

**“Sometimes I still question whether my personality and authority will
be sufficient in a classroom context”:**

Investigating vocational identity formation of student language teachers

Bachelor’s Thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Opettajaopiskelijoiden ammatti-identiteetin rakentuminen on keskeinen aihe, kun tähtäimessä on hyvä ja kestävä opettajuus. Aiemmat tutkimukset osoittavat ammatti-identiteetin kehittymisen olevan vahvasti kytköksissä kokonaisvaltaiseen työtyytyväisyyteen ja motivaatioon toimia opettajana. Ammatti-identiteetti ja sen kehittyminen määritelläänkin yhdeksi keskeisimmäksi oman identiteetin osa-alueeksi.</p> <p>Tämä tutkielma pyrki selvittämään, minkälaiset käsitykset Jyväskylän yliopiston kieltenopettajaopiskelijoilla on oman ammatti-identiteettinsä kehittymisestä ja mitkä tekijät ovat tähän kehittymiseen vaikuttaneet negatiivisesti, mitkä positiivisesti. Tämän lisäksi tutkimus pyrki määrittelemään, mitkä syyt saavat opiskelijat hakeutumaan kieltenopettajan ammattiin. Tutkielman yhteydessä suoritettuun kyselytutkimukseen vastasi 84 kielten pääaineopiskelijaa.</p> <p>Tutkimustuloksista käy ilmi, että osallistujien mielestä merkittävimmät tekijät ammatti-identiteetin kehittämisessä olivat henkilökohtaiset taustatekijät ja opetusharjoittelut sekä eri tahoilta tarjottu tuki. Keskeisimmiksi syiksi hakeutua opettajankoulutukseen osallistujat mainitsivat halun auttaa oppimaan ja mielenkiinnon lasten ja nuorten parissa työskentelyä kohtaan. Osallistujat kokivat saavansa liian vähän autenttisia tilaisuuksia toimia opettajana sijaisuuksien kautta, minkä koettiin haittaavan ammatti-identiteetin kehittymistä. Myös vaikeus saada oman alan kesätöitä mainittiin merkittäväksi kielteiseksi tekijäksi.</p>	
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1 Introduction

Vocational identity development is a central issue in any university student's study path, regardless of whether one is studying mechanical engineering or pedagogical subjects. An individual's vocational identity, however advanced or undeveloped, has a noticeable impact on their future career. As pointed out by Holland et al. (1980) and Holland and Gottfredson (1994), one's vocational identity is linked to clear and stable career goals and job satisfaction. Vocational identity is a matter that needs to be addressed and acknowledged by students during their studies to ensure that a student indeed is studying in a field that supports his or her talents, values, and career plans. By this, the number of students who drop out due to diverse reasons, or end up in careers that do not support their own vocational identity, would decrease. Further, it would result in more competent, motivated, and overall more satisfied future employees. Thus, vocational identity research should be considered a fundamental topic when discussing university syllabus planning.

This paper focuses on examining the vocational identity development of student language teachers currently studying at the University of Jyväskylä. The main interest is to examine which elements the student language teachers regard or have regarded as beneficial and which aspects they refer to as harmful or deficient, when discussing their own vocational identity development. Besides this, the present study aims to investigate the level of interest and motivation the participants have towards a career as language teachers.

The thesis data was collected using an online questionnaire that reached the students via mailing lists of the Department of Languages. The questionnaire contained both quantitative and qualitative questions. The analysis of the data focuses primarily on examining the qualitative aspects, however not completely discarding the quantitative answers, but rather using them for support. Furthermore, the focus of the data collection was not in creating a wide range of student profiles, but to present the student language teachers as a convergent group and get a more overall picture of the students' concerns, ideas, and opinions.

The thesis is structured the following way. First, section two introduces and examines the term vocational identity. Within this section, special focus is given to the investigation of previous research on vocational identity development of teachers and a brief introduction to the Finnish subject teacher training system will be included. Second, section three presents the research questions of this study, the data collection process, the methods of analysis, and the participants of the study. Third, section four focuses on the analysis of the results, which is followed by a short conclusion.

2 Vocational identity

Holland (1997: 127) and Vähäsantanen et al. (2007: 90) have discussed the semantic differences between the terms work identity, career identity, and vocational identity. According to Holland (1997) and Vähäsantanen et al. (2007), a vocation is a way of life rather than a set of separate work skills and functions, which is a phrase that is used to describe the terms work identity and career identity. Hence, vocational identity can be interpreted as an umbrella term, which includes both the concepts work identity and career identity, both of which are frequently understood as synonyms.

Fundamental issues when considering an individual's vocational identity, are questions discussing the questions "*Who am I now?*" and "*Who do I want to be in the future?*". Eteläpelto and Vähäsantanen (2006) state that vocational identity is one part of an individual's personal identity, ergo, a highly crucial part of one's existence. Employment and everything related to the process of finding employment is nowadays a significant key issue in our society and a social norm for every individual. Erikson (1986) considers vocational identity, besides political and religious identity, to be the most central domain of identity formation. Thus, vocational identity can be defined as an individual's perception of him/herself when discussing the exercise of one's profession, however near or far one's future career may be.

Factors that contribute to one's vocational identity development are one's previous life experience, one's current life situation, future goals, plans, and overall expectations (Eteläpelto et al. 2007: 8-10). Consequently, an individual's vocational identity is an element which keeps developing and

maturing throughout one's life. This aspect is confirmed by Sundin (2002: 187-195), who states that while vocational identity is a quality which is already getting internalized during one's studies, it still keeps developing when entering working life. This contributes to the fact that once a new position in a new working environment has been entered, a new worker is expected to assimilate to certain norms and customs of that new working community. Every work community has its own customs, norms, and expectations, which a new employee is confronted with.

Smitina (2009) examined Latvian university students' risks for dropping out of university and its relation to the students' vocational identity development. By conducting a study using the Vocational Identity scale (Holland et al. 1980), Smitina discovered that students who appeared to have a higher risk for interrupting their studies had also a significantly lower score on their Vocational Identity levels. As the most critical reasons for leaving one's studies students mentioned personal reasons, having no interest in their own study program, and an overall disappointment regarding their studies. This would indicate that the conditions for a stable vocational identity development have not been met, thus leading to misconceptions and the interruption of one's university studies.

2.1 Previous research on student teachers' vocational identity development

The popularity of investigating particularly the development of teachers and their vocational identity has increased within the last decade. Swanson (2009) studied students in future educator programs by using the Holland Hexagon introduced by Holland (1997). The Holland Hexagon is a tool used as the basis for several career tests, particularly for high school students in the USA. Swanson's (2009) results indicated that the clear majority of future educators scored enormously high in artistic, enterprising, and social skills. An artistic personality would refer to someone who is independent and tends to avoid repetitive actions, whereas an individual scoring high in enterprising has valuable skills in leading and motivating. A high score in social skills refers to the ability and will to help and lead others. These skills and their thorough development were interpreted as the foundation of a teacher's vocational development.

More specific research results on the topic of why someone chooses to become a teacher were provided by Kautonen (2016). Kautonen researched future language teachers regarding what being

a teacher means to them and the levels of guidance they have received during their studies from various parties. The results of Kautonen's study indicated that the three most significant reasons for the participants to have chosen a teaching career were that they had a calling to become teachers, they wanted to work for a common good, and that the teaching profession would provide them with economic stability. When discussing vital sources of guidance concerning their teaching studies, the participants emphasized the importance of their teacher training sessions, which are a part of the pedagogical studies, and the support of friends, family and other university studies and teachers.

Similar findings were also introduced by Betancourt (2017), who studied the interaction between student chemistry teachers during their practical teacher training and the experiences they had regarding their vocational growth and teacher training. Betancourt discovered that the most important motives for becoming a chemistry teacher and what it, according to the respondents, means to be a teacher, were the wish to educate the students about the world and nature, the desire to inspire the students to get involved with science, and the important role of being an educator. Besides this, the student teachers emphasized the importance of the practical teacher training and mentioned that it significantly affected their vocational identity development by them gaining confidence, controlling skills, and the idea of how it really feels to be a genuine teacher. The importance of the practical teacher training was also an issue discovered by Vuori (2015), who studied student teachers and their teacher identity construction. Vuori (2015) concluded that, according to the participants of Vuori's study, the practical phase of teacher education appeared to support their vocational identity development best.

2.2 Subject teacher training in Finland

Finnish subject teachers typically find employment in Finnish comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools, or vocational schools. To be qualified for working in these posts, students study a Master's Degree, which has an extent of 300 credits (ETCS), and which includes the teachers' pedagogical studies (60 ECTS credits). Generally, a subject teacher specializes in two school

subjects and teaches these subjects in the learning institution they find themselves working in. To be qualified for working in an upper secondary or vocational school, a teacher must have broader knowledge, i.e. more ECTS credits, in their own teaching field than a subject teacher working at a comprehensive school. A teacher qualification can also be acquired after already having studied a Master's Degree if interest towards a career as a teacher emerges.

Nowadays schools increasingly introduce budget cuts which heavily affect the employment of subject teachers. Some institutions choose to hire temporary, unqualified teachers, for positions that last several months to a school year, as they are cheaper to employ. Some schools will not even get involved into the process of recruiting substitute teachers and authorize an already employed teacher of another school subject to conduct the tuition of a school subject they do not have a qualification for. Whether this is in the best interest of the students is a topic that would require further research.

3 The present study

This section will introduce the research questions and the aims of this study. Additionally, the data collection process, the participants, and the methods of analysis will be presented.

3.1 Research questions

The research questions of this thesis are the following:

1. How strongly do the language student teacher trainees of the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä identify themselves as future language teachers?
2. Which factors have supported the students' vocational identity development and which have been harmful or deficient?

The main aim of this study is to examine which elements the student language teachers regard/ have regarded as beneficial and harmful during their studies when discussing their vocational identity development. Besides this, the thesis aims to investigate the level of interest and motivation the participants have towards a career as language teachers.

3.2 Data collection and participants

For data collection, an online survey was sent via several mailing lists of the University of Jyväskylä to all lists able to reach students majoring in a language (English, German language and culture, Finnish language and culture, Swedish, Finnish sign language, Romance Philology, Russian language and culture¹). Besides majoring in a language, another requirement for answering the questionnaire was that all participants needed to minor in pedagogical studies, as it was a survey for student language teachers only. The web questionnaire with an average answering time of approximately 10 minutes was created using the Webropol survey software and contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The survey was launched on the 13th of February 2017 and all responses analyzed in this thesis were collected by the 26th of February 2017. Answering the questionnaire was completely anonymous, which was also clarified for the participants. The focus of the data collection was not in creating a wide range of student profiles, but to get an overall picture of the students' opinions. Therefore, as a result of data anonymization, information from the data set could not be used to identify a single participant.

The questionnaire was sent in Finnish to ensure a broader variety of answers from native Finnish-speaking students whose first language is not English. The first section of the survey focused on collecting the students' background information, such as age, gender, and the starting year of their studies at the University of Jyväskylä. The second section included questions about their motivation to work as teachers and in the final segment of the questionnaire students responded to questions concerning their vocational identity development.

¹ University of Jyväskylä, Department of Language and Communication Studies.
<https://www.jyu.fi/hytk/fi/laitokset/kivi/opiskelu/oppiaineet>. Accessed: 29.5.2017

The sample of the study consisted of 84 students (N=84), all of whom were majoring in a language subject at the University of Jyväskylä. The mean age of the participants was 23.321 years and the median age was 23 years. 90% of the participants were female, which indicated that only 8 male students answered the questionnaire. Most of the participants had started their studies during the time span of 2011–2015. First year students accounted for 12 % of the answers and the percentage of students who had started their studies 2010 or earlier was 7 %. The number of participants who affirmed to study or have studied pedagogical studies as a minor was 83 out of 84. However, this minor anomaly does not affect the overall validity of the results, as it may also have been an unintended, accidental typographical error. The last question in the background section addressed the participants' teaching experience, excluding teaching practice. Almost half of the participants, 45 %, answered not having any experience in the field of teaching. 7 participants had acquired less than one month of teaching related experience and 37% had worked in teaching positions that altogether combined had lasted for one to three months. The remaining 10% of the participants responded having several months of total teaching experience, varying from four months to multiple years of teaching practice.

3.3 Methods of analysis

The method of analysis used in this paper is basic content analysis, with a focus on exceptional answers and reoccurring themes, which were analyzed with the help of the Webropol Text Mining tool and Microsoft Excel. Weber (1990) defines content analysis as “frequency counts of semantically equivalent textual units such as words, word senses, phrases, issues, or themes”. The analysis is conducted considering Weber's (1990) four key issues when discussing content analysis: measurement, indication, representation, and, subsequently, interpretation. Measurement refers to percentages and proportions that are recognizable from within the results, indication covers the analysis and implication inspected by the researcher himself, representation refers to choosing the aspects and details a researcher wishes to maintain, and interpretation covers the final part of analysis: connecting text and theory.

As already mentioned earlier, the questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Both the quantitative and the qualitative data were analyzed with the help of the

Webropol reporting tool and Microsoft Excel. In addition to this, the questionnaire along with the participants' answers were translated into English. Both the Finnish (Appendix A) and English (Appendix B) questionnaire can be found at the end of the thesis.

4 Analysis

The following paragraphs will present the results of the study. The analysis is divided into two parts: In the first part of analysis, the focus will be on examining the language teacher students and their identification as future language teachers. The second segment of the questionnaire introduces several questions which address motivation and overall interest towards a career as a language teacher.

4.1 Interest and motivational factors towards a teaching career

The first question that concerned language teacher motivation was *In the future, do you want to work as a teacher?.* 77% of the participants answered yes to this question, 5% answered no, and 18% were not sure, as can be seen in Figure 1 below.

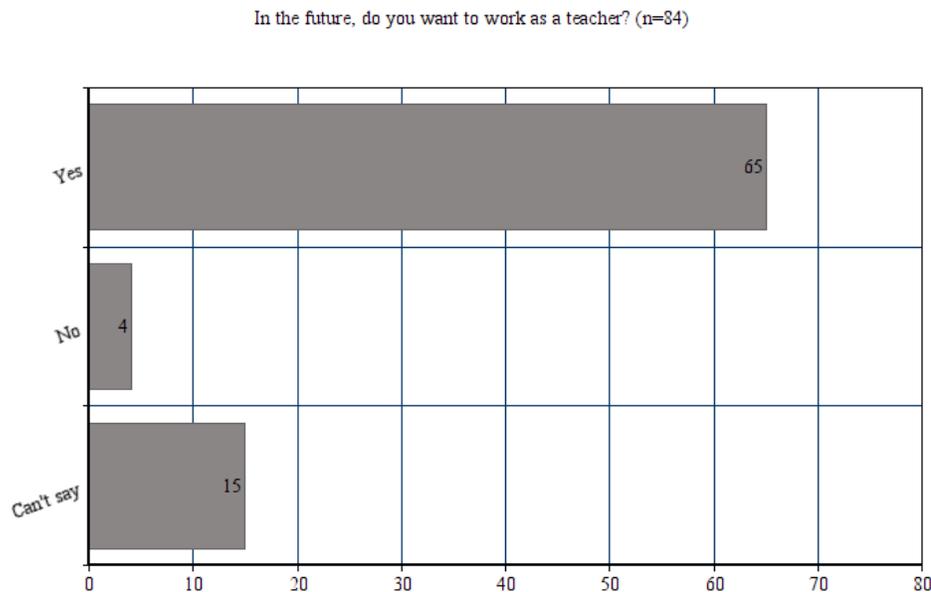


Figure 1.

This division of answers means that almost one fifth of the respondents were unsure whether they wanted to pursue a teaching career or not, for various reasons that are more closely being analyzed in the following paragraphs. 5% stated to being sure never wanting to work in a teaching profession. One respondent commented that they were only minoring in pedagogical studies because they wanted to find work in the field of language textbook design. What was interesting was that while 77% of the participants claimed to be sure of their interest towards a future teaching profession, almost half of the respondents answered not having any experience in the field of teaching, which was stated earlier in the data collection and participants Section 3.2. This indicates that several participants are motivated future teachers despite having any previous teaching experience.

The following question addressed the reasons why the respondents wanted to work as teachers. The question was arranged as a multiple-choice question, however also allowing participants to write openly if they wished to clarify their answers. The most popular answers to the question *Why do you want to work as a teacher? Check all answers that apply* were *I want to help people to learn*, which was agreed on by 87% of the participants and *I like working with kids/ teenagers*, which 77% of the participants agreed on. Only 2% of the participants ticked the answer *The work is easy*. Reoccurring themes in the open answers were responses which emphasized that working as a teacher was something that represented the respondents' own personal identity, values, and overall interests. These results enforce the findings Kautonen (2016) discovered regarding student teachers and their motives for approaching a teaching career. Kautonen (2016) also discovered that the aspect of helping others was a prominent concept amongst students who chose to get involved with teaching.

The third question of the second segment concerned traits and behavioral patterns that participants associate with good teachers. The question was an open-ended question, allowing respondents to openly define a good teacher by using their own words. Traits and behavioral patterns which most frequently were used by participants to describe a good teacher were empathy, understanding, easily approachable, a sense of humor, fair, motivated, and patient. An interesting theme among the answers was that the majority of qualities participants associated with good teachers concerned the teachers' personality. Only a few emphasized the importance of expertise the teachers should

have accumulated in their own field. These answers would indicate that the participants primarily emphasize the important role of a teacher as a general educator and only secondarily emphasize the teacher's subject matter knowledge. Another possible explanation for this would be that the participants consider it as already self-evident that a subject teacher has gathered an adequate amount of subject matter knowledge, and not something that would be worth mentioning. Further research on this topic of subject matter knowledge and its importance for future language teachers might be needed.

The last question concerning the students' motivation and interest towards a language teaching career was a follow-up question to the previous question that addressed ideal traits and behavioral patterns of a good teacher, being *Do you find yourself able to becoming this kind of "good teacher"?*. 90% of the respondents responded yes, 4% no, and 6% ticked other, what, which allowed them to further specify their answer. These answers are demonstrated in Figure 2 below.

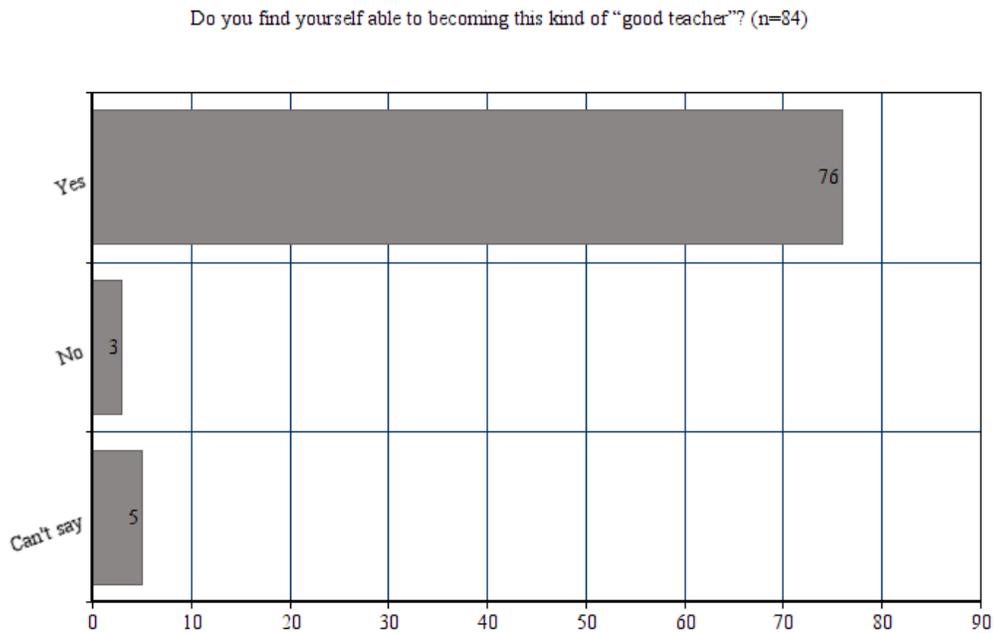


Figure 2.

Several participants questioned whether they would be enthusiastic about their teaching profession when entering working life, or even, barely, interested in teaching. A few participants were worried

about the challenges and seemingly massive workloads of teachers. However, the low percentage of respondents who felt not being able to become “good teachers” indicates that the participants are trusting their skills and expertise and have already gathered a somewhat strong teacher identity. Additionally, one must keep in mind that several respondents who answered no to this question, might not be interested in becoming teachers, neither good ones nor bad ones. On other questions, participants repeatedly stated that their prior teachers had given them, with the help of their personalities and skill sets, a positive teacher image, which they found was something that they likewise wished to promote in their own classroom.

4.2 Vocational identity development of language teacher students

In the following second part of the analysis, the focus will be on examining the participants’ vocational identity development during their studies. This part of analysis will include several text extracts of the respondents’ answers to open-ended questions. The two issues that will be further examined in the following paragraphs are these consecutive questions: *During your studies, which factors have helped you in developing your vocational identity?* and *Which factors have failed in supporting your vocational identity development, or have not been sufficient enough?*

A subject that was mentioned and agreed on by 43 participants, was the importance of the practical teacher training when discussing the development of the participants’ teacher identity. This was a central issue which also supports the results Betancourt (2017) discovered. However, one must keep in mind that some respondents were only in the beginning of their studies, thus not being yet capable of mentioning anything concerning the pedagogical studies and the practical teacher training sessions. Had the participants all been in more advanced stages of their studies, the number of participants mentioning the practical aspect of teacher education would probably have been higher.

However, a small number (n=6) of participants reported that the practical teacher training sessions had failed in advancing the student teachers’ vocational identity development, mostly due to overly strict guidelines requested by the supervising teachers, and poor feedback. These students wished for more freedom in their teaching sessions, so that they would gain a more authentic perspective

of what it really means to be a teacher. Authenticity was also mentioned by five respondents, who stated that the teacher training sessions, which take place over an extremely short period, would not provide the students with a legitimate image of the teaching profession. The respondents reported failing in establishing authentic teacher-student relationships as the few weeks of practical training were not sufficient to support this. The following excerpt comprehensively summarizes the negative occurrences some participants had while completing their practical teacher training study module.

- (1) Sijaisuudet ovat aika kiven alla tällä hetkellä ja opetusharjoittelujen aikana olen saanut vaihtelevan laatuista palautetta, joka on ollut joko ylistävää ja "hyvähyvää" tai sitä että pitämäni tunnit, persoonani ja muut siltä väliltä on lytätty maan rakoon. Harjoittelujen aikana Norssilla ja muualla olen kokenut, etten ole voinut toteuttaa itseäni ja "mokata luvan kanssa" (vaikka sitä meille kovasti mainostettiin ennen harjoittelua), vaan olen joutunut tekemään asioita hyvin paljon ohjaavan opettajan maun mukaisesti.

(It's extremely hard right now to get work as a substitute teacher and during my subject teacher studies I have received a lot of different kind of feedback, which has either been praising and "well done, well done" or that kind of feedback that the classes that I taught, my personality and everything else have been totally bashed. During the teacher studies at Norssi I have had the feeling of not being able to self-express myself and "screw up with permission" (even though that was something they very severely emphasized before our practical training), but have had to do things very much according to the taste of my supervising teacher.)

Another recurring theme were participants (9%), who, despite having already completed their practical teacher training, described having an identity as a language specialist, but lacking the ability to recognize themselves as competent future teachers. One participant wrote:

- (2) En edelleenkään osaa ajatella itseäni opettajana, vaan lähinnä siellä luokan edessä olen Minä, joka nyt vaan opettaa niitä kieliä ja, joka tietää myös paljon siitä, miten niitä asioita voisi opettaa. Taustalla on myös jonkunlainen halu kehittää vuosisadat voimassa olevaa surkeaa ajatusta, miten kieliä jonkun homeparran mielestä "tulisi" opiskella. Ajattelen olevani ensisijaisesti saksan ja ruotsin kulttuurien asiantuntija ja toisisijaisesti [sic] mahdollisesti opettaja. Luulen kuitenkin, että jos ajaudun opettajaksi ja teen sitä työtä pidemmän aikaa, saan siitä hyvästä palkinnoksi jonkinlaisen opettajan identiteetin.

(I am still not able to consider myself as a teacher, but mostly as Me at the front of the class, who just happens to teach these languages, and who also knows a lot about how to teach these things. I also have some sort of motive to develop the idea that has prevailed for centuries of how languages, according to some old coot, “should be” taught. Primarily, I identify myself as an expert on the cultures of Germany and Sweden and secondarily, possibly, as a teacher. However, I think that if I drift into a career as a teacher and do that job for a longer period, I will consequently be rewarded with some sort of teacher identity.)

Despite identifying themselves as specialists in their own language field, the respondents reported having no, or little, teacher identity. However, this unfinished level of teacher identity could be explained by the fact that generally, university students study their own field for approximately five years, and the completion of pedagogical studies requires only two years. It is obvious that the longer a subject is being studied, the stronger the gained expertise will be. Therefore, as stated in the preceding excerpt, a stronger sense of teacher identity will be gained by either working as an educator or enrolling in more advanced, prolonged pedagogical courses.

44 participants mentioned the weak opportunities for a student language teacher to find employment in their own field, both during one’s studies and during summer breaks, as the school year in Finnish comprehensive and upper secondary schools normally ends in early June and begins in mid-August. This leaves few options for employment of student teachers, when compared to other students, who have a good chance of finding employment over the summer in their own field.

(3) Olen tehnyt vain muutaman päivän kestäneitä sijaisuuksia muutaman kerran opintojeni aikana - minua huolestuttaa, että kukaan ei halua valmistuttuani töihin, kun minulla ei ole enempää sijaistuskokemusta. Toisaalta uskon ehkä voivani kompensoida tätä puutetta joillakin muilla taidoillani.

(During my studies, I have only had a couple of substitute positions that lasted for some days – I’m worried that nobody wants to employ me after I graduate because I don’t have more teaching experience. On the other hand, I believe that I can compensate this lack of experience with some of my other skills.)

Some of the participants who mentioned the difficulty of finding substitute positions being something that has negatively affected their vocational identity development mentioned that often

the recruiting processes of substitute teachers are prejudiced as the focus tends to be less on merit and skills, and more on relationships and nepotism. This was something the participants defined as unjust and controversial and made them wonder why schools simultaneously encourage student teachers to apply for teaching posts and then do not even employ any of these student teachers.

In addition to the practical teacher training, participants (n=20) emphasized the importance of peer support from fellow student teachers. The students experienced it as comforting that they could share their thoughts and feelings with someone, who understands them, and get reassured that they are not alone with their doubts and fears. The following excerpt provides an example of a respondent who emphasized the importance of peer feedback:

(4) Opetusharjoittelut ja muiden opeopiskelijoiden kanssa keskustelu. On lohduttavaa huomata, että en ole ainoa, joka on ääri-idealistinen opettajan ammatin suhteen. Myös oppilaiden oma positiivinen asenne opetusta kohtaan on auttanut.

(The practical teacher training and conversations with other student teachers. It is comforting to acknowledge that I am not the only one, who is utterly idealistic when it comes to the teacher's profession. The positive attitude of the pupils towards the tuition has also helped.)

5 Conclusion

The present study aimed to discover the levels of motivation and interest the participants experienced towards careers as language teachers. Furthermore, this research focused on determining which positive and negative factors affected the vocational identity development of student language teachers. The web questionnaire that was used as the tool for data collection was answered by 84 language majors at the University of Jyväskylä in February 2017. The research results provide research communities with a broad variety of material which can be used to further examine the vocational identity development of future educators or to modify already existing university curricula to more advantageously adjust to the needs of students.

The results of the study indicated that whilst possibly struggling with the development of their vocational identity, most student language teachers confirmed having a certainty that the teaching profession was something that they wished to pursue, despite almost half of the respondents answering not having any work experience as teachers. The most popular reasons for choosing a career in the field of teaching were, as stated by the participants, the desire to help others to learn and the interest towards working with children and teenagers. Nearly all the participants agreed on the fact that being a language teacher is not a simple profession. Nevertheless, one must keep in mind that not all students who are minoring in pedagogical studies want to become teachers, which was also something that the results of this study indicated. Some may get involved in textbook design, curriculum design or research.

The respondents mentioned that the most central issues which failed to support the students in their vocational identity development were the lack of substitute positions for teacher trainees, the few chances of finding employment in their own field during the summer, and their own view of themselves, including the opinion of not visualizing themselves as teachers and their own insecurities and doubts. The practical teacher training divided the participants' opinions. Whereas many considered the practical training having been the most crucial element contributing to their vocational identity development, some had negative experiences. Participants emphasized that the practical training had a considerable effect on their vocational identity development, whether it was a positive or a negative one. Additionally, one must keep in mind that some study participants were much more advanced in their studies as compared to others, as some participants responded not yet having completed their practical teacher training. This affects the reliability, and indicates that the results might have been more consistent if the study had been conducted with students who already had completed all their pedagogical studies. However, the focus of the study was to allow every student language teacher the possibility to convey their thoughts, regardless of how advanced they were in their studies.

Another considerable issue when addressing the employment possibilities of student teachers is the fact that the summer breaks in Finnish universities and Finnish comprehensive and upper secondary schools fall on the same months. This results in student teachers often having to find other forms of employment during their summer break, thus negatively affecting their vocational

identity development when compared to other students, who have good chances of finding employment in their own field during the summer.

The main indications of this study were that the language student teachers requested additional opportunities for practicing their teaching skills. Participants who felt that the practical teacher training and their own work experience failed to support their vocational identity development, had problems with perceiving themselves as competent teachers. The results of this study would suggest that the practical teaching training is not extensive and authentic enough. From the viewpoint of student teachers, it would be beneficial if the pedagogical studies would undergo some amending. Additionally, the student teachers would benefit from work opportunities, where they could experiment with their already existing teaching skills without the fear of failure, as many student teachers responded experiencing feelings of low self-esteem and often doubting their skills. All of these suggestions mentioned above might lead to the students developing a stronger sense of vocational identity, which again will be a considerable asset regarding their future teaching careers.

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Appendix 1: The questionnaire in Finnish

1. Pääaine

2. Sukupuoli

Mies

Nainen

3. Ikä

4. Opintojen aloitusvuosi Jyväskylän yliopistossa

5. Suoritan/olen jo suorittanut sivuaineena opettajan pedagogisia opintoja

Kyllä

En

6. Muut sivuaineet

7. Opetuskokemus kuukausina (lukuun ottamatta opintoihin kuuluvia opetusharjoitteluja)

8. Haluatko tulevaisuudessa työskennellä opettajana?

Kyllä

En

En osaa sanoa

9. Miksi haluat työskennellä juuri opettajana? Merkitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.

Lapsuuden haaveammatti

Perheessäni on opettajia

En keksinyt parempaakaan

Hyvä työllisyystilanne

Hyvä palkka

Kielten pääaineopiskelija ei saa töitä muualta

Pidän lasten/nuorten kanssa työskentelystä

Haluan saada aikaan muutosta opetusosalalla

Opettajan ammatti on arvostettu

Työ on helppoa

Pitkä kesäloma

Haluan auttaa ihmisiä oppimaan

Haluan työn, jossa minulla on vaikutusvaltaa

Muu, mikä?

10. Millainen on mielestäsi hyvä opettaja? Luettele vähintään kolme luonteenpiirrettä/käyttäytymismallia.

11. Oletko mielestäsi kykenevä kehittymään tällaiseksi "hyväksi opettajaksi"?

Kyllä

En

Muu, mikä?

12. Opintojesi aikana, mitkä asiat ovat auttaneet sinua oman ammatti-identiteettisi kehittymisessä? (Esim. kanssaopiskelijoiden tuki, opetusharjoittelut, henkilökohtainen opinto-ohjaus, oma asennoituminen, oma työkokemus)

13. Entä mitkä asiat ovat estäneet ammatti-identiteettisi kehitystä tai olleet riittämättömiä tukemaan sitä? (Esim. niukka tuki opetusharjoittelussa, vaikeus saada oman alan kesätöitä ja opettajan sijaisuuksia, oma kiinnostuksen puute alaa kohtaan)

14. Tulevana kieltenopettajana, oletko optimistinen tulevaa työuraasi ajatellen?

Kyllä

En

En osaa sanoa

Muu, mikä?

Appendix 2: The questionnaire in English

1. Majoring in

2. Gender

Male

Female

3. Age

4. Starting year of studies at the University of Jyväskylä

5. Are you studying/have you been studying pedagogical studies as a minor?

Yes

No

6. Minor subjects

7. How much work experience do you have as a teacher? (Excluding teaching practice) In months

8. In the future, do you want do work as a teacher?

Yes

No

Can't say

9. Why do you want to work as a teacher? Check all answers that apply.

Childhood dream job

There are teachers in my family

I couldn't come up with anything better

Good employment situation

It pays well

A language major's only choice for employment

I like working with kids/teenagers

I want to achieve change in the field of teaching

It is a respected profession

The work is easy

Long summer holidays

I want to help people to learn

I want a job with authority

Other reason, which?

10. How you would define a good teacher? Mention at least three traits or behavioral patterns.

11. Do you find yourself able to becoming this kind of “good teacher”?

Yes

No

Other, what?

12. During your studies, which factors have helped you in developing your vocational identity?
(e.g. peer support, teaching practice, student counselling, your own attitude, own work experience)

13. And which factors have failed in supporting your vocational identity development, or have not been sufficient enough?

14. As a future language teacher, are you optimistic when thinking about your future career?

Yes

No

Can't say

Other, what?