

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 191 (2015) 1728 – 1734

---

---

**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

---

---

WCES 2014

# Perception Of Professional Identity Among The Violin Teachers Of Estonian Music Schools

Äli Leijen<sup>a\*</sup>, Riina Linde<sup>a</sup>, Tuulike Kivestu<sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup>University of Tartu, Ülikooli 18, Tartu 50090, Estonia

---

## Abstract

A survey was conducted among 58 violins teachers (43 % of the total population) in Estonia to study teachers' perceptions of professional identity. Professional identity perceptions and self-reported teaching activities were collected with a questionnaire developed by Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt (2000). It appeared that i) during their career, teachers' perceptions of their professional identity shifted from subject-centred focus towards a focus on students' general development; ii) self-perception of identity was not often related to self-reported teaching activities; iii) there are differences between professional identity perceptions in relation to teachers' pedagogical rank.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of WCES 2014

*Keywords:* Professional identity, violin teachers, music education, hobby education

---

## 1. Introduction

The increasingly developing contemporary society and its social and economic changes set new requirements on training and education, including music education. This article studies the topic of music education focusing on the perception of professional identity of violin teachers in music schools. According to the Estonian Education Information System music schools are ranked as hobby schools. Hobby education is seen as a systematic and guided voluntary and free time practice of a hobby apart from formal education in order to acquire more specialised knowledge and skills in the chosen sphere of interest. According to the Standard of Hobby Education the aim of hobby education is to create possibilities for the diverse development of the personalities of the students and to support the development of students into managing members of the society. According to a survey conducted in Estonia parents value the free and friendly environment of hobby education most of all (Vanemate, 2005, p. 4). The abovementioned shows that the teachers of hobby education have been introduced with different expectations that include the teaching of speciality based knowledge and skills as well as supporting the development of students in general. So far we lack the study of Estonian hobby school instrument teachers' opinion about these different aims

---

\* Äli Leijen. Tel.: +372 737 6464  
E-mail address: [ali.leijen@ut.ee](mailto:ali.leijen@ut.ee)

and we do not know how important they consider these to be. Therefore, the present study focuses on identifying musical instrument teachers' perception of different pedagogical aims using violin teachers as an example. According to the data of Estonian Music Schools Association (Eesti Muusikakoolide, 2012) there were 10363 students studying in Estonian music schools in 2012/13 academic year. Violin takes the second place after the piano in popularity being studied by a total of 3557 students. Taking the historical context of Estonian music education into consideration (Selke, 2007) it could be presumed that learning to play the violin is somewhat more important to teachers than general pedagogical aims. The evaluations and preferences of teachers' pedagogical aims can be investigated through the perception of their professional identity that is considered in more detail in the following chapter.

### *1.1 Teacher's professional identity*

Professional identity, being a form of social identity, determines how members of one occupation define themselves in comparison to members of other occupations (Schein, 1978). A teacher's professional identity is connected with several factors of professional effectiveness like job satisfaction, professional self-identification, self-efficiency and motivation (Day, 2002). Professional identity forms via the dialogue between the individual and socio-cultural environment, in the course of which the expectations concerning social (professional) role are internalised and a personal professional self-cognition (e.g. "I as a teacher") constructed (Valsiner, 2001; 2007). Though the earlier studies have mainly concentrated either on professional or personal aspects of the professional identity (for further information see Beijaard et al., 2004), the further authors (e.g. Beijaard et al., 2004; Burke & Stets, 2009; Leijen, Kullasepp, & Agan, 2010; Leijen & Kullasepp, 2013a, 2013b; Pillen, Den Brok, & Beijaard, 2013), also pay attention to the connection and interaction of the two variants of the professional identity. The present study focuses on the professional variation of professional identity. The movement of an individual to the socio-cultural environment of a new activity can be viewed as an experience that supports the formation of his/her new self-perception (e.g. "I as a professional"). Leijen, Kullasepp, & Ots (2013) found that the experience of acting as a teacher lead to more frequent self-perception as a teacher. The results of the study conducted among teacher students show that the answers of the students with greater working experience expressed the internalised professional role expectations more often than students without any working experience. In line with the above, Bromme & Strässer (1991) stress that a teacher's professional identity is based on his/her professional knowledge. Teachers' professional knowledge does not comprise only the knowledge of pedagogy and speciality (including the curriculum). The intercourse of theory and practice also plays an important part. Teachers make their pedagogical decisions using the knowledge of different fields and connecting them. It is a difficult task as the values used in scientific disciplines and the ways of argumentation can be different. Other studies have also pointed out the importance of knowledge accumulation (see e.g. Anspal, Eisenschmidt, & Löffström, 2012) and enhancement of pedagogical reasoning (see e.g. Löffström, Poom-Valickis, Hannula, & Mathews, 2010) as important characteristics in professional identity dynamics. Inspired by the survey of Bromme and his colleagues, Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt (2000) worked out the teachers' professional identity of three aspects: subject matter expertise, pedagogical expertise, and didactical expertise. First, subject matter expertise entails that teacher's work requires specific subject related knowledge and one of the main duties is to support students' development related to the subject area. Second, teacher requires didactical skills that first and foremost are connected with the preparation and practicability of the studies and also evaluating the work done. Third, teacher's work is related to more general pedagogical goals that help to support the students' broader emotional and moral development. To analyse these three aspects of teachers' professional identity, Beijaard et al. developed a questionnaire. According to the results, most teachers saw themselves to a certain extent as experts in the subject matter, pedagogy, and didactics. While looking at the dominant aspect, the results showed that the most frequently teachers reported subject matter expertise as the most important aspect. According to most participants' opinion, the teacher's professional identity had changed during their professional career. As a beginner teacher, the respondents described themselves mostly as subject experts, but in the course of time the value of this aspect had decreased. Investigating the respondent's

gender as a potentially related factor to professional identity, it was concluded that relatively more men than women saw themselves as subject specialists (Beijaard et al., 2000).

Relying on the above described, we formulated the following questions to study the violin teachers' professional identity: 1) How do the Estonian violin teachers define themselves on the basis of the three identity aspects? (Beijaard et al., 2000); 2) How does their present professional identity differ from their professional identity at the beginning of their professional career?; 3) How do the subjective evaluations of self-perception correspond to the occurrence of specific activity descriptions related to the aspects of a teaching profession?; 4) How do the evaluations and activity descriptions relate to the following impact factors: teaching context, teaching experience, teacher's biography and the subject of violin teaching?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Sample

The present study included 58 (52 women and 6 men) Estonian music school violin teachers, which is 43% of the total population). 36% of them stated that their length of employment was 10-19 years, 26% of the respondents had worked for more than 30 years as teachers. 20% of the respondents had worked 20-29 years and 16% 1-9 years. 55 teachers out of 58 had also marked their pedagogical rank (at the time four ranks were distinguished in Estonia: novice teacher, teacher, senior teacher, and teacher-methodologist). The biggest group was comprised of teacher category with 65.5% of respondents, followed by senior teachers with 23% (13 teachers), teacher-methodologists with 9% (5 teachers) and novice teachers with 2% (1 teacher).

### 2.2 Survey

Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt's (2000) questionnaire was used to study the aspects of the teaching profession and its possible impact factors. In more detail, the study applied the Estonian language questionnaire that was adapted by Kirsipuu, (2003) for two parts out of three. The third part (questions about the impact factors of self-perception) included the adapted version of Löffström & Poom-Valickis, (2013). The first part asked teachers to divide 100 points between the different aspects of the teaching profession (subject specialist, specialist in didactics, and pedagogy) at different points of time: right now and at the beginning of their teaching career. The teachers were asked to briefly explain the division of points. Additionally, the respondents were asked to say how they have acquired knowledge, skills and experience in connection with the three aspects (subject matter, didactics, and pedagogy). The second part included 18 control questions that addressed the accordance of the provided subjective evaluation with their actual behaviour. The third part included 22 questions that focused on the factors that influence teachers' professional identity. The second and third part of the survey required answers in a four-point Likert scale. A questionnaire validation by three experienced violin teachers was conducted before the main data collection. Two questions that were not suitable for music schools were left out. In addition, background data was asked from the teachers.

### 2.3 Data analysis

Similarly to the survey of Beijaard et al., (2000) the data collected in first part of the questionnaire was divided into seven groups. In forming the groups, three aspects and their combinations were distinguished. The three aspects were: 1) *subject specialist*: a teacher who most of all values speciality based knowledge and skills; 2) *specialist in didactics*: a teacher who most of all values the knowledge and skills that are connected with the preparation of teaching, the teaching, and the evaluation of the teaching; 3) *pedagogue*: a teacher who most of all values the knowledge and skills that help to support students' social, emotional, and moral development. In order to find out the possible differences between the identities groups (seven in total) within the third part of the questionnaire the analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. An independent sample *t* test was applied in order to compare the

perceived activities cohering to the identity aspects in two groups of the pedagogical ranks (novice teachers and teachers in one group and senior teachers and teacher-methodologists in the second group).The Spearman correlation analysis was applied in order to find possible connections between the questions of impact scales (subject, context, biography, teaching experience) and scales of professional identity (subject matter, didactics, pedagogy).

**3. Results**

*3.1 The change in the perception of professional identity of violin teachers and the evaluations of the importance of different aspects of the teaching profession during a teacher’s career*

First the violin teachers were divided into seven groups according to subjective self-perception of professional identity. Table 1 shows the frequency of the groups. It can be seen that the group of subject specialist was the most frequently appearing, followed by the group of pedagogy and the balanced group.

Table 1: The perception of identity of all respondents at the moment and at the beginning of their teaching career

	Teacher’s perception of identity at the beginning of their career		Teacher’s perception of identity at the present moment	
	n	%	n	%
Balanced group	9	16	14	24
Subject matter group	25	43	18	31
Didactics group	3	5	2	3
Pedagogy group	10	17	15	26
Subject matter and didactics group	1	2	1	2
Subject matter and pedagogy group	2	3	5	9
Didactics and pedagogy group	0	0	2	3
Unanswered	8	14	1	2
Total	58	100%	58	100%

The results revealed that 30 violin teachers (52%) evaluated the importance of the different aspects of their profession similarly at the moment as well as at the beginning of their career (see Table 1). This result is different from the result of Beijaard et al., (2000), in which case only 31% of the respondents found that there has been no change. While looking at the beginning of the career, the biggest group identified themselves as subject specialists, 25 teachers (43%). 13 of these changed their preference; the biggest transfers took place either to the pedagogy group (5 teachers) or to the balanced group (4 teachers).

*3.2 The perception of professional identity on the basis of control questions*

The subjective perception of violin teachers was compared with the answers to the control questions. Table 2 presents the mean scores (M) and standard deviation (SD) within groups. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) identified that there were no differences between groups (p > 0.05). Table 2 shows that the division of points given to the different aspects does not coincide with the results of the control questions. The table indicates that all seven groups are of strong pedagogical bias. The only concurrence of self-perception and control questions occurred in case of the subject matter and pedagogy groups.

Table 2 Average comparison and results of ANOVA test (N=57).

	Balanced	Subject matter	Didactics	Pedagogy	Subject matter & didactics	Subject matter & pedagogy	Didactics & pedagogy	F value
	n=14	n=18	n=2	n=15	n=1	n=5	n=2	
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	
Subject matter	3.41 (0.43)	3.41 (0.42)	2.92 (0.83)	3.40 (0.60)	3.67	<b>3.47</b> (0.36)	3.25 (0.12)	0.44
Didactics	3.24 (0.49)	2.99 (0.58)	3.00 (0.47)	3.10 (0.57)	3.00	3.13 (0.51)	3.08 (0.35)	0.31
Pedagogy	3.55 (0.41)	3.55 (0.37)	3.25 (0.12)	3.68 (0.34)	3.50	<b>3.37</b> (0.30)	3.58 (0.35)	0.74

What could be the reason behind the fact that the everyday behaviour of violin teachers does not coincide with their self-perception? Teacher explanations given to the open-ended questions could give a hint: “*I must have excellent knowledge about my instrument and everything connected with the speciality when teaching children.*”; “*The basic part is comprised of speciality-based knowledge, as the field is rather specific*”. Violin teachers might value the aspect of subject matter, because they as musicians consider subject matter as most important. According to the particular nature of the subject, in order to pass certain knowledge to the students the teachers might believe that first of all they have had to master the profession very well themselves.

Although the survey suggests that there is no connection between subjective self-perception of professional identity and the actual behaviour of the teacher, it can be brought out that even teachers who identify themselves mainly as subject specialists or specialists in didactics often apply (in their opinion) a behaviour of pedagogical specialist. The mentioned result concurs with the principles of contemporary pedagogy, which considers students and their development (after the teaching of the subject) the most important part of the study process.

### 3.3 Professional identity aspects in relation to the pedagogical ranks and impact factors

The *t* test showed (Table 3) that the group of senior teachers and teacher-methodologists reported the use of concrete teaching activities related to all three aspects of professional identity more often than novice teachers and teachers. As a result, it could be concluded that senior teachers and teacher-methodologists see themselves using more varied pedagogical activities than their colleagues.

Table 3: Results of T-Test between two category groups

	Scale of subject matter			Scale of didactics			Scale of pedagogy		
	M	t	p	M	t	p	M	t	p
1* N = 37	3.3	-2.815	< 0,05	3.0	-3.506	< 0.001	3.5	-2.057	< 0.05
2** N = 18	3.6			3.4			3.7		

\* The group of novice teachers and teachers

\*\* The group of senior teachers and teacher/methodologists

Finally, relationships between different impact factors and control questions of professional identity were reviewed. Spearman’s correlation analysis showed that similarly to the results of Beijaard et al. (2000) it was not possible to connect the scales of impact factors with the scales of teacher profession. Therefore, Spearman’s correlation analysis was conducted between the questions of professional identity scales and items of impact factors. An average relation (herein  $r > 0.5$ ) occurred between the following professional identity scales and impact items: between the scale of subject specialist and item: *In order to be a good teacher I consider belonging to a professional organisation important* ( $r = 0.52$ ); between the scale of subject specialist and item: *A great deal of my work satisfaction comes from the speciality I teach* ( $r = 0.52$ ); between the scale of didactics and item: *Teaching experience is important because it has shaped my teaching style* ( $r = 0.53$ ). According to the above-mentioned we can presume that the aspect of subject specialist is related to participating in professional organisations and satisfaction with one’s speciality. The aspect of didactics, according to the present survey, is mostly connected with teaching experience that has resulted in the formulation of one’s teaching style.

#### 4. Discussion

The results showed that most teachers identified themselves with all three teacher roles. The biggest group was that of the subject specialist, followed by the pedagogue and the balanced groups. Similarly to the survey of Beijaard et al., (2000) the violin teachers of Estonian music schools also perceived themselves more as subject specialists at the beginning of their career. A somewhat surprising outcome of the survey showed that subjective evaluation of violin teachers does not coincide with the control questions that assess the perceived behaviour of the teachers. More specifically, irrespective of the subjective perception, all violin teachers possess a strong pedagogical focus in their teaching. At the same time, it is a rather pleasant outcome as the principles of contemporary pedagogy see students and their development as the most important aspect of the teaching process. Another interesting aspect of the results occurred in the connection between pedagogical roles and teachers' pedagogical rank. When comparing the two groups, novice teachers and pedagogues, and senior teachers and teacher-methodologists, it occurred that the group of senior teachers and teacher-methodologists see themselves using more varied pedagogical roles than other teachers. This result points out that in case of violin teachers all three roles gain further attention in the course of teaching career, not just the role of pedagogue as hypothesised on the basis of Beijaard et al. (2000). This is in accordance with the results of surveys conducted among experts. Experts can have a vast amount of information that has been organised into schemas relevant to the particular kind of problems in this field (see e.g. Larkin et al., 1980). Compared to novices, expert teachers are able to provide richer and more integrated cognitive schemas that grasp the nature of problems in a more relevant way (see also Pilvar & Leijen, in press).

#### Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Estonian Science foundation (No ETF9221).

#### References

- Anspal, T., Eisenschmidt, E., & Löfström, E. (2012). Finding myself as a teacher: Exploring the shaping of teacher identities through student teachers' narratives. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 18(2), 197–216.
- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(2), 107–128.
- Beijaard, D., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. (2000). Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: An exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(7), 749–764.
- Bromme, R., Strässer, R. (1991). Wissenstypen und professionelles Selbstverständnis. *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 37, 769-785.
- Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Day, C. (2002). School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37(8), 677–692.
- Eesti Muusikakoolide Liit (2012). *Õppekavade statistika ja proportsioonid lähtuvalt õpilaste arvust 2012/2013 õ.-a. [Curriculum Statistics and Proportions According to the Number of Students in 2012/13 Academic Year]*. Retrieved from [http://www.eestimuusikakoolideliit.ee/index.php?mid=309\(21.11.2913\)](http://www.eestimuusikakoolideliit.ee/index.php?mid=309(21.11.2913))
- identify teacher potential among students? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(2), 167–184.
- Kirsipuu, E. (2003). *Professionaalse identiteedi tajut Tallinna kutseõpetajatel [The Perception of Professional Identity of Vocational Teachers]*, Bachelor Thesis, University of Tartu.
- Larkin, J. H., McDermott, J., Simon, D. P., & Simon, H. A. (1980). Expert and novice performance in solving physics problems. *Science*, 208, 1335-1342.
- Leijen, Ä., Kullasepp, K. & Agan, T. (2010). The dynamics of the professional self of final year leisure time management students. In J. Mikk, P. Luik, & M. Veisson (Eds.), *Teacher's personality and professionalism* (pp. 87 - 103). Frankfurt am Main, et al.: P. Lang
- Leijen, Ä., Kullasepp, K. & Ots, A. (2013). Õpetaja professionaalse rolli internaliseerimise hindamine õpetajakoolituse esmaõppe üliõpilaste hulgas [The Evaluation of Internalisation of Teachers' Professional Role among Pre-Service Teachers]. *Eesti Haridusteaduste Ajakiri [Estonian Journal of Education]*, 1, 72 - 96.
- Leijen, Ä., & Kullasepp, K. (2013a). All roads lead to Rome: Developmental trajectories of student teachers' professional and personal identity development. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 26(2), 104–114.
- Leijen, Ä., & Kullasepp, K. (2013b). Unlocking the potential of conflicts: A pilot study of professional identity development facilitation during initial teacher education. *International Journal of Dialogical Science*, 7(1), 67–86.
- Löfström, E., Poom-Valickis, K., Hannula, M., & Mathews, S. (2010). Supporting emerging teacher identities: Can we
- Löfström, E.; Poom-Valickis, K. (2013). Beliefs about teaching: Persistent or malleable? A longitudinal study of prospective student teachers' beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 35, 104 - 113.

- Pillen, M. T., Den Brok, P. J., & Beijaard, D. (2013). Profiles and change in beginning teachers' professional identity tensions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 34, 86–97.
- Pilvar, A. & Leijen, Ä. (in press). Differences in thinking between experienced and novice teachers when solving problematic pedagogical situations. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Science*.
- Schein E. (1978). *Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs*. MA: Addison-Wesley Co., Reading.
- Selke, T. (2007). *Suundumusi eesti üldhariduskooli muusikakasvatuses 20. sajandi II poolel ja 21. sajandi alguses. [Trends of Music Education in Estonian General Education Schools in the Second Part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century]*. Doctoral Dissertaion. University of Tallinn. Tallinn.
- Valsiner, J. (2001). *Comparative study of human cultural development*. Madrid: Fundación Infancia y Aprendizaje.
- Valsiner, J. (2007). *Culture in minds and societies*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Vanemate ja noorte suhtumise laste- ja noorte huvialaharidusse (2005). *[The Attitude of Parents and Youngsters towards Children's and Youngsters' Hobby Education]*. Faktum uuringukeskus <http://www.hm.ee/index.php?045027>