

## PREFACE

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### 'CONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY'

Teacher's identity is inextricably linked to professional practice and to continued professional learning and development [1]. Becoming a teacher involves, in essence, the (trans)formation of teacher's identity. This is a process that begins before higher education (anticipatory socialization), is followed by socialization during initial training (higher education and professional training), and continues along the career pathway. Research concerning the (re)construction of 'professional identity' tends to be the outcome of an interface between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and institutional context in which they function on a daily basis [2]. Identities exist as reifications and within relevant social practices. Professional identity, and teacher's identity more specifically, is a complex concept that includes: people's legitimate participation in a profession; their occupation of a professional 'role' and ability to control the practices, language, tools and resources associated with that role; the ideals, values and beliefs that lead them to commit to a profession; the unique way in which they personify their professional role as a result of the experiences that have influenced them through their career; and the representation of themselves as a professional that they project both to themselves and to others [3]. Taking into account this context, the aim of this special issue is to focus on teacher's professional identity, particularly the process of construction and (re)construction of teachers' professional identity not only during the teacher's career but also during the educational training process. The special issue includes contributions from Ireland, Portugal and Spain.

The first paper is a systematic review of the professional identity literature presented by *Cardoso, Batista and Graça* and report a number of trends from the related literature. It is evident that interest in professional identity continues to grow in the learning and professional stages of development and that symbolic interactionism and in postmodernity

emerge as strong conceptual positions of authors interested in interrogating professional identity. There is continued support for the concept of professional identity as individual (personal and social) and collective dimensions. Directions for future studies on professional identity favour ethnographic and longitudinal approaches, encouraging observations of the dynamics established in communities of practice.

From an Irish perspective, *Young and MacPhail* present two case studies detailing the learning trajectories of two post-primary physical education teachers as they strive to establish and maintain their identity as competent and confident cooperating teachers/supervisors to pre-service teachers on school placement. The authors employ Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning and the concept of legitimate peripheral participation to investigate each of the cooperating teacher's journey in their attempt to shape their professional identity through participation in a variety of professional learning communities.

*Bolivar, Domingo and Pérez-García* study the process of the 'professional identity crisis' experienced by ten post-primary physical education teachers as a result of educational reform in Spain. The authors link the professional identity crisis (personal dimension) to the effects produced by an educational reform on the professional practice (contextual dimension) through both a collective and multiple case study approach. Conscious that identity is crucial to how teachers construct the nature of their work on a daily basis and given the educational reform in Spain, the authors argue that it is necessary to evaluate alternative discourses that can lead to better school systems and a reconstruction of teachers' identity in the academic community.

An autobiographical narration of one Spanish teacher, conveying how initial teacher training plays a crucial role in the reconstruction of professional identity, is the focus of the paper by *González-Calvo, Barbero-González, Bores-Calle and Martínez-Álvarez*. Class logbooks and life story were utilised to collect data and convey the extent to which this particular teacher's professional identity was strongly determined by the initial stages of his teacher training, which enabled him to build, develop and apply his pedagogical knowledge.

*Gomes, Alves, Queirós and Batista* set out to examine how three Portuguese physical education pre-service

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teachers constructed professional identity through their daily practices within the practicum group, with the practicum group being considered a community of practice. Data included field notes, videos and interviews that were collected through non-participant observation over a period of fifteen days in a Porto post-primary school. The three pre-service teachers reported that being part of a practicum group (as a community of practice) contributed greatly to the process of becoming a teacher, especially due to the sharing process and the sense of fellowship developed during the practicum.

*Albuquerque, Sá, Aranha and Resende* set out to understand how teachers express their competence and knowledge of the craft of teaching, acknowledging that the teacher's role is increasingly demanding. Thirty Portuguese physical education cooperating teachers were identified by the two criteria of teaching experience and orientation experience. A structured interview protocol sought to gather responses that would characterize the conceptions of cooperating teachers about the objectives of the professional internship process, and the ideal conditions in which to practice the profession. Results are reported for cooperating teachers with short teaching experience, cooperating teachers with short orientation experience and cooperating teachers with long orientation experience.

Using Gee's discursive notion of identity *Cunha, Batista and Graça* examine the discourses that Portuguese pre-service physical education teachers used about themselves and others in discussing teaching practices in the context of their practicum training in school. Most specifically, the authors set out to identify and characterize the situations of concern to the pre-service teachers in learning to be a physical education teacher and in (re)constructing their professional identity through a dialogic relation between talks and images. Data was gathered from nine Portuguese pre-service teachers and included the photo elicitation interview technique. That is, photographs and videos produced by the pre-service teachers were used as prompts for discussion. The pre-service teachers' discourse on

examining the images recognises what constitutes being a physical education teacher.

*Fachada and Machado Gomes* describe and analyse post-primary Portuguese teachers' (teaching different subjects) actual workload, relying on the empirical data available concerning different national contexts and on a description of the teachers' work composition. Using a multiple case study approach 20 Portuguese teachers were chosen, representing different subjects, gender, in-service time, contractual link and middle management tasks. Working time data was collected over nine weeks. The main results of the inquiries illustrate that teachers are overworked and that there is a significant dispersion through several types of tasks.

It is anticipated that across the complement of papers included in this special issue the reader will have an opportunity to engage with teacher's professional identity and the differing ways in which the topic is framed, explored and subsequently interrogated.

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