Identification – A process of self-knowing realised within narrative practices for teacher educators during times of transition

Dr Penny Amott

Department of Leadership and Learning, University College London - Institute of Education, London, UK

Email: p.amott@ucl.ac.uk

Telephone: 07805 916548

Dr Penny Amott is a lecturer in Initial Teacher Education at UCL - Institute of Education

Abstract

Identity transformation from teacher to teacher educator is problematic as an 'expert become novice' (Murray & Male, 2005). The need for professional development for neophyte teacher educators is accepted. The focus of such professional learning has been on the development of an academic identity and engaging in research; the transition in identity is assumed to follow. This study used an adapted form of Professional Life History which is shown to support their 'identification' with the new role. Analysis showed a process of identification within the context of the focused story-telling. The study demonstrates that specific narrative practices can be utilised to support neophyte teacher educators in developing their personal and professional identity as a teacher educator.

Key words:

Professional identity change; teacher educator identity; professional learning; narrative methods; life history.

1. Introduction

Identity for neophyte teacher educators has been shown by the literature to be problematic. As individuals transition from teacher to teacher educator their teacher identity can become a source of 'credibility' with the student teachers they work with and this can stall the development of a more integrated identity as a teacher educator (Boyd and Harris, 2010). Professional development to support neophyte teacher educators is a growing area for consideration and Higher Education Institutions or Teacher Educator Networks are starting to consider the need to provide suitable induction for their new teacher educators, many of whom are transitioning from school-based contexts. The nature of such induction focuses on what these new teacher educators need to know and do, and often assumes that transition into identity as a teacher educator will follow. This paper takes a different approach in that it adopts a narrative approach to professional development for neophyte teacher educators, in which the focus is on supporting what has been termed 'identification' with their new role and professional identity. The term 'identification' adopted in this study is used to refer to a particular instance of critical self-reflection realised within the story-telling process. This is in contrast to more general terms such as self-knowing or self-awareness that might occur through a range of reflective practices and may or may not support the development of identity.

This study considers the narrative events of six neophyte teacher educators who engaged in an adapted form of life history story-telling – a Professional Life History. In addition, follow up discussions explored the participants' perceptions of engaging in the Professional Life History process, and provided instances of 'reflecting on reflection'. Such collaborative narrative practices are recommended as an effective model of professional development for neophyte teacher educators during times of transition.

This study resides within a growing body of research into the lives and learning of teacher educators which emerged in the early part of the 21st Century. Studies by Marilyn Cochran-Smith (Cochran-Smith, 2003, Cochran-Smith, 2005); Jean Murray and colleagues (Murray, 2005, Murray and Male, 2005, Murray *et al.*, 2009) and Anja Swennen (Swennen *et al.*, 2008, Swennen *et al.*, 2009) set the scene for a new focus on this 'under-researched and poorly understood occupational group' (Murray and Male, 2005 p125). It was also Murray and Male's research that identified the issues for teacher educators as moving from being *first order practitioners* (as teachers) to *second order practitioners* (as teacher educators), and their unique position as *expert become novice*. They claimed that it took between 2-3 years for the new professional identity to be established and saw this as the point at which the situational and substantial selves are closely aligned. Later Boyd and Harris (2010) identified that for new teacher educators there was a particular challenge, in their search for *credibility* with student teachers, that may stall their development of an academic identity as a teacher educator. This growing body of research claims that professional identity for new teacher educators is problematic and that transition into the new role as teacher educator does not automatically translate to identity as a teacher educator.

Since this early work there has been a growing number of researchers considering the professional learning required for teacher educators as they move into their new role and the challenges of identity incurred by such a transition. Some studies conflate engaging with professional learning and identity development, assuming one will support the other (Ben-Peretz *et al.*, 2010, Izadinia, 2014, Hadar and Brody, 2016). In contrast, this paper seeks to identify approaches that are specifically tailored to facilitate 'identity work'. One such approach is that of self-study which does appear to be supportive for the individual in developing their professional identity as a teacher

educator (Williams and Ritter, 2010, Dinkelman, 2011, Vanassche and Kelchtermans, 2015). A second area of professional development, that is less well researched but appears to be supportive in terms of developing a teacher educator identity, is that of narrative approaches. Up to now, these have been used as a research approach in order to study teacher educators' lives and work (for example Sfard and Prusak, 2010, O'Brien and Furlong, 2015) rather than as a professional development approach to support teacher educators in negotiating a better understanding of their professional identities. Two examples of the latter were identified from the literature: Vloet and Van Swet (2010) developed a biographical interview method to explore and construct teacher and teacher educator identity and found that 'by reflecting on their stories and meaningful experiences, professionals can construct and reconstruct their professional identity' (p151). McGregor *et al.* (2010) used collaborative peer group support, including some narrative practices, and found that shifts in personal identity could be fostered through such approaches.

This study is part of a larger piece of work which sought to adopt a narrative life history approach as both a 'method' and a 'means': firstly, to research the development of identity for neophyte teacher educators within the first three years in their new role and, secondly, to engage these new teacher educators in critical self-reflection on their role as a teacher educator in order to support a notion of 'identification' with their new professional selves. It is the second aspect that is the focus of this paper. An adapted form of life history method was developed for this purpose. This Professional Life History approach activated both retrospective and prospective reflection as participants were asked to retell their professional life stories, including their present role, and then to consider future possible career trajectories. This story-telling was supported by participants preparing a Professional Life History timeline in advance of their

discussion with the researcher. A follow up discussion was conducted at a later point to engage participants in reflecting on their experience of the Professional Life History discussion.

Six neophyte teacher educators were recruited for this study, three worked within Initial Teacher Education and three worked as Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders[1]; these are also teacher educators but receive one year of professional development to prepare them to train experienced teachers to teach children at risk of reading failure through a tailored one to one reading intervention. These Teacher Leaders, once trained, would work from a designated Reading Recovery centre, attached either to the Local Education Authority or to a school. The point of interest in this study, in contrasting these two groups of teacher educators, was in the nature of the preparation for the role. Whereas the literature for teacher educators highlights the lack of induction into the role, the Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders have a full one-year, Masters level preparation before taking on their new role, perhaps resulting in a stronger identity as such.

2. Theoretical framework for this study

This study is situated within two aligned bodies of research into teacher educators; that of teacher educator professional learning and teacher educator professional identity. The research presented provides the theoretical context for this study within a literature that shows that professional identity can be supported through

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[1] Reading Recovery has been operating in England for over twenty years, based at the Institute of Education in London, UK. It is a literacy intervention programme for children at risk of reading failure, developed by Marie Clay during the 1980s in New Zealand. Reading Recovery is a model that is predicated on the development of expert teachers who are able to provide daily intervention for children aged about six; this enables them to make improved progress in around 12-20 weeks in order to read at age-related expectations.

the adoption of narrative approaches as part of the professional development and support for neophyte Teacher Educators.

2.1 Professional learning

The literature on professional learning for teacher educators clearly identifies the lack of provision for professional development as an area of concern. Induction for teacher educators and further professional development is identified by Murray (2010) as 'uneven and sometimes inadequate' (p197). Boei *et al.* (2015), note that an 'informal learning trajectory is no longer sufficient…' and suggest 'more formal arrangements for professional development are considered necessary, such as induction programmes, in-service courses and participant in conferences or conducting research.' (p323). It is also claimed that there is a lack of focus on what teacher educators need to know and be able to do (Goodwin and Kosnik, 2013, Kosnik *et al.*, 2015) accompanied by an identified lack of 'existence of or need for experts to educate the teacher educators' (Swennen *et al.*, 2010 p145).

An increasing amount of research has considered models of professional development that might support teacher educators, particularly those in their early career stages. Izadinia (2014), in her review of the literature on teacher educator identity, identifies four features of induction for new teacher educators, including: learning communities, supportive relationships, reflective activities and research. Similarly, McKeon and Harrison (2010b p41) identified the facilitators for professional pedagogic learning as: effective induction programmes; in-depth, reflective learning conversations; and support to navigate the boundaries and practices of different communities. Both studies highlight the role of supportive relationships and opportunities for reflection as features of effective professional development.

Overall the body of research on professional learning for teacher educators clusters around two main areas: *using research to support professional learning, particularly self-study approaches, and collaborative learning supporting reflective practice*.

In relation to the use of research to support professional learning, Murray (2010) highlights the importance of developing researcher identities for new teacher educators, suggesting that this leads to rich professional learning, and that there is a congruence between teacher educator as researcher and as a teacher of teachers. Roberts and Weston (2014) explored the use of a 'Writing Support Programme' to enable teacher educators to engage in academic writing and found that this supported the development of an academic identity for these teacher educators. There is a growing body of research by teacher educators using self-study approaches (Mueller, 2003, Bullock, 2009, Williams and Ritter, 2010, Dinkelman, 2011, Morrissey, 2014 for example). Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2016) have further developed this approach as a means of supporting professional learning for teacher educators.

Williams *et al.* (2012), from their review of the literature, note 'the central importance of collegial, supportive relationships that nurture the construction of a strong professional identity as a teacher educator, particularly through self-study' (p254), which links to the second cluster, that of collaborative and reflective models of professional learning. There have been a variety of collaborative approaches in the research literature including the following: McGregor *et al.* (2010) used collaborative peer group support for teacher educators engaging in research enquiries; Williams and Power (2010) used a 'core reflection' model with a sequence of prompts to support collaborative discussion and reflection between two teacher educators; Clemans *et al.* (2010), in their work with teachers leading professional learning in their schools, found

that development of professional learning communities and engaging teachers in case-writing methodology supported teachers as knowledge-producers; also Hadar and Brody (2016) used an approach 'Talk About Student Learning' in professional development communities as a means to support teacher educator professional learning. The importance of such collaborative approaches to support critical reflection is identified by Davey and Ham (2010) who state that 'professional learning through (self-) critical reflection is not achieved rapidly, it is not achieved comfortably and it is not achieved alone' (p231). Likewise for McKeon and Harrison (2010b) '...identity is shaped through participation in various communities of practice and that identity also shapes participation in those communities' (p27).

This study is situated within this second group of approaches to professional learning for teacher educators as it utilises a narrative practice, that of the Professional Life History, to support professional self-knowing and identification in dialogue with the researcher; providing a model of professional development that is specifically focused on supporting teacher educator identity development.

2.2 Professional identity

The working concept of professional identity in this study takes a constructivist notion: that identity is unstable and constantly changing; that it is constructed within a social context and is therefore shaped by that context and may vary between contexts; and it is a personal interpretation of self which is formulated and shaped for purpose (suggesting that they might not be a single 'true identity', but multiple identities constructed in different contexts for varying purposes). This is in alignment with Davey's (2013) definition that '...identity is not a singularity but is better conceived of as overlapping, dynamic, unstable, and relative. It involves multiple 'selves', each continually re-constructed and re-expressed in the various personae and responsibilities

take on during our course of work.' (p117). (For other similarly constructivist definitions see also Hall, 2000, Beijaard *et al.*, 2004, McKeon and Harrison, 2010b, Kosnik *et al.*, 2013).

As suggested in the introduction, transition from first order teacher to second order teacher educator is not straightforward and can be problematic (Murray and Male, 2005, McKeon and Harrison, 2010a, Roberts, 2014, O'Brien and Furlong, 2015). This is particularly true for new teacher educators, in striving for credibility with students, who seek to retain their teacher identity (Boyd and Harris, 2010). Williams et al. (2012), in their review of self-studies conducted by teacher educators, state that

> … the process of becoming a teacher educator as complex and multi-layered, and influenced by three key factors: personal and professional biography, institutional contexts and the nature of community; and the ongoing development of personal pedagogy as a teacher educator. (p256)

In addition, this study adopts a notion of 'identity transformation', which considers that during the process of transition from teacher to teacher educator an individual's dominant identity (or identification) with a particular role or profession has changed such that previous roles or identities are subsumed (or rejected) as the new discourse of self is expressed. This is in alignment with the conclusions made by Izadinia (2014) in her literature review of identity for teacher educators, in which she states that:

> [t]he development of a professional identity has been recognised as a central process in becoming a teacher educator because there is a close connection between identity and practice. In other words, the development of teacher educators' practice is connected to the development of their professional identity.' (p427).

Identity transformation occurs in this connection with the new practices of teacher educators. Griffiths *et al.* (2014), in their study of mid-career teacher educators, observed that whilst some were moving from one identity (as teacher, teacher educator, researcher) to another and leaving the previous ones behind, others were somewhere between, in terms of which identity was dominant (p86). Warin and Muldoon (2009) refer to a notion of 'identity dissonance' in the context of transition between different professional roles and suggest the need to develop an 'expanded story of self'.

There is a growing body of research that seeks to identify and explore ways in which teacher educators can be supported to develop their identity as a teacher educator; although there is often an assumption that engaging teacher educators in professional development would lead to development of their professional identity, which this study seeks to challenge. Thus, professional identity in the literature is strongly linked to the themes related to professional learning discussed above. Self-study approaches have indeed proved supportive for teacher educators in developing their identity as teacher educators and further developed into collaborative practice by Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2015). Likewise, narrative practices have been used as a way of supporting identity development with teachers for some time (Beijaard *et al.*, 2004, Clandinin *et al.*, 2009) and more recently within Initial Teacher Education programmes (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2010). There has been less research using such approaches with teacher educators (McGregor *et al.*, 2010, Vloet and Van Swet, 2010). And indeed, O'Brien and Furlong (2015) more recently raise the concern that for new teacher educators 'there is no discursive space for critical reflection, development or reshaping of identity' (p390).

This study is situated within approaches that use narrative practices to support self-reflection. In addition, through the incorporation of retrospective and prospective

reflection (sometimes termed 'anticipatory reflection') the Professional Life History approach will be shown to activate 'identification' to support teacher educators in identity transformation. The use of prospective reflection has been adopted with teachers (Urzua and Vasquez, 2008, Beauchamp and Thomas, 2010) and with student teachers (Conway, 2001) but not with teacher educators.

3. Research Design

3.1 The participants in this study

These were drawn from two contrasting contexts for teacher educators all of whom had previously been teachers (and in some cases advisory teachers within a Local Education Authority). The sample was purposive in nature, drawing from colleagues and acquaintances within the field. Three from the first, more traditional, context were teacher educators working in Initial Teacher Education – Emily, Annie and Elizabeth. The second three were Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders, who were also experienced teachers but who engaged in an intensive one-year professional development programme to support them in their new role as teacher educators providing training and professional development for experienced teachers to become Reading Recovery teachers – Joanne, Jane and Rebekah. The distinctive models of professional learning used in Reading Recovery are well researched (Schmitt *et al.*, 2005, Schwartz, 2006 for example). The contrast of two different forms of preparation into Teacher Education was of particular interest in this study. Both groups of Teacher Educators could be considered as moving from being first order to second order practitioners, with the first group being based in a Higher Education Institution and the second group of Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders taking up more of a consultancy position employed by the Local Education Authority (or consortium) and having their own Reading Recovery

Centre from which they worked. These Teacher Educators should therefore not be considered to be school-based practitioners as they were still having to negotiate a second order context and way of working.

It should also be noted that for all of these neophyte teacher educators they were going through times of significant role uncertainty due to changes in the economic climate in England at the time of the study. For those within Reading Recovery, significant funding as part of the 'Every Child a Reader' project had been stopped, leaving Local Education Authorities to find funding from other sources. For those in Initial Teacher Education, the focus of government initiatives away from university-based to school-based teacher education programmes also provided a threat to their role stability within their employing universities. The six participants were all considered to be neophyte teacher educators, with between one and three years in role.

3.2 The use of a Professional Life History approach

Life history method has long been valued as a rich source of data to study the lives of teachers (Kelchtermans, 1993, Goodson and Sikes, 2001, MacLure, 2003, Huber *et al.*, 2014). In addition, the value of such narrative practices in supporting identity has also been acknowledged – '…if selves and identities are constituted in discourse, they are necessarily constructed in stories.' (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006 p137). Life history approaches have also been used in the study of teacher educators and their developing professional identity (Swennen *et al.*, 2008, O'Brien and Furlong, 2015). However, the utility of a life history approach as a means to support professional learning and self-knowing for teacher educators is still under explored; Vloet and Van Swet (2010) being the one identified instance of such. Therefore, in this study the researcher sought to develop an adapted form of life history approach that could enable participants to engage in the construction of their professional life story with the

expectation that this would be supportive for the development of their identity as a teacher educator. The more traditional approach to life history method (Atkinson, 1998) was adapted in three ways: firstly, the focus was on the professional life, in that personal life details need only be included at the discretion of the teller; secondly, the story telling episode would conclude with time spent in prospective reflection and consideration of possible career progression and professional selves in the future; and finally, the participant would prepare their own diagram of their 'Professional Life History timeline' in advance of the life history narrative event, providing a scaffold for the story telling. These life history discussions were all conducted with the researcher in a venue of the participants' choice and lasted between 30-45 minutes. Audio recordings were later transcribed and used for analysis in this study.

In order for participants to engage in reflection on their experiences of narrative storytelling, each participant engaged in a follow up discussion with the researcher (which took place within the following year). In addition, participants were asked again to use prospective reflection and comment on how their previous reflections might have changed in the intervening time. These discussions also proved to have value as instances of 'reflecting on reflection', which will be discussed later.

Ethical considerations were adhered to in this study. Participants were able to check and amend the transcripts of the narrative events, as this could still be conceptualised as part of the process of creating a 'story of self'. In addition, pseudonyms were used throughout.

3.3 Using an inductive analysis drawing from grounded theory

Taking a post-structuralist approach, this study sought to disrupt a more positivist attitude to research by adopting a set of propositional statements, in contrast to the more traditional research questions, as advocated by Atkinson (2004). The use of

propositional statements allows for concepts to be explored, defended or refuted through the data analysis process. They also reveal the assumptions that the researcher made when commencing this study, in the pursuit of transparency. The following three propositional statements were adopted for this study:

(1) That the transition between different professional roles might be associated with indicators of changing identity which are evident in the narrative events.

(2) That the process of reflection engaged during the narrative events, and subsequently, is transformative in nature, with potential to support identity transformation.

(3) That the engagement with narrative approaches, including the use of prospective reflection, is supportive for participants in terms of self-knowing.

The narrative events in this study were all analysed using an inductive approach drawing from grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006). Transcriptions were coded, initially as hard copies and later using qualitative analysis software (QRS NVivo 9 ©).

In order to address the first propositional statement, the Narrative Events were explored for indicators of identity change from teacher to teacher educator through the course of the life story. Initial coding assigned labels to statements of identity, using either *in vivo* statements or summary words and phrases. Subsequently, codes were then clustered into categories that formulated the key indicators of identity, which are discussed in the findings section below. In order to address the second propositional statement, the narrative events were analysed using two *a priori* codes, for instances of critical self-reflection and particularly 'premise reflection' (Mezirow, 1991), as evidence of transformative learning. Each instance of critical self-reflection or premise

reflection was coded according to the nature of that reflective episode. From these codes themes were identified, and discussed in the findings section. This second layer of analysis also provided evidence of 'self-knowing' which addressed the third propositional statement.

4. Findings

In this section, the analysis of the narrative events will provide evidence of a process of identification for participants in this study. The three analyses consider the evidence: of identity transformation in the narrative events; of a process of identification in the follow up discussions; and of the Professional Life History approach supporting critical self-reflection, including the use of prospective reflection.

4.1 Evidence of identity transformation in the narrative events

The first main point of interest was that within the narrative events there were no clear statements of identity as a teacher educator, that is a participant calling themselves as such. This is of interest as it might indicate that the participants still did not have an identity as a 'teacher educator'. However, the analysis, through the use of inductive coding, was able to identify certain key indicators of identification with their new role:

Skills (and/or knowledge) –

There were clear statements of the skills they had to be a teacher educator, gained through experience or training and qualifications, e.g. student teacher mentoring or Reading Recovery Teacher Leader training. In addition, there were statements where individuals recognised these skills within themselves. Annie recognised that she had gained the skills of coaching and of being a mentor for student teachers, and that this would equip her in her new role. Joanne stated that she had the 'knowledge of working alongside adults and being a leader of adults' as she considered other roles if her current

Reading Recovery Teacher Leader role were to end. Emily expressed this as her 'rucksack' that she carried around with her, a metaphor she used for her developing skill set that equipped her to take this role (and others).

'Doing it' –

There are expressions in the Professional Life Histories of the participants' confidence gained from doing the role, and their ability to engage with different aspects of their role, even if some parts are not so enjoyable. Elizabeth talked about different aspects of her role 'I teach mostly on the BA Ed. undergraduate programme' and 'I found myself as acting programme director'.

Self-belief –

Self-belief is also linked to 'doing it'. It is evidenced in the following ways: a growing confidence, 'feeling natural', enjoying the role, experiencing success in outcomes (for students or pupils), knowing that 'I am good at it', an awareness of aspects of the role that you are good at or not so good at, and a love for the job. Annie commented that 'it felt very natural really'. Rebekah noted her '86% discontinuation rate' demonstrating her feeling of success in the role.

Future aspirations –

Expressions of future aspirations were also indicators of identity, although often expressed in times of transition where identity became disrupted. Some of the participants made statements expressing their desire to make a difference or bring impact. Jane talked about 'the difference we make in their (the children's) lives… I couldn't ever let that go.' For some, these aspirations were evident as they discussed applying to jobs in related roles and the skills they were drawing. For others, this might be expressed in having a sense of choice or an awareness of their own limitations.

Support and independence –

Another area indicating teacher educator identity was evidenced by expressions of the support gained from being part of a team or mutual support provided by colleagues. Elizabeth acknowledged the importance of being part of a team, particularly in the early stages in her new role and how valuable that was. For Joanne, whilst valuing the support of working alongside colleagues in her Reading Recovery training groups, she also expressed a desire of wanting her own training group in the coming year, which was also an indicator of her growing identity in this new role.

In the analysis of indicators of identity as teacher educators, a perhaps stronger identity emerged; that of 'an expert'. Seeing themselves as an expert in their field seemed to be quite crucial for these novice teacher educators. Perhaps, whilst the identity as a teacher educator was less well developed, a sense of expertise, as a teacher, subject specialist or Reading Recovery teacher, was supportive for them in their new role and provided sufficient strength of identity to enable them to transition more effectively. This idea might resonate with Boyd and Harris' (2010) notion of novice teacher educators seeking to gain 'credibility' as they move into their new role. Joanne was particularly noticeable as she came to acknowledge her expertise and the satisfaction that she was 'finally an expert in something'. This was endorsed for her as she was asked for advice and could support schools. Some of the indicators of 'identity as an expert' were similar to those of teacher educator identity, as described above: evidence of skills and knowledge, self-belief and future aspirations. In addition to these were indicators that supported their credibility as an expert; such as their qualifications, areas of responsibility, and leadership and management roles from their previous contexts.

The above discussion shows that there is evidence in the narrative events of identity as a 'teacher educator' and as 'an expert' for the participants in this study and that this is different to previous identities as a 'teacher'. However, it may be that identity as a teacher is subsumed into identity as a teacher educator whereby the individual will still consider themselves to be teachers, but also 'teachers of teachers'. Thus, identity transformation might still be in process, with some aspects of the previous identity apparent in the Professional Life Histories. However, the analysis of the follow up discussions as instances of 'reflecting on reflection' suggest that the telling of the Professional Life History provides a context for the process of 'identification' which further secures identity transformation into this new role.

4.2 Evidence of a process of identification in the follow up discussions

This study adopts a concept of 'identification' as: *the process by which a person comes to know or identify themselves*. Hall (2000) also used this term to denote a process of 'recognition', which this study suggests is realised within the discursive act. The analysis of the follow up discussions identified instances of such a process of identification.

Joanne in her follow up discussion noted of the Professional Life History process:

> It possibly made me more ready to be reflective. Rather than just carrying on regardless. There is that idea that once I've done it once, and reflected on your career path, perhaps it made me more aware of my lack of confidence and now thinking maybe just go for it. And that I am capable of doing things. So perhaps in that way yes possibly. It made me more reflective and being able to act on what I think has happened along the way.

She appeared to have identified herself as someone who lacked confidence in the past and noted that this had changed to someone who was more confident. Likewise, Jane commented that:

> I think [preparing the timeline] kind of made me reflect even before getting it down on to pen and paper. After you ask me to do it and I looked at what was involved in it, I think it kind of made me look back over my whole career and look at the paths that I have taken and the choices that I have made and consider why I have made some of those choices. It just made me start to think a little bit more.

Both are examples of what could be considered as identification. Jane also talked about her feelings doing the Professional Life History:

> [It made me] emotional in some ways I think. Some of the decisions I had made, and thinking sometimes did I do the right thing? It helped me looking back to think that I had made the right decision. And starting to think about what might have happened if I didn't do this, or what might have happened if I had made that choice instead. I think it was quite emotional really doing it.

She recognised that at the time of the Professional Life History discussion she was 'in quite an emotional state' but that at the point of the follow up discussion 'I'm more stable in myself'. Perhaps this identifying with emotions at different points in the professional life is also part of the identification process. It was in the preparation for the follow up interview, in which she was able to review the transcript of her Professional Life History, that Annie noted:

> But I think what I didn't make explicit in the story telling is of the very important landmarks of how I became an effective practitioner. I think that perhaps the retelling of my professional life actually made me realise it wasn't something that had happened haphazardly.

She clearly identified herself as an 'effective practitioner' but the process of identification is in remembering and imparting significance to those 'landmarks' along the journey towards that identity. Emily adopted a similar concept which she termed 'pivotal points':

> I think it's always interesting to reflect and I suppose building the timeline I was aware that perhaps I was trying to pick pivotal sort of points. I think I had that in the back of my mind to make sense of it rather than... So [the Professional Life History] had some type of structure, but it was able to reflect some of those pivotal points and the reasoning behind them and to be able to look at it and make connections between those things. And I think I was really interested in reflecting back and how it was quite a theme. And I think it was just in reflecting back that you began to realise how what you think you know is what had happened, and you had internalised that yes these turning points are positive.

She noted that building the timeline before the discussion made her more aware of 'trying to pick pivotal points'. This implied that the process of identification is not only supported by the narrative event of the Professional Life History itself, but the preparation of thinking and construction that went into this in advance, particularly through the use of the timeline. She also noted that the Professional Life History process involved 'making those links as you go', again this could be a part of the process of identification. Elizabeth identified a broader context in which identification might take place, particularly when triggered by decisions around changing jobs or roles. She noted that 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.

She commented that she had done this 'privately in my head' and 'with family and friends'. Of course, such self-knowing might occur in many other contexts, but usually with a trigger such as role uncertainty. For some of the participants in the study, however, they did acknowledge that they had not engaged in such identification before; notably Annie who reflects:

> I tend to think of myself as a reflective practitioner and what surprised me and puzzled me was that, I thought, as I said earlier, 'well why hadn't I had done this process before?' But I think it's perhaps because it never occurred to me that it had such power to impact on what it is that I'm doing now. In a way, I guess I felt as though I am aware that what I am doing now is built on what I did then but I don't think I quite realized it, as I do now.

The reflections made by participants in their follow up discussion would indicate that most of them did engage in a process of identification during the telling of their Professional Life History. It also further evidences that identification should be seen as a 'process' which is active and un-concluded, this aligns with Hall's assertion that 'identifications are never fully and finally made' (2002, p. 29).

4.3 How the professional life history approach supports critical self-reflection

The second propositional statement of this study was that 'the process of reflection engaged during the narrative events, and subsequently, is transformative in nature, with potential to support identity transformation'. The narrative events were re-examined for instances of two particular types of reflection: critical self-reflection and premise reflection.

The analysis for critical self-reflection was based on the assumption, drawn from the literature - particularly that of (Mezirow, 1990, Mezirow, 1991), that this would be most closely aligned with 'identification'. This formed the second level of analysis of

the narrative events. It was considered that critical self-reflection would be distinct from mere description, and would consist of consideration of the impact of events on the professional life and self. Figure 1, shows the list of themes identified from the analysis of instances of critical self-reflection within the narrative events.

Figure 1 - Themes in relation to critical self-reflection

Theme	Linked Codes
• 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

Each theme reflects a different area of critical self-reflection. The first theme of 'identifying aspects of professional life of significance' shows that critical self-reflection is a process of identifying or 'identification'. Each code contained within this theme suggested a different aspect of the professional life to which the participant had attributed significance. The second theme 'statements of professional identity' showed

that critical self-reflection was synonymous with identification whereby in the narrative process the participant identified themselves with a particular professional identity at different points in their professional life. The third theme 'reflections on roles in professional life' was about critical self-reflection on professional roles and attributing meaning to them, for example Jane reflected 'I remember my first two training groups; I went on that journey with them as a Reading Recovery Teacher Leader.' Again, this is an example of identification. The fourth theme 'recognising influences on professional life' built from the first whereby, in addition to significance being attributed to an event or person, the way in which that event or person has influenced or shaped their professional identity was acknowledged. Prospective reflection, whilst incorporated as part of the Professional Life History approach, can also be recognised as an instance of critical self-reflection. The sixth theme 'reflections on self and evidence of self-awareness' included two categories that emerged in a few of the narrative events by more than one participant; that of confidence and regret. Both of these codes were of instances where the participants recognised personal traits or feelings that were significant as they progressed through their professional life.

The above analysis showed that each theme (and assigned codes) related to aspects of identity and therefore it can be concluded that there is a linkage between critical self-reflection and identification, and that identification could be considered to be a process of critical self-reflection which is specific to the context of telling stories or personal narrative.

The concept of premise reflection is derived from Mezirow's 'transformative learning theory'(Mezirow, 1991, Mezirow, 2003). Premise reflection might be the deepest and most demanding aspect of reflection, in which meaning perspectives are uncovered and challenged. In relation to premise reflection on the self, this would be

about uncovering psychological meaning perspectives; thus, understanding ourselves as individuals. 'The most significant learning involves critical premise reflection of premises about oneself' (Mezirow, 1994 p224). A working definition of premise reflection for this study is that *it pertains to critical self-reflection which provides a summary or over-arching hypothesis about the professional life lived or the contexts in which the individual operates*. The analysis of the narrative events for instances of premise reflection indicated that they appeared to occur as a culmination of a sequence of critical self-reflections and required a statement of new understanding about themselves or their perceived identity. Although not all of the instances of premise reflection identified were considered transformative learning, there were some clear examples that appeared to be transformative in nature and linked more strongly to identity transformation.

In her Professional Life History, Rebekah reflected on the nature of teacher learning in Reading Recovery: 'Because we are talking about something that is broader than a pedagogy. It's about how people think and how they react and their emotions as well'. This premise reflection related to her professional role and is based on her experience as a Reading Recovery Teacher Leader and her work with Reading Recovery teachers. This premise is used by her in instances of prospective reflection to explain the challenges she faced in thinking about possible futures. For Joanne, in her Professional Life History, she recognised a change in attitude towards her professional life, from thinking 'I can't do it', to 'going for it'. She particularly attributed this transformation to her training as a Reading Recovery Teacher Leader.

> I think I've got a very different attitude these days. Down here, (pointing to the timeline) when we were thinking about feelings, as a student in the early days I remember thinking 'I can't do it, can't do it'. I've started to think 'I'm just going to go for it' and think if people want me then they will say 'yes'. So that for me has

been a huge transition. And I think I can pinpoint that happening for me going from Reading Recovery teacher to Teacher Leader training. And thinking 'I'm going to go for it'.

This was premise reflection on her professional self. She went on to consider this premise in more detail in her follow-up discussion where she identified her tendency to be reactive rather than proactive; 'I still allowed things to happen, rather than being completely proactive'. She also acknowledged that she had been more proactive since the Professional Life History discussion;

I think I've had to start thinking about where would I like to be, what would I like to do. I still think I've got a bit of a way to go there. I still allowed things to happen rather than being completely proactive. I think the first step is actually being reflective and thinking about it. So yeah, over the past sort of 12 to 18 months I feel that I have definitely started to think more in those terms. But that may be down to having to sit down and map it out, plot it out for your research.

Jane evidenced premise reflection in her follow-up discussion where she concluded that:

Just thinking about the things that have helped me in the past and have influenced my choices and the things that I have enjoyed. It helped me to think about things that I was more comfortable doing and the things that felt uncomfortable but actually doing those uncomfortable things were the better decisions I made, and pushing myself a bit more. Rather than going for an easy option sometimes. I think the places where I took the more difficult option have been more successful.

This was quite transformative in nature with a clear understanding drawn from reflecting on her past that might support future actions. This premise reflection appeared to have been triggered by engaging in 'reflecting on reflection'. For Emily, in her follow-up discussion, the perspective on her premise reflection appeared to be more outward looking in focus, as she commented on 'not planning a career path', 'being comfortable with change' and 'staying flexible'. These comments seemed not to be

spoken to herself but were suggestive of another audience, perhaps perceived through engaging in this research. Could the premise reflection that she had already engaged with in relation to her own career path, supported by the Professional Life History process, now been reified into a set of principles that she would advocate for other education professionals, particularly within uncertain times? For Annie, her premise reflection related to her own self-understanding in which she concluded that in the process of re-telling her professional life she came to realise that it was not something haphazard but it happened because of what she identified as the 'key landmarks in becoming an effective practitioner', commenting that 'I realise that it is not haphazard, it is actually a science, that if you do this, this will happen.' This appeared to be a significant revelation that she attributed to her engagement with the research, was transformative in nature and would have an impact on her future thinking. Elizabeth's premise reflection was somewhat different to the others. It appeared to be evidenced within the Professional Life History but as something that had already been understood prior to telling her story.

> I think there's also that thing when someone like me, I think you will have to
> analyse that, a working-class girl, the very ordinary background, who seriously did
> not have any high ambitions of who they are and what they would be. When I
> came to work at the university that was beyond anything I could have dreamt of.

This related to an awareness of her roots and her realisation of how far she had come in her professional life, beyond expectations.

This analysis of both critical self-reflection and premise reflection demonstrates that a process of identification is realised within narrative story-telling practices, such as the Professional Life History, and further supported by opportunities for 'reflecting on reflection' as afforded by the follow-up discussions. In addition, it is inferred that

identification is perhaps a sub-set of critical self-reflection that is unique to such narrative episodes.

5. Conclusion - Developing narrative practices for educational professionals during times of transition

This study has evidenced that for neophyte teacher educators engaging in narrative story-telling, such as the Professional Life History, activates a process of identification which can enable individuals to develop a more secure understanding of their professional identity as teacher educators. As the literature shows, the transition from first to second order practitioner (Murray and Male, 2005) challenges the development of identity as a teacher educator, as does the search for 'credibility' with students and teachers (Boyd and Harris, 2010). Whilst engaging in research can support development of an academic identity for teacher educators working within Higher Education Institutions (Roberts and Weston, 2014), this study demonstrates that approaches to professional development for teacher educators that adopt narrative story-telling practices can support neophyte teacher educators to engage in 'identification' as they explore their transition from teacher to teacher educator, their roles and expertise as a teacher educator and their prospective roles as they consider how their career might develop.

Whilst the Professional Life History method was developed for the purposes of this study, there are particular elements of this model that are supportive for professional learning and activating identification.

Collaborative story-telling -

The literature, discussed earlier, shows that collaborative approaches to professional learning for teacher educators have proved to be effective. Story-telling is

also a collaborative process as it requires a teller and a listener and cannot be conducted in isolation. Life histories could be shared in a one to one discussion or with a group of supportive colleagues. Due to the personal nature of such stories it is important that these are trusted adults and that parameters for sharing are agreed in advance. One of the benefits of the Professional Life History approach is the preparation of the Professional Life History timeline in advance of the story telling episode. This provides opportunity for the teller to consider and construct their story in advance and enables them to share their story without the need for much prompting. This approach is similar to that used by Conway (2001) with student teachers. For neophyte teacher educators, the sharing of their life history might be incorporated into an induction programme, perhaps with groups of neophyte teacher educators, or used as part of staff development and review processes. The other issue is to identify the optimal point into the new role for this sharing of the life history to take place. If it takes place too soon (perhaps within the first year) the risk is that there has been insufficient time for the nature of the new role to be fully experienced, thus limiting the opportunity for identification. In this study, all participants were between one and three years into role, which did appear to be a suitable time frame.

Use of prospective reflective

The incorporation of prospective reflection proved to be particularly effective as a trigger for critical self-reflection and identification. This also aligns with the work of Conway (*ibid*) and Urzua and Vasquez (2008) with the notion of exploring 'imagined selves'. It might be assumed that the process of considering future career progression requires an individual to clarify their present roles and circumstances, again triggering identification. There might also be a strong alignment between life history practices and career planning and progression; as MacLure (1993) suggests, '[o]ne way of looking at

the notion of career is as a special genre of life stories that we tell to make sense of what we have done, are doing, and might do in our jobs.' (p319)

Reflecting on reflection

Within this study, the follow up discussions took on a particular significance as opportunities for 'reflecting on reflection'. Analysis of the narrative events revealed this as a rich source of critical self-reflection, and particularly premise reflection. This was due to the opportunity afforded for revisiting the Professional Life History and identifying its significance in self-knowing and recognition of identity as a teacher educator. Although this was also conducted on a one to one basis, it could equally become part of a collaborative discussion with other neophyte teacher educators.

Limitations of this study

Studies of teacher educators have more recently included school-based teacher educators within a broader definition of 'teacher educator' (Boyd and Tibke, 2012, White, 2013, White *et al.*, 2015). Similarly, this study broadens the definition of teacher educator to include a group of Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders (who work with experienced teachers on a consultancy basis for a Local Education Authority). The question is whether these individuals can be considered second-order practitioners (according to the concept of Murray and Male, 2005) as they are not university based, do not work within Initial Teacher Education and the expectations of their role may differ in some respects to the more traditional teacher educator. For this group, they may well not be expected to assign themselves the designation as 'teacher educator'.

The second limitation is the role of the researcher as a participant in the narrative events. Whilst the benefits of being an 'insider researcher' are well recognised (Smyth and Holian, 2008, Clandinin *et al.*, 2010), Smyth and Holian also identify three

issues that require attention: role-duality, pre-understanding and access. Thus, these ethical issues have to be taken into consideration when working with known participants, recognising too that the presence of the researcher may impact on what is shared or left unsaid. Likewise, the potential for bias in the analysis and presentation of findings has to be acknowledged.

Finally, there is also a possible conflation in this research between identity and 'doing the job'; or is this the difference between the situational and substantial self as defined by Murray and Male (2005)? One challenge from this research was the finding that none of the teacher educators identified themselves as such. This may be due to the nature of the conversation within the narrative events but could also be considered an indication that they have not fully realised an identity as a 'teacher educator'. Linked to this is the 'doing it' indicator of identity; which likewise may not indicate identity at all but just the degree of assimilation into the role.

Implications for Future Practice

The recommendation of this paper is that narrative practices, such as the Professional Life History approach, be further examined as a vehicle for supporting professional self-knowing and identification. The focus of which could be supporting neophyte teacher educators through the challenges of transition into their new role and their incorporation into other more formal induction processes. This might help address the growing demand for attention to be paid to supporting teacher educators in this very different and demanding role as 'teacher of teachers' (Murray, 2010, Boei *et al.*, 2015, Kosnik *et al.*, 2015). In addition, there might be broader scope for using narrative story-telling to support other education professionals during times of transition, such as working with student teachers or teachers moving into other professional roles. Further

research is needed to evidence the effectiveness of these recommended narrative

practices.

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