World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Educational and Pedagogical Sciences
Vol:12, No:01, 2018

A Unique Professional Development of Teacher Educators: Teaching Colleagues

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Abstract : The Mofet Institute of Research, established a School of Professional Development, the only one of its kind in Israel and throughout the world. It offers specialized programs for teacher educators, providing them with the professional knowledge and skills. The studies aim at updating teachers about rapidly changing knowledge and skills. Teacher educators are conceptualized as shifting from first order practitioners (school teachers) to second order practitioners. Those who train teachers are referred to as third order practitioners. The instructors in the School of Professional Development are third-order practitioners – teacher educators specializing in teaching their colleagues. Collegial guidance by teachers' college staff members is no simple task: Tutors must be expert in their field of specialization, as well as in instruction. Moreover, although colleagues, they have to position themselves within the group as authoritative figures in terms of instruction and knowledge. To date, the role and professional identity of these third-order practitioners, has not been studied. To understand the nature and development of professional identity, a qualitative study was conducted in which 12 tutors of various subjects were interviewed. These were analyzed by categorical content analysis. The findings, assessed professional identity through a post-modern prism, while examining the interplay among events that tutors experienced, the knowledge they acquired and the structuring of their professional identity. The Tutors' identity transformed through negotiating with 'self' and 'other' in the class, and constructed by their mutual experiences as tutors and learners. Understanding the function and identity of tutors facilitates comprehension of this unique training process for teacher educators.

Keywords : professional development, professional identity, teacher education, tutoring
Conference Title : ICEQCK 2018 : International Conference on Educational Quality and Circulating Knowledge
Conference Location : Sydney, Australia
Conference Dates : January 29-30, 2018

Open Science Index, Educational and Pedagogical Sciences Vol:12, No:01, 2018 publications.waset.org/abstracts/76885/pdf