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A focus on theory, measurement, and longitudinal associations

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TEACHER IDENTITY AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY TENSIONS
AMONG PRIMARY STUDENT TEACHERS:
A FOCUS ON THEORY, MEASUREMENT, AND LONGITUDINAL
ASSOCIATIONS

SUMMARY

EACH TEACHER training program aims at providing primary student teachers with abilities that will make them high-quality teachers determined to teach for a longer period of time. Helping student teachers to build 'strong' professional identities is fundamental to accomplish these goals. Successfully handling professional identity tensions student teachers experience has been linked to forming professional identity. Most work underlying the connection between professional identity tensions and teacher identity is theoretical rather than empirical. Consequently, much is to be understood about how the two constructs actually are related over time. What is more, suitable and/or valid instruments for investigating the link between teacher identity and professional identity tensions are missing. The overarching goal of this dissertation, therefore, was first to develop reliable and valid measurement scales for teacher identity and professional identity tensions; and then advance our understanding of the development of the relationship between teacher identity and professional identity tensions across time in the context of primary teacher education. In pursuing this goal, four studies were conducted that together form the present dissertation.

The first study (Chapter II) aimed at providing an overview of components of teacher identity that are found in quantitative measurement instruments; and reported on the psychometric quality of these measurement instruments. This search included studies that assessed components of teacher identity published in English-written, peer-reviewed journals between 2000 and 2018. A total of 59 components in 20 studies were analyzed. After the components were categorized on the basis of a substantive analysis, six main domains of teacher identity became apparent: Self-image, Motivation, Commitment, Self-efficacy, Task

perception, and Job satisfaction. Whereas the overall psychometric properties of the measurement instruments used in the different studies were acceptable to good, the systematic overview revealed several conceptual and methodological issues that need to be resolved.

The second study (Chapter III) developed and validated the Teacher Identity Measurement Scale (TIMS) for assessing primary student teachers' professional identity. Based on ideas derived from the identity theory framework of Burke and Stets (2009) and the outcome of the review study (Chapter II), teacher identity, in the context of primary student teachers was decomposed in four first-order constructs: motivation, self-image, self-efficacy, and task perception. The factorial structure was examined by administering the TIMS to first- and second-year primary student teachers. In phase 1, involving 17 students, qualitative scale development methods were used to assess the construct validity. In phase 2, its second-order factor structure was tested and confirmed among a sample of 211 students. In phase 3, this structure was cross-validated among a new sample of 419 primary student teachers. Overall, the results provided support for the capability of the TIMS to obtain reliable and valid information about the teacher identity of primary student teachers. Specifically, the qualitative results suggested that the content of TIMS is understandable, meaningful, and doable for primary student teachers, and quantitative results indicate that the four domains – motivation, self-image, self-efficacy, and task perception – are separate yet related factors of teacher identity.

The third study (Chapter IV) developed and validated the Professional Identity Tensions Scale (PITS) for assessing primary student teachers' professional identity tensions. Based on ideas derived from dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), existing vignettes (Pillen et al., 2013) were transformed into a multidimensional scale and two tensions were added. Multiple steps were conducted in the process of validating the PITS. First, results from expert validation, cognitive interviews, and a small pilot showed the importance and usefulness of the PITS for primary student teachers. Then, using a sample of 211 student teachers, factor analysis indicated that the developed items measure the underlying constructs of professional identity tensions. Applying confirmatory factor analysis, a similar factor structure was demonstrated with a new sample of 271 student teachers. The final instrument includes the tensions: 'Wanting to care for students versus being expected to be tough', 'Feeling treated like a student versus wanting to take responsibility as a teacher', 'Feeling like a peer versus wanting to take responsibility as a teacher', 'Experiencing difficulties in maintaining an emotional distance', 'Experiencing conflicts between one's own and others'

orientations', 'Feeling dependent on a mentor versus wanting to go one's own way in teaching', 'Wanting to invest in a private life versus feeling pressured to spend time and energy on work', 'Teaching in urban classrooms', and 'Leaving training versus becoming a teacher'.

The fourth study (Chapter V) examined the development of the relationship between teacher identity and various professional identity tensions among a sample of 201 primary student teachers. Students completed three times the PITS and the TIMS. Random intercept cross-lagged panel models showed that at the inter-individual level the professional identity tensions were negatively associated with teacher identity. Particularly, it was observed, in descending order, that student teachers who experienced tensions regarding 'Leaving training versus becoming a teacher', 'Wanting to care for students versus being expected to be tough', 'Feeling treated like a peer versus wanting to take responsibility as a teacher', 'Experiencing conflicts between one's own and others' orientations', and 'Wanting to invest in a private life versus feeling pressured to spend time and energy on work' were likely to perceive their teacher identity as less strong than those who experienced those tensions to a lesser extent. At the intra-individual level, no statistically significant cross-lagged relationships were detected, indicating that an increase in experiencing a professional identity tension is not associated with change of student teacher's professional identity across time.

A General Discussion of the four studies is provided Chapter VI of this dissertation. This General Discussion tackles the issues raised in Chapter I. First, the findings related to the development and validation of the TIMS and the PITS were summarized and discussed. This was done separately for each instrument. Then, the results about the relationship between professional identity tensions and teacher identity were addressed. The General Discussion was closed with suggestions for future research and recommendations for the field of teacher education.

This dissertation resulted in reliable and valid instruments for both teacher identity and professional identity tensions. Furthermore, the results showed that although some, but not all, professional identity tensions are negatively related to the stable differences in teacher identity between student teachers, no evidence was found that professional identity tensions are related to changes in teacher identity within primary student teachers. This means that, if there is any relation between professional identity tensions and teacher identity, identifying such an association over time is complex and probably dependent on other factors (e.g., context, personal traits, and time). Although these findings are preliminary, they seem to be in contrast with earlier theoretical perspectives about the existence of the relation and its

direction. On a practical note, the findings underscore the need to focus on teacher identity and professional identity tensions separately during teacher training.

In conclusion, having high-quality teachers is of great importance for one's personal, academic, and professional growth. In this spirit, the hope is that this dissertation contributes to the training of such teachers through explicitly paying attention to teacher identity as well as professional identity tensions during training. This dissertation may also encourage other researchers to continue with research into teacher identity, professional identity tensions, and other relevant variables, ultimately with the aim of generating a firmer knowledge base that further contributes to the development of high-quality teachers.

LEERKRACHTIDENTITEIT EN PROFESSIONELE
IDENTITEITSSPANNINGEN ONDER PABOSTUDENTEN:
EEN FOCUS OP THEORIE, MEETINSTRUMENTEN EN
LONGITUDINALE VERBANDEN

SAMENVATTING (SUMMARY IN DUTCH)

ELKE PABO-OPLEIDING tracht haar studenten toe te rusten met de vaardigheden die hen in staat stellen voor een langere tijd effectief en kwalitatief goed les te geven. Om deze doelen te bewerkstelligen is het belangrijk studenten te helpen bouwen aan een sterke professionele identiteit en hen te leren omgaan met diverse spanningen die hun professionele identiteit kunnen beïnvloeden. Hoewel leerkrachtidentiteit en professionele identiteitsspanningen frequent met elkaar in verband zijn gebracht, is het meeste werk naar dit verband meer theoretisch dan empirisch van aard. Hierdoor is nog veel onbekend over hoe de twee constructen aan elkaar gerelateerd zijn over tijd. Bovendien zijn geschikte en/of valide meetinstrumenten voor het onderzoeken van de relatie tussen leerkrachtidentiteit en professionele identiteitsspanningen nauwelijks voorhanden. Daarom was het overkoepelende doel van deze dissertatie tweeledig. Het eerste doel betrof het ontwikkelen van betrouwbare en valide schalen voor het meten van leerkrachtidentiteit en professionele identiteitsspanningen. Het tweede doel betrof het vergroten van het begrip over de ontwikkeling van de relatie tussen leerkrachtidentiteit en professionele identiteitsspanningen over tijd binnen de context van de lerarenopleiding. Om dit doel te bereiken werden vier studies uitgevoerd die tezamen de huidige dissertatie vormen.

In de eerste studie (Hoofdstuk II) werd getracht een overzicht te geven van de componenten van leerkrachtidentiteit in kwantitatieve meetinstrumenten alsmede de psychometrische kwaliteit van deze meetinstrumenten. Deze zoektocht omvatte Engels geschreven en door vakgenoten beoordeelde studies die tussen 2000 en 2018 zijn verschenen en waarin componenten van leerkrachtidentiteit zijn onderzocht. In totaal zijn 59

componenten uit 20 studies geanalyseerd. Nadat de componenten werden gecategoriseerd op basis van een omvangrijke analyse, kwamen zes hoofddomeinen naar voren: Zelfimago, Motivatie, Betrokkenheid, *Self-Efficacy*, Taakperceptie en Werktevredenheid. Hoewel de psychometrische eigenschappen van de meetinstrumenten uit deze verschillende studies acceptabel tot goed bleken, bracht het systematische overzicht ook diverse conceptuele en methodologische kwesties aan het licht die opgelost dienden te worden.

In de tweede studie (Hoofdstuk III) werd daarom de Meetschaal voor Leerkrachtidentiteit (*Teacher Identity Measurement Scale*; TIMS) voor het evalueren van de professionele identiteit van pabostudenten ontwikkeld en gevalideerd. Op basis van ideeën uit het theoretische raamwerk van Burke en Stets (2009) en de uitkomsten van de reviewstudie (Hoofdstuk II) kon leerkrachtidentiteit van pabostudenten opgedeeld worden in vier eerste-orde constructen: Motivatie, Zelfimago, *Self-Efficacy* en Taakperceptie. De factorstructuur van de TIMS werd geëvalueerd in een steekproef van eerste- en tweedejaars pabostudenten. In de eerste fase, met 17 studenten, werden kwalitatieve schaalontwikkelingsmethoden ingezet om de constructvaliditeit te beproeven. In de tweede fase werd de tweede-orde factorstructuur getest en bevestigd in een steekproef van 211 studenten. In de derde fase werd deze factorstructuur gekruisvalideerd in een nieuwe steekproef van 419 pabostudenten. Tezamen boden de resultaten ondersteuning voor de betrouwbaarheid en validiteit van de TIMS. Meer specifiek suggereerden de kwalitatieve resultaten dat de items van de TIMS begrijpelijk, betekenisvol en goed te doen zijn voor pabostudenten en toonden de kwantitatieve resultaten dat de vier domeinen—Motivatie, Zelfimago, *Self-Efficacy* en Taakperceptie—met elkaar overlappen, maar ook goed te onderscheiden zijn als aparte factoren van leerkrachtidentiteit.

In de derde studie (Hoofdstuk IV) werd de Schaal voor Professionele Identiteitsspanningen (*Professional Identity Tensions Scale*; PITS) voor het evalueren van professionele identiteitsspanningen van pabostudenten ontwikkeld en gevalideerd. Op basis van ideeën uit de dissonantietheorie (Festinger, 1957) werden bestaande vignetten (Pillen et al., 2013) omgevormd tot een multidimensionale schaal en werden vervolgens twee spanningen toegevoegd. Om de PITS te valideren werden meerdere stappen gezet. Ten eerste toonden resultaten op basis van expertvalidatie, cognitieve interviews en een kleine pilotstudie het belang en nut van de PITS voor pabostudenten. Gebruikmakend van een steekproef van 211 pabostudenten werd vervolgens een factoranalyse uitgevoerd, waaruit bleek dat de items daadwerkelijk de onderliggende constructen van professionele identiteitsspanningen meten. Deze factorstructuur kon middels een confirmatieve factoranalyse worden bevestigd in een nieuwe steekproef van 271 pabostudenten. Het

uiteindelijke instrument bestaat uit de spanningen ‘Laten zien dat je om leerlingen geeft versus het gevoel hebben dat je streng moet optreden’, ‘Je als een student behandeld voelen versus je als leraar verantwoordelijkheid willen nemen’, ‘Behandeld voelen als een leeftijdgenoot versus verantwoordelijkheid willen nemen als leraar’, ‘Ervaren van moeilijkheden in het behoud van een emotionele afstand’, ‘Ervaren van conflicten tussen je eigen en andermans oriëntatie ten aanzien van leren lesgeven’, ‘Afhankelijk voelen van een mentor versus je eigen weg willen gaan in het lesgeven’, ‘Willen investeren in je privéleven, terwijl je je onder druk gezet voelt om tijd en energie in je werk te steken’, ‘Lesgeven in stedelijke klaslokalen’, en ‘Opleiding willen verlaten versus leraar willen worden’.

In de vierde studie (Hoofdstuk V) werd de ontwikkeling van de relatie tussen leerkrachtidentiteit en professionele identiteitsspanningen in een steekproef van 201 pabostudenten onderzocht. Studenten vulden driemaal de TIMS en de PITS in. *Random intercept cross-lagged panel* modellen toonden dat de professionele identiteitsspanningen op het interindividuele niveau negatief gerelateerd waren aan leerkrachtidentiteit. Meer specifiek werd, in aflopende volgorde, gevonden dat pabostudenten die spanningen ervaren met betrekking tot ‘Opleiding willen verlaten versus leraar willen worden’, ‘Laten zien dat je om leerlingen geeft versus het gevoel hebben dat je streng moet optreden’, ‘Behandeld voelen als een leeftijdgenoot versus verantwoordelijkheid willen nemen als leraar’, ‘Ervaren van conflicten tussen je eigen en andermans oriëntatie ten aanzien van leren lesgeven’, en ‘Willen investeren in je privéleven, terwijl je je onder druk gezet voelt om tijd en energie in je werk te steken’ hun leerkrachtidentiteit als minder sterk waarnemen dan pabostudenten die deze spanningen in mindere mate ervaren. Op het intra-individuele niveau werden echter geen statistisch significante *cross-lagged* verbanden gevonden. Dit geeft aan dat een toename in ervaren professionele identiteitsspanningen mogelijk niet gerelateerd is aan veranderingen in de professionele identiteit van pabostudenten over tijd.

In Hoofdstuk VI wordt een Algemene Discussie van de vier studies in deze dissertatie gegeven, waarin de kwesties die in Hoofdstuk I aan bod kwamen zijn aangepakt. Ten eerste werden de bevindingen met betrekking tot de ontwikkeling en validering van de TIMS en PITS samengevat en apart bediscussieerd. Vervolgens kwamen de resultaten over de relatie tussen leerkrachtidentiteit en professionele identiteitsspanningen aan bod. De Algemene Discussie werd afgesloten met suggesties voor toekomstig onderzoek en aanbevelingen voor professionals in het veld van onderwijs en de lerarenopleiding.

Dit proefschrift is uitgemond in betrouwbare en valide instrumenten voor het meten van zowel leerkrachtidentiteit als professionele identiteitsspanningen. Daarnaast toonden de

resultaten dat sommige, maar niet alle professionele identiteitsspanningen negatief verband houden aan stabiele verschillen tussen pabostudenten in hun leerkrachtidentiteit. Er werd echter geen bewijs gevonden voor het idee dat professionele identiteitsspanningen gerelateerd zijn aan veranderingen binnen pabostudenten in hun leerkrachtidentiteit. Dit betekent dat, als er al een verband bestaat tussen professionele identiteitsspanningen en leerkrachtidentiteit, het heel complex is om een dergelijk verband over tijd te vinden en dat dit verband mogelijk afhankelijk is van andere factoren (zoals context, persoonlijke karakteristieken en tijd). Hoewel de bevindingen voorlopig zijn, staan ze in contrast met eerdere theoretische perspectieven op het bestaan en de richting van dit verband. Meer praktisch ondersteunen de resultaten het belang van het apart ondersteunen van leerkrachtidentiteit en professionele identiteitsspanningen tijdens de lerarenopleiding.

Samenvattend kan gesteld worden dat goed gekwalificeerde leraren belangrijk zijn voor persoonlijke, academische en professionele groei. Hopelijk draagt deze dissertatie bij aan het opleiden van dergelijke leraren door expliciet aandacht te besteden aan zowel leerkrachtidentiteit als professionele identiteitsspanningen gedurende de Pabo-opleiding. Dit proefschrift kan andere onderzoekers tevens aanmoedigen om onderzoek naar leerkrachtidentiteit, professionele identiteitsspanningen en andere relevante variabelen voort te zetten, met als uiteindelijk doel een steviger kennisbasis te genereren die verder bijdraagt aan de ontwikkeling van goed gekwalificeerde leraren.

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