The Emerging Professional Teacher Identity of Early Childhood and Foundation Phase Pre-service Teachers: Implications for Teacher Education Programmes

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Abstract

Professional teacher identity is an important element in teaching. A teacher who rightfully identifies with teaching can be capable of helping learners achieve. Professional teacher identity needs to be addressed starting from pre-service level for preparation of effective teachers. This paper explores how Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase (ECD and FP) pre-service teachers in South Africa construct professional teacher identity. A qualitative study in which six pre-service teachers participated was used. Using propositions from Bourdieu's habitus theory and Wenger's community of practice theory, pre-service teachers 'narratives were analysed to find out how they construct professional teacher identity. From the findings, they constructed professional teacher identity using dispositions influenced from their personal histories, personal attributes (beliefs and values), prior experiences and teacher education. These findings have implications for teacher education programmes.

Keywords: professional teacher identity, pre-service teachers, early childhood development, foundation phase, dispositions.

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Introduction

Professional teacher identity is about how teachers identify with the qualities they should possess as teachers (Mockler, 2011), and is crucial in how they perform their work. Professional teacher identity can provoke a sense of agency, empowerment and capacity to transform one's context (Beauchamp, & Thomas, 2009), thereby strongly determining the way teachers teach as well as their professional development (Beijaard et al., 2004). There are different perspectives on the importance of developing a professional teacher identity (Lamote & Engels, 2010); one that stresses its relationship to quality and innovation in teaching and the other that stresses the development of practice in teacher education programmes.

Professional teacher identity is a theoretical construct which draws from educational, psychological and sociological paradigms of teaching (Beijaard et al., 2004; Samuel & Stephens, 2000). People develop their professional teacher identity in interaction with other people (sociological perspective) but express it in their perceptions of "who they are" and "who they want to become" (psychological perspective) (Clarke, 2008, p.98). Professional teacher identity is related to images of self and teacher's roles (Beijarrd et al., 2004). Both self-images and teacher's roles relate to perceptions teachers have about themselves as teachers (Cattley, 2007). In this paper, professional teacher identity makes reference to the perceptions, values, knowledge and understandings teachers have of themselves as teachers within their educational contexts (O'Sullivan, 2008).

Pre-service is a period in which professional teacher identity begins (Walkington, 2005; Cattley, 2007), hence it is considered emerging (Chong et al., 2011). Its development is an important component of the process of learning to become a teacher (Friesen & Besley, 2013; Beijaard, 2019). Ways in which pre-service teachers integrate a range of influences as they become teachers can be examined through professional teacher identity, which makes it a pedagogical tool (Olsen, 2008). It can be used as a pedagogical tool to assist pre-service teachers to understand themselves as teachers which makes them good teachers (Schepens et al., 2009). Thus, it becomes useful in framing learning and development for pre-service teachers (Olsen, 2008), making it a component of teacher education.

Understanding how pre-service teachers construct professional teacher identity enables

identification of professional learning and development needs (Mockler, 2011). This paper tries to bring out this understanding through exploring how Early Childhood Development and Foundation phase (ECD and FP) pre-service teachers from a Higher Education institution in South Africa construct professional teacher identity. While this research is from a South African context, it can provide new insights and reflections for teacher educators elsewhere in the world.

In South Africa, ECD caters for 3 – 5 years (the pre-school phase) while FP, the first phase in the school system, comprising grades R to 3, caters for 5-9-year olds. The participants were training for both ECD and FP. This phase is typified by poor learning outcomes, as evidenced in poor performance in national annual assessments and international evaluation tests (Wilson, 2015). One of the ways to improve poor learning outcomes for this phase of the education system could be to focus on developing quality teachers (Green et al., 2011). Developing a positive professional teacher identity can enhance teachers' capabilities to bring effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

In any occupation 'who one is' as a person is so much interwoven with how one acts as a professional and these cannot be separated (Lamote & Engels, 2010). There is a relationship between the personal and the professional in developing a professional teacher identity (Kelchtermans, 2018; Bukor, 2013; Mockler, 2011; Olsen, 2008; Day et al., 2006; Beijaad et. al., 2004). A transaction between the personal and professional occurs whereby teachers can either adapt themselves to the context conditions or adapt context conditions to their own ideals (Lopes & Pereira, 2012). For pre-service teachers, how they deal with influences during teacher education depends on the value they personally attach to them (Beijaad et. al, 2004). This implies unavoidable interrelationships between the personal and professional (Day et al., 2006). Therefore, identity is constructed from an interaction between the person and the context (Wenger, 1998). A socio-cultural perspective was used to understand how pre-service teachers construct professional teacher identity. From this perspective propositions from habitus theory (Bourdieu, 1977) and community of practice

theory (Wenger, 1998) were used.

Habitus Theory

Habitus is "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which integrate past experiences, and functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). Dispositions acquired from experiences present as perceptions, appreciations and actions. These are inculcated through a long and slow process of acquisition and tend to last long (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 51). Social systems such as family, class, society are responsible for inculcating these dispositions. Habitus is internalised as habits that guide thoughts and actions. Habitus is not fixed or permanent and can be modified as people occupy different spaces and times.

Habitus provides a general understanding of how the social structures inform present actions (Bourdieu, 1993; James, 2011). It emphasises the role of past experiences in shaping identity. Pre-service teachers from their experiences in society and teacher education programme they can acquire and internalise certain habits (dispositions) which influence their thoughts and actions leading to identity formation. In this regard, habitus helps to identify the influences upon constructions of professional teacher identity (Proweller & Mitchner, 2004).

Modes of belonging from Community of Practice Theory

Community of practice provide a context of experience in which one's beliefs and perceptions are refined and changed, leading to identity formation (Wenger, 1998). Identity formation is understood as "belonging" in terms of three modes: engagement, imagination and alignment (Wenger, 1998). The three modes help in explaining how pre-service teachers construct professional teacher identity.

Engagement is active involvement in mutual processes of negotiating meaning which allows us to invest in what we do and in our relations with other people to gain a "lived sense of who we are" (Wenger, 1998, p. 192). Imagination is where people create images of the world and see connections through time and space extrapolating from own experiences. Alignment is where people coordinate their energy and activities to fit within broader

structures, to contribute to broader enterprises (Wenger 1998, p.173). In this theory, teacher professional identities are constructed as a result of pre-service teachers being active participants in communities of practice, which are the university, community and teaching practice schools. When pre-service teachers engage in practices, align with shared practices and integrate their past, present and future in creating images of the teaching (Clarke, 2008), it reveals how they construct professional teacher identity.

A combination of the two theories frame an understanding of professional teacher identity from a personal and professional view. Habitus reveals the influences from the person, while modes of belonging reveals how the person interacts with the context (profession) in identity construction process. This understanding is addressed by answers to the following questions;

1. What are the personal factors that shape professional teacher identity in ECD and FP pre-service teachers?
2. How can we explain the emerging professional teacher identity of pre-service teachers?

Method

Context

The study was undertaken in the four-year ECD and FP teacher education programme of a selected institution of higher learning in South Africa. The participants were being prepared to teach young children (ages 3-9) from preschool to Grade 3. The cohort consisted of 122 students, both those who were upgrading diploma qualifications and those in initial teacher training. The programme exposed students to the theory and practice of ECD and FP education. Teaching practice within schools took place during the first four weeks of the second semester in each year of study, starting from second year.

Participants

Six pre-service teachers in the final year of an ECD and FP teacher education programme

were selected to participate in the study. It was recognised that all ECD and FP pre-service teachers have stories to tell (Cresswell, 2013) about themselves. Choosing to work with six was based on the premise that it was a manageable number to generate a thick description and rich data and not so large to cause data overload which could pose a challenge to analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). The selection of participants was based on the willingness to participate and 20 (2 males and 18 females) out of 122 volunteered to participate. Both males were selected, while females were streamlined to 4 accommodating diversity in terms of age, origin, and others. Below is biographical information on the participants.

Table 1. *Background information of participants*

Name	Ethnic Group	Gender	Age	Geographical origin	Previous teaching experience
Susan	African	Female	28	KwaZulu Natal	None
Morgan	African	Male	44	Limpopo	14 years
Teneile	Coloured	Female	24	Kwazulu Natal	None
Margret	African	Female	42	Limpopo	12 years
Nick	African	Male	24	Limpopo	None
Viola	African	Female	45	Limpopo	19 years

Methods

The study adopted a qualitative interpretive approach which explains how people make sense of their circumstances in a social world (Cohen et al., 2011; MacNaughton et al., 2006). Within a qualitative interpretive approach, Narratives were identified as powerful tools to document identity (Zembylas, 2003) since identity is storied (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). A narrative case study was used in which an ECD and FP teacher education programme from one university provided a unique context for professional teacher identity construction.

Data collection

Data collection took place from March to October in the same year. Before data was

collected, participants granted their consent by signing informed consent forms to confirm their willingness to participate and that they have read and understood the aims and objectives of the study. The study drew from multiple sources of data; poster narratives, semi-structured interviews, teaching practice reports and reflective writings. The aim was to gather sufficient data to explore and develop collective interpretations that explain the emerging professional teacher identity.

Poster narratives

Poster narratives were guided by the following questions: 1. Who are you? 2. How do you see yourself as an ECD and FP teacher? These are essential questions in developing a professional identity (Korthagen, 2004). The 'who are you' question probed into pre-service teachers' life histories (Bamberg, 2010) to reach the personal factors that influenced professional teacher identity constructions. Each participant created a poster putting ideas together using pictures, drawings, images and texts describing who they were and how they saw themselves as ECD and FP teachers. Each presented a poster narration to the group which was video recorded. The poster itself was used as a tool to aid narratives, thus the analysis was of the narratives generated, not of the drawings and images.

Interviews

Two interview sessions lasting 45-60 minutes were carried out with each participant. The first was an unstructured interview which probed poster narratives. The second set of interviews were semi structured which interrogated their perceptions and understandings of ECD and FP, to reveal their professional identity. The interviews were conducted in an office for privacy. The following questions were asked, but with room for further probing to obtain as much data as possible;

1. Why did you choose to teach in the foundation phase?
2. What are your beliefs about young children?
3. What is your understanding of foundation phase teaching?
4. What are your expectations from ECD and FP teaching profession?
5. What are your views about ECD and FP?

Reflective Writings

The reflective writing exercise sought for experiences from teaching practice to reveal their identity in practice (Wenger, 1978). Reflective writings allowed pre-service teachers' in-depth explorations of their experiences during teaching practice which provided data for their constructions of professional teacher identity. To allow space for critical reflection in their own comfort while offering prompts to think, the following guiding questions were emailed to participants and they responded through email.

1. Reflect on your teaching practice and tell of those situations that challenged you and how you dealt with them as well as those that made you successful in your teaching.

- Challenging situations in my teaching practice:
- Successful situations in my teaching practice:

2. Now that you have finished your BEd ECD and FP programme, how do you see yourself as an ECD and FP teacher?

- Here focus on describing the kind of a teacher you want to be.

Teaching practice reports

Teaching practice reports were deemed to give information about pre-service teachers' practices, knowledge and competences. They were meant to complement data from their teaching practice which would reveal their identity in practice. The reports used in this study, were from university tutors and mentors who supervised students during teaching practice. Summative reports designed by the University to capture different aspects of students' performance were used. The following criteria made up the summative report:

A. Interpersonal relationships - with learners and with colleagues and parents

B. General teaching ability: planning and preparation, lesson presentation, classroom management

C. General: involvement in extra-mural activities, integration in the school life

D. Additional comments: comments on any other aspects of student's performance

Data analysis

Data was taken verbatim from the poster narratives and interviews. Reflective writings

and teaching practice supervision reports provided written narratives which were ready for analysis. Data analysis proceeded in the following steps informed by narrative analysis approaches (Reissman, 2008; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003; Punch, 2009) and the theoretical frameworks. Narratives related to personal factors were grouped together and themes and patterns were identified. Habitus theory informed the interpretation of the findings to unearth the dispositions shaped from personal factors. The next step was to categorise all data related to perceptions on the profession so as to identify themes and patterns. These findings guided by modes of belonging informed the explanation of the emerging professional teacher identity of pre-service teachers.

Findings

The findings will be presented to show how ECD and FP pre-service teachers construct professional teacher identity which reveals the emerging professional teacher identity. The personal factors that influenced the constructions of professional teacher identity are presented as *influences upon habitus* informed by habitus. The explanation will try to show how habitus influenced identity construction. The   process of *belonging to the profession* informed by modes of belonging will aid the explanation. For ethical reasons, pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants. Sources of data are abbreviated as follows: Poster Narratives (PN), Interview Narratives (IN), Reflective Writing (RN) and Supervision Report (SR).

Influences upon habitus: personal factors that shape professional teacher identity

The concept of habitus explains the influences from the person that impact on identity. When responding to the 'who are you?' question on poster narratives, the preservice teachers gave accounts of their lives and important experiences that impacted on their identity. The 'who are you?' question can probe into personal life histories to bring up personal identities (Bamberg, 2010). From an analysis of these life stories, the following themes emerged as factors that influenced professional teacher identity: personal histories,

prior experiences and personal attributes. These will be used to present findings.

Personal histories

When narrating about self, the pre-service teachers gave prominence to when they were born, where they came from, childhood experiences, their education history, and historical events which impacted on who they were.   For older participants, growing up in contexts of rural areas and during apartheid South Africa, had implications for who they became. Rural areas are often remote and relatively underdeveloped, where communities are poor and disadvantaged (Surty 2011, p. 8). Growing up in these contexts was a struggle to overcome poverty and hardships as one of the participants said;

> "I grew up during apartheid era and prior to 1994, things were tough. When I started school, there were inadequate classrooms. I remember we used to learn under the shade of a tree. We had no uniforms and we went to school barefooted. We had no books to write on we wrote on the ground and on cardboards". (Morgan, PN)

These difficulties had implications in who they choose to become as indicated in the excerpt below.

> "My experience in my primary education and the environment in which I grew up as well as the teachers who were teaching me influenced me to choose to become an EC and FP teacher. What was happening in the Apartheid system was not good, the education that we were receiving was poor, I have realised that this needs to be changed. I want to address these problems". (Morgan, IN)

The hardships faced during childhood seemed to be a driving force in Morgan's decision to become an ECD and FP teacher. Perhaps he saw becoming a teacher as an opportunity to address the injustices of the past. Taking action in the classroom to address injustices of the past is teaching for social justice (Adams et al., 2007). Morgan might have been positioning himself for social justice teaching which relates to serving.

Prior experiences

From their prior experiences with teaching, pre-service teachers encountered both negative and positive experiences. The positive experiences shaped emotions of love and care for children and the negative experiences influenced participants to make a difference

in the lives of those children. One of the pre-service teachers narrated:

> "I remember one of my primary school teachers who was loving and motivating. She always praised me saying "Good Girl". This would motivate me to work hard and it made me more confident. What this teacher was doing made me want to become like her. To me she was a role model". (Viola, IN)

It seems Viola identified with teachers who were loving and caring. Most likely she assumed loving and caring are qualities teachers of young children should possess.

Negative schooling experiences influenced the motivation to make a difference in the lives of children, as indicated in the following excerpts:

> "When I started attending school, we used the tree as a class, and we spend the whole day under the trees. We did not have uniforms and we used to go to school barefooted. We had no books to write on we wrote on the ground and on cardboards. These things affected me so much that I do not want to see it happening again to the African children". (Morgan, PN)

> "When I was in the primary school, some teachers would tell us to sleep and close our eyes when they were busy doing their own things. They did not care to teach us. When I got to grade 7, I couldn't express myself in English, I would become embarrassed when trying to respond to a question. This is because some teachers in the lower grades didn't do their job well. I want to get this past". (Nick, PN)

From these excerpts, it seems negative experiences drove the determination to make a difference in the lives of children. Phrases like "...*I do not want to see it happening again to the African children", and "I want to get this past"*, point to emotions developed from these experiences. These emotions could be a driving force for them to serve their own people or communities.

Personal attributes

Personal attributes relate to those qualities pre-service teachers believe they possess which contributed to who they are. The personal attributes that emerged from their narratives included patience, sympathy, love, respect caring, creativity and others. They also include gender, personal beliefs and values as well as knowledge. These qualities emerged from their poster narratives, for example one said;

"This is me; I got a lot of colour in my name to portray brightness in me, which means I have happiness and energy. I want to try new things; I like being kind to people by helping them whenever I can. I empathise and sympathise with people." (Teneile, PN)

Gender also emerged as a personal attribute which influenced upon their habitus. The following are examples of excerpts that refers to gender:

"I understand that people believe males can't handle young children! So that's what I want to show the world that we men can also take care of young children". (Morgan PN)

"When I am with children, they must feel that they are with a mother". (Viola, IN).

Growing up in religious families and communities brought self-awareness and interconnectedness with others (Lindholm & Astin, 2008):

"My parents; my father is a pastor and my mum is a teacher and that has had a great influence in my life and the person I have become. They have taught me good morals and values. I grew up observing how they were interacting with people and I emulated them". (Susan, PN)

"I understand that God loves me and because he loves me, I need to give people the love that I have discovered". (Teneile, PN)

They drew meanings from religious and spiritual beliefs:

"I believe in doing my best to fulfil my life purpose or calling which I belief my calling is linked to working with children in different areas". (Susan, IN)

All participants mentioned various forms of knowledge from their learning experiences in the teacher education programme. For example, one said;

"This pair of glasses symbolises me as an ECD specialist and I am now putting on a new pair of glasses which make me see things in a different way. I cancelled what I have been doing before and I am starting a new chapter. So, I want to go impart the knowledge that I gained and make a difference when I go back to school". (Margret, PN)

The findings on influences upon habitus seem to suggest that the personal factors (personal histories, prior experiences and personal attributes) shaped dispositions of *serving,*

caring and loving, compassion and knowledge in pre-service teachers. The contexts and contents of their lived lives (Samuel & Stephens, 2001) shaped aspirations, motives, beliefs, values and attributes (habitus) which influenced who the pre-service teachers became. Experiences of hardships from growing up in contexts of rural area during apartheid seemed to shape values, beliefs and aspirations related to serving and making a difference in the lives of children. Prior experiences with teaching seemed to influence dispositions of caring and loving while personal attributes influenced compassion, serving and knowledge. These findings demonstrate how past histories influenced pre-service teachers' professional teacher identity (Olsen, 2008).

Belonging to the profession: Explaining the emerging professional teacher identity

Pre-service teachers' constructions of professional identity will be explained by showing how they belonged to the ECD and FP profession (Wenger, 1998). This will be done by showing the influences of habitus (dispositions that emerged from personal factors; (*serving, caring, loving, compassion, and knowledge*) on processes of belonging (identity construction). Belonging to the profession is examined using the modes of belonging; engagement, alignment and imagination.

Engaging with ECD and FP practices

Engagement is seen through how pre-service teachers related to colleagues, mentors in teaching practice, school principals, lecturers, parents and learners in their practice. Dispositions of caring, compassion, serving and knowledge were found to influence on their engagement with practice. For example, one pre-service teacher in his reflection wrote;

> "When the teachers were attending a workshop for CAPS (a new curriculum that was being introduced), I had to help the principal who was at the school to attend to learners. To make sure that learners at least benefit from coming to school, I had to design activities for them to do while I attended to my grade one class". (Morgan, RN)

Designing activities for children who had no teachers attending to them suggests care

and responsibility. Feelings of responsibility for children's well-being and development indicates care and commitment to serve (Alexander et al., 2014). Caring is viewed as a teachers' pedagogical or classroom management tool (O'Connor, 2008), making it a relevant aspect in professional teacher identity for ECD and FP pre-service teachers. Dispositions of caring and compassion emerged from   their practices as indicated in one of the reports.

> "Viola had a good relationship with all learners, and she treated them as unique individuals. She has sympathy towards children, is always helpful and generous". (SR)

The sympathy and help shown to learners by Viola suggests compassion towards children, which reflects good relationships with learners. Knowledge is also seen in pre-service teachers' engagement with practices, as indicated from these examples in reflective writings:

> "I found myself successful in the making of resources for teaching as well as employing various teaching strategies. The use of resources in teaching make the environment of teaching and learning conducive as learners engage and participate in learning". (Margret, RN).

> "The classroom was full in such a way that I was unable to move freely as well as the learners. I adopted a strategy of attending to learners in their groups in order to get to individual learners, (Viola, RN).

These pre-service teachers related dispositions of caring, compassion and knowledge, with which they engaged in practice, in the processes of belonging to the ECD and FP teaching profession. Apart from engagement, alignment with practices was also examined.

Aligning beliefs, values and actions with the profession

How one aligns him/herself with values and practices of the profession determine a sense of belonging, resulting in identity formation (Wenger 1998). Alignment started with choosing to become ECD/FP. The pre-service teachers identified factors such as love for children and making a difference in the lives of children, which indicated alignment of interests with decisions to become teachers.

"I chose ECD and FP teaching because I love children, I have the love of children in my heart. So, realising that some of the children become school dropouts somewhere somehow because of a lack of a good foundation, I have chosen to be a foundation phase teacher so that I will be able to lay a good and solid foundation for those learners (Viola, PN)

From a gendered perspective, pre-service teachers aligned teaching in ECD and FP with caring. Caring is a gendered construct (Vogt, 2002) but it can be conceptualised as a central facet of the teaching profession (Alexander, et. al, 2014). It relates to emotions, actions and reflections that emanate from the teacher's desire to motivate, help and inspire their students (O'Connor, 2008). They aligned teaching with caring, as indicated in the excerpts below.

"I want to show the world that we men can also take care of young children". (Morgan, PN)

"ECD and FP teaching is a lot of work especially for us men because one has to care for children by attending to them and supporting them individually". (Nick, IN)

Episodes of caring during their teaching practice emerged from their reflections as in the example below.

"There was no adequate furniture, learners sat on steel frames and there were no textbooks as well. I suggested to the mentor if we could ask from neighbouring schools for extra furniture. She agreed to my suggestion and we managed to get some which alleviated our problem. (Morgan, RN)

This episode suggests how they aligned their practices to caring being influenced by their own personal perceptions of ECD and FP. Taking responsibility for the welfare of children suggests a caring attitude. They also aligned teaching children with instilling moral values which seemed to emanate from their religious backgrounds:

"Here I have a little hand of someone's doing pottery and this represents the moulding that I will do to young children. In moulding, I will be trying to instil good values and morals to help them grow well, (Susan, PN).

Imagining the kind of teacher, they want to be

Pre-service teachers created images about themselves as ECD and FP teachers in the process of belonging to the profession. These images emerged from reflections on the kind of teachers they want to become (emerging professional teacher identity).

> "Teaching demands broad knowledge of subject matter and curriculum, a caring attitude, a love of learning, knowledge of discipline, classroom management techniques and a desire to make a difference in the lives of young people. If I can portray most of these qualities, I will be a great teacher and my learners will enjoy my teaching". (Nick, RN)

> "The kind of teacher I am going to be is based on what I have learnt from the programme. When I finish my BEd Foundation Phase programme, I am going to practice all the roles of the teacher. I am going to be a teacher who is dedicated and committed to my work, self-disciplined with positive attitude". (Viola, RN)

As previously given, some pre-service teachers reflected on inspiring teachers who were loving and caring, and they wished to emulate them. Others reacted to teachers who lacked commitment to their jobs, and they wished to change such practices. They seemed to create images of ECD and FP teachers who are loving, caring, and committed and envisioned themselves as those teachers.

From the explanation above, the dispositions (*serving, caring, loving, compassion and knowledge*) shaped from personal factors such as personal history, prior experiences, personal attributes and the teacher education programme influenced how they belonged to the profession. These are evident in their relationship with children during their teaching practice and their reflections and reports from tutors/mentors. They aligned their practices with expectations of the profession, informed by the knowledge they have learnt in the teacher education programme. These dispositions were also inferred from the images they created about the kind of teachers they imagined will one day become.

Discussion

The findings point to the personal investment embodied in the lived experiences of pre-service teachers well before they entered the programme. Who one is as a person is so much interwoven with how one acts as a professional (Lamote & Engels, 2010, p. 4). Moreover, the kind of society from which participants emanate and the meaning they derive from their society impacted on how they construct professional teacher identity (Smith & Fritz, 2008). Who the pre-service teachers are, was influenced by their lived experiences from personal histories, prior experiences such as schooling, as well as personal attributes such as qualities, beliefs, values and knowledge. Both the pre-service teachers' lived experiences and teacher education shaped the habitus which influenced professional teacher identity constructions. The habitus as an internalised, subconscious battery of dispositions emerged as dispositions of *serving, caring, loving and compassion and knowledge* and oriented their actions (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2007).

The emerging professional teacher identity, viewed as belonging to a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), resembles the process of becoming a teacher. The schools in which pre-service teachers undertook their professional experience and the teacher education programme provided the community of practice. Becoming teachers for ECD and FP pre-service teachers resembled a 'transformation of self' which is changing from being who the person is to who the person is as a teacher (Krzywacki, 2009). The construction of professional teacher identity became a continuous process whereby the personal and professional merge into 'oneself' resulting in becoming a teacher (Nias, 1989; Goodson & Cole, 1994; Samuel & Stephens, 2001; Day et al., 2006). This suggests a transaction between personal and professional (Lopes, & Pereira, 2012), facilitated through an interplay of dispositions from the personal and professional. From a synthesis of findings, a proposed model to better understand the emerging professional teacher identity of ECD and FP pre-service teachers is suggested in figure 1.

The emerging professional teacher identity was constructed through reflecting on how one perceives the self and self as teacher in the context of the ECD and FP teacher education programme. The emerging professional teacher identity comprises dispositions of loving, caring, serving and knowledge, which emphasises the emotional aspects of working

with young children (Osgood, 2010; Miller & Cable, 2011). Teaching young children requires caring teachers (Taggart, 2011). These dispositions can be a foundation for dispositions of teaching young children which would make participants effective teachers if these dispositions are nurtured. These findings emphasise the significance of personal factors in becoming a teacher that have implications for teacher education programmes.
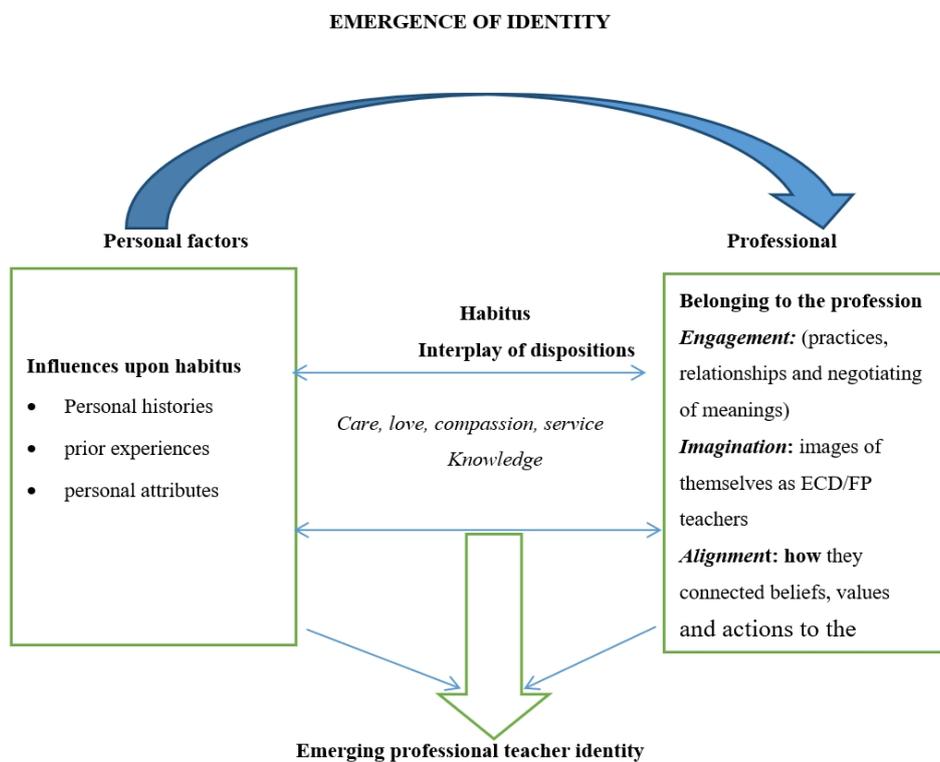
EMERGENCE OF IDENTITY

Personal factors

Influences upon habitus

- Personal histories
- prior experiences
- personal attributes

Habitus

Interplay of dispositions

Care, love, compassion, service Knowledge

Professional

Belonging to the profession

Engagement: (practices, relationships and negotiating of meanings)

Imagination: images of themselves as ECD/FP teachers

Alignment: **how** they connected beliefs, values and actions to the

Emerging professional teacher identity

Figure 1. Emerging professional teacher identity

Implications for teacher education

The findings from the study foreground the influences from personal factors in becoming a teacher (emerging professional teacher identity). It is not only what pre-service teachers learn from the teacher education programme that impacts on their becoming teachers but also who they are, which includes their values, beliefs and emotions shaped from their past

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experiences.

   The findings point to the need of assessing dispositions pre-service teachers bring to the teacher education programme as a starting point in addressing the development of a positive professional teacher identity. The beliefs, values, motivations and emotions they bring can influence the way they interpret experiences in the programme (Feinman-Nemser, 2001; Flores, 2001). They also inform practices and influence decisions and behaviour (Beijaard et al., 2004). There is therefore a need for teacher education programmes to respond to these attributes by identifying the negative and positive qualities. The positive ones can be nurtured, and the negative challenged to foster a positive professional teacher identity.

The method of research, highlights the importance of reflection in constructing professional teacher identity. Through reflection, pre-service teachers revisited their beliefs, values and perceptions to create images of the kind of teacher they aspire to become. In this way, they created a vision which can motivate them in becoming good teachers (Korthagen 2004). They also revisited their practices and examined their perceptions in relation to the reality they experienced in schools. This implies that reflection can be used as a tool in pre-service teachers' development (Körkkö et al., 2016; Walkington, 2005; Korthagen, 2004). Teacher education programmes can emphasise reflective practices to enhance development of   positive professional teacher identities in pre-service teachers.

Conclusion

   The value of this study lies its contribution to understanding the emerging professional teacher identity of ECD and FP pre-service teachers. It points to a greater need for recognising both personal and professional factors that shape the emerging professional teacher identity in pre-service teachers. Understanding who pre-service teachers are in terms of the contexts and contents of their lived lives prior to joining the programme (Samuel, & Stephens, 2001), is a starting point in addressing the development of a positive professional teacher identity. The emerging professional teacher identity of pre-service teachers is an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute life converge in the mystery of self (Palmer, 1998). This study is limited in studying pre-service teachers from

one institution making it difficult to generalise the findings. However, studying one institution and a few participants enabled a deep understanding of the phenomenon from which insights can be drawn. Further research can be done to find out what supports the development of a positive professional teacher identity in pre-service teachers.

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