

## Verbal and Visual Strategies of Teachers' Work on Identity

### Abstract

The paper describes qualitative research which studied six teachers from their professional beginnings to the present position of an experienced – expert – teacher. The research method used is life story, through which the teacher's career is reconstructed. The key research question is: What strategies of work on identity did a teacher use to become an expert teacher? The most important motor of change and particularly of a teacher's development was his/her decision and commitment to the development of his/her identity (Pittard, 2003). Snow and Anderson (1987) labelled this process as work on one's identity. I will discuss only verbal and visual strategies, which the teacher uses to influence the environment at school in general (verbal distancing, gossip, and strategy of uniqueness). The paper concludes with a discussion of how necessary the verbal and visual strategies directed towards the school space are for the teacher's professional identity. Had they no power, teachers could not influence decision-making processes.

**Keywords:** *expert teacher, identity, professional development, work on identity*

### 1. Expert Teachers and Identity

There are various theories describing the teacher's development and progress. They study, e.g., changes in the teacher's interpersonal styles throughout his/her career (Wubbels, Levy, 1993), the development of the teacher's professional career (Foley, 2004), the constitution of various evolutionary phases in the teacher's life (Steffy et al., 2000), development of schools as professional learning communities