

TEACHER TRAINEES REFLECTING UPON TEACHER ROLE IDENTITIES

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Abstract

Teachers` job is not an easy one and it requires much study and pedagogical training. Before going to the classroom and taking the role of teachers, TTs always report much anxiety and doubt about their knowledge, pedagogical skills, the interaction with the learners and the teaching activity as such. The aim of this study is to find answers to the following questions: Are TTs aware of teacher role identity? What is the relationship between their understanding of teacher role identity and the anxieties they experience before going into teaching?The study uses data triangulation (observation, focus group discussion and sentence completion tasks). The outcomes relate to psychological, pedagogical and interactional aspects of the topic under investigation. The conclusions we have reached enhance the idea that the ways in which TTs perceive teacher role identity, corroborated with representations of the learner, as well as with representations of their own selves, go hand in hand with their anxieties as effective teachers-to-be.

Keywords: Anxieties; representations of learners; representations of selves; teacher role identity

1. Framework of the study

1.1. Teacher Trainees (TTs)

In Romania, the traditional initial training for occupying teaching positions in pre-university education is offered by universities during BA studies. Universities offer such courses on an optional basis. The decision belongs to students and their desire of embracing a teaching career. Once enrolled in the Teacher Training Department (that ensures the initial training of the students and, at the same time, certifies the competences specific to the teaching profession) they undergo psycho-pedagogical theoretical and practical study, as well as a teaching practice stage in schools

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(the practicum) - the “transitional point from student to teacher” (Lerseth, 2013:10) - under the guidance of a teacher trainer /mentor. TTs (TTs for plural/ TT for singular, for further reference) differ in many ways, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Variables related to TTs

Category	Descriptor 1	Descriptor 2
knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (English) subject matter knowledge • pedagogical content knowledge • methodological/didactic content knowledge • experiential knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge in the field area • academic education: theory about how to teach • experience in the classroom
type of personality and personality traits	self-centred role-model	responsibility openness fairness integrity
drives within the individual	motivation self-concern concern about teaching concern about students self-confidence self-esteem	the degree of intrinsic motivation about his personal image (in terms of competence, performance and reflection) positive attitude taking into consideration students` learning and needs trust in one`s abilities and judgement valuing oneself having the sense of self-worth
1. physical and cognitive abilities that can define professional abilities 2.	cognitive flexibility emotional intelligence critical thinking capacity of self-reflection energy creativity skills for teaching human resource management skills	ability to think about different concepts and to switch from one to another one identification of others` motivation understanding others` feelings analysis; interpretation; inference; explanation; evaluation; reflection skills identification of one`s weaknesses and strengths turning new ideas into reality communication; confidence; patience; enthusiasm motivating students encouraging students identification of students` strengths identification of students` weaknesses
experience in the classroom		a) no experience b) as a teacher of another language/ subject or as a primary-school teacher

University teacher education offers subject knowledge, pedagogic and didactic knowledge; at the same time, it is endowed with the role of students` professional identity formation (Danielewicz, 2001) – that is, it prepares students to perform their teaching roles.

1.2. Learning to become: experimentation, reflection and conceptualization

The TT is subject to professional growth (*Table 2*), described as a process made up of “states of enculturation into the school and the classroom” (Danielewicz, 2001:109). Researchers in the field have identified and analysed these states/stages, from different perspectives. Having in view the goal of the paper, we have selected only those findings that have under focus the change of paradigm in TTs` concerns - from concerns about Self to concerns about Others (as we considered that these represent the key to effectiveness in teaching).

Table 2. Stages of a teacher`s professional growth

Researcher	Stages	Descriptor of stage
Fuller (1969:207-226)	pre-teaching	non-concerns stage
	early teaching	self-concern stage
	late teaching	concern about students
Katz (1972:50-54)	survival	self-interest and self-concern
	consolidation	
	renewal	concern about students
	maturity	
Karge, Sandlin, and Young (1993, quoted in Ginns&al. 2001:110)	self	concern about themselves
	task	concern about tasks (the teaching process as imposing particular duties)
	impact	concern about their success in teaching and about students

Becoming a teacher is a complex, long-lasting learning process, an “experiential learning cycle” (Kolb, 1984); according to Kolb, the cycle includes four stages:

- a) concrete experience (having an experience)
- b) reflective observation (reflecting on the experience)
- c) abstract conceptualization (learning from the experience)
- d) active experimentation (trying out what has been learned)

In the case of TTs, corroborating our ideas with the findings offered by Fuller 1969 and Katz, 1972, we interpreted these stages as follows:

- a) During the first stage, TTs have the opportunity to have an experience of teaching during their teaching practice stage in schools (during their practicum). Under the guidance of a teacher

trainer, they perform “on the stage” of the classroom (most of them for the first time in their lives). This stage follows a period of TTs` observation of the lessons taught by the teacher trainer; during these observation, they have the chance to get familiar with “the culture of the classroom” (Wajnryb, 1992:7).

b) The “performance” in class is followed by each TT` reviewing the whole lessons (step by step) through an open discussion with the teacher trainer and his/her colleagues (the other TTs in the group, who attended the respective classes, as part of their practicum). The discussion helps the TTs to make sense of the experience and brings into focus the strong and the weak points of the lesson they taught; it also helps TTs to think of the ways meant to refine their teaching abilities and get a better understanding of the teaching process as such, of their own teaching, as well as of their role identity. The teacher trainer offers pieces of advice that are meant to help the TTs` process of professional growth.

c) The open discussion upon the lesson gives the TT the opportunity to draw conclusions and learn from the respective experience/from repeated experiences.

d) The fourth stage refers to the teacher as such, working in a language-teaching context. It includes many processes, starting with establishing objectives, planning, implementing tasks, taking decisions, assessing etc.

All these stages have their major importance in the formation of the TTs` competencies, necessary for a teaching career. For the purpose of this paper, we have particularly insisted on reflection (as the learning process of becoming a teacher requires a continuous process of reflection), taking into consideration two aspects of it, as deducible from our topic: reflective observation and reflection as a learning method and a way of building teacher role identity.

Becoming a teacher requires getting knowledge, skills and experience, changing behaviour (in terms of motivation, emotion) according to the personal approach towards job requirements and personal development, as well as a permanent process of evaluation (self-evaluation, evaluation of others) through reflection.

1.3. Role identity. Teacher role identity. Literature review

a) Role identity - according to Dong (2008:19), it is

a psychological term, which means one tends to be the same with other individuals or groups according to imitating and internalizing the behaviour manner, attitudinal notion and value criteria.

It has some main traits: a) it involves patterned behaviour; b) it involves a relational component, as it represents the fundamental element in human interaction: people interact with each other via the social positions they hold in the community/in a group (via the social roles they play); c) it consists of a set of sub-identities “embedded” in several social contexts. According to Baker and Faulkner (1991:283), a role becomes a “resource” used to “enact positions”. This makes Tadic & al (2013:541) reach the conclusion that “role enactment is the expression of conceived roles and social positions” that finally help the construction of a particular role identity (including values, beliefs, as well as commitments).

b) Teacher role identity

The concept of *role identity*, with reference to the teacher, is a combination of two terms: *identity* (Who am I?) with that of *role* (position fulfilled by the teacher). It belongs to Farrell (2011:54) who argues that *teacher role identity* is a result of the teacher’s construction and reconstruction of a conceptual sense of who they are (their self-image) and what they do (their professional role identity). Thus, he identified a number of 16 main role identities, which he included in three main categories:

- Teacher as manager (the role performed by the teacher as a person who controls or manages the entire activity in the classroom). He identifies sub-categories, such as: vendor, entertainer, juggler, communication controller, motivator, arbitrator, presenter;
- Teacher as professional (the role played by the teacher as a person dedicated to his work in a very serious way): knowledgeable person, collaborator and learner;
- Teacher as acculturator (the role that he plays through involvement in the activity outside the classroom through which he helps students get to know the local culture. The sub-categories are socializer, social worker and care-provider.

Velliaris and Willis (2014:87) consider that *teacher identity* is based on “the core beliefs one has about teaching and being a teacher; beliefs that are continuously formed and reformed through experience.”

The main traits of teacher identity have been well-defined by Castañeda (2011:24); he argues that teacher identity entails both cognition and roles. Its development is based on internal images constructed by teachers even since they were learners themselves. According to Hsieh (2010), teacher professional identity is a distinctive type of identity “centered on what it means to be both a teacher and a particular type of teacher”; identity formation is thus in relation to role (the role of a teacher). TTs may have access to the understanding of teacher role identity by

means of internalization of three things: a) experience (the experience gained in the classroom); b) the notion of teaching and its requirements; c) the capacity to discriminate between good and bad teachers through reflection on their performance of roles (Farrell, 2011:54). The idea is present in the literature that has brought into light the ways in which one can get informed about teacher role identity (what it means to be an English teacher) (Table 3).

Table 3. Sources informing about teacher role identity

Source	Related descriptor
1. past histories as learners (Mahlios, 2002:221-236); one's experience as an English student (Grossman, 1990)	awareness of teacher knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge understanding of the relation between teachers and students understanding of the differences in what teachers believe and value (Lieberman, 1990: vii) finding models among teachers of different subjects constructing internal images – that “come from a lengthy process which starts in their experiences as learners” – Castañeda, 2011: 24)
2. pre-service education and teaching practice experience / classroom-based experience (Mahlios, 2002)	understanding of the purpose of teaching and the role of the teacher, as “classroom practice helps teachers to get a real sense of the role of the teacher” (Castañeda, 2011: 25) understanding of what is required from teachers in terms of planning, choice of approaches, methods, strategies and techniques, choice of tasks, task implementation, classroom interaction, task assessment, aids and materials, material design understanding of the relation between teachers and students constructing personal images about being a teacher comparing personal images with models the teacher trainer or peer TTs
3. external teaching-related discourses (Hsieh, 2010:50)	professional experiences both in social and policy contexts
a) images of teachers from the published or online media (blogs, discussion forums, web seminars)	possibility of learning new things about the teaching process, teacher motivation, teacher knowledge, teacher role identity, professional expectations, as well as the possibility of forming mental images and judging “models of good and bad teachers” (Castañeda, 2011: 25) through comparative analysis
b) experiences with teachers shared by friends (Olsen, 2008)	
4. teacher education programs (Mahlios, 2002)	possibility of learning how to become more effective (through course programs or models of good practices)

2. Research methodology

2.1. Research hypothesis and questions

We start from the hypothesis that TTs` anxieties and doubt (about their knowledge, pedagogical skills, the interaction with the learners and the teaching activity as such) is a direct result of their understanding of the teacher role identity (of the importance of the role they are

going to take, once they are on their own in the classroom – that is, when teaching formally as a profession) – as perceived from different sources they had access to: their own experience as English students; pre-service education and teaching practice experience; images of teachers from the media; experiences with teachers, shared by friends.

The aim of this study is to find answers to the following questions: Are TTs aware of teacher role identity characteristics? What is the relationship between their understanding of teacher role identity and the anxieties they experience before going into teaching?

2.2. Research method and instruments

The study uses data triangulation (observation, focus group discussion and sentence completion tasks). The outcomes, analysed qualitatively and quantitatively, relate to psychological, pedagogical and interactional aspects of the topic under investigation.

2.3. Participants to the study

The study was conducted at “Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacău, Romania. The participants were 30 students in the 2nd year of study (second semester), from the Faculty of Letters. They were students attending the Romanina-English study programme. This aspect was very important for our research as, at the moment of the study, our trainee teachers had already been initiated into the process of teaching; they had their practicum, teaching Romanian during the first semester of the academic year. At the moment of the study they had already attended theoretical classes, getting English subject matter knowledge, pedagogical and methodological knowledge, for both Romanian and English. Data collection extended over a semester and included moments of their practicum in teaching English: observation classes, after-observation classes, while-teaching classes and post-teaching discussions.

2.4. Data collection and discussion

Data collection started with the process of observation (that will be analysed from two perspectives)

a) TTs` observation of the classes taught by their teacher trainees (who became models for them for an entire semester)

Each trainee student had to observe a number of lessons (n= 20) taught by their teacher trainers (n=3). They received observation charts based on various observation tasks. The tasks focused on either one aspect only, or on a small number of aspects. TTs had to identify the required aspects/to collect data about the process of teaching and learning during the (model)

lessons in progress. After the observation classes, we asked the TTs to participate to a focus group discussion, whose aim was to allow us learn about TTs` opinions, concerns and feelings following the experience. Their opinions and feelings are registered in Table 4.

Table 4. TTs` opinions and feelings about classroom observation lessons

Opinion and feeling	No	%
excitement for the activity they experienced	27	90
appreciation of the observation stage as a learning tool in the process of becoming teachers	30	100
awareness of the professional role of a teacher	26	86.66
concern about their abilities of coping with teaching responsibilities	12	40
anxiety in front of so many demands (tasks) required by the professional role	17	56.66

Analysis of their opinions and feelings brought into light some important ideas for our research:

➤ TTs (n =27) showed excitement for the activity they experienced. Excitement was directly linked to English class specificities (as compared to Romanian practicum): working with primary school students; moments of learning English while playing; students` learning the foreign language through songs and games; a large display of methods, strategies and techniques that varied according to the students` age (between 6 and 12)

➤ TTs (n=30) considered the observation stage of the practicum as a learning tool meant to help them in their future activity as teachers-to-be. The fact that all trainee teachers agreed on this aspect finds the explanation in their short (but already existing) experience in teaching in the classroom, as well as in the understanding of the fact that teaching English is different in many aspects from teaching Romanian (especially as their practicum in Romanian was at the level of gymnasium students)

➤ TTs (n=30) manifested awareness of the professional role of a teacher. We were really impressed by this large number, but the explanation finds support in the previous practicum they had in the Romanian language: they acted as teachers in the classroom; they confronted the processes of planning material, teaching, evaluating students, coping with classroom difficulties and problems.

➤ TTs (n=12) showed concern about their abilities of coping with teaching responsibilities. Although they mentioned that during the practicum in Romanian they did well and were happy with results, in the case of teaching in English, the challenge was bigger.

➤ TTs (n =17) expressed their anxiety in front of so many demands (tasks) required by the professional role. TTs mentioned the fact their anxieties were the same in the case of teaching Romanian.

Focus group discussion was also based on a process of meaning making, related to the teaching profession (Table 5). We were interested in learning about TTs` teaching role beliefs, as we considered that recognition of role represents the starting point in building a professional identity.

Table 5. TTs` teacher role beliefs

<i>Preparation for lessons</i>	
ability to prepare adequate lesson projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishing cognitive objectives establishing affective objectives establishing stages of the lesson establishing patterns of interaction establishing feedback and evaluation establishing timing for activities
materials and teaching aids	choice of the adequate materials and teaching aids
<i>Class management</i>	
ability to create a favourable climate for learning through organization of the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the teacher feeling relaxed and enthusiastic attention paid to seating arrangements creating a relaxed atmosphere/emotionally supportive climate classroom layout (the possibility that students could see the teacher/the blackboard/the displayed materials well) explaining goals of activities
attending to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offering clear explanations and instructions offering clear, positive/constructive feedback establishing duties and responsibilities noticing lack of student engagement motivating students finding alternative ways of teaching, in order to reach full understanding from the part of students valuing students` contribution communicating with students verbally, nonverbally and paraverbally exercising good control over class engaging students actively in activities offering possibilities for individual expression combining initial planning with spontaneous decisions showing sensitiveness to students` differences (noticed in their needs and style of learning) developing motivation in students treating students in a fair manner establishing balance between praise and criticism avoiding repetitive activities selecting activities according to students` level of knowledge monitoring the students` performance on activities
classroom interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring possibilities for work in pairs or groups varying ways for grouping students
timing and pace of activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishing the timing factor of their lesson changing pace of the lesson when necessary
teaching space	moving around the classroom, monitoring students` activities
errors correction	managing different ways of correcting errors
warm-up moments	ways of monitoring these moments
lesson cohesion	ensuring smooth transition from a stage of the lesson to another
disruptive behaviour	coping with noise situations

TTs had to bring into memory their past histories as learners and combine images of teachers with the image of the teacher trainees, whose lessons they attended during the observation classes, and draw conclusions about teacher role/about what to be a teacher means. Thus, they assumed that to be a teacher means to be the one whose values, beliefs, actions relate to the aspects presented in Table 5.

Discussing about and analysing the large display of teachers` commitments, TT openly disclosed a number of their own anxieties in relation to the role they were going to perform in the while-teaching stage of the practicum. This was done through the sentence completion task that they had to solve. These two activities hinted at representations of their actual Self (beliefs and emotions being part of it) in relation to the teaching model offered by the teacher trainee and based on the perception and conceptualization of the teacher role identity. Findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. TTs` anxieties after observation classes and before going into teaching classes

Area of concern	Anxiety	Anxiety-related descriptor	No of concerns	%
Self-image	they feared they might make a fool of themselves in front of their students	by making mistakes while speaking	6	20
		by not succeeding in making themselves understood by students	12	40
		by forgetting what they have to do during each stage of the lesson	5	16.66
		by forgetting pieces of information	4	13.33
	they feared they might be criticized by the teacher trainer for weak performance	**especially if criticism is offered in front of their peers	12	40
Preparing for teaching and performance in the classroom	they feared they would not be able to prepare well for the process of teaching	not being able to design effective lesson projects	9	30
		not being able to establish the appropriate techniques, according to students` age and level of knowledge	15	50
	they feared they would not be able to play the role well	not being able to keep students/ noise under control	5	16.66
		not being able to manage time during the lesson	10	33.33
		not being able to transform students into active learners/active doers	11	36.66
	combining initial planning with spontaneous decisions	5	16.66	

Analysis of findings leads us to the following conclusions:

1. TTs` answers confirmed findings in literature: before going into teaching lessons, TTs were very much concerned about themselves (n=39)

- n=6 feared they might make mistakes and make a full of themselves in front of the students; this indicates, in our opinion, awareness from the part of the TTs in what concerns their level of English.
 - n=5 feared they might forget what they have to do at a certain moment of the lesson (once they move around the classroom and get away from the teacher`s desk, without having the chance to throw a glance at their lesson project);
 - n=4 were concerned about forgetting pieces of information while playing the role of imparter of information;
 - n=12 feared they might lose their “faces” in front of the peers in case the teacher trainee came with pieces of criticism during the usual after-lesson discussion
 - an equal number of answers (as compared to the above-mentioned ones) - n=12 - reflected the TTs anxiety about not succeeding in making themselves understood by students; this is somehow connected to the idea of anxiety about “losing face” in front of the students, but it also may interpreted as a first sign of concern about “the other” (the students in the classroom) and, consequently about the process of teaching (including choice of methods or techniques, as well as choice of tasks). It also hints at the idea of concern about success in teaching (the impact of the activity performed in the classroom).
2. n= 55 expressed TTs` anxieties connected to
- a) the process of preparing for teaching the lesson (n = 24)
 - n=9 worried about their lack of ability of designing a lesson project
 - n=15 mentioned anxieties linked to their ability of choosing the appropriate methods and techniques according to the students` age (as they were supposed to teach students of various ages) and to their level of knowledge (as they did not know students and the they were aware of the fact that they would be working with mixed ability classes)
 - b) the process of acting the role in front of the others (on stage/front stage) (n =31)
 - n=5 were worried about their ability of keeping classroom noise under control, especially when teaching students in primary classes
 - n=10 indicated TTs` anxiety in relation to the manner in which they could manage their time during the lessons
 - n=11 were anxious about the ability of motivating students so that they become active learners in the classroom
 - n=5 expressed the feeling of anxiety in relation to the ability of acting effectively so that they could combine their planning with spontaneous decisions that they had to take during the course of the lesson.

Conclusion upon findings: We expected TTs to mention both types of anxieties (concerning the self-image and concerning the teaching activity as such), but we did not expect anxieties linked to the latter point of interest be at such a high level, considering the trainee teachers' level of experience.

b) *our observation (in our quality of university coordinators of the TTs' practicum) of the TTs' lessons in progress during their practicum*; we had the opportunity to analyse their lessons from a wide range of perspectives. This was completed with analysis of their teaching files.

The conclusion was that although students have theoretical pedagogical and didactic knowledge they feel tension/anxieties and, at the same time, they have difficulty in transferring an applying their theoretical knowledge into practice, noticeable both in their teaching files (including project lessons and teaching materials) and their performance in the classroom. This conclusion came after a large number of observations during the lessons TTs had to teach in the classroom [trial lessons (n=4) and final lesson (n=1), for each of them].

What we also observed were many of TTs' reactions in different situations – that is, we observed the Self, while performing the role; thus, TTs:

- were panicking when they were aware of a language mistake they produced
- were nervous any time an unexpected question came from the students
- felt frustrated when they did not remember a word/pieces of information
- were panicking when they finished the lesson many minutes before the bell rang – that is, could not manage time in the classroom in an effective way
- felt at a loss when they could not keep the students under control and could not cope with noise
- seemed unhappy when they could not remember what they planned to do at a particular stage of the lesson
- felt at a loss when they did not succeed to get students answers to their questions

After each lesson, together with the teacher trainers, on the basis of things observed, we offered the TTs the possibility of recalling their experiences in the classroom, examining and evaluating them, thus helping them to make decisions concerning their own future teaching actions, in order to make the teaching process as effective as possible (Bonta, 2013:167).

Because many issues raised during these discussions brought into light the TTs' admitting the presence of anxieties before and while-teaching stages during their practicum, we felt the need of organizing a new focus group discussion and a sentence completion tasks session. The

discussions were based on a process of reflection, following the line of the realistic approach, taking into account the gap existing between theory and practice (Korthagen, 2011: 38). The main points of interest were:

1. identification of TTs` anxieties during 5 hours of teaching and establishing a comparison between these findings and the ones obtained after TTs finished the observation practice session
2. identification of the relationship between their understanding of teacher role identity and the anxieties they experience before going into teaching as profession
3. identification of the representations they have about learners, as well as about their own self as efficient, successful teachers-to-be.

We tried to find out whether trainee students` anxieties while teaching the lessons were different from the ones before performing this activity (Table 7).

Table 7. TTs` anxieties during teaching classes

Area of concern	Anxiety	Anxiety-related descriptor	No of concerns	%
Self-image	they feared they might make a fool of themselves in front of their students	by making mistakes while speaking	10	33.33
		by not succeeding in making themselves understood by students	6	20
		by forgetting what they have to do during each stage of the lesson	4	13.33
		by forgetting pieces of information	4	13.33
	they feared they might be criticized by the teacher trainer for weak performance	**especially if criticism is offered in front of their peers	3	10
Preparing for teaching and performance in the classroom	they feared they would not be able to prepare well for the process of teaching	not being able to design effective lesson projects	5	16.66
		not being able to establish the appropriate techniques, according to students` age and level of knowledge	3	10
		not being able to keep students/ noise under control	9	30
	they feared they would not be able to play the role well	not being able to manage time during the lesson	17	56.66
		not being able to transform students into active learners/active doers	17	56.66
		combining initial planning with spontaneous decisions	12	40

TTs` answers revealed the following:

1. TTs were still preoccupied with their self-image (n=27)
 - n=10 were afraid they might make mistakes
 - n=6 worried they would not be able to make themselves understood by the students
 - n=4 did not want to make a fool of themselves by forgetting what they have to do during each stage of the lesson
 - n=4 feared they might forget pieces of information from the lesson content
 - n=3 expressed anxiety about getting criticism from the part of the teacher trainer, especially in front of their peers
2. n= 63 revealed anxieties about their teacher role, in two different processes
 - a) the process of preparing for teaching the lesson (n=24)
 - n=5 worried their lesson projects would not be satisfactory
 - n=3 mentioned anxieties linked to their ability of choosing the appropriate methods and techniques according to the students` age and level of knowledge
 - c) the process of acting the role in front of the others (“on stage”) (n=55)
 - n=9 were worried about their ability of keeping classroom noise under control, especially when teaching students in primary classes
 - n=17 indicated anxiety in relation to time management
 - n=17 were not sure they could motivate the students and transform them into active participants to the process of learning
 - n=12 expressed anxiety about their ability of coping with the necessity of taking spontaneous decisions, thus not fully observing the lesson project framework.

It seemed to us important to compare trainee teachers` anxieties corresponding to the two different moments of their wording. Table 8 shows the difference in TTs` concerns before teaching English properly (column **a**) and after doing it (column **b**). Column **c** expresses the value of variation.

Table 8. TTs` anxieties (comparative analysis: a) after observation classes and before going into teaching classes; b) during teaching classes; c) difference between responses

Area of concern	Anxiety	Anxiety-related descriptor	a	b	c
Self-image	they feared they might make a fool of themselves in front of their students	by making mistakes while speaking	6	10	+4
		by not succeeding in making themselves understood by students	12	6	-6
		by forgetting what they have to do during each stage of the lesson	5	4	-1
		by forgetting pieces of information	4	4	0
	they feared they might be criticized by the teacher trainer for weak performance	**especially if criticism is offered in front of their peers	12	3	-9
Preparing for teaching and 3. performance in the classroom	they feared they would not be able to prepare well for the process of teaching	not being able to design effective lesson projects	9	5	-4
		not being able to establish the appropriate techniques, according to students` age and level of knowledge	15	3	-12
	they feared they would not be able to play the role well	not being able to keep students/ noise under control	5	9	+4
		not being able to manage time during the lesson	10	17	+7
		not being able to transform students into active learners/active doers	11	17	+6
	combining initial planning with spontaneous decisions	5	12	+7	

Our analysis takes in view the two levels of interest: the self-image and the role of the teacher in the classroom:

1. Self-image. Through focus group discussions, TTs disclosed themselves directly, expressing their concern about their self-image in front of the students, in front of the teacher trainer and of their peers. Thus, they feared
 - they might make a fool of themselves in front of their students by making mistakes while speaking [a=6; b=10 ; c= +4]. The explanations for the increased number of concerns after the lessons taught in the classroom may be linked to TTs` being minoring in English (the explanation was given by TTs). Our explanation is based on two more factors: TTs` being told they had made mistakes during the first trial teaching lesson; TTs` being more concerned about their role of a model in the classroom
 - they would not succeed in making themselves understood by the students [a=12; b=6; c= -6]. The explanation lies in TTs` having already had their teaching practice stage in

Romanian, thus having already passed through situations that, somehow, encouraged them in this respect

- they would forget what to during each stage of the lesson [a=5; b=4; c= -1] . TTs offered the same explanation for this variation: they already knew that it was not necessary to throw too many glances to their lesson projects during the lesson, as they mastered them quite well and they coped with situations in the classroom
- they would forget pieces of information regarding the content of the lesson [a=4; b=4; c= 0].
- they might be criticized by the teacher trainer for weak performance (especially if criticism is done in front of their peers) [a=12; b=3; c=9]. There is a dramatic decrease in the number of concerns in this field of research. The explanation lies in TTs` finding out (after teaching each lesson) that teacher trainees did not criticize them after their performance, even though there were weak points in their lessons. Discussions were based on free/open presentations of opinions and

supportive pieces of advice from the part of the teacher trainers, as well as on constructive ideas coming from peers, in a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere.

2. Teacher role. TTs feared

a) they would not be able to prepare well for the process of teaching

- a decrease in the number of concerns about TTs not being able to design effective lesson projects [a=9; b=5; c= -4] came from TTs` having the opportunity to be well, carefully and thoroughly advised by teacher trainees about how to design their project lessons. They also benefited from models of project lessons to help them in their activity of projecting the lesson.
- a sharp decrease in the number of concerns about TTs` not being able to establish the appropriate techniques [a=15; b=3; c= -12] according to students` age and level of knowledge finds the explanation in the same fact: teacher trainees offered TTs a very careful guidance and pieces of advice, too, for each level of study in particular

b) they feared they would not be able to play the role well

- not being able to keep students/noise under control [a=5; b=9; c= +4]
- not being able to manage time during the lesson [a=10; b=17; c= +7]
- not being able to transform students into active learners/active doers [a=11; b==17; c= +6]
- combining initial planning with spontaneous decisions [a= 5; b=12; c= +7]

The comparative analysis of this last type of concerns brings into light the fact that all the four areas under investigation disclose an increase in anxieties. First, we were surprised by the result, but deeper investigation of the problem, made us draw the conclusion that the explanation consists in the TTs` increasing awareness of teacher role and their desire of becoming more and more performant.

We also considered that their anxieties, as well as their establishing and enacting roles depend very much on the representations they have about learners. That is, the representations they have about students, in general, can help them establish the role they have to play in the classroom and, at the same time, might explain the anxieties that they experience. The sentence completion task: *In my opinion, the student is...* revealed the following, as seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Representations of students and their roles in the classroom

Representation	Descriptor
a source of existence	
the reason for which the teacher goes to work	
the one who / the person who	acquires knowledge assumes responsibility in the learning process can be modelled/educated in order to accomplish his/her dreams in life is in a continuous development (in terms of knowledge and character) needs the teacher`s greatest concern needs much care and love needs to be valued and loved goes to school in order to evolve
a friend	
a partner	
a flower that we need to "water" so that it can grow	

As it can be easily noticed, the TTs` representations of students range from abstract to concrete, from impersonal to personal, from literal to metaphorical hypostasis. Thus, the student is a source, a reason, the one who.../the person who..., a friend, a partner and even a flower. The student is either object of one`s action (*can be modelled*) or the agent of it (*goes to school in order to evolve; acquires knowledge*). The important things are: the student has got needs (*care, love, information*), has got duties (*acquiring knowledge, assuming responsibilities*) and plays different roles (*friend, partner*). At the same time, the student is in a permanent process of development, a process in which the teacher has an important role to play.

We assumed that the TTs` prospective Self may be an indicator of their awareness of the role they have to play in the classroom, so that to develop their own identity as teachers. According to Heshmat (2014), psychologists understand identity formation as a “matter of finding oneself by matching one`s talents and potential with available social roles.” The idea goes in line with that of Bullough`s (1997) who argued that teacher role identity gives information about beginning teachers` beliefs about the process of teaching, the process of learning, the learner as such, as well as about the self, playing the role of a teacher. Therefore, they had to do the following completion task: *Myself, as a good teacher, would definitely mean...*

We received the opinions that we organized on two levels: the professional level and the individual level (Table 10).

Table 10. TTs` prospective teaching Self and prospective teacher role identity

Level of analysis	Area	Descriptor	
Professional level	knowledge	example of knowledge; intellectual example for students; encyclopaedia of knowledge	
	performance	skilful manager/advisor; a guide; a mentor; a good communicator; a partner for students	
	knowledge and performance duties	a professional [in constant development] a person for whom the job is a vocation to adapt teaching to students` needs and profile to make decisions about learning goals, content, materials and assessment lessons challenging and pleasant use of both traditional and modern methods and techniques to attend to students to diagnose learning problems to establish good rapport and communication with students to ensure engaging lesson projects and classroom activities to convey information in a clear and interesting manner	
	behaviour	model of behaviour; be aware of own strengths and weaknesses; show respect to students; be fair with students	
	quality	good psychologist	imaginative funny
		good actor	objective calm
good listener		creative optimistic patient confident	

Conclusions

The study brought into discussion aspects of the Romanian TTs` process of preparation for becoming teachers. We gave priority to their reflections upon their professional growth and building a role identity. The framework for analysis was the practicum TTs had to undergo and we had in view some particular stages of it: the classroom observation stage, the (trial and final) teaching lessons, the post-observation and post-teaching discussions.

Reflection upon these important moments of their practicum was offered through (reflective) observation, focus group discussions and sentence completion tasks and was exploited as a learning method, meant to help TTs become aware of and build a teacher role identity. Reflection helped us identify TTs` awareness of the teacher role identity characteristics and the relationship between their understanding of teacher role identity and the anxieties they experience before going into teaching.

As teacher role identity consists of beliefs about the Self and the role the teacher has to play in the classroom, we investigated

- a) variables related to TTs (knowledge, type of personality and personality traits, drives within the individual, physical and cognitive abilities)
- b) the TTs` actual Self (with opinions and anxieties during their professional growth)
- c) the TTs` prospective teaching Self and prospective teaching role (in relation to teaching models and on the basis of their awareness of the teacher professional role)
- d) TTs` representations of their students (as a pre-requisite for TTs` understanding of their roles and as a potential source of TTs` anxieties - before and while teaching)

We reached the following conclusions:

- a) TTs acknowledged the importance of the practicum (with all its stages); they considered it a real learning tool in the process of becoming teachers
- b) TTs developed awareness about the professional role of a teacher on the basis of the models they took into consideration (images of their own teachers far back in time, when TTs were learners; teacher trainees whom they observed during the practicum; other images of teachers they came into contact with)
- c) TTs experienced various anxieties during the observation stage of their practicum, as well as during the process of their own teaching lessons in the classroom (within the framework of the practicum). We analysed their anxieties on two levels: 1) Self- image;

2) preparation for teaching and performance in the classroom. Outcomes revealed that their concerns changed along the practicum:

- before the teaching stage, they were more concerned about themselves and their image in front of the others (n=39) as compared to the same concerns during the teaching stage (n=27)
- before the teaching stage they were preoccupied about the particular duties imposed by role they had to play in the classroom (n=55), but they started to be more preoccupied about these aspects (n=63) during the teaching stage; the increase in anxieties was correlated with the TTs` increasing awareness of the teacher role identity, as well as with TTs` desire of becoming more and more performant
- the representations they had about students can be considered an important source of their anxieties

The conclusions we have reached enhance the idea that the ways in which TTs perceive teacher role identity, corroborated with representations of the learner, as well as with representations of their own selves, go hand in hand with their anxieties as effective teachers-to-be. We are aware of certain limitations of our study. First, it is based on a small number of participants (n=30). Second, the participants to the study were not at their first experience with teaching (they had experimented a practicum stages during their teaching Romanian as a subject), but they confronted with their first experience in teaching English. The findings offered by their reflections should have been compared to those offered by TTs majoring in English as a foreign language and who had not benefited from a teaching practice stage, prior to our research.

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E. Bonta, R. Galița/ *Journal of Innovation in Psychology, Education and Didactics*

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