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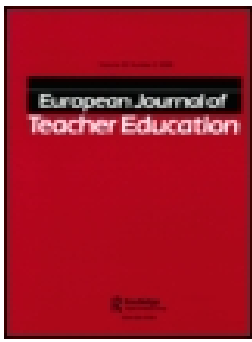Please cite the original version:

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Status versus nature of work: pre-service language teachers envisioning their future profession

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ABSTRACT

Considering the central role of identity in understanding teacher development, this paper addresses the ways in which pre-service language teachers envision their identities as future professionals. The paper is based on a qualitative study of 61 students' visualisations of their future work during their first semester in language teacher education. The visualisations and accompanying descriptive texts were analysed using the principles of qualitative content analysis. In the analysis, two different ways of perceiving future professions, and thereby identities as professionals, were identified. The first was a nature-oriented perspective that focused on desired characteristics of the profession, its activities, environment and social relationships, and the other a status-oriented perspective that focused on the societal status of the profession. The nature-oriented perspective was further divided into three subcategories that illustrated different career options. The implications of the different ideal professional selves for teacher education are also highlighted.

Introduction

In teacher research, professional identities have been found to be central in understanding teachers' decisions, wellbeing at work, and their professional practices (Barkhuizen 2016; Day et al. 2006; Hong 2010; Kayi-Aydar 2015). Professional identities are constantly evolving and constructed by teachers' conceptualisations of themselves as professionals and by their former and current experiences and their future aspirations (Barkhuizen 2016; Golombek 2017). Teacher education forms an important period of identity development, as the previous experiences and hopes for the work are evoked, with the future profession in sight (Steadman, Kayi-Aydar, and Vogel 2018). Understanding this development is a crucial indicator of how prepared student teachers are when they enter professional life after teacher education. Awareness of the centrality of identity in teachers' professional development has altered the understanding of the practices of teacher education. Teacher education is now expected to educate teachers who not only have knowledge of the up-to-date theories in teaching and learning, but are aware of the role of professional identity in

their teaching. This identity perspective positions the student teacher at the centre of the learning process. By understanding the identities and work that the student teachers are envisioning, we as teacher educators can better understand who they are (Kayi-Aydar 2015) and thereby better support the development of their teacher identity and their capacity to work as teachers (Kanno and Stuart 2011).

Although the centrality of professional identity is recognised in teacher education and some studies have been conducted on the ways in which graduate student teachers perceive their professional identities (Steadman, Kayi-Aydar, and Vogel 2018; Kalaja 2016), little research has been conducted on the ways in which future teachers starting their bachelor education envision their future work (see, however, Barcelos 2016; Stenberg et al. 2014). They are at the very beginning of their teacher education and thus also at the early stages of the development of their professional identities. It is, however, important to gain insights into the ways in which they envision their future work, since these conceptualisations of teaching guide their expectations of and orientation to teacher education (Barkhuizen 2017). This article addresses the question of the development of professional identity by means of a qualitative study of 61 pre-service teachers' visualisations of their future work during the first semester in language teacher education. The students were asked to visually illustrate their desired and undesired future career and to verbally describe these visualisations and the likelihood of them becoming a reality.

Theoretical underpinnings

Professional identity

Teacher identity has been a subject of extensive research in the last two decades (Akkerman and Meijer 2011; Barkhuizen 2016; Beauchamp and Thomas 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop 2004; Rodgers and Scott 2008). Although producing a single conceptualisation of teacher identity on the basis of this body of literature is difficult, some common features are often linked to it by researchers. Firstly, teacher identity is understood to include individual teachers' beliefs and theories of learning combined with pedagogical knowledge and practice as tools through which teachers make sense of their professional practices (Barkhuizen 2017). Secondly, identities are social and enacted and negotiated in professional contexts (Akkerman and Meijer 2011). They are dependent on traditions, roles and practices that the individuals have encountered and formed on the array of the societally available discourses (Coldron and Smith 1999). Identity development can thus be seen as socio-politically situated activity (Norton 2000). Thirdly, in addition to being social, they are at the same time personal, i.e., they encompass the aspect of individual agency, as individuals are active participants and interpreters of the social processes they participate in (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop 2004; Barkhuizen 2017). In their identity development process, they use the contextually available resources in constructing themselves as unique professionals (Coldron and Smith 1999). Finally, identities are 'structured across time and space' (Norton 2013, 45), bringing together past experiences and future aspirations of the individual.

The aforementioned defining features of teacher identity also suggest that constructing professional identity is an active process. As Barkhuizen (2017) puts it, professional identities are formed as part of a reflexive process in which individuals try to make sense

of 'who they are and who they desire or fear to be' (Barkhuizen 2017, 4) in the midst of the competing narratives of truth and power in relation to teaching (Norton 2013). In this process certain socioculturally available discourses and possible stereotypes of teaching are judged desirable or undesirable by the individual. The desirable discourses and stereotypes represent a reality where the individuals' desire for positive professional identity can be fulfilled, whereas the negative images posit a threat to an individual's identity construction. In our study, we extend the envisioning of a future profession to also include the 'feared' future, in line with Barkhuizen's (2017) characterisation of the reflexive process of professional identity development.

Although the process of forming professional identity does not begin in teacher education, it is, however, a place where former beliefs and ideas of teaching and learning can be reflected on and transformed to provide a sufficient basis for starting as a professional (Lanas and Kelchtermans 2015). Central in this phase is the transition from a learner perspective to a teacher perspective (Kanno and Stuart 2011), which is mediated by peer discussions, practice periods and theoretical literature (Le Fevre 2011; Lopes and Pereira 2012). In recent literature, teacher education programmes are thus perceived as places where teachers should be supported in their identity construction processes or, in other words, in becoming conscious of their former beliefs about the teaching profession and teacher roles and in taking responsibility for their own identity development process (Freese 2006; Ruohotie-Lyhty 2013). Supporting this complex development demands understanding of the nature of the process itself (Varghese et al. 2005). In this study, we draw on the idea of narrative identity development to conceptualise the active participation of student teachers in the construction of their identities (Barkhuizen 2017; Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop 2004). In the following, the framework of narrative identity development is presented in greater detail.

Role of narratives in identity construction

Block (2017) defines the process of identity construction as 'an ongoing, narrated process which brings together experiences in the past and present, as well as those anticipated in the future'. Narrative knowing is based on the human tendency to seek coherence and continuity (Polkinghorne 1988; Ricoeur 1992, 1991). In the midst of discontinuous events and emotions, humans tend to create coherence by organising these events as parts of an ongoing storyline. These narratives help them to find meaning in events and to plan future actions. It is through the narratives of themselves and others that individual teachers make sense of their experiences and surrounding realities (Barkhuizen 2017). In narration, the social processes the individuals participate in become part of their life story. In this process, the array of socioculturally available traditions, stereotypes and beliefs become personally interpreted and significant. Supporting identity development in teacher education is therefore often considered in terms of offering possibilities for making sense of past experiences of school and present contradictory perspectives in teacher education through the use of stories (Golombek 2017). These kinds of activities are supported in many teacher education programmes in the form of reflective essays, metaphors and portfolios.

In teachers' identity development, however, not only the present but also the narratives of future play an important role. As Kanno and Norton (2003) state, imagined communities and the hopes attached to these are also important. According to Norton (2001), imagined future communities invite imagined identities that further direct individual action and motivation. The

imagined communities further mould student teachers' ideas of the tasks, roles and positions that are related to their future work. Students' stories of the future can therefore be seen as a powerful tool for teacher educators to learn about the ways in which student teachers perceive their future as teachers and what motivates them. They provide understanding of the ways in which individual students use socio-cultural resources, such as cultural stereotypes, and of the ways in which they judge them desirable or undesirable in constructing their unique professional identities. They also provide evidence of the depth and wealth of conceptualisations that student teachers connect to the teacher profession and demonstrate their capacities in building realistic professional identities. Some studies that have addressed this question directly or indirectly have shown that student teachers have enduring ideas of the profession that stem from their own school experiences (Barcelos 2016; Stenberg et al. 2014), i.e., they might teach languages the way they themselves have been taught. It has been demonstrated among Finnish student teachers that culturally typical ways of constructing the teaching profession as a job that is done alone in the closed context of the classroom can affect their orientation and expectations of the future profession (Kalaja 2016; Stenberg et al. 2014). According to Golombek (2017), student teachers' conceptions of teacher identity are also often quite idealised and student teachers struggle to enact them in practice. Although idealised, anticipating rewarding professional experiences work as a powerful impetus for a developing sense of professional identity and make engagement in studies meaningful for the individual (Barkhuizen 2017).

Understanding future identity aspirations is also important because not all narratives are beneficial for individual development. Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013, 2016) found in her study that a personal narrative that constructed teaching as a relational profession in which teachers have good opportunities to influence their everyday practices supported newly qualified teachers in their development. In contrast, narratives in which teaching was conceptualised from the perspective of subject teaching (such as teaching English) heavily affected by external conditions without the possibility for change constrained the professional development of the teacher. Similarly, in a study by Barcelos (2016), student teachers' negative beliefs and fears about the teaching profession severely hampered their motivation and willingness to study. From this perspective, supporting the narrative construction of identity might not be helpful if the quality of the narratives is not explicitly addressed and reflected on and if the students are not offered possibilities to enact their identities as part of their teacher education (Golombek 2017). For this reason, we invited a cohort of future language teachers to picture 'who they desire or fear to be' as future language teachers (Barkhuizen 2017, 4) and how likely they consider these two possibilities to be.

Methodology

Research questions

Our ongoing research task is to find out how student teachers envision their desirable and undesirable future work and how they thereby see their professional identities at the beginning of their university studies. This task is addressed by answering the following two research questions:

- In what ways do student teachers envision their professional future?

- What elements of a future career are considered central in envisioning a positive and a negative professional future?

Context and participants

This study is part of an ongoing research project on language student agency in a Finnish University. The project follows the development of agency and professional identity of a cohort of language students throughout their studies by qualitative and quantitative means. The specific study presented in this article is part of this longitudinal study and based on a visual narrative task of 61 first year language students who are approximately 20 years old and study in the language education programme of the university. Of the participants, 50 were female and 11 male, which closely represents the typical gender distribution in language teacher programmes.

Data collection

To support the development of teacher identity during the whole length of studies, the University of Jyväskylä offers a programme for students wishing to become language teachers in which courses that specialise in questions of language teaching begin in the very first year of study. The data for this study were collected during the first course, which was offered during the first semester. The students were asked to visually illustrate their dream job and also its antithesis and to verbally describe their illustrations and the likelihood of them becoming a reality. The students were given a free hand to use any technique to produce their visualisations. The chosen techniques ranged from drawings and collages to using clipart or online images.

The above assignment links this study to previous studies on teacher identity development in language teacher research that have used stories and visual images in studying students' beliefs and identities (e.g. Kalaja 2016). Our approach of visualising two possible futures, however, broadens these previously implemented methods by connecting visual narrative research to the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS), which has been used in sociological and educational studies in Finland (Wallin et al. 2015; Wallin, Koro-Ljungberg, and Eskola 2018). The main idea of this method is to produce two alternative storylines in which only one central feature of the story is altered. Although any aspect of the story can be varied 'it is relatively common to use a division between positive and negative elements, such as success and failure regarding a phenomenon' (Wallin, Koro-Ljungberg, and Eskola 2018, 4). The method is considered to highlight how specific phenomena are perceived and valued. By applying this data collection method in our visual narrative research, we aim to highlight the central elements that construct desired and feared futures for the student teachers' professional identities (see also Barkhuizen 2017).

The visualisation was completed as a course assignment, but was not numerically evaluated. Permission to use the assignments as part of this study was requested from each student and the data consist only of visualisations for which a written consent was obtained from the participants.

Data analysis

The data analysis was done by two researchers (the authors) using the principles of qualitative content analysis (Patton 2015; Kalaja and Pitkänen-Huhta 2018). The analysis was data-driven or

inductive (Vaismoradi et al. 2016). The students' visualisations and accompanying explanations were used to categorise the data. First, the images were printed and the researchers made an initial grouping on the basis of the images only. The images were analysed in terms of the elements included in the image, including people, material elements, the space, and visible emotions. Next, the students' written explanations were analysed in relation to the images. These were used to clarify the interpretation of the images. In these analyses, we identified two dominant overall orientations to the professional future: *Nature-of-work oriented perspective* and *Status-of-work oriented perspective*, which formed the two main categories of the analysis. We call these *nature-oriented* and *status-oriented perspectives* for short. The nature-oriented perspective foregrounded the meaningfulness of work in the descriptions of the dream job. In these images, the students had included a variety of elements characterising the future working environment, overall positive emotions could be seen in people's positions, and facial expressions and interaction between people was visible. The status-oriented perspective, in contrast, focused on the societal status of the desired profession. In contrast to the other main category, these images visualised emotionally neutral either bare or messy environments or no environment at all, the focus was on an isolated worker figure, and there was a lack of interaction between people. The main category of the nature-oriented perspective was further divided into three subcategories, which illustrated different career options. In the first subcategory, the students envisioned two different teacher careers. In the second subcategory, the contrast was between the teaching profession and another profession, and in the final category, two professions were contrasted but neither was related to the teaching profession.

After the initial formation of the main categories, the researchers coded the contents of each visualisation in an excel file. To ensure the validity of coding, both researchers coded each category independently and the codings were compared and any discrepancies were reanalysed and negotiated together. Coding focused especially on the objects of the images, grouping of the objects and people and emotional expressions visible in the image (Kalaja and Pitkänen-Huhta 2018). Coding of the visualisations was further complemented and confirmed by doing a similar coding of the accompanying texts (see appendix for an example of coding an image and accompanying text). After detailed coding of the content, key elements, emotions and positions typical of each category were identified based on elements repeatedly observed in the visualisations. In this phase the initial formation of the categories was further considered and refined.

Findings: two dominant ways of perceiving future work

This section presents the ways in which possible professional futures were portrayed in the student teachers' visualisations and described in the adjoining texts. Table 1 presents the distribution across the two main categories and the three subcategories of the nature-oriented perspective.

Table 1. Distribution of categories.

Main category	N	F	M	Subcategory	N	F	M
Nature of work orientation	45	40	5	Two teacher positions	18	17	1
				Teacher vs. another position	18	17	1
				Two different professions	9	6	1
Status of work orientation	16	9	7				

In the following, we will first present the results in relation to the nature-oriented perspective with an illustration of the main elements that were attached to positive and negative professional futures in this group. Second, we will describe our results in a similar way in relation to the status-oriented perspective. The presentation of findings is then followed by a discussion of the significance of these results for teacher education and teachers' professional development.

Nature-oriented perspective of future work

The nature-oriented perspective consisted of illustrations that highlighted significant elements that made work enjoyable, meaningful and suitable for the individual. This perspective on work was then contrasted with a professional future that did not include these features or two professional futures not related to teaching were contrasted. Although the student teachers envisioned different professional options, typical for these narratives was a hope of participation, cooperation, and a sense of significance in their own work. We will now present in more detail the results in relation to the three subcategories and show the ways in which the significant elements are presented in the student teachers' visual and written narratives.

Contrasting two futures as a teacher

The *Contrasting two futures as a teacher* subgroup consisted of images in which the student teachers illustrated two different professional futures as a teacher. In total, 18 student teachers, one male and the others female, chose this perspective to envision their possible futures.

The following visualisations (Figures 1 and 2) exemplify how potential future scenarios as a teacher were typically viewed and contrasted in best – and worst-case terms.

Figure 1. Drawing
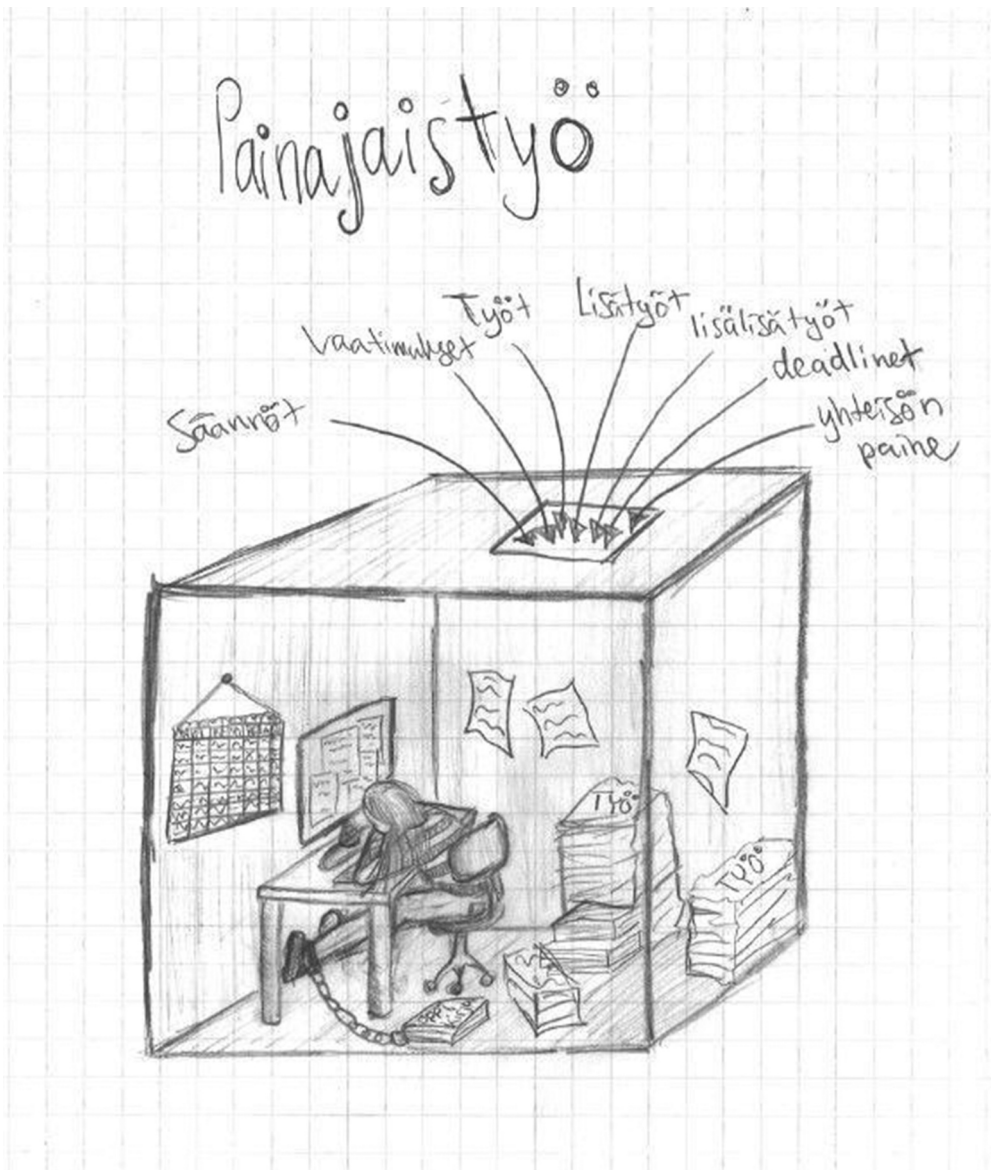
Figure 2. Drawing

The first image, titled 'dream job', depicts a playful scene involving adults and children in a cosy and spacious classroom. The space also includes symbols related to music, art, drama, and internationality. In contrast, the undesirable professional future titled 'nightmare job' is represented by a person enclosed within a cubicle and pressed down by external pressures represented by the words 'rules', 'requirements', 'work', 'extra work', 'extra extra work', 'deadlines' and 'pressure from the community' written in Finnish on top of the box. The room is filled with piles of papers and the person is chained to a book labelled 'textbook'.

Participants in this category also highlighted more generally in their illustrations community, varied learning methods, meaningful work, rich learning environments, and positive emotional

experience when describing their dream job. The community aspect was present in comments such as 'a lot of internationalism and cooperation'[1] and 'being part of the class community' and thus included a cooperative community perspective encompassing both pupils and teachers. The idea of varied teaching methods was visible in the different teaching methods illustrated in the visualisations and described in terms of 'communicative approach', 'discussion' and 'activating pupils'. These were linked to the theme of meaningful work practices, which also included descriptions such as 'combining my special education studies with language studies' and 'trying to keep up with change by educating myself further'. In the student teacher visions this was supported by a resourceful teaching context.

In contrast, the visualisations and descriptions of an undesirable future included loneliness, 'no real contact with pupils' or 'isolation', 'lack of resources', 'too big groups', and a lack of development opportunities. Negative emotional experience was typically signalled in these illustrations by question marks, angry faces or neutral facial expressions, and the teacher was often depicted alone in front of the class, as in the picture below (Figure 3).
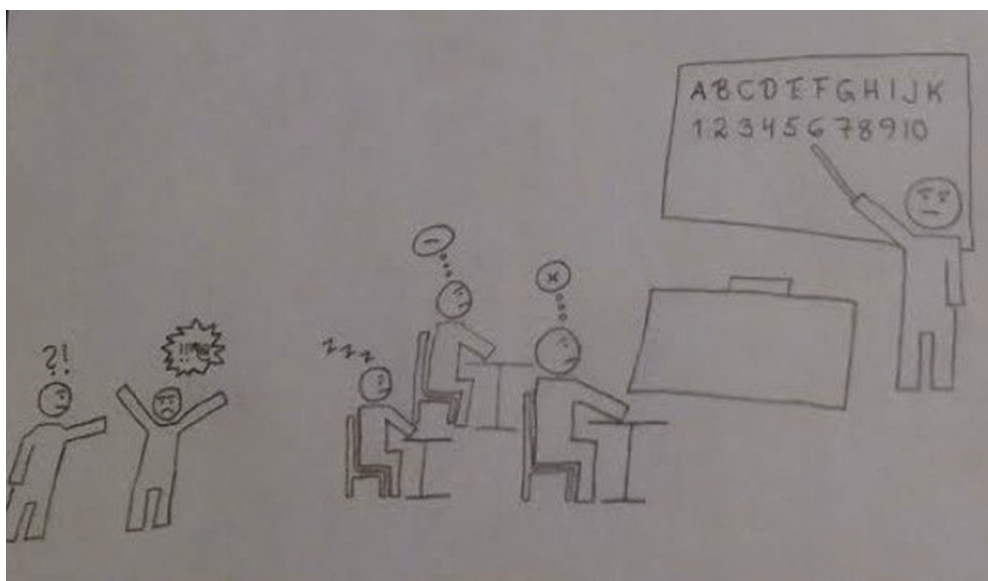
Figure 3. Drawing

In sum, this group of student teachers focused heavily on the nature of the job they wanted to do in the future. They were also capable of naming factors that were central to their job satisfaction. Their illustrations and the accompanying explanations were generally detailed and included clear contrasts based on the students' values and preferences. The imagined professional identity of these students was of a certain kind of teacher, which they were able to describe in detail. They rely heavily on professional values, including working conditions, relationship to others, and self-fulfilment. They are also able to reflect on the downsides of the profession by presenting an alternative, not desired, envisaged teaching reality, and they thereby possess a good starting point for developing their professional identity during their studies and beyond.

Contrasting teaching with another profession

The students in the subgroup *Contrasting teaching with another profession* focused on two alternative professional futures: language teaching and an alternative career. Similar to the previous category, however, the nature of the work was highlighted as central to the two alternatives. In total, 18 student teachers (17 female, 1 male) chose to illustrate their professional future in this way.

Figures 4 and 5 show a typical example of the image pairs in this category.

Figure 4. Source: https://pixabay.com/fi/verkko-yhteiskunta-sosiaalisen-1019737/; https://pixabay.com/fi/nainen-toimisto-opettaja-613310/

Figure 5. Source: https://pixabay.com/fi/officen-sihteeri-ty%C3%B6-office-1148156/

In the above example, the student has chosen three pixabay photos to illustrate the envisaged career scenarios. The first image shows a group of people gathered around a globe. In the second image, which is attached to the first image forming a continuous entity, a smiling teacher sits at her desk in a cosy space. The third image depicts a woman speaking on an old-fashioned phone enclosed inside an office file. In this set of images, tensions are created between human interaction and interaction with machines and between community and loneliness. The themes of this visualisation are further supported by the accompanying text, which mentions 'working with people' and 'internationality' as central features of the desired career.

More generally, desired aspects of the future career included 'sense of community', 'creativeness', 'appreciation', 'self-fulfilment' and 'internationality'. In contrast, the undesirable future included 'loneliness', 'interaction with machines', and 'work with no challenges or possibilities to have influence'. Although, similarly to the first category, this category focused on the nature of the work, the work of the teacher is in this case unquestionably considered to be professionally fulfilling: the characteristics of the envisaged teaching career were idealised and the visualisations and accompanying texts did not reflect on the possible downsides of being a teacher. This was also reflected in the emotional expressions in the photos. The emotions in the desired teaching career image and accompanying interpretations provided by the participants ranged from happy to peaceful and enthusiastic, whereas the associated emotions of the other career options were unhappy, sad, tired, irritated or neutral. The imagined professional identity of these students was thus an idealised future as a teacher of their dreams. Here, the lack of realism regarding the possible negative sides of the teaching profession might hinder the development of a realistic, and thereby resilient, professional identity.

Contrasting two professions not related to teaching

In this subcategory, as with the two previous subcategories, the focus was on the characteristics of an ideal future career, but in this case neither of the envisioned dream professions included teaching. Nine student teachers (6 female and 3 male, out of an overall total of 61 teachers) made no reference to teaching in their descriptions of their ideal career. For some of the students in this category, their dream profession was related to their studies in languages, but not to their pedagogical studies. For others, however, their dream career was not related to their current studies at all. The following drawing (Figure 6) is an example of this category.

In this example, the student has drawn two images on the same sheet of paper and attached the written explanations alongside them. In the first image a woman sits at a desk with a computer with a hot drink in her hand. Next to the computer are papers and a pen. The clock on the wall shows 13.25. The adjoining text describes the characteristics of the dream profession: 'I'm a writer', 'I work alone at home', 'working hours can be freely chosen', and 'creative'. The second drawing shows a woman standing behind a desk in front of an audience. There are rows of chairs in front of the woman, many of them occupied. The adjoining text says that 'I'm a university professor', 'I lecture to big groups', 'often early in the morning', and 'not so active'. In this case, both possible futures are related to the student's studies.
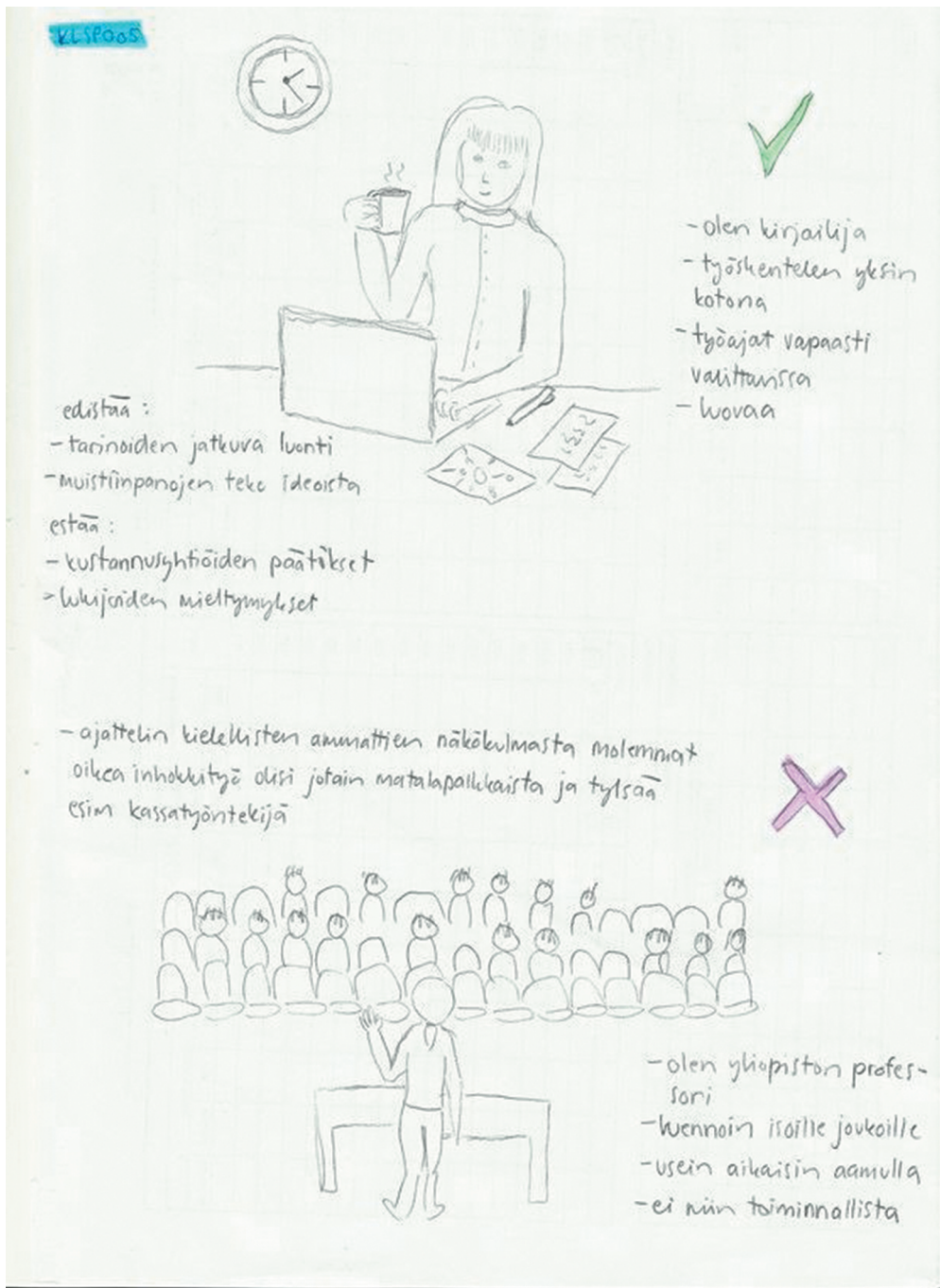
Figure 6. Drawing

In the text in the middle of the drawing the student explains that she imagined the two futures to be professions related to languages, and that her nightmare job would be something low-paid and boring, like a supermarket cashier.

In some visualisations in this category the characteristics of the future career were portrayed in such general terms that they might or might not include teaching, while some explicitly stated that teaching could be one possibility alongside other options. What was common, however, was that the students seemed to feel strongly about the desired characteristics of their dream future career, describing it in terms such as 'meaningful', 'international', 'ethical', and 'sustainable'. The antithesis was described as being not in line with their values: 'no self-fulfilment', 'physical work', or 'unpleasant working conditions'. With regard to identity development, this category is similar to the first subcategory in which two possible teaching professions were contrasted. As with the students in the first subcategory, these students were aware of the conditions in which they want to work and could reflect on the positive and negative features of professional life. They, too, appear thus to have a solid starting point for preparing for professional life after their studies. However, their dream was not teaching. It should be noted, however, that the task instructions did not ask the students to envisage a future as a teacher, but simply to imagine their desired and undesired future careers.

Status-oriented perspective on future work

In this category, in contrast to the nature-oriented main category above, job status or job title appeared to be most important considerations rather than the nature of the work, which was in most cases not described at all. In total, 16 students (9 female, 7 male) described their dream and its antithesis in these terms. The following pair of images (Figures 7 and 8) illustrate this category:

Figure 7. Source: http://www.publicdomainpictures.net/view-image.php?image=56145.
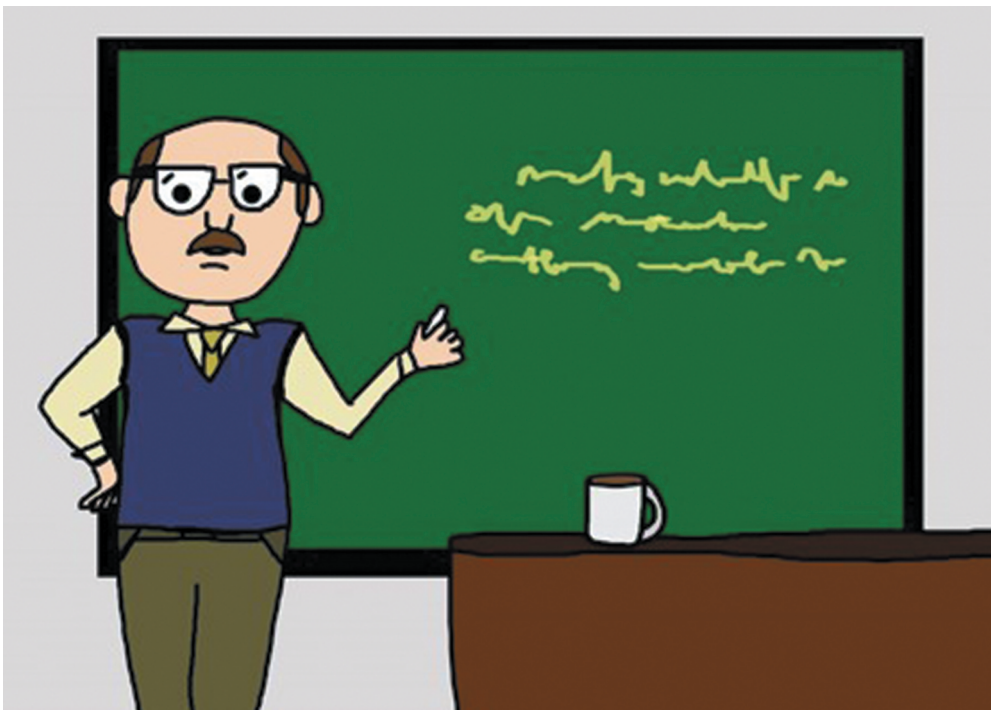
Figure 8. Sources: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Auto_Mechanic.jpg.

In this case, the student had downloaded two freely available images to represent two opposite futures. One of the images (Figure 7) depicts a male teacher standing in front of a blackboard with chalk in hand, a mug on the desk. What is notable here is that the focus is on the teacher and no students can be seen in the image. The image portrays a stereotypical picture of a conventionally dressed teacher in a very conventional environment and, by connotation, traditional teacher-led teaching. The stereotypical image is further enforced by the student's explanation: 'In the first picture I work in my dream job as a teacher of mother tongue and literature'. This is in clear contrast to the descriptions in the nature-oriented category, as hardly any descriptive elements beyond the job title were used.

The second image (Figure 8) is a photograph of a man changing car tyres. The man lies on the ground with tools in his hands and the tyres lying next to him. Again, the image portrays a fairly stereotypical picture of a profession, this time manual work, which is placed in opposition to the work of the teacher. The text describing the undesired career is slightly more detailed than the text describing teaching: 'In the second picture I work as a car mechanic. That job really does not match my dream. I could never imagine someone bringing their car to me to get repaired.' Even though the description is longer, it does not contain anything about the nature or conditions of the work.

The undesired job was most typically manual work, as in the example of a car mechanic above. Other jobs presented included a postman, cashier, caretaker, security guard, cleaner, and factory worker. There were only two exceptions to these manual types of jobs: a researcher and a youth counsellor.

Overall, the images in this category presented stereotypical images of professions. Many were photographs downloaded from the internet. In most images representing the teaching profession, the focus was on the teacher and, if there were students, they sat in rows at their desks. The profession of teacher was often contrasted with a low-skill, low paid and less valued profession. No strong emotions could be detected in the images and the accompanying texts in this category. In the images and the accompanying texts depicting the teaching profession, the emotion was either happy and joyful or then no specific emotions were highlighted. In the images depicting other jobs, the emotion was either sad and tired or no emotions were described. The overarching neutrality of the images further reinforces the focus on the status of the profession or the meaning of attaining a certain job title: the students had no strong emotions concerning the job of a teacher. This is in contrast to the first main category, where different realities of the teaching profession were portrayed.

It seems therefore that the teacher students in this category had a very traditional view of the teaching profession and had no will or capacity to reflect on it in any detail. The dream is to achieve the status of a teacher and their imagined professional identity remains rather superficial and one dimensional. Such a superficial imagined future identity can be considered to create little possibilities for identifying one's own needs for development during teacher education.

Discussion

Our study aimed at finding out how 61 first-year student teachers perceive their future work and professional identity. The data were collected by means of two opposing visual presentations: one presenting the desired dream profession and the other the undesired profession ten years from now. The students were also asked to write a short text explaining what their visualisations show, how plausible they see the two possible futures, and what could enhance or hinder their wishes. In the analysis, we identified two different ways of perceiving future professions and thereby identities as professionals. The first was a nature-oriented perspective that focused on the desired professional activities, environments and social relationships, and the other a status-oriented perspective characterised by the societal status of the profession. The first was further divided into three subcategories. In the first subcategory, the students contrasted two different kinds of teacher careers. In the second subcategory the contrast was between the teaching profession and another kind of profession, and in the final category, two professions were contrasted but neither of them was related to teaching. A clear majority of the students' future career portrayals were nature-oriented (45 students). Of these, 18 students contrasted two futures as teachers in a nuanced way, and 18 students contrasted the teaching profession with another kind of professional future. Surprisingly, nine students did not express teaching as being their desired professional future, even though their studies were oriented towards becoming a language teacher. In total, 16 students focused on job status in their future visions. Notably, a clear majority of these students were male students; the overall percentage of males in the data is 19%, but in this category the percentage is as high as 44%.

The results give reason to argue that pre-service teachers do not share a homogeneous starting point in their studies, but that their expectations, hopes and imagined

professional selves differ considerably at the beginning of their university education. Although the cultural stereotypes of teachers' work were strongly present in the student teachers' visualisations either as socially desirable or undesirable images of teachers (cf. Kalaja 2016), the particular conceptualisations that the participants used differed. These results align with the results that show differences in pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching and their professional identities in later stages of their teacher education (e.g. Gu and Benson 2015; Barcelos 2016; Stenberg et al. 2014). The variation was also visible in how they are able to reflect on their future. Many student teachers in the nature-oriented group already possessed a wealth of multifaceted conceptualisations of teachers' work that they can use as a point of reference for their identity development. This was especially typical of the pre-service teachers who reflected on their professional future in terms of the different characteristics of two alternative teacher narratives. In their narratives, the possibility of a non-preferable teaching career was also made evident, which showed an awareness of the possible challenges and pitfalls of constructing a teacher identity. In the nature-oriented category, some student teachers also expressed very detailed and mature ideas regarding ethical values and ideal working conditions, even if the desired future was not specifically related to teaching. For student teachers, an imagined professional self can act as a significant goal that can help students choose courses and seek for experiences that help them reach this dream. In our study some students showed, already at this very early stage in their studies, a clear awareness of the possibilities and challenges of the work of a teacher, which may enhance their agency as students.

On the other hand, our study also revealed possible problems in how pre-service language teachers envision their future work. In particular, when the teaching profession was contrasted with another profession, the student teacher narratives narrowly portrayed teaching in an exclusively positive light. These narratives, while building an enticing imaginary identity, present a very clear danger of idealising the teaching profession (also Golombek 2017) and thus the risk of disappointment when entering the classroom reality, with serious negative consequences for well-being at work. Contrasting teaching with an alternative career does not create conditions for reflecting on the ways in which desirable teaching communities and positive relationships are constructed and nurtured.

In addition to the nature-oriented perspectives of future work, our study also identified a considerable group of future teachers who see their future profession through a rather simplistic lens. The wish to be 'a teacher' was contrasted with low-skill, low-paid, and low-valued manual work. In these images, teaching was only recognised as a status without reference to any dimensions of teachers' work. Reliance on simplistic stereotypes of the ideal self (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009), which was evident in many of the images, does not activate student agency in anticipating the tasks, relationships or environmental challenges that they might face (also Stenberg et al. 2014). This starting point may thus be insufficient for meaningful reflection on and development of agency in university studies, which in Finland are highly dependent on the student's own activity. We therefore consider that this group of students would need extra support at the beginning of their teacher education. It is notable that male students were overrepresented in this group. One can only speculate on the reasons for this, but it is something that should be taken seriously and explored further in future studies.

Methodologically we aimed at extending previous studies that have focused on envisioning a future teaching profession by including two imagined futures: the wished for and the feared for. This methodological approach also aligned with MEBS in asking participants to imagine different storylines but with visual means and by the same participant in our case (Wallin, Koro-Ljungberg, and Eskola 2018). We feel that this method revealed aspects of identity development that would have remained uncovered had we only asked the students to imagine their dream job as a teacher. First of all, we could see differences in how the opposite futures were constructed. Some had a clear view of opposing teaching realities with nuanced reflection on the elements of the work of the teacher, whereas for others their dreams and fears were expressed in the form of professions that were opposite from the outset in terms of physicality, pay, and societal value. Secondly, it showed that, for some, their future as a teacher was still uncertain, even though they had entered a programme of language teacher education.

Implications

Although the focus of this study was on language teacher students, we believe that these results can also be applied to teacher education more broadly. The results of our study underscore the necessity of teacher education programmes to focus on the ways in which preservice teachers perceive future possibilities and to be sensitive to the educational and counselling needs of different students. Each of these students, irrespective of their focus on either the nature or status of their future work, would need different kinds of support in reflecting on their future. On the basis of this study, we want to suggest two practical implications for teacher educators to consider.

Firstly, this study shows the difference of starting points for identity development in teacher education and highlights the need for teacher educators to recognise and acknowledge the depth and type of discourses that surround the student teachers' narratives of the teacher profession. Since these discourses direct the student teachers' orientation to teacher education and its activities (Barkhuizen 2017; Pavlenko 2003) as well as contribute to their identity development, knowledge of them can help teacher educators create meaningful learning experiences and engage students in these activities and thereby support their identity development.

Secondly, this study points out the necessity for teacher educators to engage in dialogue with their students about their dreams and the realities of teachers' work. An important goal of teacher education is to develop an ability to consciously reflect on identities (Freese 2006; Beauchamp and Thomas 2009). The visualisations used in this study offer a valuable and accessible activity at the beginning of teacher education that can be used to consciously reflect on different future possibilities and fears and to reveal inconsistencies and discrepancies between dreams, fears, and realities (Freese 2006). The more the students know themselves and are conscious of the discourses that surround their dreams and fears, the more they can also understand the power relationships and discourses that surround the teacher profession at large (Barkhuizen 2017).

Finally, although we are positive about the possibilities of future narratives, we also perceive a danger of empty verbalism (Vygotsky 1986, 150) in encouraging our students to reflect on their hopes and dreams, a concern that has been raised by Golombek (2017). Asking student teachers to form empowering identities is not enough if we as teacher

educators leave them without the support needed to enact them (Golombek 2017, 153). Awareness of the starting points and the hopes they have for the future work can, however, help us as teacher educators to better support their development.

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