Using a professional life history approach to support identification and identity transformation for neophyte teachers and teacher educators as they transition into new professional roles

Presentation for TEAN
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Aim: To support Teacher Educators to use an innovative narrative tool as they seek to enable student teachers and new teacher educators engage in identification as they transition into new professional roles.

What is the evidence base for these proposals?

- Drawing from study conducted for my Ed.D.

- Use of Professional Life History (PLH) approach with 6 neophyte teacher educators

- Working across two contexts – Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders and Tutors in ITE.

- Analyses suggest that:

  - Use of narrative story telling activates identification

  - This is particularly supported by the incorporation of prospective reflection and opportunities to 'reflect on reflection'

The Professional Life History (PLH) approach

- An adapted form of Life History method (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Atkinson, 1998).

- Focus on professional life – sharing of personal information is at discretion of storyteller.

- Incorporating prospective reflection – more likely to reveal identity over recent transitions, supportive of identification (adapted from Conway, 2001)

- Preparation of timeline in advance to form structure for conversation, reducing need for prompting.

The Process of Identification Activated through the telling of a PLH

- Term coined from Hall (2000) that 'identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group or with an ideal' (p16).

- My definition – Identification is a process of recognition of self / identity, realised in the narrative act.

- Evidence that in telling their stories the participants in this study developed a stronger awareness of their professional identity.

Evidence of Identification

During the follow up discussions participants stated that the PLH:

- 'made me more aware of my lack of confidence and now thinking maybe just go for it.' (Joanne, 28-03-13)
- 'it just helped me understand myself a bit more' and gave her a 'clearer understanding of where I wanted to go' (Jane, 08-04-13).
- enabled her to identify the 'very important landmarks of how I became an effective practitioner' (Annie, 15-05-13).
- 'able to reflect on some of those pivotal points and the reasoning behind them' (Emily, 12-03-13).
- 'why hadn't I done this process before?' (Annie, 15-05-13)

May also occur in other contexts:

- '[when] you have to make the decision are you going to move or not, you find yourself talking to various people about what you've done in the past and what you think you might be going to do in the future, and what's brought you to where you are now.'
- And that she had done this 'privately in my head' and 'with family and friends' (Elizabeth, 09-04-14).

What Supports Identification?

An analysis of instances of critical self-reflection (CSR) within the narrative events evidences a link between CSR and identification.

Theme	Linked Nodes
Identifying aspects of professional life of significance	• Identifying change • Identifying feelings • Identifying problems • Identifying skills and strengths • Identifying tensions
Statements of professional identity	• Identity as a teacher educator • Identity as a teacher • Identity with Reading Recovery
Reflections on roles in professional life	• Reflections on current role • Reflections on past role • Reflections on professional life
Recognising influences on professional life	• Influence of context • Influence of others • Job security • Motivation to change
Prospective reflection	• Ambitions for the future • Considering options
Reflections on self and evidence of self awareness	• Confidence • Regret • Self-awareness

Why is identification so important?

- Literature suggests that transition from teacher to teacher educator is problematic in relation to professional identity (Murray and Male, 2005; Field, 2012)

- Identification supports identity transformation as professionals move into new roles.

- Comprised of critical self-reflection, and particularly premise reflection, on self and identity.

- Supported by engaging in narrative story telling.

- Activated particularly by prospective reflection and 'reflecting on reflection'.

- Identity transformation may be problematic where identification is not activated.

Supporting Identification for Student Teachers, Masters Level Students and Neophyte Teach Educators

Such approaches might include:

- the preparation of a professional life history timeline,

- one to one or small group sharing of professional life histories, and

- follow up discussions as an opportunity for 'reflecting on reflection'.

Example: Masters Level Students

- Prepare timelines in advance of a session
- Work in pairs or triads to share PLHs
- Later in year – Group reflection on their PLH and professional identity
- Supported the writing of assignment focused on critical self-reflection.

Example – Neophyte Teacher Educators

- Prepare timelines in advance of PLH discussion (perhaps as part of SDR process)

- Telling PLH, including prospective reflection – linking to planning CPD

- Collaborative discussion with other neophyte TEs – reflecting on reflection.

Possible Example – Student Teachers

- Preparation of timeline showing what has lead them into teaching as a career

- Sharing timelines in pairs or small groups

- Revisiting timelines later in the year. Reflecting on how these might have changed.

- Considering prospective reflection.

Discussion

1. Would you concur with the findings of this study that identification is a process activated within narrative practices?

2. Might this process of identification be supportive for individuals during professional transitions?

3. What narrative practices might we engage with in our work with student teachers, experienced teachers, mentors and teacher educators?

4. Do you have examples of using such practices already, have these been beneficial and in what ways?

References

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