# 10

# Developing Subjective Identities Through Collective Participation

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This chapter explores the mutually constitutive relationship of the individual and the social context. In the analysis of our empirical data on teacher students we shall ask how individual students were able to exercise their personal agency in the two learning communities within a university context, and the context of authentic working life. We shall look more closely at the kinds of continuities and transitions that can be identified in a subject's personal goals, and how these relate to their learning and developing a professional identity. Based on a critical review of the conceptions of identity and teacher identity, the chapter addresses the critical characteristics of professional subjectivity and the emotional nature of teacher's work. Continuities and transitions in teacher student identity construction are described using three particular cases to exemplify the mutually constitutive role of the community and the individual subjects. Our cases demonstrate that in order to negotiate and redefine one's personal and professional identity in the learning community, there have to be mutually constitutive spaces for learning in terms of developing professional subjectivity. In such spaces, the learner's personal goals, plans and intentional projects come together in a favourable environment, one which offers resources for realising them.

## 10.1   Introduction

This chapter explores the mutually constitutive relationship of the individual and the social context. In particular, it seeks to understand the individual nature of the subjective experiences of participants in socially shared activities, and the consequences of these experiences for learning.

From our analyses of individual experiences of participation and learning within a university context, and also the context of authentic working life, we have found that the nature of participation is very context-specific, and dependent on the resources available within the context in question (Eteläpelto, Littleton, Lahti and Wirtanen 2005; Eteläpelto and Vakiala 2005).

Experiences of situations in which the community does not promote the subjectivities of its members have led us to try to identify the necessary conditions for community processes, and the conditions that can promote the subjectivities of individual participants. We shall analyse how the different kinds of resources available – both within the university learning community and the working life community – contribute to the construction of the professional identities and subjectivities of the individuals in question. The data were collected from teacher students' experiences in two different learning communities.

In the analysis of our empirical data we shall ask how individual students were able to exercise their personal agency in the two learning communities under study. We shall look more closely at the kinds of continuities and transitions that can be identified in a subject's personal goals, and how these relate to their learning and developing a professional identity. Continuities and transitions are analysed in order to understand the interactions between the sense of professional self and the growth of subjectivity in communities, which are supposed to develop the professional identity of teachership. On the basis of these analyses we shall discuss the relationships between personal and social power in promoting professional subjectivities, and their consequences for individual learning experiences.

In theoretical terms, we see professional identity as something that emerges through a subject's personal intentions, goals and ideals, all of them being intertwined with the subject's learning through the communities of professional education and working-life experiences. Our conception of identity is informed by authors discussing the role of personal and subjective aspects of identity (Archer 2001, 2003; Billett and Pavlova 2005; Billett and Somerville 2004; Lasky 2005; Sawyer 2002; Zembylas 2003). The individual's intentionality and agentic action within the community is seriously taken into account in our efforts to understand how teacher students actively construct professional identities and subjectivities in their learning communities.

Our conception of social communities is informed by sociocultural theories of learning communities (Rogoff 1990; Vygotsky 1978) and communities of practice (Wenger 1998). Professional identities are assumed to be constructed and negotiated through participation in and

engagements with subjects' practical activities and experiences in the communities. Learning and identity construction is understood as taking place through subject's participation and active construction of meanings in socially formed local communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). The building of an identity is assumed to consist of negotiating meanings of the experiences arising from membership in social communities (Wenger 1998). The resources of the communities are thought to be used as affordances for subject's learning and identity development in subject's active construction of professional identities. According to such conception, professional learning and identity construction are closely intertwined and thought to take place coincidentally with the participation in community. Learning through participation manifests in continuous negotiations concerning the nature and degree of participation within the communities.

The work of identity negotiation is understood as ongoing and pervasive. This means that the subject's self is constantly renegotiated in relation to experiences, situations and other community members (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop 2004; Wenger 1998). An identity can thus be understood as a trajectory in time that incorporates both past and future into the meaning of present (Wenger 1998).

If we assume that subjects have an active agency in the communities, we could expect that this is manifested in some kind of continuities in how they bring their present interests and learning challenges to the community. The intensity of individual agency on the one hand, and the intensity of the social agency (the kinds of affordances provided by the community) on the other hand are used to construct the professional self in the community (Billett and Somerville 2004). In order to understand better the individual learning processes, affordances of learning communities and the interaction of the social and individual, we therefore need to elaborate what kind of continuities and discontinuations can be identified in individuals' learning trajectories when they move from one community to another. Evidence of individual continuities can be considered as demonstrations of individuals' active agency and subjectivity in their making and remaking of identities.

In the following pages we shall first undertake a critical review of the conceptions of identity and especially teacher identity. After this, we shall address the critical characteristics of professional subjectivity and emotional nature of teacher's work. Continuities and transitions in teacher student identity construction are described using three particular cases to exemplify the mutually constitutive role of the community and the individual subjects.

## 10.2   Conceptions of Identity: From Social Determinism to the Priority of Personal

In recent years, the concept of identity as a relatively unchanging core of an individual's personality has given way to a much more dynamic view of the self: the self is seen as something which is constantly being reconstructed and renegotiated in relation to the experiences, situations and people with whom we interact in everyday life (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop 2004; Moran and John-Steiner 2004). The negotiation of identity – and with it, professional identity - is seen as taking place through participation in authentic, culturally-constituted working-life contexts (Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald 2002; Wenger 1998). The renegotiation and reconstruction of one's professional identity – for example, as a teacher – is also seen as an emotionally imbued personal process of growth (Hargreaves 1998; Myllyniemi 2004; Storey and Joubert 2004).

Within sociological approaches, the concept of identity has been discussed ever since Mead (1934) suggested the division between "I" and "me", representing personal and social aspects of identity. Nevertheless, recent approaches to professional learning have not made much use of the concept of professional identity. Theoretical approaches have mostly operated at the level of working systems and organizations (Engeström 2004; Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow 2003). Although studies on these lines may analyse the interactive processes in working systems, they do not, on the whole, thematize individual subjects or their professional identities. Nor do they recognize individuals as developing subjects who define and redefine their conceptions of themselves as professional agents.

Socio-cultural approaches based on ideas drawn from Vygotsky and Bakhtin allow us to reframe the question of the constitution of the subject. The socio-cultural view of identity emphasizes the mutually constitutive relationship of identity and social context (Van Oers 2002). The dialogical principle, as proposed by Bakhtin, suggests that relationships with others, which are populated by many different "voices" and by the words of others, make it possible for the subject to achieve an individual constitution by speaking his or her own voice "in the chorus" (Smolka, De Goes and Pino 1995). However, it does not thematize the role of individual subjectivities and the subjects' personal agency, both of which are of decisive importance when individuals move from one community to another. Such a characterization is also limited to the sphere of language, and to those semiotic systems which are socially conditioned.

A similar "centrality of language" is present also in social constructionist approaches to learning and development (Edwards 1997). Archer (2001, 2003) has criticized such a social constructionist viewpoint,

arguing that in social constructionist approaches selfhood is perceived as nothing but a grammatical fiction, as simply a product of learning to master the first-person pronoun system. Pursuing Archer's line of argument, it can be suggested that social constructionist approaches neglect the vital significance of our embodied practice in the world. (Archer 2003; Billett 2004; Billett and Pavlova 2005; Billett and Somerville 2004). Similar critiques have been presented by theorists within post-structural feminist approaches (Braidotti 1994; Saarinen 2003; Weedon 1994).

The concept of identity and agentic action is widely discussed in the realist social theory proposed by Archer (2001, 2003) who criticizes Mead's conception of identity as being socially deterministic. Archer (2001) suggests that *social* identity is merely a component of *personal* identity, produced through internal conversation with the circumstances that are in place. Archer also rejects the idea of Cartesian subjectivism, i.e. the notion that humans exist because of their individual consciousness, separated from an objective or "real" world.

Archer's critical realism (2001) perceives human personal identity as primary to their social identity. Personal identity is thought to emerge from individual's emotional commentaries on his or her concerns, originating from three orders of reality – natural, practical and social. Archer (2001) argues that because our concerns can never be exclusively social, and since the balance of concerns is worked out by an active and reflective agent, personal identity cannot solely be the gift of society.

Archer (2001, 2003) suggests that our personal identity is thus worked out through internal conversation and emotional elaboration with the second-order emotions. Such elaboration includes figuring out our ultimate concerns, through highlighting and discriminating the actual and potential items of worth registered for consideration. Personal identity is for Archer something that emerges from the internal conversation. It entails discerning, deliberation, and finally dedication to our particular concerns.

## 10.3 The Journey of Constructing Teacher Identity Through Interests, Choices, Ideals and Intentions

In the construction of teacher identity, especially in the initial and thus still very fragile stage of seeking one's professional role, the subject's personal interests and choices are of central importance. When signing up for a certain field of study, the subject's personal preferences, goals, aims, and ideals have great influence on the choices between different vocational and professional areas. This is the case in teacher education also:

our students have to pass through an interview in which their motives and orientations are addressed. In addition, most of the students have had practical experience as school assistants before they apply for teacher education. Their personal preferences, goals and ideals have thus been shaped through such experiences, and their personal identity is already intertwined with their professional identity.

In terms of Archer's idea of an internal conversation, it is clear that the subject's initial professional preferences will emerge from their internal conversation and reflection on working life, and from its central social contexts. In a subject's decision to enrol as a student in a certain professional or vocational field, the processes of discerning, deliberation, and dedication will result in prioritization: the subject will attach personal meanings and importance to a variety of professional and vocational preferences, duties and responsibilities. In this sense, "dedication" can be understood as a central process in becoming a subject, taking place through the practice of active agency, within the development of a professional identity.

Active agency, which is based on subject's personal interests and motivations, is manifested as the subject's making vocational and occupational choices. This personal choice and its layers can be understood as a central component of a subject's professional identity.   Furthermore, in regard to our own students, there is an emphasis on individualized study plans and working on individual learning goals, even when the students are acquiring formal knowledge of the field. There are no all-encompassing theories that we can assume would cover the learning experiences of all the students. Instead, a reflective orientation is promoted through self-evaluation and individual portfolios.

In our teacher education programme the idea of continuous learning and developing oneself as a professional provides a general framework for designing a personal curriculum. The more specific framework for designing such a curriculum consists of the teacher education program itself. This is written in terms of a process curriculum including five core competencies. The idea is that the students' personal evaluations should be included in their learning goals and strategies. Hence, their conceptions of themselves are closely intertwined with their goals and preferences (Lahti, Eteläpelto and Siitari 2004).

For their practice period, our students define their individual learning goals. In our case, they can also as a group take part in choosing and selecting their practice school environment. When they become familiar with the practice school, they can also choose a specific classroom. Our students had distinct preferences, regarding for example the level of class they wished for their practice. Furthermore, some classrooms applied specific pedagogical approaches, such as Montessori pedagogics,

and the integration of children with special education needs. As far as possible, we tried to obtain a match between the interests and preferences of each teacher student and the classroom conditions. This meant that the practice of the students in the classrooms was in many ways imbued by their previous orientations, choices, goals, and preferences – each of which is closely intertwined with the subject's personal identity.

The processes of reflecting on one's professional identity (and the construction of personal identity as an essential component of this) do not, however, take place only once while students are enrolled in a certain field of study. Our analyses of teacher students' concerns during their initial period in working life showed that their main concerns at this stage were connected to their professional future. Working and negotiation with this issue was very active, whether the students had received negative or positive experiences from their practice within the classroom (Eteläpelto and Vakiala 2005).

In a practical working-life context, the subject's professional future was the main issue of our students' negotiation and redefinition of their teacher identity. The conscious and intentional nature of these negotiations was illustrated in how they were closely intertwined with the students' understanding of their future ideals concerning the kind of teachers they wanted to become. While examining their own personal concerns, students often referred to their future goals and to their ideal conceptions of teachership. The question of the kind of teacher the student wanted to become was addressed in terms of the student's own personal characteristics, with possibilities of redefining conceptions of the self.

The role of the subject's personal identity or subjectivity does not, however, end when one enters working life and its authentic social contexts. In recent working life it is increasingly important for subjects to display their competencies, interests, strengths and preferences, that is, to give manifestations of themselves. This is connected with the need to provide evidence of qualifications, characteristics and competencies that previously might have been tacitly understood. Subjects have to identify their competencies and make them visible in portfolios (Evans, Kersch and Sakamoto 2004; Fenwick 2004). The need to reflect on and market one's personal competencies and qualifications makes it more important to manifest and illustrate one's professional self, and to make visible how it is intertwined with one's personal identity.

Individual's agentic action is needed for such working of one's professional self.

Archer postulates the individual's agentic actions as an intentional and goal-directed process, one which has relational autonomy in the subject's exercise of self. Billett (2003) and Billett and Pavlova (2005) have shown how important such an exercise of the self is for subjects' motivation

for learning across the transitions and continuities of work situations. The exercise of agentic action is understood as the construction by individuals of their ideals of learning for and through work, in relation to their subjective sense of self (Billett and Pavlova 2005).

Billett and Pavlova (2005) see continuities in the subject's sense of self as being achieved through the negotiation of subject's personal interests, goals and intentions, these also being components of their professional identities. However, despite social and cultural practices, institutional constraints, and the voices of social discourses, there exists a relational interdependence between what is socially suggested and what is enacted by individuals (Billett 2003). Learning throughout working life is thus aligned with the personal as much as with the social suggestion of the workplace. In this sense, the individual and the social world are co-constitutive (Billett and Somerville 2004).

## 10.4   Professional Subjectivity and Emotions in Teaching Work

In a teacher's work, the teacher's professional subjectivity is present in many ways. First of all, it is present through teacher's sense of purpose as a teacher, through ethical and moral concerns and the need for decision-making in everyday interactional situations. Secondly, the teacher's work can be essentially characterized as emotional work where the emotions have central function in regulating and monitoring teacher's everyday work and experiences. In the following we shall summarize some previous research demonstrating the dilemmas on the professional identity of teachers and on teaching as emotional work.

The evolving professional identities of teacher-students and novices have been found to be present in multiple selves. Roberts (2000) analysed the interplay between the notion of self, structure, and human agency within educational establishments. The analysis identified different voices or discourses: personal, professional, and institutional. The different voices or discourses give rise to stories about different kinds of identities, and they lead to an account of the ways in which subjectivities appear to be constructed.

Teacher's professional identity formation has been recently understood as an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences in professional learning contexts (Beijaard et al. 2004). Such an interpretation includes taking an active agency and a reflection on experiences and situational conditions. The conditions themselves include the organizational culture of the workplace and the professional culture

arising from subjects' professional knowledge. It also includes the moral and ethical standards that apply to the work. Since a teacher's work can be centrally understood as work in which ethical and moral norms are involved in classroom practices, a teacher's professional identity represents emotionally imbued aspects of personal identity (Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002; Zembylas 2003). Personal and professional identities are thus closely intertwined with each others in a teacher's work; they cannot be separated from each other.

Since a teacher's work is essentially characterized as emotional work, these aspects are bound to be present in practical teaching contexts. Emotional work is recognized as the ways in which professionals perform and manage their emotions in the workplace (Hochschild 1983). A teacher may contend with dilemmas faced by students and genuinely seek ways to help students overcome them. In so doing he/she experiences a variety of powerful emotions (Isenbarger and Zembylas 2006). Taking the time to listen to students' worries, giving advice or guidance to them, and showing warmth and love are all examples of emotional work in teaching. Even under great managerial stress in the context of school reform, committed expert teachers struggled to remain faithful to their sense of purpose as teachers. This included the purpose of creating trusting learning environments and being openly vulnerable with their students (Lasky 2005).

In a teacher's work, the emotional aspects are also present in dealing with colleagues and in the construction of identity statuses within school organization. In the classroom context, the emotional aspect is present in the interactive relationships between the teacher and the children. In everyday discussion this is referred in terms of the importance of a teacher being "nurturing, supportive, nice, inclusive, responsive, and kind" (Isenbarger and Zembylas 2006). It has also been understood as commitment, intimacy and passion (Goldstein 2002).

When our students were asked what their most meaningful learning experience was during their first practical internship as teacher-students, most of them mentioned that the most important thing was learning to manage their emotions in a challenging situation. Meaningful learning situations were thus situations in the classroom where the student had to use "boldness", "assertiveness", or "calmness" in order to "manage the surge of emotions". The management of emotions was manifested also in the teacher-students' descriptions of how, at the beginning of the practice, they took everything too personally and emotionally. Thus, one student reported how she almost started to cry after receiving negative feedback, but later had learnt to take the situation more professionally (Eteläpelto and Vakiala 2005).

## 10.5    Continuities and Transitions in Teacher Students' Identity Construction

In order to analyse the continuities and discontinuities of subjects' professional identities, we shall focus on three students from two successive learning communities, representing different kinds of identity statuses. We shall describe the transitions and continuities that manifest themselves in subjects' concerns, and in their projects for revising their professional subjectivities. The contexts in question are a university learning community and an authentic working-life context. We shall illustrate how the personal and social identities are manifested in the communities; also the kinds of transitions and continuities in professional identity construction that can be identified. In each case we shall also describe what the students perceived as the most important obstacles and, on the other hand, the most important resources within the learning communities.

The learning communities in question were very different from each other. The first was an intensive small-group-based learning community within a university context; the second was a working-life context of a primary school.

In the following pages we shall focus particularly on the subjects' transitions from the first community (university-based) to the second community (working-life-based). The three cases to be described have been chosen to represent the three different types of participation that we previously found in the university-based community. These cases in our previous study showed (i) decreased or minor participation, (ii) highly involved participation, and (iii) increased participation (Eteläpelto, Littleton, Lahti and Wirtanen 2005).

In the first two types, there were radical changes in subjects' participation when they moved from the university learning community to the working-life community. The third case, representing increased participation, showed a similar trajectory of participation in both communities.

### 10.5.1  Three Types of Identity Construction Occurring in the Two Contexts

This data were collected in the context of an authentic learning environment in a university department, which was carrying out action research over a three-year time frame. The participants in the community were a trainee-teacher group of nine students (seven females, two males). The students were aged 20–40 at the time of data collection, and they were completing the second and third years of their university studies.

The teacher education program in the university was based on socio-constructivist ideas of learning and studying. An intensive small-group learning community approach was used to promote teacher competencies. Students regularly wrote individual learning diaries and self-evaluative portfolios concerning their learning experiences. The group had considerable autonomy in defining such matters as the means and methods of learning. The group also had to reconcile individual- and group-level goals in the course of drawing up their study plans. (Lahti, Eteläpelto, and Siitari 2004).

The students had their practical internship (16 weeks) in a primary school, which was advanced in terms of inclusive education and the application of progressive pedagogics, including Montessori methods. The school principal had developed the school according to an active and inclusive learning model; for example, pupils with various kinds of learning difficulties were included in a normal classroom. If a child had a medical diagnosis related to learning difficulties, he or she had a personal school assistant to give individual support during the lessons. Because there were many children with learning difficulties, there were often several adults in the classroom.

The data concerning the practice period were collected using semi-structured interviews. In these the teacher-students were presented with questions concerning their main concerns and reflections during the internship, plus their learning experiences and most challenging situations; also the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats they recognized in their teachership. In addition, the interview addressed their ideals of good teachership, and changes which might have occurred in their conceptions (Eteläpelto and Vakiala 2005).

Based on an analysis of the students' trajectories over the two years of study in the university, three qualitatively different trajectories of participation could be identified. The first type was characterized by reports of high-level and relatively steady participation throughout the period in question. The second type was characterized by reports of increased participation, starting from a relatively low level and increasing over time. The third type was characterized by reports of either decreased or fairly marginal participation (Eteläpelto et al. 2005).

In the following paragraphs we shall take an individual student from each of the three sub-groups, representing different kinds of participation in the first (university-based) learning community. Thus, Alice is an example of a teacher-student who had minor participation at the university context, but a high level of participation in the working-life context. By contrast, John is an example of a student who represented highly-involved participation in the university context, but minor participation in

the working life context. The third student, Karen, is an example of in-creased participation in both contexts.

### From minor participation in the university context to high-level participation in the school context – the case of Alice

Alice's participation in the university learning community remained very low throughout her three years there. She perceived her participation as low because she did not perceive the group atmosphere to be safe enough. Indeed, she perceived the atmosphere as fairly hard and conflicting, and this brought her experiences that were somewhat negative in emotional terms. Believing that a pleasant and warm atmosphere is very important for learning, she tried to influence the group atmosphere in order to make it more positive and friendly. However, she did not manage to change the situation.

Throughout the three years she spent in the community, Alice had made several attempts to construct an emotionally positive and inclusive climate in the community, one that applied certain constraints and ethical standards to what she perceived as acceptable in group communication. As a consequence of her futile attempts to construct an emotionally posi-tive and inclusive atmosphere, she had adopted an orientation of with-drawal in group situations. Alice thus perceived her participating role in the group as very minor. In addition, her actual learning experiences in the community were affectively rather negative and harmful. She believed that the group had in many ways suppressed her own interaction skills and her belief in herself. She might previously have considered herself to be a sociable and pleasant person, but in the group she could sometimes *'feel like an outcast.'*

The practice period was perceived by Alice as a very positive ex-perience, actually *'the best part of the whole teacher education'*. What she perceived as most positive during the practice period was the support and equal co-operation with the supervising teacher. Alice described her su-pervising teacher in a very positive way, as follows: *'She was a person who gave space for others, and she was also very broad-minded, and she allowed me to experiment with my ideas and then gave her comments … we had very good collaboration and trust in each other.'*

The model for using independent and child-centred method origi-nated from the supervising teacher, who did not engage in much directive teaching from the front of the class. Rather she used "contracts" with the students, with independent contract work on task assignments for two-weeks periods. The principles of Montessori pedagogy, which emphasize individual goal-setting and self-control, were used as the main notion of classroom organization.

As her main learning outcome from the practical period, Alice maintained that she had learned to understand how to organize children's classroom learning on the basis of pupils' independent working rather than on traditional teacher-centred methods. Alice had previously been quite sceptical about child-centred methods, and therefore she had given a lot of thought to these pupil-centred ways of working. Alice commented as follows: *'I have always thought that the children should be supported in becoming independent learners, but I have also been sceptical as to how the kids would be able to do that kind of independent work.'*

Based on her experiences in the classroom, Alice reported that she was now thinking about it *'in quite a different way from before'*. Alice also mentioned that the goal for her further academic studies was to seek out new practical methods to maintain student-centred teaching practice. In her future academic studies Alice also wished to figure out how as a teacher she could create *'a good learning environment, and bring the kind of good aspects into the classroom that would lead the children to enjoy things and learn in the classroom'*.

In the classroom context, which Alice perceived as emotionally supportive and collegial, she could also start to solve her personal learning challenges with regard to facing aggressive situations. She reported that a positive learning experience in the classroom context was being able to use the other adults as a resource for her professional learning. As a significant learning experience in the classroom context Alice reported a situation concerning one boy's aggressive behaviour towards practitioners in the classroom. The boy was not, however, aggressive to the supervising teacher. Alice gave active thought to the question of why the boy was so aggressive towards her, despite the fact that she *'had been very kind in relation to the boy'*. Alice had discussed the problem with other adults in the classroom, and one of them, the school assistant, related how she had changed the boy's behaviour through giving him a certain kind of feedback. The school assistant had told the boy that she *'well understood that the boy didn't enjoy being here'*. She had continued by stressing that 'the boy was a good guy' and someone that she liked very much mentioning also that the boy *'had a lot of positive resources within himself'*. As a consequence of such feedback, the boy's attitude towards the school assistant had changed in a positive direction.

Alice herself did not get so far with the boy because the practice period was ending. However, she had conducted deep-level reflection on aggressive behaviour and the reasons for it. She had also given attention to how a teacher should interact with such children. Thus, she started to become an active agent in her personal and professional learning challenge, namely how to face aggressive people and situations involving strong confrontations. The same problem had been present at the university

learning community. However, there she had adopted an orientation of agential passivity after making futile attempts to affect the community. By contrast, in the safe classroom environment, where she received emotional and social support from the supervising teacher, she adopted an agential activity orientation. This involved formulating a project to solve the problem of facing aggressive behaviour and searching for ways to change the situation. The classroom context offered proper resources to proceed with this personal learning project, and it produced a learning experience that was important to her.

The example above demonstrates the mutually constitutive nature of the learning community and the subject's learning needs. Since Alice could not engage in meaningful learning projects within the conflicting atmosphere of the university learning community, she moved into a position of marginality in the community. However, she could engage in active agency when she entered a more favourable environment.

Moving from one environment to another also demonstrated the continuity of Alice's learning challenges. The most important restrictive aspect, the conflicting atmosphere of the university learning community, was carried over to the working life situation in which she had to face up to the problem of dealing with an aggressive child. In both communities, a challenge present in the situation had produced very strong emotions in her. Feelings experienced earlier caused the issue to remain a learning challenge in a subsequent environment.

Another kind of continuity of subjectivity was represented by a male student who was a high-level participant in the university learning context, but whose participation was lower and emotionally frustrating within the school context. In his orientation, John was the opposite of Alice, since John had strong theoretical interests.

### *From high level participation in the university context to minor participation in the schooling context – the case of John*

In the university learning community John practised active agency through theorizing and conceptualizing. He also tried to arbitrate conflicting views, and to tutor the group. In the university learning community, John represented highly involved participants, people who mostly perceived the community and group working as having great significance for subjects' motivation to study. For those who had highly-involved participation, the community appeared to strengthen professional subjectivity. On the other hand, it did not greatly promote a reflective orientation towards the self.

For the practical period, John defined his learning challenge as being that he should use *'more concrete talk while speaking to others'*.

When John started the school practice, he had adopted a well-established notion of investigative project learning, and he wanted to test how this idea would function in an authentic classroom environment. In order to realize the project in the classroom, he first had to convince his student partner to collaborate with the conducting of this experiment.  The other student was actually not so convinced of the applicability of the notion. In the classroom there were many pupils with learning disabilities, (e.g. children with an ADHD diagnosis) who had great difficulties in concentrating on independent work or in collaborating with other pupils.

In the classroom, John was active enough to carry out the investigative learning project. He tried to make the pupils work independently and to encourage their active questioning of the subject matter. However, John soon realized that it was very difficult to engage pupils in independent and active collaboration. Formulating questions was even more difficult for the pupils, who did not seem to be very motivated to engage in project working. As a consequence of this frustrating experience John reported that he become more realistic – or actually more pessimistic regarding the theoretical notions he had previously adopted so enthusiastically. He also perceived it as very difficult to find suitable materials for the project. Hence, he had started to understand the benefits of didactically well-organized study material. He also said that that he tended to understand better than before the advantages of teacher-centred methods.

The most serious shortcoming of the classroom experience, in John's opinion, was *'the change of supervising teacher during the practice'*. Since the new teacher was inexperienced, she did not serve as a resource for John's learning. Moreover, there was a lack of other adults in the classroom who might have served as resources for John's learning. Because of this, John perceived his practice period as rather unrewarding.

John is an example of a learner who is engaged in active agency while bringing a theoretically interesting experimental project into the classroom. Overall, since the classroom environment did not offer the resources he needed, his endeavour did not bring the kind of positive learning experiences that would have served his needs. The classroom environment did not promote his subjective learning goals in terms of receiving an affectively positive learning experience.

### *Increased participation in both contexts – the case of Karen*

Karen represents the trajectory of increased participation in the university learning community. Her primary orientation in the university learning community consisted of pondering the nature and degree of her own participation in relation to community development. A self-critical stance

regarding her previous opinions and attitudes was characteristic of her orientation as a whole. Karen's secondary orientation included a contextually dependent stance towards the community, while attempting to arbitrate between conflicting opinions.

In a similar vein to her reflective stance towards herself, Karen displayed sensitiveness to the community in her evaluations of it. She further emphasized that she would like to have such *'sensitiveness within the classroom situation'*. Her wish was that as soon as she entered the classroom, she would like to work out her own position there. She would also like to become familiar with the children, and she hoped that the children would learn to know her before she embarked on the teaching. Such a creation of relationships with the children before actively starting on her own projects seemed to be a very conscious approach for her. All in all, she seemed both to favour and display the trajectory of a gradual movement from a peripheral to a central participant.

Within the school situation, Karen was someone who reflected on her own "stereotypes", her previous opinions, and values. Her aim was *'to learn flexible and situation-specific ways of working'*. Karen also very strongly identified with the notion of teachership, and *'the need for continuous learning in order to become a good teacher'*. During her practical period Karen perceived that she had developed in terms of flexibility in her actions and ways of working. As regards the resources she drew on during her school practice, she mentioned the supervising teacher, the other teacher student she collaborated with in the classroom, and also the children in the classroom. Karen mentioned that her parents were also teachers, and thus provided resources for the construction of her professional identity.

The learning outcomes reported by Karen within the university learning community included comprehensive changes in her conceptions of herself. In addition to this, she reported that she had made progress in developing sensitivity to group-level issues, such as the culture and atmosphere of the community.

The high-level learning outcomes which Karen could achieve in both learning communities involved her reflective orientation to the mutual relationships of the community, and to her own activities. For her, sensitivity to the culture of the learning community, and mutual adaptation in her interaction with the community, seemed to represent a condition for achieving increased participation in both communities. Her simultaneous concern for community issues and for her own related projects in the community seemed to produce significant learning outcomes in both areas.

## 10.6    Conclusions and Discussion

### 10.6.1 Implications from the Three Cases

The above elaboration of the three students showed that having an opportunity for mutuality in relation to the community seemed to be important for students' learning and identity construction. It also showed that in those situations where the students did not achieve an active agency in the community, they could not promote their professional and personal identities. This demonstrates the importance of individual's agency for learning and identity development. It also demonstrates the mutual constitutive nature of the individual and social context. The possibilities for students to solve their developmental learning tasks seemed to be dependent on the kinds of resources the community offered them.

The three cases above demonstrate the continuity of subjective learning projects across different learning environments. They demonstrate how subjects bring with them projects from one learning community to another. The projects might be conscious goals, but they can also be less conscious emotionally-imbued orientations and personally significant developmental tasks. Whatever their status, they seemed to become manifest from one context to another thus demonstrating their intensity. When moving from one context to another, the students aimed to utilize resources offered by the communities in question, in order to solve their dilemmas within the new context. In other words, the student brings along his or her individual learning projects and developmental tasks, in order to solve them in the subsequent environment.

Our students manifested great differences in their orientations. One student, John, was fairly theoretically oriented, and in this respect he could use the university context as a suitable resource for developing his professional identity. On the other hand, when he moved to the school context, he was no longer able to use cultural knowledge within the context for the construction of his identity (John).

Another student (Alice), who had a lot of experience of working with children, but who had less interest in theory, could not use the university context for the construction of her professional identity. Alice considered teacher education in the university environment too theoretically oriented, and she preferred a practical environment for developing her teachership. We were able to observe that she was indeed successful in utilizing the practical classroom context for her learning.

Our results imply that in order to negotiate and redefine one's personal and professional identity in the learning community, there have to be mutually constitutive spaces for learning in terms of developing professional subjectivity. In such spaces, the learner's personal goals, plans and

intentional projects come together in a favourable environment, one which offers resources for realizing them.

If learning goals are analysed from the perspective of an individual subject and his or her individual learning objectives, we have to ask how a given community offers resources for the practising of agency in the community. If we compare the three students above in this respect, we can see that personal discerning, and deliberating on the resources available in the actual learning community, were features typical of Karen in both communities. She seemed to have a conscious strategy at the beginning of her entry into a new community, i.e. that of being a peripheral participant, someone who tries to become familiar with the community before suggesting individual projects within it. Karen actually explored the atmosphere and resources that the community would offer to her before entering into active endeavours. Such a stance of initial peripheral participation offered her space to reflect on her own goals in relation to the community.

It is often suggested that individual subjects who find it difficult to work in a learning community have weak social skills, and that these weaknesses are more or less permanent features of individual competencies. Our results demonstrate that in many cases this is simply not true. A more productive approach would be to focus on the mutually constitutive relationships of the individual subject and the community.

## 10.6.2  Becoming a Subject in a Community

If the relationships of individuals and communities are analysed in terms of becoming a subject in a community, these relationships are seen as places where subjectivities emerge. Becoming a subject in a community means becoming an active voice, contributing to the discourse constructed by and maintained in that community.  Phillips (2002) has perceived subjectivity as a battleground of competing discourses. The subjectivities that dominate acquire dominance by virtue of greater familiarity with the predominant discourse. Becoming a subject in a community therefore means becoming a voice of the community's discourse, reaching a point at which one's voice will in fact be heard.

Becoming a subject in a community means becoming an active and intentional agent within the community. In our cases, as we have seen, it entails engaging in subjects' personal learning projects, in which the subjects can utilize the social resources of the community  (Billett and Somerville 2004; Phillips 2002). Given that there are situations where the community does not promote the subjectivities of all its members, we have to ask what are the necessary conditions for the promotion of the subjectivities of individual participants. In our earlier study, where we

focussed on dilemmas involved in the construction of professional subjectivities in an intensive long-term learning community, we found that perceived safety was a crucial characteristic of our intensive long-term learning community (Lahti, Eteläpelto and Siitari, 2004). For the construction of professional teacher identities during the internship, the supervising teacher of the classroom was the most important resource for our students (Eteläpelto and Vakiala 2005). The supervising teacher offered a role model as well as social and emotional support for the student. In addition, other adults working in the classroom and other students were perceived as an important resource for constructing one's professional identity.

From the perspective of developing professional subjectivities in the learning community, our observations imply that the community does not necessarily promote the subjectivities of all its members. This was particularly true in the case of those subjects who reported decreased or marginal participation; it was not evident that these students strengthened their professional subjectivities while in the community. This is also apparent from the emotionally negative experiences which they reported, i.e. experiences of dis-identification (Hodges 1998) which led students to suggest that they had turned away from the group in their attempts to construct a positive identity status. Those who felt that they had become central members of the community and managed to realise their learning projects perceived that they had strengthened their identity and had experienced personal growth in the direction of teachership. Those who were not able to do this seemed to turn to other groups outside the community in order to strengthen their identities. Our results imply that if students do not have the possibility of an active participatory role, one that would allow them to have an influence on community-level issues, their professional subjectivities are not promoted.

## 10.7　References

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