



Educational Pedagogy of Professionalism¹

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ABSTRACT

The Alchemy project of the Centre of Expertise Youth, University of Applied Sciences Leiden studies the (development of) golden professionalism of youth professionals, including teachers. The project findings will be used to improve teacher training and the education of social workers. In this paper, we focus on results of the research and implications for teacher training. Golden professionalism is defined as the practices of teachers who were able to do the right thing at the right time according to youths, parents, colleagues and management. Teachers who were identified as golden professionals were interviewed. These interviews were analysed by students and researchers using narrative analysis, and by researchers through interpretative analysis. Results of both analyses were related to theoretical perspectives in the literature. Main findings point to the strong relationship between practices, personal and professional values and goals, and important learning experiences. The practices can be characterised as: congruent with earlier experiences and values and beliefs; with balanced attention for self and other; being present and allowing others to be seen. Teacher training should enhance the attention for coherence between personal and professional development. This pedagogical aspect of teacher training, calls for reconsideration of the formative aspects of the curriculum, organisational structure, and culture.

A narrative to begin with

Today I told my class something about springtime. I talked about the little ducklings that you can find in the ditches that run through the polders. They still have these tiny wings. I told them that although these ducklings can flap their wings, they are still unable to fly. They are simply too small and will simply have to be patient. "Imagine" I said, "how vulnerable they are. There are cars and cyclists and herons and snakes..." And then I pretended that there was a snake slithering through the classroom and I chased after it. I was running around and then, all of a sudden I picked up a piece of chalk and slowly drew a snake on the black board and I said: this snake swallowed the number 304 and also the number 294 and it will go on to swallow ten numbers. At what number will we end up?" And the children were thrilled to go on and solve the problem.

I find maths the toughest subject to teach. It's such a 'thinking' subject and there is so much riding on it because of all the tests and because of how much importance is placed on it by the government and by parents. It is perceived as the most important subject in school. I'm struggling with that, because this does not fit with what I believe education is about. I find it hard to find the right balance, which then makes me feel uncertain and as a result I can't make it work! Sometimes the children pick up on this. They don't ask me "Mister, are you frustrated about something?" No, they are too young for that, but they will say: "Maths is boring". This frustration spurs me on and makes me really want to tackle this subject. So last evening I was thinking about it: how can I find a way in? What appeals to them? Because if they are drawn in, they will really start to practice and to learn. And then I realised: animals, they love animals, and humour as well. So I thought up this snake who swallows numbers, ten at a time. And I thought: I'll let them draw, because really, if anything makes them happy it is being allowed to draw! So now I took them from this mental picture of the polders, the ducklings and the snake, which was kind of unexpected and also a bit exciting and funny, to maths and the repetition of subtracting ten from a certain number. If I think back on what I did, I feel that I really tried to place myself in the position of children and of being engaged in such a way that they learn in a joyful way. And that what they learn is challenging, but not too hard and that there is differentiation.

GOLDEN PROFESSIONALS

This is the story of an everyday experience of a young teacher from a Waldorf school in the Netherlands. His name is Richard and his colleagues, the parents and children from his second grade primary class pointed at him when asked who was a great teacher. He was identified as what might be called a golden professional. What makes a professional a *golden professional* is not always clear. His colleagues may describe him as well-prepared, cooperative, effective and well-liked. Parents might mention how well he knows their child and that they feel free to talk to him if needed. The pupils from his class will probably mention his great story-telling abilities, his cheerfulness and perhaps that he sometimes joins them for a game of soccer during break-time. So, what makes him stand out depends on who you ask. Although the people that know him are unable to exactly describe what makes him such a special teacher and makes him stand out, they are firmly convinced that he does. In all the answers given, the common thread appears to be that as a professional he somehow manages to *do the right thing at the right time*; no matter what and for whom that might be. Doing *the right thing at the right time* is never a matter of one-size-fits-all. It differs from one teacher to the next, from subject to subject, from pupil to pupil, from class to class, from school to school and from time to time. Therefore, what makes a professional *golden* will be hard, if not impossible to capture or determine through standardized tests or checklists. Neither does it make sense to attempt to create a handbook that will lead you on the path to becoming a golden professional. Nonetheless, this ability, or perhaps more accurate, quality, is something that we wish for in all the educational professionals that our children encounter on their journey through the educational system. But the reality is that this quality is not a given for everyone. Why is this? And perhaps more importantly, what might we do so that this quality to do the right thing at the right time becomes a key characteristic for educational professionalism in general, and not just for a particular subset of teachers within the field of education?

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This research project was developed as a collaborative project between departments for teacher training and youth work at the University of Applied Sciences Leiden. These departments both operate in close collaboration with their respective work fields in order to provide students with educational experiences that meet both the demands and needs of these work fields. This collaboration for instance shapes curriculum development and the development of qualification standards at the university. Furthermore, students' practical experiences during work placements in classrooms and in youth welfare organizations form a substantial part of their educational experiences.

Over the last decades, a substantial shift seems have taken place in the way educational professionals and youth work professionals and their practices are valued and evaluated. It used to be that professionals in these work fields were allowed and expected to operate in a fairly personal and often highly autonomous way. With society's growing orientation on (cost) effectiveness, replicability and objectiveness, the response within these work fields has been to create a shift from focusing on *who works* to *what works* (Menger, 2009). When determining how we can provide the best care and education it has become the standard practice to turn to methods, checklists, standardized tests and procedures that might allow us to increase the effectiveness and objectiveness of practices. However, despite this development in the way the quality and effectiveness of professionalism in these work fields are approached, the importance of the professional can hardly be denied. For it is still the professional as a person who creates the necessary foundational relationship with the child or youngster that is needed in order for them to participate in any method or test. In the educational practices of our university we therefor aim to create a good balance between what works and who works. Yes, methods, procedures and tests are part of the repertoire of knowledge, skills and competencies that prospective professionals working with youths and

school pupils will need to develop. They help them to develop a general understanding of development, abilities and needs of young people in general. They provide them with a basic set of tools and skills to engage in practices with these young people. But they do not suffice to develop the ability to do the right thing at the right time for a particular individual child or a specific class. Because that requires from the professional that they are able and willing to look at the individual child, at themselves and at situation at hand and to shape their practices according to their evaluation of what is necessary, possible and required in that particular instance. In these decisions youth workers and educators need to also consider what is required by external stakeholders, such as state, school, parents and care organizations. This implies that a professional is not someone who simply follows a protocol, a fixed set of rules of a profession or a particular method, but rather a person who is aware of what is needed by all those involved, who takes initiative and shows creativity in creating tailored solutions, who is able to make informed decisions about what action is called for, and who is able to communicate these decisions to others on distinctive levels. How can we create opportunities for new professionals to develop such an understanding of what it means to be a professional and to develop their personal set of values, orientations, knowledge, skills and competencies that will allow them to keep on developing their professionalism?

In this research we focus on professionalism (rather than on the professional as a person with a set of competencies). Our focus on professionalism allows us room to explore its situated and dynamic nature: a professional might show *golden* practices in a particular situation, but not necessarily always, in every encounter or situation. As such, we relate to the idea of 'embodied, situated, relational, and moody nature of practical knowledge' (Manen, 2008, p. 17). Professionalism, as we interpret it, is shown in the practice of professionals in which implicit and explicit knowledge, skills and normative choices, come together in an estimation or valuation of a concrete situation: reflection in action (Schön, 1983). While the phrase *reflection in action* seems to suggest a conscious thought process, this is not what actually occurs. Rather, reflection in action feels highly intuitive. It refers to an intrinsic understanding of knowing what to do which reveals itself while you are acting. Perhaps the term *embodied knowledge* or *embodied cognition* (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991), are more appropriate. Embodied knowledge refers to knowledge that has become such an integral part of a person that it is hard to capture this knowledge in words or to share this knowledge with others through words.

In this paper we take the narratives of a number of so called *golden* educational professionals about their everyday experiences in class and in school as a starting point to explore, to question, to analyse and to learn about golden professionalism and the embodied knowledge of these professionals. Our study is aimed to increase our understanding of how and why these particular professionals shape their everyday practices in a way that is effective and appreciated. What are the roots of their understanding of education and of their educational practices? What makes them do what they do? What helps in this process or perhaps makes it more difficult? How did they come to these understandings and practices?

In the narrative at the beginning of this paper, Richard takes us through his struggle to balance the external requirements he perceives (from government, his school and parents) and his personal beliefs (the more internal requirements) about *good* education. Throughout his narrative he comes to recognize and acknowledge that his struggle is having a negative effect on himself and on his pupils. He accepts and takes on the responsibility to find a way to turn this into a positive learning experience, both for his pupils and for himself as a professional. In the end, he develops a clear sense of what is needed and wanted for the subject at hand, for the children in his class and for himself. As a result of this process he develops and puts into practice an approach to math that is effective and fun and fully engages the children in their learning process. By doing so he is able to meet the requirements from others, the educational needs of the children and his personal needs to teach in an

imaginative, inspired and creative way. This ability to reflect in and on everyday experiences in the realm of education – positive and negative-, to distil questions, ideas and actions from these experiences appears to be one distinctive quality of *golden professionals* in education. This ability appears to help these professionals to further develop their educational practices in such a way that they manage to create an acceptable balance between external and internal requirements.

In this project we explored and analysed similar common themes, common storylines, in the narratives of our educational professionals. We believe that these will provide us with new understandings and practices that as a next step, will allow us to provide the students in our teacher training courses with ways to come to discover, to understand and to develop their personal narratives towards golden professionalism. As such, the data is used to develop a 'grounded' theory about golden professionalism and the processes that contribute to this development that creates a foundation for developing a pedagogy *of professionalism*, in which notions of personal development of professionals guide us in the education of future professionals.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research project was designed as collaborative project between researchers from the fields of education and youth care from the Centre of Expertise Youth at the University of Applied Sciences Leiden. The idea behind this collaboration was to create an ongoing dialogue about professionalism between these two disciplines. Because although each discipline deals with the development and well-being of children and youths, we have found that our approaches and understandings of what this requires from a professional are not necessarily similar. We expected that this dialogue would allow us to identify key concepts and practices within each field and to deepen our understanding of these concepts and practices as they could be explored and questioned through different research and practice paradigms. The project team included five senior researchers and a junior researcher. Five students enrolled in the university's honours program participated in part of the analyses of the data from the study.

The research project spanned a period of two years. During this period the full research team met every two to three weeks for dialogue sessions. These sessions each lasted about two hours and were used to discuss, evaluate and readjust theoretical concepts, methodology, data, findings and implications for our teaching programs from the perspectives of education and youth care. As a result our respective approach to research methodology and our understandings of professionalism developed and evolved considerably over the course of these two years. In the periods between these sessions the lead researcher (first author), project leader (second author) and the junior researcher met at least once a week to discuss the practicalities and to work on data analyses.

Data was collected through narrative interviews (Riessman, 2008) with 18 professionals in youth care and education. Using the professional networks of the senior researchers in these fields these professionals had been identified by children, youths, parents, managers and colleagues as golden professionals. These professionals were then approached to be interviewed about their work as a teacher/ youth worker. Interviews took between 60 and 90 minutes and were voice recorded. After the interviews were concluded, professionals were informed that they had been selected because they were regarded as golden professionals by those they encountered in their professional capacity. The current paper discusses the findings from the nine narratives of educational professionals only. Six of these professionals taught in elementary school, one of them also had been principal; three taught in secondary education (one in a special education school). The majority of these teachers were experienced teachers (n= 7; 10 years or more of teaching experience); 1 had been teaching for less than 2 years. The schools at which they taught had educational orientations related to the fields of expertise of the senior researchers, either Waldorf pedagogy or educational settings in which nature and the natural world played a substantial role in educational practices.

The in-depth interviews had two foci. First, we asked them to tell us about their daily work and to explore situations that were typical for their approach. Secondly we asked them to reflect on their professional development and key events in this process. The set of topics addressed during the interviews was developed during the research project dialogue meetings and was both based on the senior researchers' experiences with and understanding of professionalism and its key concepts in their respective work fields, and on a review of international literature from the fields of education, social work, pedagogy to identify general themes. These topics included for instance resilience, agency, bumpy-moments, protective and risk factors.

During the interview we asked these professionals to take us through concrete situations in present and past in which their actions had had a positive impact. By doing so we aimed to develop a sense of their embodied knowledge, rather than of for instance their technical or theoretical knowledge. Embodied knowledge reflects the way a professional in action connects technical knowledge about what works to his or her personal skills, attitude, experiences and value orientation. Brought together they create a foundation on which the professional bases an evaluation of a concrete situation or problem at hand. What do you observe in the person you are engaging with? How do you interpret this observation? What kind of response does this require from you? In every day practices of the professional this whole evaluation process takes place in a split second and will occur many times over the course of a work day. Taking these stories as a starting point we explored with them how and why these stories were exemplary for their practices as professionals; why they chose to act in this particular way; and how previous experiences have impacted on these practices.

Coding and Analysis

Each interview was transcribed verbatim by a researcher or trained research assistant and carefully checked by either the junior researcher or the lead researcher. Using the transcripts, the interviews were analysed in two ways. The lead researcher was fully involved in both types of analyses in order to allow for comparison between the results from these different analytical approaches.

As a first step, a narrative analysis was conducted by the lead researcher and the junior researcher assisted by the students, using the Listening Guide (Bussman, Kuiper, & Maas, 2015; Gilligan, C., Spencer, R., Weinberg, M.K., & Bertsch, 2006). This analysis focused on the individual stories of the professionals. With the listening guide, different 'voices' or ways of expression someone uses when talking about themselves, their practices, previous experiences et cetera are identified. This analysis might reveal inner tensions, for instance insecure or passive voices in some parts and secure or active voices in other. The students had received training for this type of data analysis as part of their research project. Next to this, a dialogic performance analysis (Reissman, 2008) is done by the main and junior researcher. This analysis is focused on the way the interviewee positions him- or herself towards the interviewer. What does one want to reveal, is one showing off et cetera. These narrative analyses provided us both with stories about professional development and with information on students' constructs of professionalism. Through the analyses we developed a sense of the key themes in these storylines in which these teachers talked about themselves as professionals, the way they perceived their profession and their professional development. This information created a first orientation for our second analysis of what might be found with regard to themes and patterns of professionalism.

As a second strategy, we conducted an interpretative analysis (Boeije, 2010). The interpretative analyses developed over the course of several months as we engaged in what one might call an extended dialogue about the themes and patterns in the narratives. Through this analysis common key themes and patterns throughout the full set of interviews were identified. We applied a 'bottom-up' approach in which coding categories emerged from the analysis of the narratives about their everyday practices as professionals and of how they had come to develop their personal perception and practice of professionalism. The coding

was conducted by the first and second author after narrative reading of the transcripts using Atlas-ti; two other researchers independently coded a number of transcripts. Inter-coder reliability, established by visual comparison was satisfactory; any differences were resolved by discussion and applied in subsequent coding. During the research team meetings, findings through both types of analyses were related to each other, discussed by the research team and related to the professional and academic literature on professionalism and its development.

FINDINGS

Stories about the daily practice of professionals were the starting point for the interviews. They talked about everyday events that constituted their experiences as educational professionals, such as how they prepared for their classes and how they solved issues in class or collaborated with colleagues. From these narratives it became apparent that their practices were firmly related to standards they set for themselves and for others regarding a job well done. The standards appeared to follow from a strong inner compass that helped them to judge and value situations in the moment of action or on a longer term. Clear values about what matters in life calibrated this inner compass. From their narratives we learned that these values about life in general and their lives as professionals had gradually evolved from their personal life experiences. Four distinctive values appeared to play a key role within their inner compass: connectedness, trust or confidence, responsibility and fulfilment. In their professional practices they actively, although not always consciously, sought to establish and maintain coherence between their values and their actions.

Without exception, these teachers spoke about the importance of being connected and of forming relationships. The analysis of their practices showed that as a rule the way they conducted their actions was aimed at establishing, maintaining and developing a sense of connectedness with others (e.g. children, clients, individual colleagues); with the content of the curriculum; with themselves as a person and a professional; and with their organisation (e.g. principals, school team and policies).

To establish connectedness they worked hard at developing relationships, especially with children and classes. In order to build relationships they carefully observed these children and they paid close attention to what children had to say; they perceived the other, in this case the child, as a unique individual, respecting their individuality and showing that they were willing to accept responsibility for their own actions. An important aspect of the process of building these relationships was that professionals were not just willing to see and come to know the other, but also were willing to let themselves be seen and known. In the next fragment, Fred tells us about the importance of reciprocity in developing a mutual and not superficial or one-sided connection.

This class said to me: "Fred, it is not an official week of testing, but we have three tests tomorrow. And we have this agreement with you that in a test week, you will take us to the trees [for a specific meditation session]". I said: "Okay, yes, it is not really a test week actually, so we can't do this. I did prepare a lesson". I always play that game, because I want to make sure they really want it. And you'll know soon enough, because you can feel it. Finally I said: "We are going to do what I had prepared and discuss the assignment you made and if we can do that with enough concentration, we will have enough time to go to the trees". (Fred, teacher secondary Waldorf school)

In their classes children could experience their teachers' personal enthusiasm or sense of connection with the content of the lessons. Fred shared with his students the way he dealt with stressful events in life, by teaching them meditation techniques he found helpful. As teachers, our professionals felt that by showing themselves as a person with feelings,

emotions and ideas, they were creating an environment in which children could begin to relate to adults, each other and the content being thought with the curriculum. One teacher explicitly said: *They have to see me, they do not want a show from a teacher (Imke, teacher).*

This willingness of wanting to know the other and letting yourself be known was also seen in the way they approached and shaped their actions within the school community. They talked about building or maintaining their sense of connectedness with their school organisation and the teacher community within these schools. These professionals all aimed to find work environment in which their personal beliefs and values were reflected. Richard's story at the beginning of this paper shows that this is not always easy. Several professionals talked about having gone through an extensive process of trying to find the right fit with an organisation or colleagues; and it was not uncommon for them to have left a school once they had determined that this would not be the case. Others talked about raising issue of inconsistencies between school values and ideals and practices during meetings and discussions. When they did not feel they could support certain school practices and rules, they chose to take a firm stand, rather than complying in word but not in actions. That is not to say that they made an issue out of everything they disagreed with. Often they were highly pragmatic and creative in finding ways to fit their practices and what they valued within the demands and limitations of the system.

There are 180 learning goals children in primary school need to learn. In a way it is a convenient system. It makes clear what children need to learn and it helps me keep hold of what I need to do, otherwise I can just think up anything I like. It also gives me ideas. A subject like fossils, I wouldn't have thought of that. We simply added one more goal, because we think awareness of nature is important as well. (Anke, biology teacher primary school)

Their willingness to take a stand for what they felt was important as their willingness to find pragmatic solutions within the system seemed to indicate that the value they placed on connectedness went beyond an instrumental approach. The image of connectedness that emerges from these practices, shows that these professionals do not perceive their relationships with for instance children as purely a mean to a goal, for instance to increase their willingness to pay attention in class, but rather as a core quality of life.

The sense of community that is what creates value. That you are part of different circles. Your own class is the smallest circle, then the classes around you and the whole primary school. And around that, the children who have been in this primary school before you. It gives you a kind of perspective towards the future. And backwards as well. Sometimes they come to look, secretly, because they are not allowed to come here. And then they look around like: "do you remember?"; "Oh, yes, we did this as well". So the whole building is full of growing and developing children, from three to eighteen, and that is what I like about it. (Annelies, teacher Waldorf school)

A second theme that emerged from the analysis of the teaching practices of our professionals was trust or confidence. Trust in others provided the foundation from which they built their actions and interactions with others.

The first boarding schools I stayed at that was built on distrust, as I call it now. They would not name it like that, but it was all about regulating behaviour. Strict rules, seven o'clock in the morning, sunrise; seven twenty behind the desk for study; breakfast at eight; school nine thirty. [...] The other boarding school was built on trust. Again I thought I had to escape, like I had done at the other school, so I went away and didn't return. I rang the bell at four in the night. [...] The group leader just stood there, in his jeans and sweater and

said: "I have been waiting for you". That's an example of what formed me in how I deal with rules and trust. (Fred, secondary teacher Waldorf school)

These teachers also built and maintained trust or confidence in themselves as professionals through their actions and interactions. Especially the analysis with the listening guide showed that in all interviews, a confident voice was apparent also when was spoken about questions or difficult situations. In the interpretative analysis, in many fragments self-confidence was visible. We distinguished between trust in oneself, one's abilities, one's judgement of the situation, and one's beliefs.

They could identify and acknowledge their successful and less successful actions and experiences. When things had gone well, they accepted compliments as a sign of trust. When things went wrong, they tried to understand what had happened and took a close look at how they had contributed to the process. Throughout this reflection on situations gone wrong, they showed compassion to others and to themselves: you do not have to succeed in everything right now but you are allowed to learn and develop or ask for help. However, this trust in oneself goes along with trust in the other, the possibilities of children, the abilities of colleagues et cetera. The self-confidence of the professionals, which they are able to preserve and develop, enabled them to let themselves be known by children, classes, colleagues and organisations. As such, these practices guided by the value orientations connectedness and trust reinforced each other.

A further value that emerged through the practices and narratives of the professionals was 'responsibility'. They regarded responsibility as something they felt and took personally, but also as something that they could extend to others. All teachers felt a great responsibility towards the children as individuals and in creating a classroom atmosphere that was conducive to their well-being and learning. Many also felt responsible on a less personal level in wanting to provide education that could contribute to a better world and life for people in general.

To learn together is very important for me, because by that you hopefully can do something about the individualism. [...] I think that with collaborative work, you also work on this sense of community and social education. I think that that's somehow missing in this society. (Annelies, teacher Waldorf school)

As a result of this strong sense of responsibility, these professionals held the quality of their work and the work of others to high standards. Principal Felice expressed this responsibility for quality of work very clearly when she told about her search for a substitute teacher, rejecting two till she finds one which made her think: yes! Which "[...] has to do with morality", she said: "you cannot fool the children".

A further result seemed to be that their professional work hours often extended way beyond the hours of their professional appointment. Although this is certainly not uncommon among teaching professionals, these particular teachers had become aware that they needed to draw a line in order to take care of themselves and of their families as well.

That's the pitfall, it is never finished. That is something I have to tell myself firmly every now and then: just to do something completely different and be less prepared for one day. [...] It's a bit more chaotic and sometimes after a day I think: a new day tomorrow. But it also brings you something else and I can see the benefits of a weekend filled with other things than school. (Annelies, teacher Waldorf school)

Their sense of connectedness and confidence both seemed to help them to create a healthy balance between their responsibility regarding work commitment and personal well-being.

For instance by being able to acknowledging that there were things they were not very good at and their willingness and ability to turn to colleagues for help, without feeling less confident about themselves.

The fourth value that spoke from the practices and narratives of our professionals was a sense of *fulfilment*, both on a personal and on a more general level. These professionals were very proud of their work and of the schools they taught in. They greatly enjoyed telling about their experiences as teachers. Clearly their work was not just about bringing something good to others, but also offered them personal, joy, happiness, growth or a sense of worth; we called this fulfilment. In the data, we saw different examples of how this sense of fulfilment came about. For some it came from their love of children, the joy of working with them, or from experiencing children's joy in learning. For others it arose from their understanding that they were making a valuable contribution to the world, doing something significant.

I have this drive to work with people with whom not everything is going very smoothly, just to discover: what are you good at. And if they tell me "I cannot do anything right", we will explore that together. (Koen, teacher secondary grade special education)

In every narrative we heard stories of professionals who were seeking to find and maintain a certain balance between what is right for the professional and for the other, the children, class, school, colleagues, or society. This ongoing process of finding balance between what is right for me (and my relatives) and the other or the world is an important aspect of what Biesta (2015) calls maturity (which is not at all attached to one's age). Without this balance the values and beliefs could become selfish or one could lose oneself completely in the role of professional educator.

Learning experiences

In their narratives teachers talked about experiences and moments earlier on in life which shaped their practices as educational professionals. Almost half of our teachers had parent(s) who worked in the field of education and often practices their profession with similar commitment and values. Many of our professionals referred to childhood educational experiences, positive and negative that had had an impact on their professional practices. From the analysis of these narratives it became clear that the experiences they perceived to be formative for their practices as professionals were experiences that helped them to calibrate their inner compass towards the core values connectedness, trust, responsibility and fulfilment and helped them to develop the conviction and courage to align their practices as a professional with these values.

Well, it's funny because you can take advantage of it as well. I was bullied a lot at primary school and the moment you go to another school, it is inside you, you feel excluded. Eventually, last Friday I talked about it with a child in my class, about how she stood there by herself when groups are formed. [...] She felt excluded, came from another school where she was bullied a lot. I asked her if she had asked if she could participate. "No". I said: "would the children have noticed that you wanted to?" "Probably not." I said: "partly it is something you have to do." And that was something I have learned myself. The first half year, when I was at secondary school, I had something like: let me be, let me deal with myself, and I think that caused me trouble. I realised that I had to take initiative and must not depend on others [...] I realised I do not have to take the first step once, no, I will have to keep on doing that if I want something to change. That was really a lesson for me. (Imke, teacher primary school)

As professionals these teachers talk about the reflective practices they have developed for themselves in which they take their beliefs into account. Although teacher training practices

in the Netherlands strongly emphasise the importance of such reflective practices, the stories about how and why our teachers had come to develop these practices did not refer to their teacher training experiences. Most frequently these practices seemed to have been brought about and had developed through experiences during their initial years as a teacher. This seems to indicate that the period right after professional education is an important period for shaping practices, beliefs and values, probably because of another feeling of responsibility than during internship. Professional education is frequently related to gaining important knowledge. Three professionals did mention their professional education in another way. One teacher told that her professional education showed her what she did not want to do, another Waldorf school teacher told about a specific moment with one teacher trainer that was life changing in a positive way. One teacher told how he learned to collaborate and learn during teacher training in the late seventies, in which they were allowed to form their own teacher training. The observation that fewer stories are about experiences during professional education is interesting and raises all kinds of questions. However, we have to bear in mind that most professionals had their professional education long ago.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

To summarise our conclusions we see educational golden professionalism shown in practices in which teachers are both “known” and “knowable” to themselves and to others. We also see effective communication with a wide range of people about personal and professional values, goals and opinions, and about their practices. As a result the teachers are perceived as authentic and typically receive positive feedback on their professional practices. They also experience consistency between their personal and professional values, goals and opinions which makes their professional experiences more meaningful to them as a person.

Congruence, balance between self and other and unicity are three important themes that connect our findings. Perceived congruence between present, history and future relates to strong inner compasses guiding practices in relation to others and in relation with an organisational context. However, not only is professionalism enhanced by these inner compasses, also the drive to relate or connect as aspect of these compasses is: relating to others as a quality of life. Building and maintaining relations is an encounter between the unicity of people. Rodgers & Raider-Roth cite Martin Buber (1970, p.12): ‘The present...the real filled present, exists only in so far as actual presentness, meeting and relation exist. The present arises only in virtue of the fact that the ‘Thou becomes present’. To which they add: ‘Presentness arises when one becomes to see the other and allows one’s self to be seen.’ (p.284). Golden professionalism shows in enabling this encounter. Autonomy in communion, as Mayo calls this (2015) demands balance between attention for self and other, while this balance-act benefits from knowing and trusting on one’s inner compass. A strong inner compass facilitates one’s self to be known and attention for others as well, a mature (Biesta, 2015) professionalism.

Dialogues between what is and what has been, between the present and the desired future, between demands from society and personal values and goals, create personal and professional storylines. Professionals benefit from consistency in these storylines. Educational professionalism expresses itself in the way teachers are able to create a practice based on these dialogues. Therefore, these dialogues should be part of curriculum of teacher training. But they should also be experienced through the example set by teacher trainers in the way they build relationships with their students and colleagues, the way they organize and assess training experiences, and the way they continue to expand their professionalism. So, we, as teacher trainers have to ask ourselves questions like: what is my unique storyline? What do I

think is important in the dialogue between me and other? How do I show this dialogue to students? Do I listen to my inner compass? When and why not? The next step is to ask ourselves questions about our teacher training. To what extent is our organizational structure helpful? For instance: to what extent does our way of grading help students develop their dialogue between themselves and the world? To what extent is our culture helpful? For instance: do we encounter our students as individuals or as groups? How much influence on the curriculum do we allow from students?

Each one of these themes withholds an ongoing dialogue between the professional and the world. Engaging in this dialogue is the assignment to us all.

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