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Professionalisation of Adult Educators

International and Comparative Perspectives

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Contents

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From professional studies to learning experiences – creating learning possibilities for adult educators

Abstract

Comprehensions of self as learner and adult educator are influenced by previous life and learning experiences and professional studies. When studying to become an adult educator, it is vital that professional studies focus on learning process, also on personal and professional growth of self. This chapter discuss results from qualitative research and focuses on the question: what are the comprehensions of self as a learner and as an adult educator in the context of professional studies at the university? The methodological framework of the research provides a basis for understanding and supporting the learning process in professional studies for adult educators at university.

Introduction

Adult education professionals and especially adult educators support and influence important educational and social processes in the society, they, also, facilitate the learning process of adult learners in different learning-teaching contexts. Therefore, the professional studies of adult educators presupposes continual learning, clarifying one's personal teaching and learning theory, and the awareness of self as a learner and an adult educator. However, for those interested in qualifying as an adult educator, there are not many university based educational programmes or long-term courses offering initial education and professional training for adult educators (Milana 2010, p. 6).

Several European universities have programmes for adult education. Previous research results show that there are 19 Bachelor Programmes and 94 Master programmes specialising in adult education in nine European countries (Egetenmeyer and Nuissl 2010, p. 36). Thus, implementing and developing curricula for adult educators is an opportunity and a challenge for universities as well as a perspective to ensure systematic and research based development.

This chapter explores the use of three approaches as a tool for teaching and learning in professional studies for adult educators and as a tool for collecting empirical data. As researchers and academics we are dealing with curricula

development and implementation since 1997 researching and developing learning and teaching contexts in the university. This chapter seeks to support the links between teaching and research in adult education communities and in academic departments where either teaching adult educators or adult education is a main discipline. We wish to examine our teaching practice and to connect our teaching and research roles, and roles as educational developers.

Research results have value for further discussion about the development of teaching practice and development of professional curricula for the adult educator. The central arguments for sharing our research results are found in *Linking teaching and research in disciplines and departments* (Jenkins, Healey, Zetter 2007):

- the 'teaching-research nexus' is central to higher education;
- implications for better teaching and supporting learning at university have to be constructed based on research;
- academic departments are central to developing the links between field research and adult student learning;
- a central way to develop effective practice is to share studies with researchers and practitioners.

The research question is: What are the comprehensions of students of self as a learner and as an adult educator in a professional studies context? The aim of the study is to analyse students' comprehensions of self as a learner and as an adult educator.

Theoretical consideration

The theoretical context of our research is based on a social-constructivist approach and adult learning theories. According to a social-constructivist approach learning is a developmental activity and process (Hoarl 2006, p. 346), which has social and individual dimensions. The social dimension is influenced by social environment, cultural background, prior life experiences, and changes in personal and social life (Alheit 2004; Bennington, Derrida, 1993; Jarvis 2011; Heidegger 2000; Illeris 2002). The individual dimension is connected to self, cognition, emotions and motivation (Fink 2003). Psychological constructivism emphasizes the intrapersonal dimensions of learning and personal development. It sees the construction of knowledge as involving the activation and reorganization of existing knowledge to make a unique understanding of the self (Chen and Rovegno 2000, p. 357).

The professional development of adult educators is seen as a learning process, the focus of which is developing an understanding of learning, self as a learner

and as an educator. Therefore the learning-teaching at university context emphasize interaction of two processes in professional studies:

1. interpersonal processes: dialogue, social interaction and active participation in the learning process, in which the learning situations are important, particularly the opportunities which afford students to take responsibility and control of their personal learning including the procedures, activities, and approaches, which structure the learning environment (Light, Cox, Calkins 2009, p. 66);
2. intrapersonal processes: self-understanding, self-construction and self-reflection processes, as well as self-concept, self-awareness, autonomy, supporting the formation of responsibility and self-regulation (Barnett 2000; Mezirow 2000). Knowledge of self is a crucial component in professional growth and it is essential to be aware of what *I am* in regarding to the learning process as an adult educator (Cranton 2001).

The professional development, formation of identity, understanding of teaching and learning are connected with previous life experience, beliefs and teaching practices, and with self-conception and image of self as a learner and as an educator (Gutheil and Hof 2010; Dall'Alba and Sandberg 2006; Karm 2007; Jõgi and Gross 2009; Taylor, Marienau and Fidler 2000).

There are numerous approaches which help to support and understand the learning process concerning the personal and situational characteristics of an adult student during the study process (Dean 2002, p. 100). Understanding and supporting the learner self is a very complex process that involves considering analytical information from different sources including the combination of different approaches. Some teaching and learning approachescan focus on the learning process and the learners' perceptions, and on the ability of the learner to respond verbally and in writing (Dean 2002).

Many approaches can be used to collect empirical data about learners and their learning process. In our research we used *reflective writings, narrative interviews, a thematic essay*, which have been used as learning-teaching approaches and tasks in professional studies. These approaches grant students flexibility to describe, reflect and analyse themselves, their learning and teaching experiences, since they can use their own words and can emphasise what they feel is most important.

Reflective writing (first year autumn semester 2011) as a metacognitive tool enabled to construe oneself as a learner and the ideas connected with learning about self and significant learning experiences in an university environment. The focus in reflecting writing is describing perspectives and development as

a learner (Moon 2007). Reflective writing as a learning task based on assumptions that student's self-analysis as a learner, when reflecting on learning and the learning experiences 1) promoted understanding the significance of learning and learning experiences and 2) becoming aware of the personal meaning of learning comprehensions. Learning comprehensions are influenced by the self-concept, understanding of oneself as a learner and as an educator, previous education, and personal experience (Jõgi and Gross 2009, 2012; Karm 2007; Milana 2010). Reflective writing is a practice in which the writer describes a real event, interaction, thought, memory, form, adding a personal reflection on the meaning of the item or thought, feeling, emotion, or situation in their experience.

The goal of the *Narrative interview (second year autumn semester 2012)* as a learning task was to direct the attention to the biographic and social context of being and becoming an educator. The foundation for using the method is a statement that construction of meanings in dialogue is a learning process (Heikkinen 2002). Data from narrative interviews create a narrative frame of reference (Heikkinen 2002, p. 16), enabling one to understand comprehensions of different selves in a biographical context. Via the narrative interview it was possible to speak of important personal viewpoints prompted by a generative question. The interview question was: tell me, how did you become an adult educator?

Reciprocal pair interviewing as a study task in a study context gives an opportunity to open oneself in a trusting communication situation and gives an experience of being both an interviewer and an interviewee. The main purpose is to stimulate the telling of stories of becoming and being an adult educator – significant episodes in life that illustrate why and how certain life events, persons and self are significant in the process (Flick 2006). The narrative interview also allows for a certain amount of reflection, supporting a person in remembering, extensive learning and give possibilities for connections, evaluating, regretting or rejoicing (Wagner and Wodak 2006, p. 8).

Thematic essay (second year spring semester 2013) enabled the students to present and construct their viewpoints on being an adult educator. The goal of the thematic essay *Educator to educator* was set to direct the focus on the individual experience as an educator.

The foundation for the thematic essay as a learning task has a social and creative writing function according to which writing is the expression of personal thoughts and images. The created text is of social character and shareable with others (Doubtfire 2003).

The three approaches were learning tasks with specific objectives, which provided possibilities to use them as approaches for supporting the self development and to express understanding of self as a learner and adult educator.

Learning self and self-concept

As we pointed out before, learning is partly a developmental activity, but also an intrapersonal process and can be defined as personal and individual, a self-development process and a change since the personal experience is a prerequisite which supports the study process. P. Jarvis understands learning from the point of view of the subjectivity of the individual and states that learning is a fundamental process which manifests Self in self-formation and self-developmental processes (Jarvis 2002, p. 35). Therefore learning can be viewed as a process of becoming self and being aware of the different selves as an important goal in learning (Jarvis 2011). According to humanistic phenomenological or growth model (Heiddeger 1961), self is not fixed, self is constantly changing, a growing and evolving process (Shub 1999, p. 50).

Self includes characteristics and images that a person counts as significant and essential for oneself. An important part of the self-concept is harmony between real and possible selves. Discords between the selves appear as doubting selves through the self-image (Rogers 1990). The self-concept reflects a part of the conscious experience and is connected with self-image. The self-image is a basis for being aware and describing oneself (cognitive and behavioural) and evaluating oneself (emotional-motivational) in time. The self-image, in turn, is a basis for self-concept which includes comprehensions, beliefs towards oneself and in relation to others (see Figure 1). The self-image is a central factor which influences behaviour choices, attitudes, beliefs, values and possible selves. The self-concept differentiates between descriptive and evaluative functions (Campbell, Chew and Scratchey 1991, cited Pullmann 2003, p. 199). The descriptive self as part of self-concept includes knowledge of self – objective knowledge and beliefs of self. The evaluative function of self-conception expresses the attitude towards self (Pullmann 2003).

Figure 1: Components of self

Self

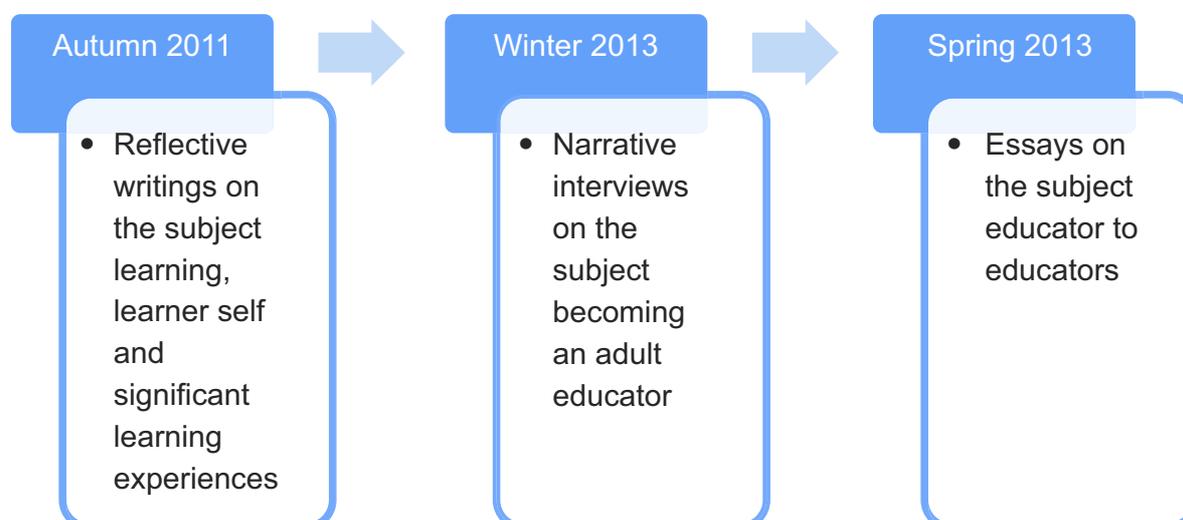Self-image

Self-concept +
possible self
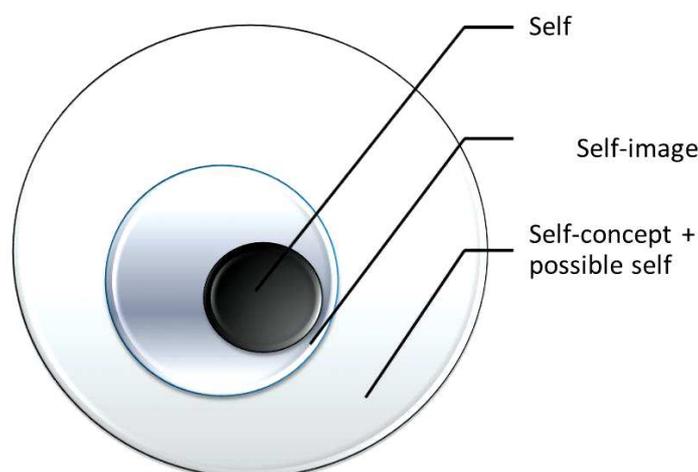
According to a possible self-theory (Markus and Nurius 1986) understandings of self are constructed as possible selves which express what is hoped, believed, wished to accomplish and feared about the future (Rossiter 2007). The past self has impact on the possible present and future self (Wilson 2000, cited Strahan and Wilson 2006). The future, i.e. possible selves, can be influenced more than the present and past selves. Future-oriented self-aspects descend from past self-reflecting previous experiences (Hoyle and Sherill 2006).

Concepts of past, current and possible selves are substantially shaped by a person's life and learning experiences. In comparison, possible future selves are more unstable, thus can undertake more influence than past and present selves. Self-conception or self is tackled as an understanding – a view of oneself that includes past, present and possible selves which are targets, i.e. what one thinks one can achieve and can possibly achieve (Lockwood and Matthews 2007; Baumeister 1999 cited Kawakami, Phillis, Simard, Pontiero, Brnjas, Khan, Mills, Greenwald and Dovidio 2012; Teraji 2008). The self and self-concept of adult students can be viewed as knowledge about selves, conscious experience, and as constantly changing, in a growing and evolving process of becoming and being a learner and an adult educator.

Methods

Empirical data was collected from 17 adult students who studied the curriculum Adult Educator at Tallinn University (it is worth 45 ECTS) during four semesters between 2011-2013 through multiple methods: *reflective writings (17), thematic essays (17) and narrative interviews (17)*, (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Data collection process

Autumn 2011	Winter 2013	Spring 2013
• Reflective writings on the subject learning, learner self and significant learning experiences	• Narrative interviews on the subject becoming an adult educator	• Essays on the subject educator to educators

Sample

The sample consisted of 17 students with different educational background, aged from 21 to 51, seven were male and 10 female. All have adult teaching experience (between 2 and 17 years) in different fields of practice e.g. practical psychology, foreign language teaching, cleaning service, beauty service, services, military training, cooking. Empirical data was coded and pseudonyms were used, contracts between researchers and students were considered.

Data analysis

Data analysis was based on thematic analysis and pragmatic phenomenography, which is centred in the process of data analysis (Van Rossum and Hamer 2010, p. 37). Phenomenography is a methodology designed to make variation of conceptions visible and to present alternative views (Åkerlind 2005), and is identified as a process more of discovery than of verification. The object of phenomenographic analysis is variation in meaning, perceptions, understanding or experiences of a phenomenon on a collective level (Marton 1981; Åkerlind 2005). The object of the present data analysis was student comprehensions of self. The purpose of thematic analysis is to identify patterns of meaning across the data that provide an answer to the research question being addressed.

Stages of the analysis

Data analysis was conducted in three phases (see Figure 3) which include the following stages:

Phase I 17 separate students' reflective writings, 17 thematic essays and 17 narrative interviews were analysed.

- Reflective writings

Segments were selected from reflective papers, which were connected with understandings of self as learner and learning. The focus in the analysing process was on categories, which were analysed in phase II.

Phase II Categories were inductively formed consisting of two phenomena (learner as self and learning). The idea was that through categories, differences in understandings would be presented and the analysis was based on phenomenographic horizontal classification, where formed units of meaning are equally important and equally valuable.

- Thematic essays and narrative interviews were analysed on the basis of an inductive approach (Saldana, 2009; Braun and Clarke, 2006), and thematic analysis was applied.

Thematic patterns were identified through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development. The focus in the analysing process was on two phenomena: perceptions of self as an adult educator and teaching adults in context of personal experiences.

Stage I – *Searching for themes* – the text was read several times and key themes were identified in the text. Themes were transformed into codes and aggregated into a matrix form. A theme represents a level of patterned response or expressions from the data.

Stage II – *Generating themes and codes* – the text was re-read, then segments in the text were selected that were connected with themes and understandings of self as an educator and training.

Stage III – *Reviewing the themes, categorization-detailed analyse* – selected data was analysed inductively to form categories based on understandings of two phenomena (self as educator and teaching) and examples of formed categories were searched.

Stage IV – *Contextualizing and interpretation* – thematic categories were generalised and meanings were interpreted based on a constructionist view – focuses on looking at how a certain experience is created by the data.

Phase II categories from data analysis (self as learner, self as educator, learning and teaching) were aggregated in matrix form.

Phase III submission of data and reconstruction of comprehensions created, where variations found in analysis about self as learner and self as educator were present.

Figure 3: Phases of analysis
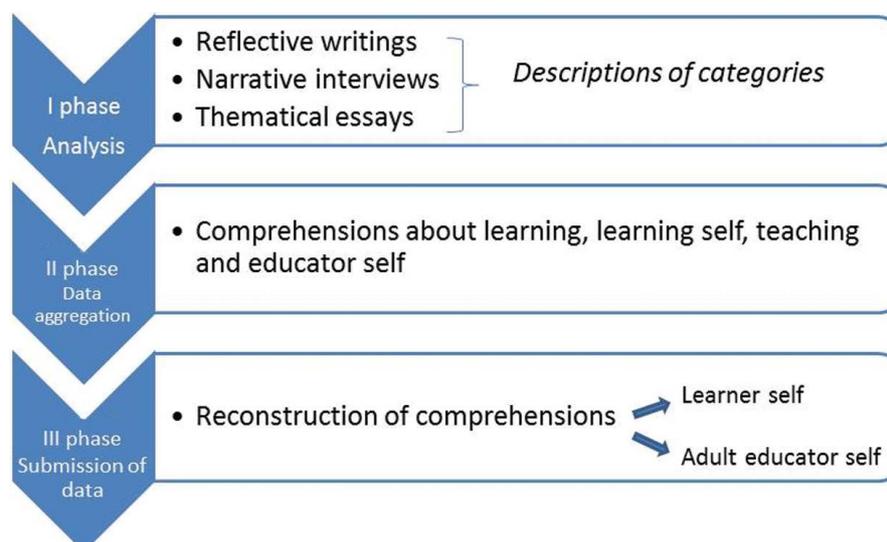
Findings and discussion

In the following part of the chapter the analysis is presented as reconstructions of comprehensions by combining content-oriented and thematic analytical approaches (Wagner and Wodak 2006, p. 394; Flick 2006, p. 186). During the reconstruction process we 1) defined macro-themes (*Learner self* and *Adult educator self*); 2) defined real and possible self and 3) illustrated themes with relevant sequences from reflection papers, thematic essays and narrative interviews. The reconstructions have been created by both researchers to give an opportunity to understand the self of learner and self of adult educator.

Due to the complexity of empirical data and extensive dataset we selected valuable empirical examples, which mirror differences and present in this chapter reconstructions of comprehensions of 3 students. This group of 3 students meet the criterion of different professional background and adult teaching experience: Vello has 2 years, Annika 17 and Ellen 10 years experience in the different fields of practice.

Vello is 31 years old, teaching experience as an adult educator 2 years. Field of practice include practical and social psychology. The beginning of the story as an adult educator is connected with law and psychology studies. In addition to a law degree Vello studied psychology at university level. Vello works as an adult educator and finds it important to teach using practical psychology.

For him, learning is a continuous and enjoyable process where rhythm and effective time management are important. Learning is associated also with his hobby, practicality, transformation of knowledge into his educator's work.

Since learning for me is a continuous process – basically a hobby – then it is OK for me to study during weekends… But it is important to keep a rhythm that would make the process enjoyable.

Vello as a learner is a goal-setter, self-directed and motivated by his own interests, he finds it important to develop, move towards his goals and obtain the necessary knowledge in practical study situations. As a learner, Vello thinks learning experience is essential. He thinks practicality, theory associated with practice should be important because one can practise the new knowledge in field of practice.

I think learning experiences are really special to me where one can speak about practical things and where one can try out the theoretical knowledge via practical tasks. I find it significant because in that case acquiring knowledge and integrating them with oneself is extremely effective.

Vello as an educator moves towards simplicity, his motives are to be a simple, at-tractive trainer who passes on practical knowledge. Simplicity is associated with field competence, trust of learners and practicality.

> *The educator has to think as philosopher and speak as a peasant – in other words the message must be as simple as possible! A real expert is someone who can explain a rather difficult thing so simply that anyone can understand. Training could not be a very serious event, training is a culmination. Anything can be explained if one is actually competent. Then it can be done simply.*

The motives of the educator also include the goal to apply for the adult educator's qualification certificate to have formal proof.

> *For that end I am going to apply for the educator's qualification certificate soon to have a formal document proving my knowledge and experience. I hope it will help me to open doors.*

Vello as an educator is calm, cool, he likes what he is doing, he prepares thor-oughly, obtains energy from it. Vello notices and values passing on knowledge and thus the roles that an educator has to tackle: medium of knowledge and ex-periences, expert, motivator, personable attractive educator, the most important of which is passing on knowledge that has to be practical.

> *The work of an educator includes many roles that he has to take on. I would describe myself as valuing these three roles the most: the medium of knowledge and experience, motivator and attractive educator.*

The possible selves of the educator manifest themselves in roles: a charismatic medium of knowledge of difficult concepts, educator as an inspirer, educator as a motivator, a certified educator and wise (experienced in life) "*top educator*".

> *I strive to become a trainer who charismatically passes on really useful information that helps the participants to raise their quality of life.*

The possible self manifests itself, also, in motives to conduct trainings outside Estonia and in his own educator's vision and developmental wishes to become a "*top educator*" in Estonia and Finland.

> *It is my vision to develop, in fields that interest me, to be a top educator in Estonia and Finland and given the chance in other countries – charismatically giving people really use-ful knowledge that can help them raise their quality of life.*

Doubting and adversative self manifests itself in recognising the difficulty of post-training analysis, analysis is associated with administrative work.

To me, as an educator, it is difficult to analyse the training and conclude the outcomes after it has ended because conducting the training is the culmination for me and after it I feel compelled to start preparing for another training, rather than do administrative work.

The learner-self of Vello manifests itself in self-regulative and cognitive processes: goal-setting, self-directing, obtaining knowledge. The real selves of the educator come forth in activities (passing on knowledge and speaking), in roles (medium of knowledge, expert, motivator, attractive educator) and in motives (striving towards simplicity, striving towards sharing knowledge). In the motive to apply for the educator's qualification, the possible self having a qualification becomes clear.

Self-representations may construct significant ideas about what somebody wants to be or what he feels that he should be (Harter 1999, p. 142). Possible selves emerge as roles (charismatic medium of understandable or difficult knowledge, inspirer, certified adult educator, wise (experienced in life) "*top trainer*"); as motives (training outside Estonia), and as visions (become a "*top trainer*" in Estonia and Finland).

The biographic and narrative context of the self-representations of Vello is laconic and does not enable us to analyse the associations between forming the selves and social and biographic context. However, the beginning of the educator story is plain that associates previous (law and psychology) and present studies at university and corroborates previous research that prior education may give a stimulus and a model for starting work as an educator. (Jõgi and Gross 2012)

The self as an adult educator is central in the thematic essay of Vello, which involve varietal meaningful roles and vision as an adult educator. There are several selves, which are strong resources for being and becoming an adult educator in the future (see Figure 4).

The real learner-selves and educator-selves of Vello differ in orientations and attitudes, reflecting discrepancies in his self-concept of learner and adult educator. His learner-self is orientated at self-development, goals in obtaining knowledge and transforming that knowledge into educator work. Educator-self is orientated at simplicity, mediating knowledge and experiences and roles are connected: medium of knowledge and experience, expert, motivator, attractive educator, the most important of which is mediating practical knowledge and experiences. The possible self is a future vision of himself as a wise (life experienced) "*top trainer*" that can be interpreted as a conceptual self and a perspective of the professional development of Vello.

Figure 4: Vello's selves
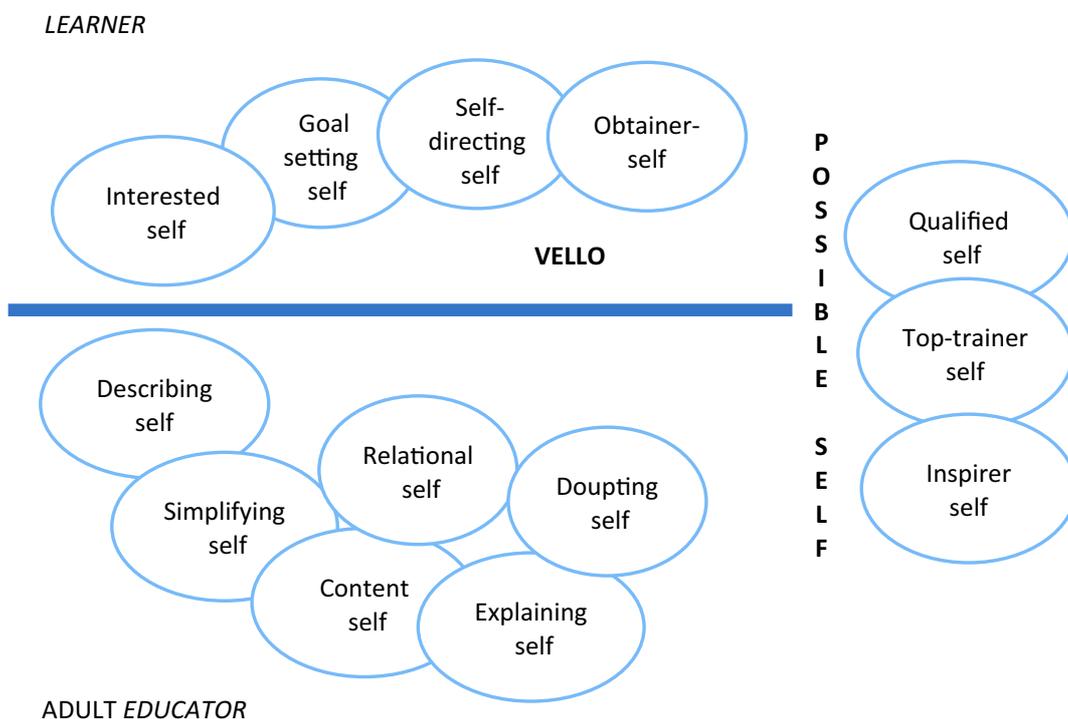
LEARNER

Annika, 49 years old, teaching experience as an adult educator 17 years, practice of field is beautician. Annika as a learner is conscientious, thorough, enthusiastic, understands learning developmentally. She was taught music and singing as a child. Later she learned German, Italian and Finnish; has studied to be a hairdresser and a vocational teacher. Since childhood she has sung in a choir and as a soloist. Her education, language studies and work-related choices have been influenced by the transitional developments in Estonian society. Her story as adult educator started from work-related training.

In the understanding of self as a learner emerge selves as conscientious, committed, responsible learning self. Annika is conscientious, committed, priority-setting, preferring to study at university.

> *At my age it would be weird just you go to university and not learn. To begin studies needed great courage on my part because I was not so sure of my abilities. Often I would think that I was too old for learning, but every time I heard that my friends had started studying, I felt a painful stitch in my heart and knew I had to try. Now I feel more confident and I am ready to extend myself to justify my decision to start my studies. I am committed to my goal – graduate – and set studying as a first priority in my life at the moment.*

She experiences learning as interesting, difficult, individual, partial of life and a continuous process. Learning is enthused by feeling of success, interest, internal motivation.

Continuous learning became a part of my life. I believe learning is beneficial and interesting if you have an internal interest and motivation.

For Annika, becoming an educator was related to the experience in hairdressing studies that began under a guiding and supportive master; it was psychologically hard because Annika changed occupation as a singer to hairdressing studies.

It was an unfamiliar situation for me, it was psychologically quite hard to step on that way … to put on a hairdresser's gown, off the stage as a singer, and start washing the heads of strange people, it was a real psychological block at first. But today I understand that all changes make people feel ambivalent towards something and it was like that with me as well … I like hairdressing, very much, and I find it is connected with all sorts of creative fields, in different ways … so today I do what I do with great pleasure.

The beginning as an adult educator was hard: she had no knowledge, but work and contact with people was pleasant and she has been supported as a trainer.

My experience as an educator is quite long, but when I remember the beginning, then I think no one, including myself, had any idea what the poor educator in fact, has to do, so it developed … step by step and … and what my work is today, it has, anyway, excited me for many years, so I have not felt I would want to change work.

Being an adult educator is connected with self-cognitive search – as *whom I feel myself to be?* That is the question she asks herself; being a teacher and an adult educator seems, in part, similar. It is not quite clear, yet, what the difference is, however, to be an educator is what Annika wants to do.

… the last years at university have added to my theoretical knowledge, because, by intuition, … I used something similar before, but, certainly, today my work is much more conscious, I have something to stand on, but still, the same problems haunt me: how to use all that andragogical knowledge in hairdresser training when the sessions were not long, but short-term and not a few hours long, how to make those sessions more interesting.

The learner and adult educator selves of Annika are significant and varietal expressing the same comprehensions-meanings of being a learner and educator: the responsibility of the educator, beliefs, social roles, the need to be in dialogue, preferences towards cooperation and feedback. The adult educator self expresses professional comprehensions of an adult educator and different selves: social, communicating, responsible, encouraging, dialogic, personal, emotional, developing, capable.

Social self is varietal and expresses the communicating-self, social preferences as trustworthy, encouraging relationships and socially dialogic roles: guide, encourager, it makes her happy and gives a sense of success.

The educator has to be in the background and remain a guide, only. I think starting a dialogue between the learner and the educator is extremely important. However, that expects mutual trust that includes opening oneself.
The educator has to encourage discussion and the development of learner positions, but these do not always have to be the same as the educator's.

The responsible self expresses the subjective position of the educator, the wish to help and belief that the professional education and qualification of the educator gives freedom while training.

I believe a good qualification and thorough knowledge of subject matter gives me as an educator a freedom while performing and I can enjoy the process and hold the course of the training under control.
To educate for me means taking responsibility and wish to help others. However, it may still happen that the wish to train is egoistic and methods are not helping others even harassing. Thus, someone who uses training to obtain power and emphasis themselves, should not be an educator.

The educator's emotional self of Annika expresses impatience, directness which is supported by a self-regulating self.

I am often too overly emotional, but luckily I can restrain my emotions with the help of long experience and I hold my emotions internally. I often speak too much and tend to offer advice to others in any situation – I have to learn to listen to others more.

The possible self is varietal and expresses cooperative/ socially responsible self, enthusing self and reflexive/ analytical self.

I wish to cooperate more with other educators to have someone to share thoughts and experiences with and get feedback from colleagues.
*Self-analysis and reflexion is a prerequisite for self-development, with the best outside feedback, support, encouragement and advice and constructive criticism one may have from a colleague from the same field…*

The ideal of being an educator is belief-based and expresses the conceptual self.

I believe that an educator, for years to come, can be only a person who has a respectful, enthusiastic and responsible attitude towards work.

The learning selves of Annika emerge as conscientious, committed, and responsible The real self expresses the understandings of the adult educator. The possible self expresses an apprehensive personal-emotional self and conceptual self of being an adult educator. The learner selves, educator real and possible selves of Annika (see Figure 5) are harmonious and are influenced by prior learning and working experiences, studies, express both personal and professional goals, beliefs, possible developments for choices as an educator (roles, beliefs, values).

Figure 5: Annika's selves
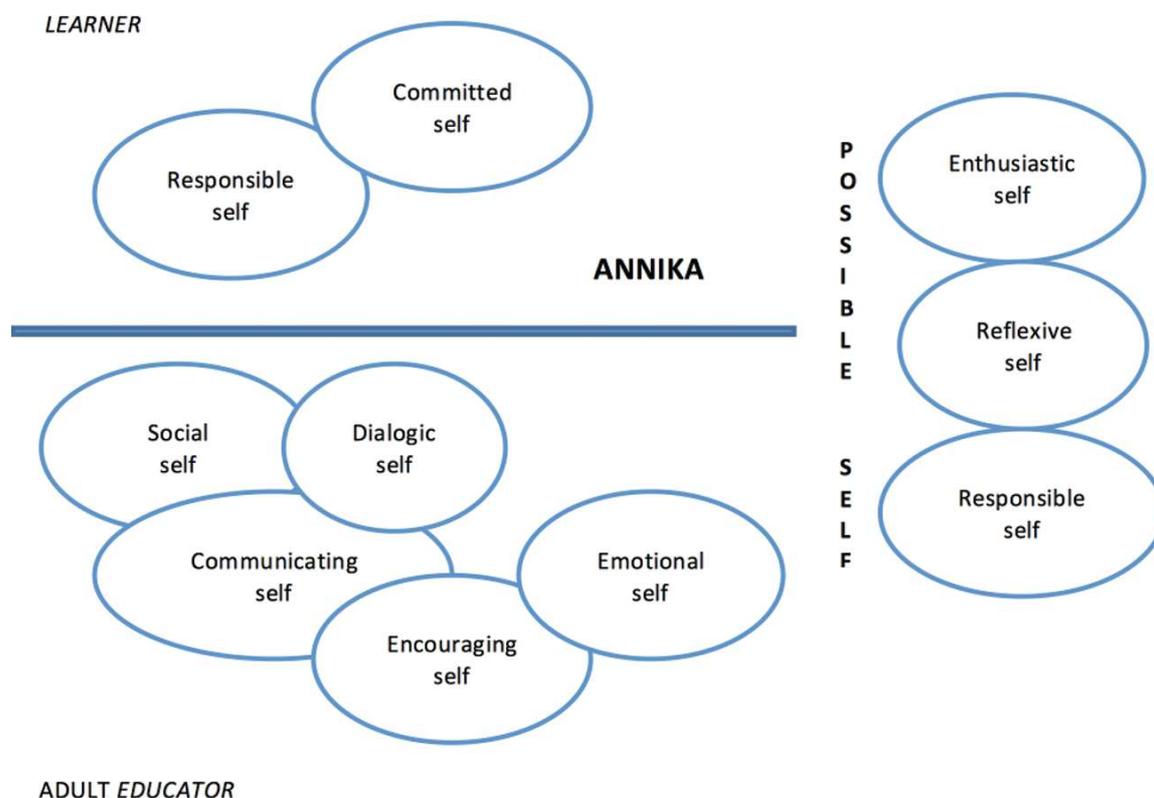
Ellen is a 30-year-old, who has teaching experience as an adult educator for 10 years. She studied business and office administration while working, later she studied vocational pedagogy. Ellen works in a hotel as a hotel and food beverages manager and is her field of practice.

Ellen as an adult educator has been influenced greatly by her childhood – parents who created a safe and stable environment that supported Ellen's conscientiousness and independence and her wish to be fair. At school Ellen's favourite subjects were the Estonian language and literature and the teacher of these subjects was an example for Ellen; an influence which made Ellen wants to become a teacher. Ellen's first training experience was in her childhood:

> *It was a moment when it was a beautiful summer day and I wanted to go outside and play with other children, but I had to organise a big block fire of wood to be stored and to go and get to play sooner… I was inventive. I understood there was no choice and the work had to be done, but I could make it quicker if I got other children to help. And then I had to train my friends to organise the block of wood into storage.*

As a learner, Ellen senses… *that the essence of learning and myself in that process has changed.* Real learner self feels happy when…*something has changed in me step by step analysing myself and looking back on the experienced things* (reflexion). Ellen as a learner is thorough, careful, self-critical and values commitment

to studies. As a learner Ellen values time: … *time for learning is worth gold because it influences the rhythm of family and work life, from which emerges a possible, though short, selftime and strength for concentration.* Ellen is motivated by what has been learned, not the diploma, because … *what has been learned lets you reach your goal as a person, a colleague and a leader.* Ellen likes to learn… *when learning is interesting and understandable.* Comprehensions of learning as an adult learner at university manifest as a communicating and experiencing self because … *learning is a possibility to communicate and experience new situations and challenges with people who have consciously chosen their destination and, so, relationships between people with the same specialty and interests can be deeper.* Learning helps to create a communication network. Ellen is searching for herself as an educator – *I feel as, well I feel fine, but I cannot say that I am professional through and thorough as far as training is concerned… my experience is not that long, so the toolbox is not big enough, yet.*

In her searching there is a sureness of being an educator – *I am fit to be an educator and I do not feel bad to be in that situation.* She thinks it is important to find oneself and the adult educator has a lot of power in that process; that power needs to be cognitively acknowledged – *adult educators-teachers play an important role in our lifelong learning movement and the impact of their actions reaches far wider than we see it at first.*

As an educator, Ellen is…*a good performer, practical – very confident – I have the ability to do things brightly*… these characteristics give the feeling she is *believable* in her eyes. Ellen feels herself as a person and an adult educator – *just as a person that I am. The more aware a educator is of their identity, the more confidence and goal-orientation the participants feel.* Motivations for Ellen as an adult educator are to strive to be

> *… emphatic, who I have gone to and who have trusted me to share their time. I think it is important to respect one another and in the case of an educator the first sign of respect is when the educator has prepared well and is 110 % there in the training.*

The opposing self of Ellen's educator self expresses a surprise at those educators who, so to say, fire away and she tries to… *never be in a situation where I have to go in front of people unprepared.* Ellen as an adult educator notices problems (e.g. *educating only to make money, super star educators-showmen educators, who teach the fashionable and popular subjects).* She takes on responsibility and challenges as an adult educator sensing that she, as an educator, stands for all adult educators. For Ellen, the educator's individuality is important, as well as the impact of the training because…*the participants have more experiences and knowledge, they ask more boldly (more often than not have been bound by the topic and*

their personal experiences). As an educator, Ellen values warmth that is the basis for communication – *if you are a warm person, then it opens a thousand doors without you having to do anything for it.*

The possible self of Ellen is expressed in the wish to … *learn, experience and develop and the path that I go along just grows longer and longer.* Yet, she sees the need … *to make little stops and from time to time look back and be happy about the past.* Ellen wishes to reach mastery as an adult educator and senses often the need for educators' qualification, professional studies and self-development.

The learner selves of Ellen appear flexible, feeling happy, thorough, careful, self-critical, valuing time learning self. In her learning self both communicating and experiencing as well as apprehensive self appear. In the educator self, the searching self is dominant, which is manifested in the confidence of being an adult educator, a wish to find herself and growth of professionalism. In her comprehensions, explanatory and evaluative self appear in the expressions of the characteristics of the educator and strives to be counted with others as an educator, respectful, communicating and warm. The opposing self and the responsible self as an educator do appear. The social self of Ellen appears as a learner and an adult educator (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Ellen's selves
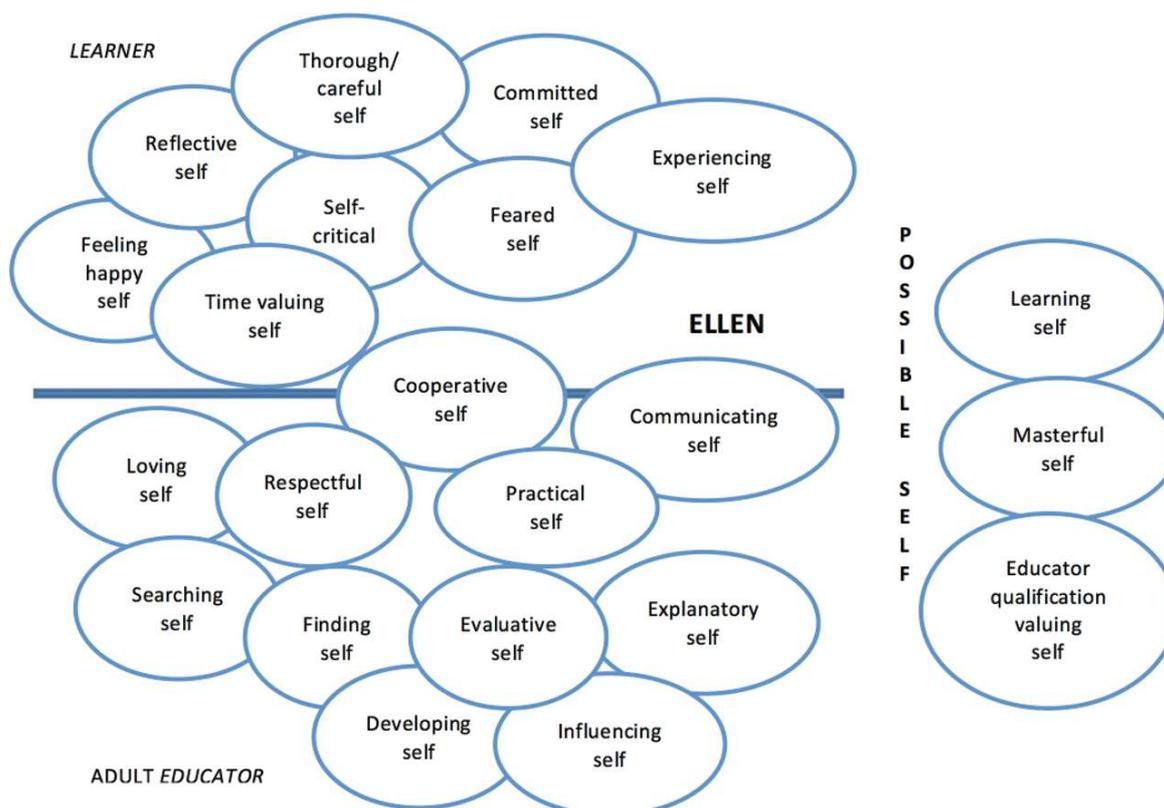
Ellen expresses the subjective position of the adult educator self, searching for a relationship between the educator and the learners. The real self of Ellen has been influenced by significant others (parents, Estonian language and literature teacher, peers, learners). The description of the possible self is a self development factor. The more precisely one describes the self, the more clearly an understanding emerges as self (possible, developing).

It appears from the analysis that there is a developing self in the comprehensions that express cognitive development need, for the achievement of which hard work is needed.

Conclusion

The self-concept has at least three major qualities: it is learned, it is constructed, and it is dynamic. The self is a cognitive self-awareness component and a phenomenological area that includes comprehensions of self (self-concept) as subjective expressions of who one is as a learner and how one has emerged to be an adulteducator or who one wishes to become. Basic perceptions of oneself are quite stable and change takes time, the self-concept development is an individually varietal and continuous process (Purkey, 1988). Self-concept is developed through experience and also during the professional studies at the university. Learning process at university have influenced student self-consciousness, comprehensions, beliefs and professional values.

Summing up the results of our research the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Each of the students has unique personal comprehensions about them/selves, which are conceptually framed in learning and professional selves and experienced differently.
- The selves as learners and adult educators are subjective, with an individual structure, including varietal comprehensions.
- The selves express comprehensions of learner and educator activities, roles, attitudes, motives, beliefs, values, emotions, creating adult educator resources, opportunities to rely upon, readiness and prerequisites for professional development.
- Possible self has been clarified, and expresses who one is and would like to become. The possible selves reflect self-attitudes, motives, wishes, motivation in future context of field of practice, thus, it is important to notice the possible selves and support these during the studies implementing different approaches.

- The description of the possible self is a factor in self development and motivation, and, the more precisely the possible selves are described, the more clearly a comprehension of one's own self emerges (possible, developing).
- In the adult educator selves there are changes in comprehensions of a good educator that have been influenced by experiences of field practice, significant others and professional studies in the curriculum of *Adult Educator*.
- The more experienced adult educators the personal self prevails which is harmonious with the learner and educator *social, dialogic, cooperative, preparatory and developing selves.* Therefore, in these comprehensions the variations of the educator selves and connections with biographic context appear.
- The more experienced adult educators value the adult educator's professional studies, education and qualification. Among experienced educators doubting selves, educator positions and relationships with the learners appear.
- The impact of the past experience is recognised and the learner, as well as educator selves, reflect associations between prior learning and experience of field practice, but in addition influences from professional studies.
- The learner and educator selves can be harmonious, however, there could be discrepancies. The learner selves are less than varietal: the learner self is conceptual. Learner selves are varietal reflecting changes in the learner selves and variety in the conceptual self.
- The more experienced adult educators have more variations of selves, which connect with the personal and professional self, more individual and professional resources, opportunities and readiness for cooperation.
- Prospective adult educators' selves are less than varietal and diverge with learner selves. Educator's real and possible selves express roles of the adult educator and training activities, though personal self as a resource is less visible.

The importance of learning and professional studies at the university are recognized by students. The influence of professional studies on intrapersonal processes is evident and becomes clear in varietal comprehensions of self as a learner and an adult educator. Therefore, inner focusing on the self could be one possible tool for supporting learning process, constructions of selves as learners and as adult educators during the professional studies by using different approaches.

The influence of professional studies on learning experiences is complex, studies have influenced understanding of being an adult educator and learner, awareness has emerged, theoretical knowledge; though it is not quite clear how to use all the learned knowledge in teaching practice.

As researchers, academics and curricula developers we conclude that simultaneous actualisation of the learner-selves and educator-selves in the learning

process and during the professional studies create learning possibilities to support learning in a complex, consistent manner and understand the learners' possible problems and resources. Research results are important in the context of professional studies and mirror the complexity and open-ended nature of the adult learning process and that is why future research is needed.

We believe that there is much to be researched concerning the development of learner and adult educator selves in professional studies at the university. On the basis of the results of this research we can pose two new research questions: how biography and professional studies at university relate to the development field of professional practice of adult educators and how professional practice is constructed in the adult educator narratives of their field of professional practice?

Acknowledgements

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