4 % of the participants reported to sometimes experience a conflict between these two sets of factors, which means that the pedagogical values that the participants share are not entirely compatible with those of teacher education. At the same time, most of the participants reported to rarely or very rarely find themselves in situations, where they find themselves having to act against their own will. These findings suggest that notable differences exist between the values of the participants and the emphases of teacher education, but participants are not forced to unwillingly take up new values in case the two are in conflict. As was illustrated in the comments of the participants, a part of the teacher education program is to help student teachers find themselves as a teacher and promote their individual preferences as a teacher.

As we direct our attention towards the results on the statements measuring the three adjustment strategies, strong support is offered for the two less adjusting approaches. At

this point it is worth mentioning that these statements do not fully correspond to the earlier discussed definitions of strategic redefinition, strategic compliance and internalized adjustment. Rather, they seek to capture the essence of this division into altering levels of commitment to adjusting one's behavior in the context of teacher education. In the light of these findings, it seems that student teachers often manage to negotiate their personal opinions with their instructors whenever they clash with the advice they receive. This ability to use the desired pedagogical methods in teaching practice speaks also for the adjusting nature of the teacher education program. The background literature noted the significance of the balance of power between the teacher education institution and an individual student teacher, which led to the conclusion that the inferior party has to adapt to the requirements set forth by the superior entity (Lacey 1977). However, the findings suggest that this equation is not as one-sided as this theoretical review might suggest, but that the teacher education program in its modern form also acknowledges the active agency of student teachers and allows them to disagree with and critically analyze the suggestion made by the program. Adapting to the suggestions made by a supervisor or a mentoring teacher also received support from the participants. The last of the three statements that roughly applies the idea of internalized adjustment did not correlate well with the experiences of the participants. Only two out of the 76 student teachers felt that they have often abandoned their personal beliefs and embraced the techniques that teacher education has promoted. In other words, this study does not provide evidence for the likelihood of student teachers having to make drastic compromises in their teaching practice. Instead, it seems like regardless of the occasional adaptations that these student teachers have to make to their lesson plans they can mostly argue for their personal preferences when it comes to pedagogical methods and make use of these techniques in teaching practice.

Earlier in this thesis, it was theorized based on Martel's (2014) research that the various stages of teacher education might influence student teachers differently and that the later stages of this process would provide a greater perceived role of teacher education in the

eyes of student teachers. The results of this study prove that participants that are either currently attending to or have already completed their subject studies in the field of pedagogy assign a greater significance to teacher education as a factor in their teacher identity construction. The same group of participants also felt that they need to act against their own values less often in teaching practice than participants who are in the early stages of teacher education. This clearly provides support for the hypothesis and proves that the role of teacher education in teacher identity construction is increased along the way. One could argue that as teacher education progressed student teachers are exposed more to the pedagogical emphases of the teacher education program increasing the likelihood that student teachers start perceiving them as desirable. Additionally, because the subject studies are completed within a single study year, their relative presence in the lives of student teachers is greatly increased, which might lead to the observed tendency to attribute a greater significance to teacher education.

Perhaps the most peculiar finding in this section of the questionnaire was the fact that a statistically significant difference was found between the answers of the two groups regarding the three adjustment strategies - all of them signaling a greater support for the strategies by the participants in the basic studies stage of their studies. As has been discussed earlier, the three adjustment strategies measure the level of compromise the participants are willing to make in conflicting situations. It would be logical to assume that groups that score high on the tendency to adapt to the demands imposed by mentoring teachers would then be less likely to argue for their own case of being less adjusting. However, these results suggest that student teachers in the early stages of their training are more likely to get to use the methods of their preference, adapt to demands and abandon their personal opinions in conflicting situations. No definitive conclusions about the adaptability of student teachers can be made based on these conflicting findings and more research is needed to distinguish between the preferred adjustment strategies of the student teachers in the latter stages of teacher education.

Lastly, the participants' working background was used a variable to determine whether it has any bearing on the applied adjustment strategies in conflicting situations. Unlike pedagogical studies, the participants' work experience did not influence their perceptions of teacher education in the process of constructing their teacher identities. No statistically significant differences were found in relation to the valuing of personal factors either, which was contradictory to what was assumed. Much like increased exposure to pedagogical studies was hypothesized to correlate with a tendency to attribute a greater significant to teacher educational factors, it was assumed that a longer working background as a teacher would emphasize the participants' personal preferences that they have formulated during their careers. The fact that student teachers with no work experience were more likely to make use of the two less adaptive adjustment strategies further debunks this theory. What can significantly distort these results is the fact that more than 80 % of the participants had less than three months of experience in working as a teacher. A sample including more student teachers with long-term employment might provide very different results.

7.4 Summary

The findings of the current study provide support for the influence that a student teacher's background has on his or her teacher identity construction. The participants of this study perceived such factors as their work experience, friends, active self-reflection and orientation towards new information as highly influential in the process of defining themselves as future teachers. These personal factors were contrasted by the various aspects of the teacher education program that the participants also assigned value to. The ability to engage in peer discussion, receive instructor feedback and practice the use of the pedagogical methods of their liking were seen as important contributors to their teacher identities. This perception of the significance of teacher education was shown to grow stronger, as the participants progressed in their pedagogical studies. While the personal preferences of the participants are sometimes seen as incompatible with the

emphases of the teacher education program, these discrepancies do not always result in strenuous conflict. Instead, participants communicated an ability to resolve these conflict situations by arguing their own position or adapting to the suggestions made by their instructors.

8 Conclusion

The present study set out to examine the perceptions of Finnish student teachers regarding the roles of various factors in the process of constructing one's teacher identity. The study was conducted to generate information that would fill the research gap identified in the field of teacher identity research. The threefold aims of the present study were to examine the roles of personal and teacher educational factors in the construction of student teachers' professional identities as well as to define whether these two sets of factors conflicted with one another. These topics were studied using an online questionnaire that reached 76 Finnish student teachers. The findings of this questionnaire supported the notion of personal factors that were defined as set of both stable and changing variables in the backgrounds and experiences of student teachers. A strong belief in the significance of these factors was communicated by the participants who viewed their hobbies, friends and work experience as influential contributors to their teacher identity. The second set of factors that were under scrutiny were defined as teacher education factors that consisted of such aspects of peer discussions and instructor feedback, to name a few. The role of teacher education in general was seen rather favorably by the participants, who assigned great value to the possibilities they were offered along the course of their studies. When these two sets of factors were examined in relation to one another, it was discovered that the values and practices that student teachers possess are not always shared by the teacher education program and this discrepancy can, at times, cause conflicts in the minds of student teachers. However, the data did support the idea of an inequality in the position of power, which was theorized to force student teachers to blindly adapt to the emphases of the teacher education

program. Rather, the participants communicated an ability to resolve these conflicts in manners that require only minor adjustment on their behalf.

The implications of these findings speak highly about the approaches used in the Finnish teacher education program. The comments of the participants showed that student teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own development as teachers and possibilities to use the methodology of their preferences were often supplied. Although the conflicts that arose along the course of teaching practice were often resolved with minor adjustment, some of the participants still felt that they sometimes feel forced to act against their own will. Whether this perception is dependent on the particular instructor one receives at a given point of teaching practice is subject of speculation, but it still suggests inconsistencies in the teacher education program. Alterations could be made so that each student teacher feels like they are provided with an equal opportunity to develop themselves towards a desirable direction that is not always contingent on the values of a single instructor. Additionally, the fact that the participants put major emphasis on the significance of their personal preferences in the process of defining themselves as teachers provides incentive for teacher education to continue to support the active self-reflection of student teachers.

Although the findings of this study provide useful information about the perceptions of Finnish student teachers regarding the relative influence of personal and teacher education factors, it does not provide explanations to the exact nature of the factors. Because the study was conducted in a quantitative frame of reference, interpretations regarding the effects that these perceptions have on the actual behavior of these student teachers cannot be made. Although a student teacher might perceive a conflict between his or her personal preferences and the emphases of the teacher education program and communicate an ability to resolve this conflict in his or her favor, the actual reaction to the conflict might be entirely different. Distortion to the results can also be caused by the anonymous and ambiguous nature of an online questionnaire which relies heavily on the

participants' truthfulness and their ability to engage in objective and accurate self-reflection. As the comments of the participants in section 6.2 illustrated, some participants responded to the statements lacking appropriate experience on the matter and instead decided to guess how they would most likely imagine themselves feeling towards a particular factor. Additionally, as the questionnaire was distributed online, the participants did not have a chance to ask about individual statement in case they were ambiguous and this lack of clarity is always a factor that might come at play in such situations.

While this study provided important information regarding personal and teacher educational factors and the participants' perceptions of the conflicts between these factors, further research is needed to discover, how these factors can be seen in the behavior of student teachers. Interviews would provide a chance to further map the underlying perceptions of Finnish student teachers and find more explanatory answers to the findings gained in this study. Additionally, an observational study would bring an interesting new dimension to the equation by allowing researchers to observe how student teachers actually negotiate their differences of opinion with their mentoring teachers and whether the possible adaptations they make can be noticed in their classroom behavior.

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Appendix: The questionnaire

1. Ikä:

19 tai alle
20-24
25-29
30 tai yli

2. Sukupuoli:

Nainen
Mies

3. Opiskeluvuosi:

Ensimmäinen
Toinen
Kolmas
Neljäs
Viides
Kuudes
Seitsemäs tai enemmän

4. Työkokemus:

Ei työkokemusta
Alle 3 kuukautta
3-6 kuukautta
7-12 kuukautta
1-2 vuotta
2 vuotta tai enemmän

5. Pedagogisten opintojen vaihe:

Perusopinnot aloittamatta

Perusopinnot aloitettu
Perusopinnot suoritettu
Aineopinnot aloitettu
Aineopinnot suoritettu

6. Kuinka hyvin koet seuraavien väitteiden kuvaavan opettajaidentiteettisi
rakentumista?

Täysin eri mieltä Jokseenkin eri mieltä Jokseenkin samaa mieltä Täysin samaa mieltä

Koen saamani kotikasvatuksen ja sitä
kautta omaksumieni arvojen vaikuttavan
opettajaidentiteettiini.

Suosin opetustekniikoita, joilla
minua on aikanaan opetettu.

Pyrin aktiivisesti pohtimaan omaa
opettajuuttani.

Pyrin orientoitumaan uudelle tiedolle,
joka auttaa minua kehittämään itseäni
opettajana haluamaani suuntaan.

Rakennan opettajaidentiteettiäni omien
vahvuuksieni varaan.

Tietämykseni opetettavasta aineesta ovat
perustana opettajaidentiteettini muodostu-
misessa.

7. Löydätkö muita opettajakoulutusta edeltäviä tai sen ulkopuolisia vaikuttimia
opettajaidentiteettisi rakentumisen taustalta? Mitä?

8. Kuinka hyvin koet seuraavien väitteiden kuvaavan opettajaidentiteettisi
rakentumista?

Täysin eri mieltä Jokseenkin eri mieltä Jokseenkin samaa mieltä Täysin samaa mieltä

Olen omaksunut useat hyödyntämäni
opetustekniikat opettajankoulutuksesta.

Koen muokkaavani itseäni opettajana
vertaispalautteen ja/tai –keskustelun pohjalta.

Ohjaajien antama palaute ohjaa opetatjaidenti-
teettini kehitystä.

Opetusharjoittelulla on ollut suuri rooli
opettajuuteni kehityksessä.

Nojaan pedagogisissa valinnoissani
pitkälti opetussuunnitelmaan.

9. Koetko opettajankoulutuksen vaikuttavan opettajaidentiteettisi rakentumiseen jollain muulla tavalla? Miten?

10. Kuinka usein koet seuraavien väitteiden pitävän paikkaansa? (Mikäli et ole opinnoissasi ehtinyt vielä opetusharjoitteluihin asti, voit sitä koskevissa kysymyksissä valita vaihtoehdon "Ei omakohtaista kokemusta".)

Erittäin harvoin Harvoin Toisinaan Hyvin usein Ei omakohtaista kokemusta

Henkilökohtaiset näkemykseni eivät
mene yhteen opettajankoulutuksen
painotusten kanssa.

Koen, että joudun toimimaan omien
arvojeni vastaisesti opetusharjoittelussa.

Saan hyödyntää haluamiani tehtävätyyppejä
opetusharjoittelussa, vaikka ohjaava opettajani
ei olisikaan niistä samaa mieltä kanssani.

Mukaudun ohjaavan opettajan tai didaktikon
ehdotuksiin, vaikken täysin uskoisikaan niiden
toimivuuteen.

Olen joutunut muuttamaan tuntisuunnitelmiani
ohjaavan opettajan käskystä.

Mikäli henkilökohtaiset mieltymykseni pedagogisten
ratkaisuiden suhteen ovat ristiriidassa opettajakoulutuksen
painotusten kanssa, hylkään omat näkemykseni ja omaksun

opettajankoulutuksen tarjoamat tekniikat ja arvot osaksi
omaa opettajaidentiteettiäni.

Henkilökohtaisten näkemysteni ja opettajankoulutuksen
pedagogisten painotusten yhteensovittaminen on sujunut
kivuttomasti.

Olen kyennyt puolustamaan näkemyksiäni ja saanut toteuttaa
tuntisuunnitelmani haluamallani tavalla ristiriitatilanteissa.