

# Teaching is a Story Whose First Pages Matters – Four Type Narratives From The Beginning of a Teaching Career

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## Abstract

From a broad perspective, the entire time spent in teacher training can be characterized as a period of professional growth. Specific professional growth and development are realized when the students enter the advanced stage of master's studies to independently practise their profession in their own class of pupils. The uncertainty of a novice teacher and, on the other hand, the 'burden of competence' gained from teacher training make this induction phase very sensitive and critical, as all the competencies they have obtained during teacher training should culminate in this specific phase.

The development of a student into an independent teacher is a growth story in which each person's identity, experiences of teaching, and the knowledge structures gained from teacher training determine how they experience their growth, how their multiple skills develop, and how their individual growth story evolves.

In this study, we look at the writings of primary school teacher students who have just entered working life. In their writings, the students who are in the beginning of their teaching career highlight their experiences, critical points, decisive moments, meaningful experiences, and professional growth in different ways. What can we, as teaching practice supervisors, learn from our students' experiences? What conditions and actions strengthen or destabilize the teacherhood of a newly graduated teacher? This study examines these questions through type narratives specific to narrative research by summarizing the students' experiences in four different type narratives.

## Keywords:

Student Supervision, Peer Support, Collegiality, Professional Growth, Professional Support

## Introduction

*"All of a sudden, I was in a new school, alone among 25 pupils and new colleagues. The safe and familiar small group with which I had solved many problems during the studies was now gone. Each member of the group was now facing the same kind of situation. This was not a showcase nor a survival test but my first day in a profession that I had dreamt about and trained for. All at once, all that I had learned seemed to have disappeared from my head: planning, objectives, contents, assessment - those words*



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*were swimming in my mind without finding a place to anchor to. The start of my work was also the start of my final teaching practice. I would carry out the teaching practice in my own class of pupils. Was I ready for this after all? I wanted to press the panic button and discontinue the practical training. What if I don't make it?"*

These words and thoughts summarize quite well the feelings and experiences of students who are just beginning their career as teachers. They have just completed their studies in teacher training, which has prepared them to support and promote the pupils' learning and competence development, to help the pupils become independent and responsible members of the society and possess the knowledge and skills needed in changing environments. However, the suddenly increased responsibility, requirements and expectations feel too big: the students feel that they are only beginners and novices as teachers, but at the same time they feel the pressure to appear as curriculum experts and digital specialist with the latest knowledge. (cf. Husu & Toom 2016, 9–10.)

During the years we have worked in classroom teacher adult education, we have become aware that the induction phase where the students take responsibility for their own class of pupils is very crucial:

*"A new workplace with new practices, a challenging new class of pupils and, moreover, a very demanding teaching practice to be completed. At some point, I was ready to give up. The teacher who supervised my teaching practice saved me by reassuring and supporting me and by going through the assignments piece by piece."*

As the student feedback above shows, starting in a new job is not always easy - even when one has dreamt about it for a long time. The transition to working life is a phase where the students' teacherhood - which they have developed during their studies - can easily be either reinforced or crumbled.

This phase is especially sensitive since most adult students in the class teacher education already have a long career behind them when they start their studies, and certain practices have become routine to them. During teacher training, the students' theory-in-use must be examined anew, which adds new dimensions to it as regards how learning, teaching and the factors affecting these are seen in the light of the latest research. In most cases, this new information changes the existing theory-in-use in a considerable way. The students' theory-in-use and their goals as teachers are put to the test during teaching practice periods, where the students are supported by trained supervising teachers, a university supervisor, and the peer group of other students. However, in a teaching practice in one's own class, things are different in many ways: now the student is the only teacher in the class, in a school that may be familiar or new. If the school is new to the student, its new work environment, working

community and working culture pose challenges to the student. In a familiar school, where the student may already have worked as an unqualified teacher, the challenges are related to the expectations falling on the student. At this stage, the student's situation may be complex if his or her theory-in-use has changed significantly and no longer meets with the practices of the workplace. When one is newly graduated, it is difficult to hold firmly to one's views in case they are being challenged, the work feels demanding, or you are uncertain of your teacherhood.

At this point, a tailor-made teaching practice in one's own class and with guidance from the university helps to cross the boundary between studies and working life. In this type of teaching practice, the students work as class teachers in their own class but can also discuss matters with a supervisor from the university and a mentor teacher from the school they work in (Meriläinen, Piispanen, Valli & Valli 2012). According to studies (Soini, Pietarinen, Toom & Pyhältö 2016), this type of simulated or guided authentic on-the-job learning situation helps the graduating student to develop as a teacher and to attach to working life especially because the student is given a chance to solve problematic situations in authentic contexts and in cooperation with other students, teacher trainers and the fellow teachers in the school.

### **Narrative research**

The development of teacherhood is a narrative of its own, which students reflect on especially by examining and creating their own theory-in-use during teacher training. At its best, this narrative is endless, as teachers are expected to revise their teacherhood during their entire career through self-reflection, explorative teaching, collegial cooperation, shared expertise, new scientific data, and their experiences. During teacher training, students' theory-in-use is put to the test during the periods of teaching practice. Students often feel that they progress in leaps and bounds during practice periods because the constant debate between theory and practice tests, challenges and strengthens their teacherhood. In the final teaching practice, the students are asked to reflect on their teacherhood once more. This is done with the help of learning diaries and assignments that direct their teacherhood, cognitive control, working culture, and the planning of teaching. The students are given guidance and feedback to the assignments by means of video recordings, written instructions, and discussion with the university supervisor during the entire teaching practice in their own class. Every student also has a tutor teacher who works at the same school and helps the student.

The data of this study consists of syntheses of the students' learning diaries and assignments, where the students elaborated on their teacherhood and

its development and the feelings they had when starting work in their own class of pupils. The data also includes the results of an anonymised survey where the participants ( $n = 16$ ) were asked to examine the critical points and affirmative elements of their teacherhood and the situations and emotions they experienced at work. In the syntheses and in the survey, the students could write about their emotions and experiences freely and highlight matters they considered important. Both surveys included guiding questions that the respondents could use to help outline their answers. However, they were asked to write free-form answers. The university supervisor had a discussion with each student based on his or her synthesis, thus giving the students a chance to broaden and specify their reflection. The survey the students answered after the teaching practice was anonymised.

The purpose of this study is to explore the different starting points of students as newly graduated teachers and to highlight such measures the students found important in strengthening their teacherhood at critical stages. Knowing these measures gives us a chance to further develop teacher training to support students professionally when they enter working life.

The method used to examine the students' stories is narrative research. In a way, the data collected for this study are like field reports that lead us to the authentic narrative of each student in the beginning of their working life. Kaasila (2008) and Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi (2005) point out that narratives have a great influence on the building of one's identity: telling narratives involves interpreting one's own identity, past and future. Narratives build and convey the person's view of the world and values as well as make them part of the community and the world. In this study, we as researchers were given a chance to have a close look at the students' activity and thoughts through the research data, our discussions with the students and the observations we made when observing the students at work.

According to Polkinghorne (1995, 6–8) the analysis of this type of research data can be done by using two methods: either the analysis of narratives and/or the narrative analysis. The analysis of narratives focuses on classifying the narratives into different categories with the help of case types, metaphors, and categories, whereas the narrative analysis focuses on producing a new narrative based on the narratives included in the data. Thus, narrative analysis does not classify the data but uses it to create a new narrative that aims at highlighting the important themes in the data. Such a narrative is a synthesis of the narratives in the data. (Polkinghorne 1995, 15.) In our study, the analysis of narratives and the narrative analysis alternate and support one another. Through the

analysis of narratives, we have been able to outline the meanings that students give to their experiences and the meanings they give to their theory-in-use. On the other hand, the narrative analysis gave us information about the students' professional growth and the experiences that define their attachment to the new job.

Thus, our method of analysis can be described as data oriented. Our starting point is the matters told and described by the students. The collection of data was a process with two phases: it was conducted both during the final teaching practice and after it. During the teaching practice, the students created syntheses of their learning diaries and the structured assignments, which we then discussed. After the teaching practice, the students answered an anonymised survey consisting of open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were formulated so that they would help specify the students' syntheses but also give the students a chance to talk about their experiences in their own way. During the teaching practice, we observed the students' work through a network connection, which helped us form a conception of the actual circumstances in the classroom and of the way teaching was implemented.

Teaching practice in one's own class involves that the student acts very independently in the classroom. Therefore, the supervisor must rely on the student's account of the pupils and the group structure. For this reason, the supervisor must maintain a good dialogical connection and familiarize oneself with the student's thoughts and experiences of the pupils to form a comprehension of the student's performance and experiences of teaching (Nummenmaa 2003, 47, 51).

After familiarizing ourselves with the research data, we aimed at understanding the contents of the data within their original context, which is a situation where newly graduated teachers take responsibility for their own class using all their knowledge and skills they have obtained during and prior to teacher training.

In the narrative analysis, we use the data to create a new narrative that highlights the central themes of the data. Instead of classifying the data, a narrative analysis aims at creating a synthesis of the narrative knowledge. (Polkinghorne 1995, 12.) This type of holistic and content-based reading focuses on the whole narrative, its contents, and themes. In the research data, the central themes were being an educator, building a theory-in-use, reflecting on one's competence, and strengthening of professionalism (Table 1). In other words, these themes are matters that the students considered important and focused on in their narratives. In the data of each student and in relation to each theme, we found factors that strengthen and factors that destabilize one's

teacherhood (Table 1). Destabilizing factors were uncertainty of oneself (of one's competence and coping at work), uncertainty about belonging to the teacher community, discrepancy between one's concept of learning and the school culture, time management, and uncertainty about employment. Strengthening factors were collegial support, support from the university supervisor, teaching practice assignments as means to structure work, and realizing that results are related to one's competence. (cf. Husu & Toom 2013).

As the research data consists of the written assignments and several related discussions with 16 students, we decided that we would not be able to create a narrative for each individual student. That would also have violated the ethical principles of research work, as it might have been possible to identify the students in the narratives. Therefore, we decided to develop different kinds of type narratives based on the data. These type narratives describe the different experiences teachers have in the beginning of their career. There are several models for and alternatives to creating type narratives. According to Hänninen (1999, 33), the purpose of typification is to compress the central elements and narratives of the data. Type narratives have the kind of plot structure and elements that are characteristic of stories in general and of the persons and factors involved in the stories (strengthening and destabilizing factors). It is important to see that the type narratives in this study do not represent specific students. Instead, the type narratives highlight the main themes of the research data so that the themes dealt with in the students' stories are collected together. The type narratives express the multiple ways of experiencing the beginning of a teaching career. Each type narrative is characterized by the importance of support, which was a significant factor in the study. In addition, each type narrative also includes critical points where support was crucial for the development of a growth story.

By utilizing the methods of analysis described above, we were able to create four type narratives which were related to the following themes: how the students experienced themselves as educators, how their theory-in-use developed at this stage, their sense of competence, and how their professionalism was

reinforced. The four type narratives are called Diana Doubter, Benny Booster, Cathy Conformist, and Isla Innovator. The type narratives highlight the diversity of students and the importance of individual support.

### *Diana Doubter*

The type narrative of Diana Doubter represents a very common group of students. Doubters trust in their own skills is rather weak, and the supervisor's task is to make Doubters notice their skills and strengths in a solution-oriented way. Supervisory discussions always help the Doubter to strive, but any little factor causing uncertainty or lack of support at the right time makes the Doubter start to doubt. Doubters tend to seek reinforcement to their assignments and belittle themselves or their work. They feel that teaching practice is especially demanding, and they easily consider quitting. Doubters nearly always experience inner conflicts because they compare their own choices with the choices of others which they try to relate to. Situations where the school culture or colleagues' conceptions of learning and teaching conflict with their own conceptions are especially difficult for Doubters. In these situations, Doubters feel distressed and insecure as regards their own choices, even if they realize that their choices are well-founded and right. In these situations, it is extremely important that the supervisor supports the students and makes their work apparent. Doubters need constant support, confirmation of instructions, and feedback on their work to build up their resilience (Waugh 2014, 73.)

*"The long distance between us was critical factor, but our discussions helped. The support and feedback from the teacher helped me reach all my goals. As I said earlier, the supervision process helped me in moments of uncertainty."*

*Positive support is crucial to Doubters' attachment to working life:*

*"It is like I was given a pair of glasses or a telescope through which I can see myself in a positive light. Insecurity is a growth process and an ability to reflect on one's competence."*

*"Support and encouragement as well as the promotion of feelings of calmness and of the attitude that everything is going to be all right have been important to me. Reflecting on things and putting emphasis on one's strengths." "Feedback that was supporting and encouraging. Especially during*

**Table 1.**

*Key elements and strengthening and destabilizing factors of teacherhood.*

Teacherhood: Key Elements	Teacherhood: Strengthening Factors	Teacherhood: Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being an educator</li> <li>• construction of one's theory-in-use</li> <li>• reflecting on one's competences</li> <li>• strengthening of professionalism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collegial support</li> <li>• support from the university supervisor</li> <li>• teaching practice assignments as means to structure work</li> <li>• realizing that results are related to one's competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uncertainty about oneself (competence and coping)</li> <li>• uncertainty about belonging to the teacher community</li> <li>• discrepancies between one's concept of learning and the school culture</li> <li>• time management</li> <li>• uncertainty about employment</li> </ul>

*moments when I thought I could not handle it. Also, the feedback I got after the observation day was extremely valuable. It is sometimes difficult to see the good sides and things that need to be developed in one's work."*

### **Benny Booster**

Benny Booster is a person who radiates contentment and certainty. Already in the beginning of teacher training – or at least during it – Boosters feel that their views of and experiences about being a teacher as well as their methods have been efficient. During teacher training, this view has been promoted. Such persons can utilize and support their resources and strengths – often without realizing this (Koirikivi & Benjamin 2020).

With their own class, Boosters face any possible challenge with an attitude that their teaching methods and educational competence will produce results in time. The knowledge gained from teacher training is stored in the memory, and it is typical that Boosters reinforce their sense of competence during the final teaching practice:

*"I tried to achieve the objectives set to me, and all the assignments I was tasked to do during the teaching practice led me towards them. I think I succeeded well."*

*"I can plan comprehensive and integrative learning wholes suitable for the age group. I have strengthened and deepened my personal and professional identity in line with the objectives."*

It is typical that Boosters' learning assignments and course of action are in some respects incomplete. It may also be difficult for the reader to understand what Boosters are trying to communicate. In these critical situations, a Booster often assumes that others understand what he means or is doing. For Boosters, action comes naturally but explaining the action on a pedagogical level may be difficult. There is an interesting connection with studies on resilience and interaction, according to which a person's resilience is strengthened through reflection and interaction (Zautra 2014, 189). Boosters' central need for development is in the area of pedagogical interaction: if we as supervisors could support this interaction, Boosters' expertise would become visible, which then would build up their resilience (Zautra 2014).

*"Discussions with the supervisor have helped me analyse the knowledge that I have. At first, I was not able to write it intelligibly in my lesson plans. Afterwards, when I read my plans, I realised that they were incoherent. But when I really focused on following the instructions, I was able to write my plans in a way that was intelligible."*

Boosters also mentioned that a strong belief in the correctness of one's actions is a strength but also as a challenge:

*"In the beginning of teacher training I wondered if I would gain anything new from it. But I can see now that it has given me the thread of the profession. I can now actually create learning phenomena and themes based on the curriculum. On a practical level I already could do that, but now it has a meaning, too."*

For Boosters, moments of uncertainty are critical. In situations of uncertainty, they often give feedback on the instructions. However, this was due to their own insecurity. The other types of students did not give the same kind of feedback.

*"At some point I noticed that students may misinterpret the instructions. Thus, very specific instructions and examples would help them act correctly."*

*"I'm just saying that the instructions are confusing at times..."*

*"I was confused, because I had submitted my assignment, but I could not see it there. For some reason, the assignment was not there, although I had submitted it."*

Despite elements of uncertainty, Boosters typically feel that everything they experienced during training improved their sense of competence and teacherhood.

*"I cannot say that my way of being a teacher changed in any way. Actually, training has made me more certain of the fact that I am acting in the right way and can continue the same way."*

To some extent, Boosters are a mysterious group: It is easy to say with contentment that they were skilled teachers already when entering teacher training. On the other hand, the group may include people who tend to view everything new they have learned during training as part of the competence they already had prior to training. In psychology, this is called confirmation bias, which is a tendency to favour new information in a way that confirms one's prior beliefs or knowledge. This means that certain people tend to choose information and sources that support and promote their prior opinions. These people will also interpret ambiguous data in a way that supports their own views. (Levine 2003.)

It is often difficult to see the difference between good self-esteem and confirmation bias. However, confirmation bias means that one's trust in one's beliefs is remarkable and related to all knowledge of a theme even when the person is shown evidence proving the opposite. (Levine 2003.) A self-confident person may try to cover one's uncertainty by reinforcing one's sense of competence, which can result in a confirmation bias.

As regards Boosters, the teacher training supervisor needs to distinguish whether the Booster's competence is genuine or whether there is uncertainty or bias behind the reinforcement. These two may weaken the

quality of teaching, communication, and interaction in different contexts (e.g., when meeting pupils' parents, networks, colleagues). The student's situation can be interpreted by asking questions and mapping the situations that the student finds challenging as well as the solutions to these situations.

### Cathy Conformist

Conformists are students whose environmental factors can either risk or promote their teaching career: at its best, the school culture and colleagues will embrace Conformists and let them impress with their competence. In an unfavourable situation, the environment may affect Conformists so that their competence declines. This is because Conformists try to seek sympathy for their actions and feel companionship: the support from others improves Conformists' resilience (Poulin, Brown, Dillard & Smith 2013, 1652; Zautra 2014). On the other hand, if Conformists do not get collegial support, they will start to shape their own behaviour and support the views of others even if these are very different from those of their own. For the most part, Conformists know that they tend to conform.

*"I have previously worked at the school I am working at now. It poses certain challenges since my conceptions of learning and teaching have changed so much. I no longer depend on textbooks, which is rather unusual at our school. Sometimes I wonder if I have the energy to tilt windmills. My supervisor asked me about my current theory-in-use and conception of learning. I know I should stick to my own conceptions and not just go with the flow. I am excited about the kind of teacher I would like to be, but it takes courage. However, I had the courage to say that I will take charge of the Curriculum Afternoon, even though a colleague teased me about it."*

*"I must be a bit careful about what I say, do or reform, as I only have a temporary post and I have not been promised continuation yet. But I can do things my way in my own class, of course."*

Conformists have a twofold role in their work. They have the confidence gained from teacher training and teaching practice, but they are afraid to express their own way of being a teacher. The reason for this is the pressure they feel about whether they will be accepted into the work community. Conformists feel that they need more self-confidence. In the final teaching practice, the support and questions from the supervisor can strengthen their teacherhood even when the supervisor is in another town (Brown & Okun 2014).

*"The additional questions that my supervising teacher asked me made me reflect on different views, and naturally the positive feedback I got reinforced my sense of competence. The supervision sessions were well scheduled according to the assignments we had."*

*"The support and encouragement I got as well as the interactive discussion with the supervisor about*

*my experiences as a teacher. The fact that someone listened to me and promoted my ideas."*

Conformists are often open about their critical points, such as being left alone in a controversial situation. In these situations, conformists are genuinely afraid that they will become the kind of teachers they were prior to their professional growth or that they will assimilate into a group that does not share their conception of good teaching and learning. Conformists are trying to find explanations that would help them move on:

*"I was happy to do the teaching practice in my hometown and in a real teaching job. The practice period was over extremely quickly. Somehow, I would have liked to have such guidance and counselling for longer. But on the other hand, I think all of us wanted to complete master's studies fast. Perhaps we partly thought that we would just like to get done with it."*

*"The challenge in our school is that certain textbooks and software have been ordered for us, so every teacher is expected to use them, and the use is even monitored to some extent. So, they know which things the pupils have studied from textbooks. Of course, a textbook is not the same thing as the curriculum, but in our school – and I hate to say this! – textbooks guide teaching more than the curriculum."*

### Isla Innovator

Innovators are students who feel that they have learned a lot and want to share this expertise in their work community. Innovators' enthusiasm is catchy, and they have a genuine belief in the possibilities of their actions. Innovators do not reform the school just for reformation's sake, but they strongly believe that the work will produce results. Innovators openly share their expertise and the things they do with their pupils. They also invite others to come and see their work:

*"It has been a pleasure to highlight the importance of objectives in the work community, as well as the idea that the criteria for good competence are a starting point for the objectives."*

When reflecting on their actions and the results, Innovators feel that they receive continuous and timely reinforcement to their professional growth. This is an ideal situation for a newly graduated teacher. Zautra (2014, 185–193) notes that interaction is the primary foundation for the development of resilience. Situations where individuals support one another in a compassionate and encouraging way relate to the development of resilience (Poulin, Brown, Dillard & Smith 2013, 1652; Zautra 2014, 185).

*"Especially the supervision process has helped me find my way of being a teacher. I notice that I have a gentle way of interacting with others and that I enjoy teaching when it forms a continuum, and each day is a clearly structured entity. Discussions about cognitive control and planning have helped me understand the role of entities in the work of a teacher. When learning consists of alternating lessons and textbooks and independent work at one's desk, it is not meaningful and comprehensive. Above*

*all, teaching practice helped me understand how functional and important it is for all that learning is a process and a continuum."*

*"I wished for and was provided with reinforcement for my views on the importance of the assessment of younger pupils. I also received tips on how to carry out self-assessment and peer-assessment with younger pupils."*

### **The importance of instructional support**

Teaching practice in one's own class gives those students who have already been offered a post as a teacher a chance to do their final practice period in their future workplace. Doing the practice in another town requires the student to take responsibility for the planning, implementation and instruction of education and teaching more independently and comprehensively. The challenges and everyday life of a novice teacher are the same as those of experienced teachers. In addition to having new pupils, colleagues and work environment, the novice teacher must conceptualise the educational content, the curriculum, and the pedagogical teaching arrangements. According to Feiman-Nemser (2001), this demands a lot of work during the first months, when the teacher has not yet formed a routine. During the practice period in one's own class, the students aim to create a whole, authentic, and contextual learning environment that improves the pupils' learning-to-learn skills and transversal competences. This is done by using the pedagogical know-how gained during teacher training. In theory, the students are familiar with all this, and the teaching practice is the real life where theory, practice and the school practices meet. In several schools, the students are met with a traditional school culture, which they counterbalance with a learning and teaching method that is based on a more comprehensive, phenomenon-based approach.

*"I felt a beautiful fire crackling warmly inside of me, sparks of energy flying around. I was filled with genuine gratitude as my long-held wish was about to come true. [...]After a few days of teaching, the flame inside of me was not burning so merrily anymore. Instead, it was burning down. Having discussed with some of my colleagues, I noticed that I had started to view teaching from a quite different perspective."*

In a situation described above, the student's resilience and promoting it are very important. Bradley, Davis, Kaye and Wingo (2014, 199–200) note that resilience that is promoted by the community is a significant factor in maintaining resilience in uncertain situations. Resilience promoted by the community requires the successful adoption of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural norms, which form the basis for the development of self-regulation ability, emotion regulation abilities, psychological flexibility, and social competence (Poulin, Brown, Dillard & Smith 2013; Zautra 2014).

The theoretical framework for the teaching practice in one's own class is founded on the basic ideas of educational sciences and developmental psychology: John Dewey's view that the society and school should operate according to uniform principles; Maria Montessori's view that a child's individual growth and learning should be taken into account and that learning environments should be utilized in versatile ways during the learning process; Meriläinen and Piispanen's (2018) views on the connection between contexts and pedagogy when planning a learning landscape; and Herrington, Oliver and Reeves' (2010) view on the possibilities of authentic learning.

These theories and the framework they form guide both the planning of the supervision process and the students' work as teachers. Teaching practice in one's own class differs from the earlier teaching practices in many ways. The most significant difference is that in the final practice students have entered working life and are now responsible for the independent planning and implementation of the learning landscape in the class where they do their practice. In the earlier teaching practices, the teachers at the university practice schools were responsible for planning the classroom culture and practices, for planning and implementing curriculum-based teaching, and for supporting the pupils' growth and development. In the teaching practice in one's own class, the students are responsible for these. The students are also responsible for planning and implementing successful parent-teacher cooperation strategies. Teacher's work requires a variety of skills, which are developed, extended, and deepened during the final teaching practice through guidance and by using methods of work counselling.

Soini, Pietarinen, Toom and Pyhältö (2016) examine teacher competencies from the perspective of research on teachers' sense of professional agency. According to them, the core of teacher competence consists of 1) pedagogical skills, 2) interaction skills, 3) well-being skills, and 4) skills related to school development. These dimensions of competence also correlate with novice teachers' sense of competence. Teachers who consider themselves competent in these areas also consider themselves more resilient in different situations. According to Soini et al. (2016), these dimensions are central in teachers' professional contexts: in classroom interaction and in the professional community. According to the study, success or failure in these contexts had an impact on how strong and competent novice teachers considered themselves to be as teachers.

In the teaching practice in one's own class, it is crucial that the student's own conception of learning and education is made apparent. It becomes apparent on many levels and in many ways during the teaching

practice, not only in the planning of teaching but also as the background philosophy to the class culture and practices. (cf. Soini, T., Pietarinen, J., Toom, A. & Pyhältö 2016). In addition, the student's conception becomes evident through the meticulously drawn plan for cognitive control that promotes the pupils' learning and their possibilities to succeed to the best of their potential.

*"I knew I had knowledge and skills, but all of them were somehow lost and out of reach. I had no confidence and I thought I could not be the preschool teacher I had been, because I was a classroom teacher now."*

The supervision process where methods of work counselling are utilized promotes the student's professional growth at the right time and enables each student to stop to reflect on matters that are current and of importance to them at that time. Scaffolding, timely support for learning, and working on the proximal zone of development create a solution-oriented framework for the supervision process (Kim 2008). As working and practising go hand in hand in the teaching practice, the supervision process has been planned so that it focuses on supporting and guiding the students in the questions and needs that are current and important for their professional development.

*"After the initial awkwardness had passed, the little flame inside of me was gently made stronger. This made me feel calm and gave me permission to view classroom teacher's work in the way I, a preschool teacher, see it. With the help of my extremely skilled supervisor, I found the thread again and was able to create the learning landscape that was suitable for my pupils. Afterwards, I became even more excited about the teaching practice in my own class and had the courage to plan teaching that was not textbook based. My supervisor told me to stand on my head to shake up my thoughts (a very good advice for me) and to find the key issues."*

The student's words above include an idea of shared expertise and collegial guidance that should be based on needs and provided at the right time. Furthermore, it is also important to recognise, acknowledge and highlight existing competence. It is crucial that the supervision process highlights, deepens, and extends the existing competence at the same time as the competence-related needs that the work entails are addressed.

*"I will never forget the discussion we had in the beginning of the counselling process and the idea of 'a bed model' that I had. I had come across this model during teacher training, but only now the fabulous idea became understandable and concrete to me, which advanced my professional development in leaps. I have seen and experienced what difference it makes when pupils know exactly the objectives they try to achieve and the phases of the learning whole. Pursuing the goal step by step is clear and structured for both the teacher and the pupils."*

## Conclusion

Each person experiences being a teacher in a unique way. This experience is affected by one's own school experiences, values, the attitude of the environment and one's view on teaching that has developed during teacher training and one's work as a teacher. Teaching profession is an interesting occupation that differs from many other professions in that everyone is familiar with it from the perspective of a pupil. Many students graduating from the class teacher adult education programme have worked as teachers before entering the training. Thus, they have seen the profession from the teacher's point of view before starting the training. This is not possible in every profession. Many of the students in adult education are also parents of secondary school students. During teacher training, the students must examine and reassess their experiences of being a teacher. Some students build on their previous experiences, while some must start rebuilding their teacherhood from the beginning. The distance between these two extremes is long and includes various growth stories.

The type narratives presented in this article shed light on the large spectrum of graduating teachers and provide a meaningful perspective on the planning of the supervision process of a teaching practice that takes place in the induction phase between studies and working life. Naturally, the classification could have been different, but as we tried to group the students that we supervised in different ways after several readings of their writings and responses, the classification into the current type narratives became clear. These type narratives describe the various situations of students in the induction phase of working life.

The classification was done based on the students' learning diaries, the syntheses of their assignments, and their responses to the anonymised survey. These formed a large collection of texts, only small bits of which are presented in this article as citations. The extensive data showed that the students' professional starting points vary, which challenged us as researchers and teaching practice supervisors to reflect on the efficiency and importance of instructional support that is needs-based. How can we meet the needs of different students better and at the right time, and help them develop in their work and as teachers by working on each student's proximal zone of development? The students' needs are different, but their direction is the same: to strengthen their teacherhood.

During teaching practice, we can use assignments to draw focus on the different duties of a teacher, such as planning, creating a classroom culture, methods to



support the pupils' learning and growth. While doing this, we notice that the students feel differently about their development as teachers as regards these duties.

The supervision process that utilizes methods of work counselling enables timely support, scaffolding. In that process, the students position themselves in relation to assignments that promote the attainment of the desired competencies during the teaching practice. Instead of examining the assignment-related progress together with all the students, at the same time and in the same way, we have developed the student supervision process more towards a work counselling process, where the students themselves raise questions that are current to them. We have noticed that this promotes the professional development of the students in a meaningful way. Above all, it requires a change in us supervisors. It requires a new way of examining the teaching practice from more individual perspectives: we cannot force a locked door open or demand that a student stops at a threshold he or she has already crossed. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that promote teacherhood by examining data and the themes rising from it. The data was collected during class teacher students' teaching practice which took place in the induction phase of their teaching career. The themes rising from the data were examined through four different type narratives that all indicated that the common factors that promote teacherhood are collegial support, support from the university supervisor, learning assignments during teaching practice as means to structure work, and realizing that results are related to one's competence. This framework also applies to the professional development of the teaching practice supervisor: recognising and highlighting the student teachers' competence and timely guidance are the key factors. As supervisors, we help graduating class teachers strengthen their teacherhood in their proximal zone of development by supporting their learning and competence at the right time and help them take their first steps as teachers beginning form where each one of them is at that time. Only in this way can a story called teacherhood begin.

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