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From ugly duckling to swan: Stories of novice teachers

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Three stories of novice teachers during their induction year.
- The stories represent the novice teachers' professional identity construction process.
- Every story emphasizes one of the three aspects with which the novice teachers cope: has conflict, tension and gaps with which the novice teachers must cope.

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we examine processes that underlie the formation of novice teachers' professional identity through an analysis of three stories submitted as entries in a story competition. Analysis of the literary, psychological, and professional dimensions of the narratives reflect three aspects of professional identity-construction: conflict between personal and social-public perceptions of the teaching role; tension between biographical experiences and the perception of teaching; and a gap between fantasy and professional reality. Writing and publishing professional stories may contribute to our understanding of the generic components of teacher identity and what it means to be a novice teacher.

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1. Introduction

The novice teacher's first year of work as a professional is a unique time. Novice teachers must cope with the transition from the training stage (pre-service), during which professional education is acquired, to the in-service stage, when they are considered more mature and can utilize their professional skills (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Korthagen, 2001, 2004; Lazovsky & Reichenberg, 2006; Strong & Baron, 2004).

During this first year, novice teachers often have a sense of inadequacy because it is a time of transition from learning "to become a teacher" to learning "how to teach" (Darling-Hammond, 1996). This transition year, the beginning of teachers' professional path, is particularly suitable for examining the development of teachers' professional identities (Liu & Xu, 2011).

The first years in the teaching profession, particularly the first year, have been widely studied (Le Maistre & Pare, 2010). More specifically, there has been an effort to understand the difficulties and successes of individual teachers (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013) as well as attempts to determine ways to decrease attrition in the profession (Hong, 2009). Vonk (1995) divided the professional path into three categories: personal-emotional, pedagogic-didactic, and ecologic-systemic-organizational. The induction year can lead to extreme feelings of helplessness, loneliness, foreignness, alienation, insecurity, obscurity, and ambiguity. These feelings unsettle many novice teachers, sometimes to the point of paralysis (Fenwick, 2011; Moor et al., 2005). Although there are some positive emotions and successes during this year, the encounter with the professional reality is often described in the literature in harsh terms, such as "culture shock," "stranger in a new land" (Sabar, 2004), and "baptism by fire" (Kelchetermans & Ballet, 2002). Most novice teachers feel that these emotions are personal and unique. It is not easy for them to view these difficulties as part of a process of adaptation and professional development.

Zembylas (2005) indicated the importance of understanding the role of emotions in the formation of a teacher's professional world. Positive and negative emotions shape teachers' professional images, assisting in the development and construction of identity

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(Hargreaves, 1998; Hastings, 2008; Pritzker, 2012). Novice teachers often make an effort to hide their discomfort by repressing their fear and anxieties in response to the organization's demands and to integrate into the systemic norms of veteran teachers who do not experience the same emotional effects. This phenomenon is known as "emotional labor" (Bullough & Draper, 2004, p. 285; Hochschild, 1983).

Methods for managing these emotions and challenges vary from one teacher to another; they are usually personality-dependent and relate to situations that a teacher has experienced (Maslovaty, 2000). The novice teacher's professional coping style involves complex and conflicting processes. At the center of these processes is a search for a path and the posing of questions related to professional identity in conjunction with a desire to overcome challenges. These processes lead to personal growth because professional identity is a component of personal identity (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2003; Cuban, 2001; Volmann & Anderson, 1998).

1.1. Personal identity, professional identity, and their construction

Traditional approaches to identity consider a person's identity a monolithic unit that is fully formed by adolescence. Post-modern approaches to identity suggest a tapestry of personal, cultural, and professional identities that change and develop throughout one's lifetime (Baddeley & Singer, 2007).

Freud and Erikson approaches are considered traditional approaches (today termed modern, as opposed to post-modern). Both Freud and Erikson perceived personal identity as developing in universal stages from infancy to adolescence. Freud emphasized interpersonal conflicts through interactions with "significant figures" (parents), and Erikson described external conflicts with "others" in society. According to these approaches, development occurs through tension, conflict, confusion, search, inquiry, experimentation, and the contrast between fantasy and reality, which lead to choices and, ultimately, the consolidation of one's identity (Erikson, 1968; Laplanche & Pontalis, 2004, p. 22).

Post-modern approaches to identity emphasize the multiple identities of the subject that are context- and culture-dependent. These identities are dynamic and continuous and are constructed and reconstructed throughout life. A person's membership in different cultures leads to confrontation with various significant others and establishments, providing innumerable opportunities for a person's re-examination of identities. These encounters offer myriad options for interpreting reality. In the conflict between these options, self-awareness crystallizes. Thus, a multiplicity of non-monolithic identities is formed, and these identities exist in varying tapestries and contexts and have an array of characteristics (Gergen, 1991; Schachter, 2004).

Both approaches to personal identity, the traditional and the post-modern, allow for different interpretations of the definition of a teacher's professional identity and the manner by which this identity can be constructed. According to traditional approaches, professional identity is integrative, stable, and homogenous, develops in ongoing, consistent stages, and ultimately reaches an overall consolidation. Those approaches claim that the identity of a novice teacher comes into being through experimentation, tensions, and crises that are resolved over time, eventually achieving overall stability. Only then can a teacher be considered an expert. In contrast, according to post-modern approaches, professional identity is not stable; it is a hybrid, full of contradictions and fragmentation (Burns & Bell, 2011). It changes and develops over time through encounters with "significant others" (Reeves, 2009), in which a teacher examines his or her sense of belonging to and differing from "significant others" and the relation to the cultural and social systems that those others represent (Liu & Xu, 2011).

Timostsuk and Ugaste (2010) claimed that a teacher's professional identity begins to develop at the intern stage, when pre-service teachers often start to examine their beliefs, educational conceptions, professional goals, compatibility with the profession, and the best way to accomplish their goals (Korthagen, 2004). At a later stage, the development of the teacher's professional identity is reflected through analysis of professional activity, reports of emotions arising from practical experience, and the manner in which the personal biography is presented (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2003; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Tickle, 2000; Volmann & Anderson, 1998).

1.1.1. Tensions, conflicts, and gaps

In this paper, we examine the professional identity construction process that occurs as teachers cope with the tensions, conflicts, and gaps that arise when they begin work (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2010). These tensions, conflicts, and gaps are revealed through the various ideologies that the novice teacher has internalized during training and those that are accepted in society and in the professional literature (Liu & Xu, 2011). Tensions and contradictions between ideologies in teaching have intensified in recent years, particularly in multi-cultural schools (Johnson, 2006). Tensions also arise between the teacher's personal approach and the social structuring and legitimacy of the teacher's role (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Conflicts arise between the "Who am I now?" and the "Who do I want to be in the future?" orientations (Conway, 2001). Gaps arise between the existing reality of the school culture and the idealistic image of the professional reality formed during the training stage (Flores, 2004; Goldstein, 2005). Processing these tensions, coping with conflicts, and managing the gaps constitute central processes in constructing a professional identity. These issues are subjective and interpretative, accompanied by internal and external dialogues, and involve ongoing learning throughout the teacher's professional life. This learning is derived from various sources and types of knowledge: theoretical-scientific knowledge originating in educational theories, personal-cultural knowledge deriving from the teacher's life story, and practical knowledge constructed from professional stories (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004).

1.1.2. Professional stories

The telling of professional stories contributes to the teacher's learning process in several ways. First, it constructs practical knowledge by allowing the storyteller to understand, interpret, and generalize situations. In addition, storytelling prompts the questioning of conventions and an analysis of the concepts and social structures that formed them. It also helps the novice teacher to confront previously learned theories with new theories. Thus, a meaningful bond is formed between theory and practice (Dewhurst & Lamb, 2005; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Recounting professional stories also develops reflective and interpretative thinking regarding different events as well as "significant others" encountered in the novice teacher's educational life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, 2000; Dvir, 2005; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). An example of such reflection is the experience of a book club composed of foreign language teachers in which the group analyzed books through the lens of their personal experiences. The purpose of the club was to determine the extent of their pedagogic knowledge, explore the ways in which it was formed, and deepen their insight into the connection between theory and practice. This experience developed awareness of their work among the participants, exposing them to the wide range of possibilities and complexities in teaching (Kooy, 2006). Another example is a description of encounters between high-school teachers in the U.S., during which experienced and novice teachers in various fields met regularly in a group setting to recount their professional stories. The purpose was to share joint experiences, learn from one another, and prepare joint

activities that could lead to changes in the school culture (Shank, 2006). One study was conducted with mathematics teachers who, through their stories, revealed conflicts between their experience of childhood failure in mathematics and adult success as math teachers (Drake, 2006). These examples demonstrate the many possible uses of professional stories as tools for constructing knowledge, identity, skills, and teaching practices, among both the tellers and the listeners (Monk, Gidron, Keinan, Bar Zohar, & Shochat, 2002; Shank, 2006).

The Israeli model of teacher education is based on a four-year academic program. The first year of teaching is defined as an induction year, as accepted around the world (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010). All new teachers in Israel are paid but must participate in an intern workshop and must be accompanied by a personal mentor. The Israeli Ministry of Education invites first-year teachers to write personal stories about their experiences that are subsequently published in an annual anthology. The stories are submitted anonymously, which encourages authentic writing and provides an opportunity for meaningful learning, not only for the storytellers but also for other novice teachers who are coping with similar difficulties. This paper is based on three such stories describing the induction year and its challenges, with which many novice teachers around the world are likely to identify.

2. Methodology and methods

2.1. Methodology

2.1.1. Method of inquiry

In this study, we examine the psychological processes involved in constructing professional identities among novice teachers as expressed in stories they wrote about their induction year. The examination of these processes through narrative analysis with a literary dimension focuses on the teachers' struggles with the conflicts, tensions, and gaps that arose during this year.

Researchers generally use the terms "narrative" and "story" interchangeably (Riessman, 2008). A narrative is defined in the literature as a "complex genre which usually includes a main point and figures alongside a plot that connects events that unfolded consecutively in time and space in order to provide an inclusive explanation or result" (Smith & Sparkes, 2009).

The "Narrative Turn" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998) redefined the way in which reality is perceived, explained, and given meaning (Bruner, 1987). According to this definition, a story is a way of giving meaning to a certain reality beyond words (Riessman, 2008). In other words, stories reflect reality while they form and construct it. Bruner (1987) claimed that a dialogue is conducted between reality and the story and reciprocal relations are formed between them. The encounter with reality creates a story for the teller, and this story recreates the teller. The human experience is complex, and stories allow it to be organized according to schemes that suit the teller. In other words, the manner in which the teller attempts to organize reality according to his or her own experience is actually a subjective interpretation.

Another premise is that the story is a reflection of the teller's identity; thus, if we know the story, we can characterize the teller (Mishler, 2004). According to this approach, professional stories make it possible for us to understand how the teachers telling the stories know what they know and how the professional epistemological structure is developed. In addition, professional stories promote our understanding of how teachers create the connection between acquired theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge (Josselson, 2006), and how they cope with the different components of their roles as teachers. In this way, novice teachers' professional stories shed light on their professional identities.

The act of writing professional life stories is thus a means of expression that reflects the teacher's professional world and even constructs and designs it. Unlike oral stories (for instance, those produced through interviews), written stories allow writers to search for their subjectivity, and the process of writing the story may help to organize the events through a more conscious and rational choice. Writing stories allows writers to express their identities and voices while examining their affinities with the professional community in which they work and about which they write (Torrell, 2011). In addition, in contrast to a story that is told once orally by a storyteller, the writing process allows for re-examination, change, adjustment, and the addition and removal of content in an effort to attain precision until the final text is crystallized. Stories written about the induction year refer to a critical point in time in the tellers' narratives. Writing stories about their encounters with a complex reality enables them to confront the conflicts, tensions, and gaps developed during that encounter (Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2010).

2.1.2. A story competition

The Israeli Ministry of Education holds a story competition annually with the purpose of publishing an anthology of 20 stories written by novice teachers. It begins with a call to recent graduates of teacher education colleges and universities to submit stories about a meaningful event that occurred during their induction year.[1] The call includes instructions for the writers, such as sending the story anonymously and submitting informed consent to publish their stories anonymously. One of the aims of these instructions is to ensure proper ethical conduct (see Appendix A).

Five reviewers read the stories: three academic figures who teach literature in universities and teacher education colleges and two professional academic representatives of the Ministry of Education. The reviewers give each story a score between 1 and 3 (according to the criteria discussed below), and the 20 best stories are published. In addition, the authors of the top ten stories receive a financial award presented by the Ministry of Education at a national ceremony.

Two criteria guide the evaluation process: literary quality and representation of the professional world. The examination of literary quality includes both content and form. The evaluation process is based on diagnostic tools taken from the world of literature, such as the design and description of the plot, characterization of the personalities, and the use of literary and artistic methods (Riessman, 2008). Aspects relating to the professional world are examined through the use of professional expressions in the story and their representations. For example, the challenges and difficulties deriving from various experiences during the induction year, encounters with significant others (such as colleagues, pupils, and parents), introspection and observation of experiences, teaching spheres of knowledge, and coping with the organizational culture (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Zilberstrum, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008).

The rationale for this writing competition is to encourage novice teachers to express their experiences from their own perspectives and to reveal events that took place during their induction year. Exposure of the novices' professional and personal worlds has the potential to enrich the professional body of knowledge and may promote teachers' absorption into the educational system in areas such as professional interaction between teams of teachers, school climate, and professional norms and values (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Zilberstrum, 2005, 2006).

[1] The entire population of novice teachers (early childhood, primary school, and high school teachers from the national, national-religious, and Arab sectors) were approached to write stories.

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Data collection process

The assumption underlying the narrative analysis performed in this study is that personal stories reflect aspects of the narrator's identity (Mishler, 2004). In a previous study conducted with expert teachers, we found that the process of constructing professional identity included conflicts, tensions, and gaps (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Dvir, 2010). Based on these findings, we were interested in studying stories from novice teachers as well. We read 200 stories written in Hebrew by Israeli novice teachers over five years and discovered that the teachers were preoccupied with issues concerning their professional identity during their induction year. We randomly chose three stories for deeper narrative analysis in an attempt to better understand how novice teachers' professional identities are constructed during their first year of teaching. The three stories were "The Mission," "Study Tour," and "The Ferris Wheel."

2.2.2. Analysis of the stories

The qualitative data analysis was based on the interpretive hermeneutic approach (Josselson, 2006) and thematic holistic content analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). We assumed that the entire story has a greater meaning than its parts (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). We also assumed that the interpretation enables an interpersonal juxtaposition derived from our voices as researchers and the writers' voices. Each researcher read and interpreted each story, and the researchers then read the stories together and sought to determine whether there was a clear "central theme" or "leitmotiv," one similar experience that reverberated throughout. At that stage, we identified a common central theme: the construction of the writers' professional identity. Based on the narrative analysis perspective, we analyzed the central theme in each story through three different lenses: literary, psychological, and professional. The literary lens examined form and content, including expressions, the plot, and the characters. The psychological lens related to internal processes, such as emotions and reflection. The professional lens highlighted pedagogic-didactic perceptions. The narrative analysis of each story highlights the intersection of literary, psychological, and professional interdisciplinary perspectives (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006). The three perspectives serve to complement and bolster each other, creating a comprehensive picture of the novice teacher's experience.

The narrative analysis of the three stories reveals a unique conflict, tension, or gap in each novice teacher's professional identity development: a conflict between personal perceptions of the teaching role and social-public perceptions ("The Mission"); a tension between biographical experiences as a pupil and the perception of teaching as a teacher ("Study Tour"); and gaps between fantasy and professional reality ("The Ferris Wheel").

Although each individual is unique, in the narrative analysis, we attempted to understand not only the experiences that differentiate each story but also the common theme among the stories (Josselson, 2006).

3. Results

3.1. Conflict between personal and public-social perceptions of the teacher's role

"The Mission" is a story by Ayelet,[2] a novice teacher and a graduate of an art academy, who describes a social gathering at a friend's house. The story includes a dialogue between the novice teacher and her friends. This dialogue contains perceptional conflicts among the friends regarding the status of the teacher and the teacher's public image.

The writer describes a meeting with one of her friends, Mike, a law student, who is interested in her and her work. Mike epitomizes the widely held public idea of the teaching profession in Israel as "an extinct species," a profession that pays poorly and has no career prospects. He compares the teacher to a traditional woman who "is stuck with loads of children at a set age for the rest of her life." He turns to her defiantly and says:

> What kind of job is that for a young woman in the modern world – to be a schoolteacher … and how exactly do you expect to support your children? With love? What will you do when all your friends build real careers and fulfill themselves?

Mike represents a post-modern perception of the positioning of women in the working world. He challenges Ayelet's choice of teaching as a profession based on the variety of careers available to women today, which have become more open and competitive and which allow women to realize fuller potential through their careers. Women today can choose from a range of professions that were, until recently, dominated by men, and they are able to work in positions with higher salaries. According to Mike, professional status is expressed by high financial remuneration. The teaching profession is considered the antithesis of this view; it is seen as a traditional profession that is therapeutic and populated mainly by women. It is comparable, in this sense, to housework and the private arena, has no meaningful developmental horizon, and does not offer high financial rewards (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Halpert-Zamir, 2010).

As Mike claims, "Sweetheart, money is everything. Didn't they teach you about Maslow's pyramid of needs in your teachers' college? When a person has no money, all his aspirations are dwarfed. Looks like you missed that lesson."

From a psychological perspective, we can say that in her response to Mike, Ayelet gives the impression that as a teacher, she feels a certain amount of guilt because she takes to heart the fact that someone has responded so contemptuously to her choice of career. She is defensive and apologetic: "I just like children. I think that it is important for people who love children to work in schools, people who feel that it is important for children to develop and grow and be truly happy."

Her words reflect the perception of teaching as a mission (Korthagen, 2004). According to this view, the love of schoolchildren is a form of private mothering in a professional, public practice. Accordingly, teachers, like mothers, charge the meaning of their role with the importance of providing emotional, supportive, and loving care (Noddings, 1999). However, a different meaning can be given to the novice teacher's reaction: that of loving pupils as power. From this perspective, teaching represents a mode of empowerment for both the teacher and her pupils, leading to the perception of teaching as a social mission, facilitating the ability to generate social change (Friedman, 1999). This perception challenges Mike's attitude, the traditional patriarchal perception, which regards loving children as a reflection of the absence of power, low professional status, and limited financial reward. Ayelet, as a novice teacher, attempts to cope with the conflict between the public perception that Mike holds and her own personal perception:

> Teaching is really not a simple job; it is never easy to love unconditionally. The classroom is a cumbersome and complicated place. Each child has his own needs, and they are not always compatible with those of the class. It is exhausting and demands sensitivity,

[2] All of the writers' names are pseudonyms.

but teaching, like love, is a skill that has to be worked on, and if you believe in it, then you have the power to cope with it.

The writer raises the subject of the complexity of teaching and the need for professional sensitivity to the specific needs of each child: "Each child has his own needs." Additionally, "love" is not to be taken for granted. "To love unconditionally" is a skill that develops along with the teacher's professionalism: "But teaching, like love, is a skill that has to be worked on." In other words, the professional translation of the emotion of loving children is part of the process of professionalization, and it is the teacher's source of empowerment.

Oded, another participant in the conversation, perceives loving children and the ability to empower them as an opportunity to bring about social justice. Thus, he recognizes the importance of Ayelet's chosen profession as one through which she can bring about social change. In contrast to Mike, who sees the novice teacher as stereotypically submissive to conservative social structures, Oded offers professional recognition of the teacher as a social activist whose love for children is a source of professional power aimed at social justice: "Ayelet has enough love to share among the hungry tribes in Africa. I envy her pupils."

There is also a fourth participant at the get-together: Ayelet's life partner. Throughout the discourse, he expresses his support and recognition of the value of her choice of teaching without saying a word: he hugs her and expresses warmth and support. The meeting ends happily, as Ayelet recounts, when her partner hands her a small box, saying, "Ayelet, hold this for a minute…and he handed me a small box made of recycled paper and papier-mâché that one of my pupils had made in art class." In the box was an engagement ring. The marriage proposal expressed her partner's support of her choice of profession; he wanted to share the rest of his life with the novice teacher. The gift of an engagement ring symbolizes public, social norms. In his decision to give her the ring in a box made by one of her pupils, one can see an expression of the connection between the recognition of their relationship and his recognition of her profession. This expression has great impact, compensating for the social censure by Mike at the beginning of the story. Social recognition is a meaningful expression in the construction of professional identity. The narrator's expression of positive emotions not only allows her to survive and to integrate into the teaching profession but also empowers her (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

From a literary perspective, the writer's decision to give the story a successful conclusion is reminiscent of the happy endings in fairy tales and Hollywood movies. These types of stories have plots in which things go awry and the hero undergoes a crisis in which he or she must cope with various conflicts in relationships that are resolved at the end of the story, showing the change that has taken place in the hero's life. Thus, these stories end with the hero's success. In addition, the end of the story provides a sense of satisfaction, matching that of the narrative forms typology that Gergen and Gergen (1988) formulated when they categorized personal stories based on their level of progression, regression, or stability. These forms relate to the aims, values, and development of the plot until the end of the story. In a progressive approach, the story line becomes more positive, and the hero overcomes difficulties to achieve his or her aims or values.

The dialogues presented in Ayelet's story reflect the conflict between teachers' personal perceptions of teaching and the broader social image of teaching. The conflict that arises in the social discourse helps Ayelet clarify the meanings that she has bestowed on her profession. Thus, she reconstructs her professional identity. The process of constructing a professional identity involves examining conflicts that take place in encounters with "significant others" (Reeves, 2009). In the dialogue, confrontations with differing, even contradictory, perceptions are revealed. Eliminating the conflicts in a satisfactory manner allows Ayelet to positively integrate her personal and professional realities.

3.2. Tensions between biographical experiences as a pupil and the perception of the teacher's role

"Study Tour" is a story by Yossi, a novice teacher who abandons the field of computer science to become a teacher. He describes his impressions of a study tour of an educational institution. During the tour, while sitting under a tree in the schoolyard, he watches the children playing. He sees a young pupil who refuses to join in the activities, disrupts the others, and is eventually reprimanded by his teacher, Maya.

That scene reverberates in his mind, bringing back memories of his own childhood. He recalls the feelings of failure he experienced as a pupil, remembering his learning difficulties and his sense of alienation:

> Deep frustration over innumerable punishments for deficient learning abilities that no one understood. For who exactly would have bothered with identifying learning deficiencies in the god-forsaken town of my birth, and in the burning sun blazing on no-more-fortunate trees…

His words reveal his learning difficulties as a pupil along with the social and professional criticism of his teachers. His introspection allows him to recognize both the difficulties he endured as well as the role of the educational system, as he perceives it, in providing adequate support for each individual pupil. Later, he holds an internal dialogue that prompts insight into his childhood as a pupil:

> How much fury did I expend on the trees and stones of my provincial school, and with how many curses did I curse my teachers, who, like me, didn't know if I was dumb and violent or just a small, innocent coward.

From a psychological perspective, introspection, as described in this story, causes a confrontation between the child Yossi was and his developing professional identity as a teacher. The reciprocal relations between the past and the present reality – between his memories of being a pupil and his present role as a teacher – reveal the tension between his personal-childhood story and his professional-teacher story.

The professional story is structured by means of two significant others participating in the plot: Hinda, the mentor teacher leading the study tour, and Maya, the schoolteacher reprimanding the pupil, who arouses childhood memories in the writer. It is clear that Yossi relates to Hinda as a born teacher: "It is always evident in her, as though being a teacher is a genetic characteristic and the required characteristics are female, dyed curls, short-sightedness."

This description reveals Yossi's image of Hinda as a teacher-figure and her professional role: to see the inner child. At the same time, he is critical and notes that Hinda is "short-sighted." In this way, he casts doubt on the extent to which she can really see him, not only as a professional teacher but also as a human being and a child:

> Sometimes I feel how she reads me in her 'teacher-ese' thoughts… does she know how much her presence makes me feel like a pupil in Grade 6? Was she ever young, mischievous, did she also, like me, climb the trees in the schoolyard?

The storyteller raises doubts and questions himself regarding his professional role as he examines his image of Hinda and his

perception of teaching. This approach contrasts with the image of the "short-sighted" teacher who has "colorless eyes." According to Yossi, teachers must get to know the pupil's world and its difficulties and must help pupils cope with these difficulties and empower them. Yossi's internal dialogue reveals the tension between the personal side, the child within, and the professional perception. The personal side reflects his life story, and the professional perception expresses his ideas and aspirations concerning his future role as a teacher. Part of the complexity of the induction year in teaching and the gaps that are revealed during that year comes from being on the fault line between student, still like a child in many ways, and almost-teacher, a figure of authority and responsibility.

Another figure appearing in the story is Maya, the schoolteacher who confronts the pupil who is causing a disturbance. Observing how she conducts the confrontation with the pupil leads Yossi to examine his own professional identity:

> Rafi is violent and hits, but one shake of the no-less-violent teacher's finger… Rafi is a six-year-old who drives a fifty-year-old teacher crazy. A six-year-old who has already learnt a lot about imperviousness and violence, and like a true educator, he tries to convey this knowledge to the other kids in his class.

As in the earlier scene, the storyteller's observation of the schoolteacher comes to light: a teacher who has difficulty understanding the world of a frustrated child. The interaction between Maya and the child is described as mutual frustration. Yossi's criticism is accompanied by an examination of his own sense of belonging or alienation in relation to the professional community represented by the schoolteacher. His identification with the mischievous child who is struggling and does not receive appropriate educational responses arouses emotions, reminding him of his own childhood as a pupil. In addition, his criticism and feelings of alienation toward the schoolteacher are rooted in his childhood and his criticism of his own teacher from the past. Yossi's experiences with teachers represent a facet of education of which he does not feel a part and with which he does not identify. It is not surprising that he is empathetic toward the child who is confronting the teacher: "It is possible that this was an attempt to return to the angry, bespectacled, and grumbling boy that I used to be; to get to know him again, this time as a teacher."

The internal dialogue that Yossi holds with significant teacher-like figures helps him to re-examine his perceptions of the teacher's role, a process that involves examining the tension between the ideal and the reality with regard to teaching:

> In the flickering shadow of the unattractive tree, I suddenly notice that her (the teacher's) eyes are turned to me, and it takes me another moment to comprehend, from the simple words that she has just said, a more meaningful sentence, 'So, Yossi…what's your opinion about education as a social mission?'

Despite his doubts as to whether Hinda, his mentor teacher, knows him and whether she sees the childlike part of him as well as his past failures, he hears her ask a basic question about his professional perceptions, which helps him release the tension and free himself of the fetters of his past personal experiences. That question, posed by the significant figure, produces self-recognition of his identity as a professional and recharges him with strength, allowing him to experience internal as well as professional rehabilitation. His choice to teach is part of a process of "making the world a better place"—first, as an attempt to rectify the personal experiences from childhood that were accompanied by a sense of failure and second, enabling the possibility of fixing the worlds of other children. It appears that Yossi draws his strength from being closely connected to the "child within." He remembers his childhood and the relationships he had with his teachers. The fact that he chooses teaching as a profession is a sort of internal journey, one that is demanded by his deep connection to his childlike side and his ability to see the world of teaching from both sides. This ability to see the complexity of the profession is a supporting factor, a driving force that allows him to successfully build his identity despite the challenges of the induction year.

The mere act of writing the story encourages the teller to recall chapters of his life story, allowing him to give meaning to his professional identity (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Observing events and figures allows the storyteller to confront not only his own weaknesses and failures but also his strengths and the challenges he is required to face as a teacher.

From a literary perspective, this story develops as a story within a story, uncovering various tensions that the teller experienced during his induction year: tension between his sense of failure as a pupil and his desire to make the world a better place and to succeed as a teacher; tension between the perception of the teacher as the center of the teaching process and that of the child as the focal point; tension between the ideal and the actual perception of the job. These tensions are expressed in Yossi's internal and external dialogues. The internal dialogue takes place across different time spans: between past and present; between the child with his weaknesses and the novice teacher aiming for professional growth; between significant figures (himself, the novice teacher, and the teacher of his childhood); between himself and Hinda, his mentor; between himself and Maya, the school teacher he observed during the study tour; between himself, the child within, and the child in the school.

The back-and-forth movement between past, present, and professional future in the story corresponds to the narrative approach that defines identity as diachronic, dynamic, developing over time, and reflexive and describes the individual as an active agent in his identity construction. The plot begins regressively, with a childhood story of failure, and continues progressively, as the narrator gradually constructs his professional identity as a teacher who is sensitive to pupils' difficulties (Gergen & Gergen, 1988).

The external dialogue described in the story is brief but powerful. The mentor teacher either states or asks him whether, in his opinion, teaching is a mission. This question arouses an internal question regarding his professional identity as "one who makes the world a better place." The teacher's words challenge him to hold a meaningful internal dialogue that ultimately contributes to the construction of his professional identity.

3.3. Gap between fantasy and professional reality

The story "The Ferris Wheel" is about the difficulties faced by Sara, a novice first-grade teacher of special needs children. These difficulties included children hitting one another, going wild during class, and throwing chalk at one other. Seized by anxiety and fear, she searches for ways to manage her pupils' behavior.

From a literary perspective, the story begins and ends with the act of gazing into a mirror. The plot takes place in a world of dreams, fairy tales, and characters taken from the world of childhood.

> On the first morning I looked at myself in the mirror, I felt as though I was the ugly duckling. The impression I make today on the pupils will determine whether I am transformed into a beautiful swan.

At the end of her first day as a teacher:

> In the evening, I looked in the mirror again. I had hoped that the duckling would turn into a swan, but the same reflection that I

see every day looked back at me. A confident hand grasped my shoulder. Janusz [Janusz Korczak] winked at me, and I went to prepare my lessons for the next day.

Gazing into the mirror produces images from the fairy tale "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and Hans Christian Andersen's story "The Ugly Duckling" in the narrator's mind. Like the ugly stepmother who looks in the mirror and asks it to reflect a different reality, the novice teacher asks to be transformed from an ugly duckling into a swan.

The woman looking in the mirror wishes to see the transformed reflection of her desired identity according to her subjective interpretation. Nonetheless, gazing into a mirror allows for a reflective process that shows the gap between her image of the ideal "I" and the real "I." Psychologically, seeing herself as the ugly duckling reflects Sara's fear and the lack of confidence that accompanies her at the outset of her teaching career (Zembylas, 2005). Like the duckling in the story, she may feel that she does not belong and is rejected by her professional environment; at the same time, she is filled with hope that she can improve her image and be transformed into a swan. The images of the mirror and the ugly duckling allow her to escape to the world of fantasy to bridge this gap. In this way, she naively interprets the difficulties she faces and eases her encounters with a strange and hurtful new reality. In addition, the images express her longing for the world of her childhood, a world where everything is good, safe, free of demands, and forgiving—a world explained by Freud as a fantasy that is an escape from reality (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2004). She hopes for a future like the classical fairy tales, with a happy ending. The swan image appears in two separate dreams, describing a reality from the world of her childhood. The writer imagines that she is moving and spinning around

> On a swan-shaped seat on a Ferris wheel built by an amateur. If I make even the slightest wrong move, I will fall… On the loudspeaker, I hear the fairground staff announcing that there is a problem with the Ferris wheel, and everyone is asked not to move. The little girl is shaking all over. She begins to cry. I hear screams of panic and discover crowds of frightened children all around me.

Turning into a swan is her heart's desire at the beginning of the story, but as the story unfolds, it becomes clear that Sara's adherence to the swan image is an expression of her fear, lack of confidence, and panic. She fears there is a problem with the Ferris wheel and that she will fall, and her fears grow as the wheel continues to move. She hears the screams of frightened children and finds herself telling them the story of "The Ugly Duckling." The story calms them a little:

> Everyone is concentrating on the story. The children never heard "The Ugly Duckling" and they are tense. The little girl in sparkling shoes asks me, 'Did it really happen?' And I smile at her, 'Maybe, do you think so?' She smiles and says, 'You are pretty.'

As at the beginning of the story, images from "The Ugly Duckling" and the mirror are used to reflect her emotional state and the novice teacher's wishes. The little girl's words, "Did it really happen?," reflect the fine line between imagination and reality where the writer is situated. The little girl fills the role of the mirror and reflects the teacher's wishes: "You are pretty." The little girl's words, which are actually unconnected to the story of "The Ugly Duckling" but are related to the mirror in the story of "Snow White," reflect Sara's heartfelt wishes to be beautiful, loved, and recognized by her pupils.

As a novice teacher, she makes an effort to hide her pain by repressing her fear and anxiety to survive. The conflict intensifies the "emotional labor" with which she is occupied when examining her professional status, her relationship with her pupils, and her search for recognition, admiration, and love (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Hochschild, 1983).

The image of the Ferris wheel also reflects the sense of hurtling movement and contradicting emotions that flood the novice teacher, evidence of her emotional state of mind (Hastings, 2008). On one hand, the Ferris wheel rocks and frightens, whereas on the other, it attracts and arouses the urge for adventure, simultaneously causing excitement and fear. The contradicting images in Sara's dream reflect the gap that characterizes her feelings as she begins teaching, which she sees as simultaneously exciting and frightening. She is imbued with joy and the motivation to succeed, to "touch the sky," and yet, at the same time, she is afraid of falling and of failure: "If I make even the slightest wrong move, I will fall." She describes her second dream:

> At night, I dreamed that I was on the Ferris wheel again. For me, the best part is going up. When I am at the highest point, I can almost touch the sky. After that comes the descent, and that is less fun, even unpleasant and annoying. However, I know that it provides momentum for the next climb. It is so much fun! I prefer to come to terms with those descents as long as the wheel never stops turning.

The "ascents" and "descents," creating a sort of chaos, symbolize her internal struggle to form her identity and constitute an inseparable part of the process that she is undergoing as a novice teacher. The sense of chaos and internal struggle leads the novice teacher to clarify her place in teaching and to examine the gap between the ideal "I" and the present "I." She appears to be testing her power, her functioning as a professional, and her choice of profession. The attempt to bring order and clarity to her world by means of reflective examination is an important component in constructing her professional identity. Gergen (1991) argued that the narrative approach demonstrates the possibility of conflicts and internal contradictions existing side by side in a story.

In the process of constructing her professional identity, the narrator makes interesting use of imagined encounters with significant others from educational philosophy, such as Karl Rogers, Maria Montessori, and Janusz Korczak:

> Sometimes, at the end of the day, I look at the sky and search for Korczak… Usually he is proud of me, but I will never forget the day when he was disappointed in me and said that he had expected more, especially from me … At that moment, all the voices of reason that filled my head didn't help. Montessori tried to calm me, 'She is upset and is taking out her frustration on you.' Rogers said: 'Don't take it personally, you are serving as her punching-bag right now.' Those voices are champions at saying the right things, just like the theoretical courses…

The imaginary dialogues that play in Sara's head shock her and create various gaps: between imagination and reality, between ideal and actual, between emotional and rational. The three educational philosophers are authorities in her eyes, and she hopes she will not disappoint them. Her discourse with them is her "internal dialogue" and reflects her aspiration not to be disappointed in herself. She hopes that her discourse with the philosophers will help her to understand the complex process in which she finds herself as a novice teacher and to gain recognition for her educational work. It seems that she needs this external reinforcement in

the absence of a clear, internalized professional identity that can validate her practical work. She confronts their theories with reality and tests their "durability" and her own strength in the face of her classroom struggles. In addition, she is re-learning the methods in which she was trained as she forms her own practical theory that is appropriate for the reality in which she works. This process contributes to the creation of her professional identity.

Two meaningful processes in the story reveal gaps that construct the storyteller's professional identity: first, the gap between the chaotic and violent reality in the classroom and the fantasy of fairy tales; second, the gap between practical reality and an imaginary meeting in which dialogues are held with significant educational philosophers. Here, too, the gaps expressed in the story by the movement from regression to progression, from the ugly duckling to the swan, expose a process of identity construction (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). This process is characterized by the internal and external dialogues that are subjective, reflective, and interpretive in nature (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

4. Discussion

In this paper, we have examined three stories written by novice teachers about their induction year and explored the processes of their identity construction. The examination of stories narrated and written from the teachers' points of view is one mode through which we can better understand the professional world of teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, 2000). Narrative analyses of teachers' stories reveal the meaning given to the realities in which teachers work, reflect different methods of constructing perceptions of the teaching role, and expose the processes of becoming a teacher (Korthagen, 2004). Indeed, the writing and telling of the story reveals different ways in which the professional identities of novice teachers may be constructed. Conflicts, tensions, and gaps are the recurring themes of professional identity construction: conflict between personal perceptions of the teaching role and social-public perceptions; tension between biographical experiences as a pupil and the perception of teaching as a teacher and between existing perceptions and the ideal; and gaps between fantasy and professional reality. These forms of professional identity construction prompt the novice teacher storytellers to reflectively ask and clarify questions derived from professional knowledge: "Who am I?"; "What sort of teacher do I want to be?"; "How do I see my role as a teacher?" (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). These processes may make it difficult for teachers to understand their working reality, but they also encourage reflective-critical thinking about teaching. Novice teachers raise questions and doubts, and they wonder about and critically observe the events taking place in their educational reality, which Vonk (1995) has divided into three categories: personal-emotional; pedagogic-didactic; and ecologic-systemic-organizational. These processes encourage novice teachers to examine their own perceptions of their roles and are an indispensable part of constructing identity in general and professional identity in particular (Beijaard, Paulien, & Verloop, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2010; Erikson, 1968).

The psychological aspects discussed above can be identified in the literary structure of all three stories: the plot moves between regression and progression, is diachronic, and reflects processes of professional identity construction (Gergen & Gergen, 1988).

4.1. Dialogic encounters with "significant others"

The three novice teachers' stories authentically describe encounters with "significant others," figures such as friends, teachers from the past, teachers in the present, pupils, educational philosophers, and fairy tale heroes. The act of story writing reflectively and interpretively reveals various events, figures and "significant others" that the storytellers encounter during their lives and their educational experience. The re-encounter with these "significant others" helps them clarify their professional perceptions and roles. This process of interaction is part of identity construction (Erikson, 1968).

The encounters with "significant others" take place through dialogue. The dialogues in the stories are both external (i.e., with "others") and internal (i.e., reflective, with themselves). The dialogues invite re-examination of their professional-educational perceptions by confronting other perceptions. The examination process involves internal and external struggles for self-recognition of these novice teachers' professional roles (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). They question social conventions while asking for social-professional recognition; they test their perceptions of professional reality and search for their own ways to "make the world a better place" and empower their pupils; and they search for ways to combine the theories they have learned with their practice (Dewhurst & Lamb, 2005; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). The encounter with "significant others" and the resulting dialogue prompts them to recognize their own professional choices and their similarity to and difference from these figures (Reeves, 2009).

4.2. Contribution of novice teachers' stories

The analysis of the stories and the insights that arise from them support the claim that writing and publishing stories constitutes a meaningful contribution to the teacher education process. These stories may also contribute to the training of workshop facilitators and mentors of novice teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). Reading the stories of students and novice teachers can improve our understanding of the processes these teachers will undergo when they begin teaching and constructing their own professional identities.

Exposure to these stories and analysis of professional identity construction arising from them might allow novice teachers to glean personal meaning from their professional world, to realistically observe educational and external realities, and to comprehend their own internal realities. Thus, they are able to examine the professional identity that is developing even before entering the realm of teaching. It is possible that the novice teachers' experiences described in the stories will both enlighten other teachers regarding the challenges they can expect and guide them to choose the methods most suitable for dealing with situations such as those described in the stories. In addition, the stories are likely to teach interns that the challenges revealed in the novice teachers' work are an important component of the process of professional identity construction and development.

The use of novice teachers' stories has ramifications for instructing workshop moderators who counsel novice teachers and who act as the interns' personal mentors (Yusko & Feiman-Nemser, 2008). These stories seem to reveal different patterns in which novice teachers' professional identities are constructed and the challenges with which they cope. Understanding the novice teacher's world may contribute to moderators' better absorption into the school system and the professional discourse community. In addition, this understanding may mitigate the international phenomenon of novice teachers' dropout rates, which remain at approximately 40% of all novice teachers during the first five years (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; DeWert, Babinski, & Jones, 2003; Ingersoll, 2002).

Novice teachers' stories contribute to the understanding of their world and their emotions (Zembylas, 2005). Reading them may increase empathy toward novice teachers in the school absorption

process (Flores, 2004). In addition, novice teachers can learn about other teachers' experiences in relation to the issues that they are confronting (Lasky, 2005).

Although the data presented in this paper are based on only three stories by Israeli novice teachers regarding their professional experiences, they seem to reflect the complexity of novice teachers' identity construction (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). The data may serve as a basis for international comparative research that can reveal more about the generic components of teacher identity and what it means to be a novice teacher.

Reading teachers' stories is one way to increase awareness among the professional community regarding the personal and professional processes that teachers experience. These stories may also promote the professional body of knowledge in this community. Publishing the stories facilitates the translation of personal experiences into the realm of public knowledge, allowing these experiences to be studied and re-conceptualized for the benefit of all those in teaching and teacher education (Freese, 2006).

Appendix A

A call for submissions – Stories of the induction year

Background:

The first year, known as the induction year, is a distinct stage in the teacher's professional development. During this year, interns are exposed to complex pedagogical processes and must make meaningful educational decisions. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the value of professional life stories for our understanding of the professional identity of the storyteller and for the creation of new insights regarding the perception of professional identity.

Competition:

The Induction Department of the Ministry of Education announces the Interns' Stories Competition for this year. The stories should reflect on experiences and events from the intern's first year in the workplace. This competition constitutes an opportunity for novice teachers to reflect on their professional experience in teaching. Furthermore, perceptions about the developing professional identities of the novice teachers will be revealed through their stories. Selected stories will be published in an annual anthology of "Interns' Stories" by the Department of Induction into Teaching in the Ministry of Education.

Target population:

The target population includes all graduates from the last academic year who took part in college and university intern workshops.

Judging methods:

A team of five judges, three with literary backgrounds and two from the field of teaching and education, will participate in the judging process. The team will read and assess the stories, which will be submitted anonymously.

Winning the competition:

The team of judges will announce the names of the winners by November 29, 2012.

Awards:

The ten winning entries will receive a prize of NIS 3000 each.

Those awarded certificates of excellence will also be awarded a prize of NIS 500 each.

Entrance conditions and story attributes:

1. The story contents will relate to the writer's professional experiences from the first year in the workplace.
2. The stories will have literary merit (style, linguistic value, use of metaphor, and so on).
3. The stories will not exceed 1200 words.
4. The stories will not reveal identifying details in relation to the place of work or senior position holders. The writers will use pseudonyms.

Submission of stories:

The stories should be sent by email to batyama@education.gov.il no later than Thursday, June 28, 2012. Six hard copies should be sent by regular mail.

The text should be written in Word, Narkis font, size 12, double spaced, with 1.5 cm margins.

The copies will not bear the writers' names. The writer's name will be provided in a separate letter enclosed in a separate envelope, including the name of the college as well as the ID#, address, and telephone numbers of the applicant.

Remarks: All stories will be at the disposal of the Department of Induction into Teaching. Should a writer wish to maintain anonymity at the publication stage as well, that wish will be respected.

Address for submitting stories:

The Department of Induction to Teaching
Ministry of Education and Culture
Lev Ram Bldg.
2, Devorah HaNeviah Street,
91911 Jerusalem
Please indicate: **For Intern Stories Competition**

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