The Impact of Identity on Professional Integration Success

Ping Deters, PhD
Seneca College & OISE/UT
ping@deters.ca

2011 National Metropolis Conference
Vancouver, March 23-26, 2011

Overview of Presentation

- Introduction
- Research study: rationale, questions & methodology
- Definition & conception of identity
- Findings
- Conclusion & implications

Rationale for focus on IETs

- My professional background
- Underemployment & unemployment of IETs
- Need for greater diversity in teaching
- Global migration of IETs
- Teaching: a linguistically and culturally dependent profession

Research questions

- affordances and constraints to the successful professional acculturation of IETs
- relationship between identity and IETs' acquisition of professional language and culture

Research design: Phase 1

Phase 1: **In-depth, semi-structured interviews**	**Primary / junior divisions** **K to grade 6**	**Intermediate / senior divisions** **grades 7 - 12**	**College of Applied Arts & Technology**
IETs seeking entry	4 participants	4 participants	Part-time: 6 participants
IETs in the system	New: 4 participants	New: 4 participants	Full-time: 5 participants
	Established: 3 participants	Established: 3 participants	

Research design: Phase 2

Phase 2: Case studies	**Primary/junior division** **K to grade 6**	**Intermediate /senior division** **grades 7 - 12**	**Community college division**
IETs seeking entry	1 teacher from Jamaica	1 teacher from Kenya: Chemistry	1 PT faculty from Pakistan: Health Sciences 1 PT faculty from the Philippines: Spanish
IETs in the system	1 LTO teacher from Belarus: French immersion	1 LTO teacher from Hong Kong: Family Studies	1 FT faculty from Poland: Chemical Engineering 1 FT faculty from Bulgaria: Astronomy

Research design: Phase 3

Phase 3: Additional semi-structured interviews	**K-12**	**College**
Administrators	5 participants	3 participants
Professional development facilitators	4 participants	3 participants

Data collection & analysis

- all interviews audio-taped recorded, transcribed verbatim & sent to participants for verification
- case studies: classroom observations, follow-up interviews, written reflections, surveys of students, other documents
- textual data open coded

Conception of identity

- Côté and Levine (2002): Three dialectically related aspects
  - Social identity = the roles that a person is born into or appropriates through various group memberships, such as professional identity
  - Personal identity = the disposition or temperament of a person, such as openness, optimism, and perseverance
  - Self identity = a sense of self integrity and self coherence, that is, a sense of wholeness and consistency over time and space

Conception of identity

- socially constructed & internalized
- a psychological function that mediates agency
- Erikson (1968): importance of occupation & affirmation of identity for psychological well-being

Findings:
Professional identity & acculturation

- professional identity - interrelated with beliefs, attitudes and values concerning what constitutes effective behaviour in a professional context

- professional beliefs – in alignment or in conflict

Findings:
Professional identity & acculturation

You have a special ed teacher, it’s wonderful. I like it very much. Back home we don’t have it. (...) So with individual attention, all this, it really works. I think Canada is one of the countries that is really focused, is really practical (...) Everything makes sense to me and what I was thinking a teacher should teach like and here I do find it.

(Raj – Mauritius)

Findings:
Professional identity & acculturation

They {Canadian students} were not raised with the idea that the school authority or the teacher authority is something that you have to respect.
(Kameela – Egypt)

Findings:
Professional identity & acculturation

At first I **hated** it. I **cried**, I cried. (…) I had never taught such students before. (…) And my first class was actually very, very rough, (…) Because I approached them like the students I had taught in Russia, and it was a totally different case, excuse **me**. I was accustomed to a teacher-centred setting. All of a sudden it was student centred, and they were telling me to do something and who are they to tell me? So I had this kind of attitude, and certainly it backfired, normally, of course.
(Nemo – Russia)

Findings:
Personal identity & acculturation

- Openness
- Optimism
- Perseverance
- Willingness to “go the extra mile”

Findings:
Personal identity & acculturation

If something really is not your style but if it’s something you have to do then you have to do it and don’t say, “Oh no, no, it’s not my culture. It’s not my values.” Do in Rome as Romans do. (Lin – China)

Findings:
Personal identity & acculturation

Sometimes I don’t know the word and so I ask them {the students} for the word, I’m like “How do you say these things?” and they explain to me, so I give them the power to teach me (...) So **that** worked out, instead of trying to pretend I know everything and being like defensive and “Don’t question my English.”

(Isabel – Colombia)

Findings:
Personal identity & acculturation

In our society, you have to be so cautious at times of how you're presenting some of the information. You want to give the parent and the community the detailed information that they need to have, but it's also important as educators that we do so in a way that is … accepted and well received by the community and the parent.
(Tom, school administrator - Canada)

Findings:
Personal identity & acculturation

With my temperament, and my upbringing, you were always supposed to be honest. Well, it's not that I'm not honest now, but I learned to 'package' the information appropriately. (...) It took me so long to clue into that because it was against my principles. I had a hard time with that, not being direct, not being totally honest, and so on. So that took me a long time. (Evelyn – Austria)

Findings:
Affirmation of self identity

At the very beginning when my English was not very good, and it was for me, my very first experience, in Canada, she just trusted me. And so that made it, that made it. (...) it was extremely challenging, but again she trusted me, and somehow, I knew that I could not disappoint this lady, who had put so much trust in me, who believed in me, and so I had to make it work. And it did work.
(Merida – Venezuela)

Findings:
Affirmation of self identity

That was the biggest point and I thought okay, because the (university), which is a huge institution, said “Okay, we agree with you, you have your Masters degree,” I thought okay, I will get somewhere with that. I will use it. Sooner or later I will use it.
(Peter - Poland)

Conclusion & Implications

- How professional & personal identity can facilitate or constrain acculturation
- Importance of affirmation of self identity for psychological well-being, which can also facilitate or constrain acculturation

- Importance of bridging programs
- Powerful impact of mentorship