

ISA-guided mentorship and teacher turnover

Tanárok mentorálása az identitás-struktúra analízis (ISA) alapján

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Abstract

A large proportion of teachers are prone to leaving the profession in their first five years of work. This phenomenon, teacher turnover, is a long-standing and costly societal ill. To offset it, governments have implemented mentorship and induction programs. Despite the successes of these programs, turnover is still a troublesome issue. A weakness of the government programs is that they are generalized in nature and cannot cater to the needs of the individual teacher. Identity Structure Analysis can uncover stresses and conflicts of both individual and groups of teachers. It is presented as means for generating mentorship advice that holds potential for overcoming the generalized nature of induction programs. To illustrate how this personalized mentorship advice might manifest, a summary analysis of a single teacher in crisis (teachers in a state of identity crisis are considered the teachers most likely to leave the profession) is generated. In addition, a nomothetic analysis of five teachers in a state of identity crisis is generated to illustrate how from a larger study involving more teachers in crisis, Identity Structure Analysis might reveal something of the nature of the teacher identity crisis.

Keywords: teacher turnover, identity crisis, Identity Structure Analysis, mentoring

Absztrakt

Számos pályakezdő pedagógus foglalkoztatása első öt évében elhagyja a tanári pályát. Ez a jelenség hosszú ideje fennálló, és egyben költséges társadalmi probléma. A tanárok pályaelhagyását a (kanadai) kormány pályaaorientáció és mentorprogramok indításával próbálja megakadályozni. E programok sikere ellenére, a pályaelhagyás mértéke még mindig számottevő. A kormányzati programok gyenge pontja a programok általános jellege, az, hogy ezek a programok nem válaszolnak a tanárok egyedi szükségleteire. Az identitásstruktúra-analízis (ISA) mind egyedi, mind pedig csoportszinten felfedheti a stresszteli és konfliktusos területeket. Lehetőséget nyújt a mentorálás keretei között végzett olyan tanácsadásra, amely meghaladja az orientáló-mentoráló programok általánosságait. A szerző tanulmányában egy krízishelyzetet átélő tanár adatainak mélyelemzésével illusztrálja, hogy miképpen valósulhat meg ez a személyre szabott mentorálás, tanácsadás (a krízisben lévő tanárok azok, akik legvalószínűbben hagyják el a pályát). Ezt követően, egy nomotetikus elemzés keretei között, a szerző öt, identitás-krízist átélő tanár esetét vizsgálja, hogy a tanári pályán előforduló szakmai válságokról átfogóbb képet nyújtson.

Kulcsszavak: tanárok pályaelhagyása, identitáskrízis, identitásstruktúra-analízis, mentorálás

Introduction

Teachers no doubt make the decision to leave the profession (turnover), in part at least, because of stresses they feel on the job. This paper uses Weinreich's (2003) Identity Structure Analysis (ISA) to uncover something of the nature of the stresses experienced by teachers in a state of identity crisis. Those stresses manifest as conflicted ISA constructs and conflicted patterns of identification. This paper also suggests that mentorship advice can be assembled from the analysis of teachers' ISA data and that this advice can provide teachers in crisis with new and directed paths to the resolution of their individual stresses. The application of ISA analysis in mentorship sessions represents a new approach to teacher Professional Development (PD). If we assume that teachers in crisis are the teachers most likely to leave the profession, then the application of ISA in mentorship advice is likely an approach to the problem of teacher turnover that is worthy of future study.

Policy makers face a considerable issue in teacher turnover (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). It has two components: attrition and migration (Ingersoll, 2001). Teachers who migrate move to another school; those who attrite leave the profession altogether. Migration lowers the impact of turnover at the professional level but, as Ingersoll (2001) makes note, attrition and migration are felt equally at the level of the individual school.

Turnover is U-Shaped (Grissmer & Kirby, 1993; Ingersoll, 2001). Those who leave tend to be retirees and young teachers with less than five years of experience (Leukens et al., 2004). Beyond the fifth year of employment and prior to an upcoming retirement, attrition rates decline significantly (Ingersoll & Smith 2003; Mark & Anderson, 1978, 1985).

Early onset turnover is not a new phenomenon. In the 1950s, 50 per cent of qualified Illinois teachers left the profession within 2 years (Charters, 1956). Charters (1970) found turnover in Oregon (at 5 years) to be 60 per cent for males and 70 per cent for females. Mark and Anderson (1978, 1985) reported high rates of teacher turnover in the early years and Johnson, Berg and Donaldson (2005) made note that 15.1 per cent of the US teaching population left in 2000-2001 as compared with 12.4-13.5 per cent in the late 1980s to mid-1990s. Over a 30-year period in Chicago, DeAngelis and Presley (2011) reported 40 per cent turnover at 5 years. While turnover research has been focused in the US, there is a smaller body of work that pertains to countries such as the UK and Canada. In the United Kingdom annual turnover increased from 8 to 10 per cent through 1999 to 2002 and in 2010 it was found that only 56 per cent of teachers who enter a training program were still in teaching at 5 years (House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2010). Across Canada, Salinitri, Howitt and Donohoo (n.d.) reported turnover at 15-20 per cent. In Ontario turnover was 27 per cent from 1993-1995 (Government of Ontario, 2005). The loss of teachers due to attrition increased in the period 2006-2008 (Clark & Antonelli, 2009). A more acute turnover situation (67% turnover) existed in northern British Columbia (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2000). The situation is similar across northern Canada as teachers move to fill positions left by retirees in the south (Kitchenham & Chastauneuf, 2010).

The significance of turnover lies in the costs that it imposes on society. Johnson, Berg and Donaldson (2005) note that these costs have 3 dimensions: instructional, organizational and financial. Instructional costs relate to the fact that it is quality teachers who most often leave the profession (Heck, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). A related point is that teacher effectiveness increases with time in the classroom (Murnane

& Philips, 1981). Therefore, a strategy that holds potential for delaying turnover ought to also work as means for increasing teacher effectiveness and teacher quality (to the extent that teacher effectiveness equates to teacher quality). Organizational costs lie in the effects that turnover has on program development and staff cohesion. Indication of the scale of the financial impact of turnover is available in Johnson et al. (2005) who reported costs in the state of Texas at \$329 million to \$2.1 billion depending on the model applied.

Induction programs that provide new teachers with guidance and support, such as mentoring and group lesson planning, have offset turnover somewhat (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). However, despite these positive developments, issues of funding (Hayes et al., 2019), consistency of program quality (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015), lack of training (Portner, 2008) and equity of access (Bopaiah, 2021) remain and so, despite the noted success of induction programs, turnover remains a significant issue for schools, for school boards and indeed for society at large. Passmore, Turner and Prescott (2019) note that current professional development programs focus on generalized aspects of teaching such as skills and knowledge and that they fail to consider the personalized needs of the individual teacher. ISA is presented here as a potential solution to this failing as it provides insight into the stresses felt by the individual teacher. As such it holds potential to provide mentorship advisements that overcome the generalized nature of current professional development programs.

The ISA analysis that follows presents schools with a path for the identification of teachers in crisis according to the individual stresses that are impinging on their professional identities. It seems reasonable to argue that teachers experiencing an identity crisis are in danger of succumbing to turnover. ISA-guided mentorship that caters to the individual stresses of these teachers is offered as a way to assist administrators who seek to diminish the impact of turnover on their school or board.

The ISA Method

The teacher ISA instrument is made up of a series of constructs and entities (Appendix, Tables 1-2). Constructs of ISA instruments are associated with themes that influence the formation of the identity in question. In the case of the teacher identity instrument the themes of note were team player, class management, relationship with students, approach to work and problem solving. It is important to note that each construct is made up of 2 poles (bipolar constructs) with each pole being sensitive to an issue within a theme. Where constructs represent themes that influence formation of an identity, entities represent similarly influential people, social icons, and institutions. Entities are selected during ISA instrument creation for their capacity to represent life domains that are of import to the identity in question (home and work in the case of the teacher identity instrument). The instrument was placed online as a matrix of constructs and entities in a Google form. Upon completion the Google form was downloaded and imported into the Ipeus software. Ipeus converts the raw scores of the Google form into standard scores, which it imports into a series of algebraic formulae. On working through the calculations of the formulae, Ipeus generates a 20-page report that makes a series of ISA parameters available for analysis and interpretation.

Weinreich (personal communication, 2013) developed a template to streamline the interpretation of ISA reports. The template calls for review of a few, core ISA parameters in the following order:

- Report core and conflicted dimensions of identity.
- Report idealistic and contra-identifications with influential others.
- Compare empathetic identifications for two current entities of self and one past entity of self.
- Report identity conflicts for two current entities of self and one past entity of self.
- Report on evaluations of and ego-involvement with influential others.
- Report on the intersection of evaluations of entities of self and identity diffusion.

This paper uses the template to present analysis and interpretation of the professional identities of an individual teacher and a group of teachers who are all in the throes of an Identity crisis. The goal in presenting the analyses is to shed light on the nature of teacher professional identity crises, to illustrate the nature and format of ISA analyses, and to suggest that they hold potential for directing mentorship sessions.

Instrument Design

The constructs and entities of the Teacher Identity instrument were obtained and simplified from an original version that Peter Weinreich (the researcher who developed ISA) developed. Presenting the original instrument to Hong Kong teachers in a pilot study indicated that it took too long to complete and that this issue was in part due to the teacher's having to work in English, which was not their first language. A simplified version of the original instrument was constructed to accommodate the issue of English language ability across the study's participants. Simplification involved pruning the instrument to a more manageable number of entities and simplifying the wording of constructs or removing them entirely. In the simplified and adapted instrument, the entities (Appendix, Table 1) fully represent the domains of self and work as per the original instrument and restrict home entities to the person to whom the participants feel closest (and thus to the person most likely to influence identity formation). Other entities of the simplified instrument represent important work-related persons, the subject taught by the teacher, and people representative of broader society. Typical of ISA research these entities represent a mixture of those people that research points to as being influential to teacher identity and those people that the researcher considered to be of import. The constructs of the simplified instrument (Appendix, Table 2) represent themes that research (Armor et al., 1976) suggests might be of import. Specifically, the themes of the newer instrument were *team player*, *relationship with students*, *approach to problem solving*, and *approach to management and teaching*. The instrument is available for review in the Appendix.

Design of the Study

The instrument was designed for a study involving Hong Kong teachers. 18 teachers completed the instrument and were rated by their principals as 'good' or 'average'/'weak.' The study design involved the collection of demographic data via the introductory section of the instrument, which made for comparison analyses across age, gender, subject taught, years in teaching. This work represents an addition to these comparisons in that five teachers were convenience sampled from the original 18. They were the teachers who among the 18 were identified as being in a state of crisis. A single teacher's identity is subjected to ISA analysis in the text below to illustrate to the reader how a teacher identity crisis appears in an ISA analysis. Also illustrated is that a summary of such an ISA analysis contains information that can be used to guide the provision of mentorship advice that is specific to the stresses of the individual teacher. Next, an ISA analysis of all five teachers is presented. Despite the small number of teachers involved, it reveals that the nomothetic function of ISA can be used to represent identity crises across multiple teachers, and in doing so, it points to the fact that future nomothetic analyses involving larger numbers of teachers in crisis may reveal something of the nature of the teacher crisis. Both the individual and the nomothetic analyses indicate that ISA-guided mentorship holds potential for improving upon the current, generalized approaches to teacher mentoring.

Idiographic Analysis

Structural Pressure (SP) and Emotional Significance

Emotional Significance: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 100.00

The emotional significance of a construct used in the appraisal of the teacher's social world is defined as the strength of affect associated with the expression of the construct. The index of standardised emotional significance can range from 0.00 (no significance) to 10.00 (maximal significance).

Structural Pressure: minimum value = -100, maximum value = +100

SP reflects the consistency with which a construct is used to evaluate entities. High SP constructs are used in consistent manner to evaluate others. They represent the core, stable evaluative dimensions of the identity under consideration. Low SP constructs are used to evaluate others in different ways depending on circumstance and context. Low SP suggests an area of stress and indecision; a conflicted dimension liable to poor decision making. Core and conflicted constructs for the teacher are presented below.

Table 1

Core and Conflicted Values and Beliefs

Pole 1	Pole 2	Structural Pressure	Emotional significance
Core Constructs			
Is straightforward with people	<i>Plays games with people</i>	93.62	10.00
Feels there is a lot I can do to get students to value learning	<i>Feels there is little I can do to get students to value learning</i>	72.89	7.29
<i>Sides with society's disadvantaged</i>	Sides with the advantaged in society	70.81	7.08
Becomes closely involved with students	<i>Maintains a formal relationship</i>	66.99	6.70
Believes there is no finer job than teaching	<i>Believes there are better jobs than teaching</i>	54.70	5.47
Depends on others in making decisions	<i>Prefers to work things out alone</i>	38.44	5.79
Conflicted Constructs			
<i>Communicates well with parents</i>	Is remote from parents	-24.72	6.81
Takes issue with the way things are	<i>Supports the way things are</i>	-31.58	7.27
Deals with awkward people by appealing to everyday rules	<i>Confronts awkward people</i>	-38.12	7.35
<i>Puts the needs of students first</i>	Puts personal needs first	-84.69	9.43

Core Constructs

The primary core constructs of this teacher concern: ‘*playing games with people*’, ‘*feeling there is little he can do to get students to value learning*’, ‘*siding with the disadvantaged in society*’, ‘*maintaining a formal relationship with students*’, ‘*believing there are better jobs than teaching*’, and ‘*preferring to work things out alone*’. Interestingly one of the constructs (plays games with people) is subject to very high structural pressure suggesting that this is a black and white issue for the teacher. The remaining constructs listed as core are subject to lesser but still significant structural pressure. Significant SP suggests the teacher will adhere to the behaviours of the favoured poles of these constructs most of the time. Two themes dominate the teacher’s core constructs. *Team player* is represented by ‘*believes there are better jobs than teaching*’ and ‘*plays games with people*’. Relationship with students is represented by ‘*sides with the disadvantaged in society*’ and ‘*maintains a formal relationship with students*’. Of the remaining core constructs ‘*feels there is little they can do to get students to value learning*’ is part of the theme ‘*approach to classroom management and teaching*’ and ‘*prefer to work things out alone*’; is an approach to *problem solving* as a theme. The pivotal construct of the teacher’s identity (‘*plays games with people*’) is subject to maximal emotional significance. Each of the remaining core constructs is

subject to moderate emotional significance. Two of the findings in the above are worthy of additional note. That the teacher believes there are better jobs than teaching suggests a lack of commitment to the job. Further, that the teacher feels there is little that can be done to get students to value learning points to a deficiency in their sense of efficacy as teachers. It is the case that neither of the latter two findings speak well regarding the teacher's potential to leave the teaching profession.

Conflicted Constructs

Two of the conflicted constructs fall in the theme approach to classroom management and teaching (*'communicates well with parents'* and *'confronts awkward people'*). The construct *'supports the way things are'* is a member of the *team player* theme and *'puts the needs of students first'* is an approach to the *problem solving* theme. Interestingly, *'puts the needs of students first'* is by far the most conflicted construct and the only one that is of high emotional significance. Moderate emotional significance is associated with each of the remaining conflicted constructs suggesting that the teacher may or may not be aware that they represent areas of difficulty.

In ISA, developing paths for mentorship would begin by considering ways and means to help the teacher cope with the issues that surround conflicted constructs. Conflicted constructs represent components of teaching where teachers are unsure. It is the case then that, where they are aware that they represent an issue, (have high emotional significance) they will likely be amenable to suggestions for improvement. Conversely, in the case of core constructs teachers will be sure of their thinking and as such, suggestions for change are likely to be unappreciated and resisted. To counter this resistance, ISA recommends linking a conflicted construct to one that is core. This connecting act provides teachers with more to think about than the usual issues that surround a core construct.

Mentorship for this teacher should be directed to toward helping him feel sure in his position regarding conflicted constructs. Focus on the most conflicted construct *'puts the needs of student first.'* The high emotional significance suggests that he will be aware that it represents a troublesome issue. To begin mentoring this teacher ask him to describe situations that have caused stress when it comes to putting his own, or the needs of student first. With this information to hand, begin the process of helping him reach firmer ground. This might require that the mentor work to develop a set of rules or examples to follow before mentorship sessions begin. Conversely, a mentor could ask the teacher to list his issues around how to prioritize his needs and thereafter the teacher and mentor could discuss these matters devising solutions that the teacher feels comfortable implementing. Linking a conflicted construct to a core construct might be accomplished by asking the teacher a question that associates *'puts personal needs first'* with the pivotal core construct *'plays games with people'* For example, *'can you think of situations were putting your own needs over the needs of your students reduces your ability to play games with them?'* Here again, a mentor would use the information that turns up to generate plans for future mentoring.

Idealistic and contra-identifications

Idealistic Identification: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 1.00

Contra-Identification: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 1.00

Idealistic identifications (II) reveal a person’s role models and indicate the characteristics a person will seek to emulate over the long term. Contra-identifications (CI) indicate negative role models. Negative characteristics these people possess are characteristics the teacher will wish to shun in the long term.

Table 2
Idealistic and Contra-Identifications

Entity	II	CI
School principal	0.42	
Closest family member	0.42	
A disruptive student	0.42	
A person I do not like	0.33	
A person I admire	0.33	
A good student	0.33	
A person I do not like		0.67
A disruptive student		0.58
A good student		0.58
Closest family member		0.50

The teacher exhibits significant idealistic identification with school principal, closest family member and a disruptive student. Relative to me at work the school principal exhibits superior behaviours in regard to ‘*plays games with people*’, ‘*feels there is little the teacher can do to get students to value learning*’, ‘*sides with the disadvantaged in society*’, and ‘*prefers to work things out alone.*’ In ISA, these superior rated behaviours represent targets for mentorship in that they represent long-term behavioural aspirations. This argument is bolstered by the fact that each of the noted behaviours concerns a construct that is core to the teacher’s identity. However, it is worth noting that ‘*playing games with people*’ and feeling ‘*there is little a teacher can do to get students to value learning*’ are not held as admirable traits in society. Further, ‘*a person I do not like*’, and ‘*a disruptive student*’ are not typically admired entities. This being the case, it would be unwise for a mentor to encourage a teacher to work toward these behaviours until more is known about the nature of the crisis of the identity under investigation.

Significant contra-identification (negative identification) is registered for ‘*a person I do not like*’, ‘*a disruptive student*’ and ‘*a good student*’. Relative to ‘*me at work*’, ‘*a disruptive student*’ is seen to prioritize: ‘*becoming closely involved with students*’, ‘*prioritizing student welfare*’, and ‘*depending on others in making decisions*’. Becoming closely involved with students and depending on others in making decisions are positions that run counter to the position the teacher holds for these core constructs. Mentoring the teacher to help him see why a disruptive student may behave as perceived could increase his ability to reach and teach these students and resolve the seeming conflicted stance of this entity being the object of both ideal and contra-identification.

Empathetic identifications

Empathetic Identification: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 1.00

Whereas idealistic identifications represent long-term aspirations, empathetic identifications are of the here and now. Change in empathetic identifications across context and mood states reflect potential for change in behaviour.

Current empathetic identifications based in *'me at work'*, are with *'closest family member'* (0.80), *'a disruptive student'* (0.80), and *'a person I do not like'* (0.70).

Current empathetic identifications based in *'me at home'* are with *'school principal'* (0.75), *'a person I admire'* (0.50), and *'typical artists today'* (0.50).

Past Empathetic identification based in *'me as a student teacher'* are with a *'disruptive student'* (0.93), *'closest family member'* (0.83), *'a person I do not like'* (0.83), and *'a good student'* (0.75).

At work, both now and in the past, there are similar levels of empathetic identification with the same entities of the instrument. Note however the shift in empathetic identification in the home where the school principal is the main target of empathetic identification. The shift in empathetic identification suggests potential for the teacher to change behaviour when moving between home and work. This is important, for later we will see that this teacher is happier in the home than in the work domain of the instrument. That is, for some reason, the teacher is not behaving as he would prefer in the work domain. Questioning during the mentorship process could uncover the reasons for this pattern of behaviour.

Conflicted Identifications

Conflicted Identification: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 1.00

Conflicted identification references the combination of contra and empathetic identification; being 'as' another, while at the same time wishing to disassociate from those characteristics that are seen to be held in common.

Current identification conflicts based in *'me at work'* are: *'a person I do not like'* (0.68), *'a disruptive student'* (0.68), *'a good student'* (0.64), *'closest family member'* (0.63), *'typical scientists today'* (0.55).

Current identification conflicts based in *'me at home'* are: none.

Past identification conflicts based in *'me as a student teacher'* are: *'a person I do not like'* (0.75), *'a disruptive student'* (0.73) *'good student'* (0.66), *'closest family member'* (0.65), *'typical scientists today'* (0.54).

For this teacher, the pattern of conflicted identification in the workplace both now and in the past is similar. This finding suggests that the conflicted identifications are long-standing and that they require mentorship.

There are moderate levels of conflicted identification in the home regarding *'school principal'* (0.50), and *'a person I admire'* (0.46). The level of idealistic identification associated with these entities suggests these conflicted identifications do not need to be targets for mentorship.

The significant conflicted identification with 'a person I do not like' is another matter however, as this is an entity subject to greater contra- than idealistic identification. The suggestion here is that this conflicted identification is negative in its nature.

Conflicted identifications, like conflicted constructs, represent areas around which a framework for mentorship can be focussed. Negative behaviours this teacher sees in himself and in 'a person I do not like' include: 'dealing with people straightforwardly', 'feeling there is a lot he can do to get students to value learning', 'becoming closely involved with students', 'prioritizing student welfare', 'siding with the advantaged in society' and 'believing that there is no finer job than teaching'. Exploring the teacher's issues around these constructs represents good places to start a mentorship conversation for future growth.

Evaluation of, and ego-involvement with others

Evaluation of: minimum value = -1.00, maximum value = +1.00

Ego-involvement with: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 5.00

Evaluation of others refers to a summation of the positive and negative scores associated with each entity. Entities as a result can have a positive or negative value.

Ego involvement refers to the overall responsiveness to an entity in terms of the extensiveness in quantity (number of characteristics possessed) and strength (where the rating of each characteristic lies along the zero-center scale) of the attributes they are rated as possessing.

'A person I do not like' (evaluation of -0.32) (ego-involvement: 5.00)

'A good student' (evaluation of -0.35) (ego: 4.66)

'A disruptive student' (evaluation of 0.00) (ego: 3.79)

'School principal' (evaluation of 0.12) (ego: 3.79)

'A person I admire' (evaluation of -0.30) (ego: 3.28)

'Typical scientists today' (evaluation of -0.36) (ego-involvement: 2.76)

The teacher holds all entities of interest to a moderate degree of evaluation. Ego-involvement with all entities of interest is similarly moderate, except in the case of 'a good student' and 'a person I do not like' where it is high. That ego-involvement is highest for 'a person I do not like' suggests that the teacher will be more motivated to avoid the behaviours they associate with this entity than he will be motivated to behave as per a more admired entity such as 'school principal'.

Evaluation of self, extent of identity diffusion, and identity variants.

Self Evaluation: minimum value = -1.00, maximum value = 1.00

Identity Diffusion: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 1.00

Self-evaluation refers to measurements wherein characteristics associated with the various entities of self ('me as I was', 'me as I am') are compared to characteristics associated with the ideal aspirational self ('me as I would like to be'). They can be positive or negative in value.

Identity diffusion in ISA is a measure of the extent of a person's conflicts of identification.

Identity variants in ISA are reported in a table that places the various entities of self within an identity variant category according to their combination of self-evaluation and diffusion. The central identity variant (indeterminate) is considered optimal. Interpreting the table requires consideration of why and how the placement of the entities of self differs from the optimal.

Table 3

Classification of identity variants

	Identity diffusion		
	low	moderate	high
high	defensive high self-regard	confident	diffuse high self-regard
moderate	defensive	intermediate	diffusion
low	defensive negative	negative	crisis

Note. Adapted from Weinreich, 2004, p. 106.

Figure 1

Identity variant summary of the teacher in crisis



Me at home

Self-evaluation: 0.55
Identity diffusion: 0.25
Identity variant: Defensive/Indeterminate

Me at work

Self-evaluation: -0.16
Identity diffusion: 0.52
Identity Variant: Crisis

Me, as a student teacher

Self-evaluation: -0.23
Identity diffusion: 0.53
Identity variant: Crisis

Me, as I would hate to be

Self-evaluation: -0.50
Identity diffusion: 0.56
Identity variant: Crisis

Me, as I would like to be

Self-evaluation: 0.23
Identity diffusion: 0.53
Identity variant: Confident

Most of the teacher's identity variants fall within the crisis cell of Table 3 (Figure 1). Self-evaluation of 'me at work' is essentially the same as 'me as a student teacher' suggesting the teacher is not moving forward toward his goals in the workplace. He feels better about self in the home than he does at work and there are fewer conflicted identifications in this domain (almost too few). In the home, self-evaluation is normal whereas it is low for all other entities of self other than 'me as I would like to be', which is too high and is in the confident cell of Table 3 (Figure 1). The implication behind a confident rating is that a teacher has failed to fully think through expectations for future performance.

Nomothetic Analysis

Structural Pressure (SP) and Emotional Significance

Emotional Significance: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 100.00

The emotional significance of a construct used in appraisal of the teacher's social world is defined as the strength of affect associated with the expression of the construct. The index of standardised emotional significance can range from 0.00 (no significance) to 10.00 (maximal significance).

Structural Pressure: minimum value = -100, maximum value = +100

SP reflects the consistency with which a construct is used to evaluate entities. High SP constructs are used in consistent manner to evaluate others. They represent the core, stable evaluative dimensions of the identity under consideration. Low SP constructs are used to evaluate others in different ways depending on circumstance and context. Low SP suggests an area of stress and indecision; a conflicted dimension liable to poor decision making. Core and conflicted constructs for the teacher are presented below.

Table 4
Core and Conflicted Values and Beliefs

Pole 1	Pole 2	Structural Pressure	Emotional significance
Core Constructs			
Believes there is no finer job than teaching	<i>Believes there are better jobs than teaching</i>	35.29	7.29
Is straightforward with people	<i>Plays games with people</i>	28.08	7.71
Feels there is a lot I can do to get students to value learning	<i>Feels there is little I can do to get students to value learning</i>	25.09	7.27
Follows a firm agenda when dealing with difficulties	<i>Deals with difficulties creatively</i>	19.79	7.95
Becomes closely involved with students	<i>Maintains a formal relationship</i>	14.82	7.38
Conflicted Constructs			
Depends on others in making decisions	<i>Prefers to work things out alone</i>	3,25	5.01
Sides with society's disadvantaged	<i>Sides with the advantaged in society</i>	2.81	6.81
<i>Puts the needs of students first</i>	Puts personal needs first	-26.29	8.44

Core Constructs

The primary core constructs of the teachers in crisis concern ‘believing there are better jobs than teaching’, ‘playing games with people’, ‘feeling there is little they can do to get students to value learning’, ‘dealing with difficulties creatively’ and ‘maintaining a formal relationship with students’. Interestingly, only one of the listed constructs is subject to high structural pressure (‘believes there are better jobs than teaching’). This is the only construct that is truly core to the teachers’ identity. The remaining constructs, though listed as core, are in fact secondary constructs that are subject to moderate structural pressure. Lower SP suggests the teachers will not adhere strictly to the behaviours of the favoured poles of these constructs. Two themes dominate the teachers ‘core’ constructs. *Team player* is represented by ‘believes there are better jobs than teaching’ and ‘plays games with people’. *Relationship with students* is represented by ‘deals with difficulties creatively’ and ‘maintains a formal relationship with students’. The remaining ‘core’ construct ‘puts the needs of students first’ is part of the theme,

approach to classroom management and teaching. Each 'core' construct is the subject of moderate emotional significance. Two of the findings in the above are worthy of additional note. That the teachers believe there are better jobs than teaching suggests a lack of commitment to the job. Further, that they feel there is little they can do to get students to value learning points to a deficiency in their sense of efficacy as teachers. It is the case that neither of the latter two findings speak well regarding the teachers' potential for leaving the teaching profession.

Conflicted Constructs

Most of the conflicted constructs fall in the theme of *relationship with students* ('*sides with the disadvantaged in society*' and '*puts the needs of students first*'). The construct '*prefers to work things out alone*' is a member of the '*approach to problem solving*' theme. Moderate emotional significance is associated with all the conflicted constructs ('*puts personal needs first*' is borderline high). Interestingly, the teachers' *relationship with students* is both a core and a troublesome theme. That the construct '*puts personal needs first*' is subject to a destabilizing level of structural pressure and the most emotional significance suggests it will be a stressful arena for the teacher in crisis.

In ISA, developing paths for professional development begins with the mentor considering ways and means to help the teacher cope with the issues that surround their conflicted constructs. Conflicted constructs represent components of teaching where teachers are unsure. It is the case then where they are aware that the constructs are issue-some (high emotional significance) they will likely be amenable to suggestions for improvement. Conversely, in the case of core constructs teachers are sure of their thinking, and as such, suggestions for change are likely to be unappreciated and resisted. To counter this resistance, ISA recommends linking a conflicted construct to one that is core. This act provides teachers with more to think about than the usual issues that surround their core constructs.

Professional development for these teachers should be directed to toward helping them feel sure in their position regarding their conflicted constructs. Place particular focus on '*puts personal needs first*'. Borderline high emotional significance suggests that they will be aware that it represents a troublesome issue. The teachers may or may not be aware of their potential to vacillate over the remaining conflicted constructs given their moderate emotional significance. To begin professional development (PD) for these teachers, ask them to describe situations that have caused stress when it comes to putting their own or the needs of their student first. With this information to hand, use later mentoring sessions to begin the process of helping them reach firmer ground. This might require that the mentor develop a set of rules or examples before the mentorship sessions begin. Conversely, administration could ask the teachers to list the issues around how to prioritize needs in a school meeting. Thereafter the teachers and administrators could discuss these matters and devise solutions that the teachers feel comfortable implementing. Linking a conflicted construct to a core construct might be accomplished by asking the teachers a question that associates '*puts personal needs first*' with the core construct '*believes there are better jobs than teaching*'. For example, can you think of situations, where putting your own needs over the needs of your students reduces your impression of the value of teaching as a career? Here again use the information that turns up to generate plans for future mentoring.

Idealistic and contra-identifications

Idealistic Identification: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 1.00

Contra-Identification: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 1.00

Idealistic identifications (II) reveal a person’s role models and indicate the characteristics a person will seek to emulate over the long term. Contra-identifications (CI) indicate negative role models. Negative characteristics these people possess are characteristics the teacher will wish to shun in the long term.

Table 5
Idealistic and Contra Identifications

Entity	II	CI
School principal	0.38	
Typical scientists today	0.38	
A disruptive student	0.37	
A person I do not like	0.37	
A person I do not like		0.55
A good student		0.53
A disruptive student		0.45
A person I admire		0.43
Closest family member		0.42

The teachers exhibit moderate but not significant idealistic identification with the above listed entities of the instrument. Strongest positive affiliations are with ‘*school principal*’ and ‘*typical scientists today*’. These entities are seen to exhibit but one behaviour that is superior to ‘*me at work*’, ‘*takes issue with the way things are*’. Typically, raw scores associated with idealistic identification reveal long term aspirant behaviours. That this construct is neither core to the teachers’ identity nor conflicted may limit the extent to which mentoring toward this admired behaviour will be effective.

Negative identification with the above listed entities is also moderate (contra-identification with ‘*a good student*’ is borderline significant). Relative to ‘*me at work*’, ‘*the good student*’ is seen to ‘*prioritize student welfare*’, ‘*feel there is a lot the teachers can do to get students to value learning*’, ‘*depend on others in making decisions*’, and ‘*feel there is no better job than teaching*’. ‘*Feeling there is a lot the teachers can do*’ and that ‘*there is no better job than teaching*’ are positions around core constructs that run counter to the teachers’ thinking. It may be then that directing PD toward these constructs holds the key to the teachers’ contra-identification pattern with the good student. Depending on others in making decisions is a conflicted construct for the teachers.

Empathetic identifications

Empathetic Identification: minimum value =0.00, maximum value = 1.00

While idealistic identifications represent long-term aspirations, empathetic identifications are of the here and now. Change in empathetic identifications across context and mood states reflect potential for change in behaviour.

Current empathetic identifications based in *'me at work'* are with *'a person I do not like'* (0.78), *'a disruptive student'* (0.75), *'typical scientists today'* (0.69), *'a good student'* (0.66) and *'closest family member'* (0.65). Current empathetic identifications based in *'me at home'* are with *'school principal'* (0.55) and *a person I admire* (0.54). Past empathetic identification based in *'me as a student teacher'* are with *'a person I do not like'* (0.79), *'closest family member'* (0.73), *'a disruptive student'* (0.72), *'a good student'* (0.68), and *'typical scientists today'* (0.65).

At work, we see similar levels of empathetic identification with the same entities of the instrument. It is to be noted that significant empathetic identification for the teachers begins at 0.73. This being the case, some of the entities listed above are subject to moderate levels of empathetic identification. Note the shift in empathetic identification in the home. Note also that the teachers feel more 'as' those entities that teachers would be expected to model whilst they are in the home (*'school principal'*, *'a person I admire'*). The shift in empathetic identification suggests potential for the teachers to change behaviour when moving between their home and work environments.

Conflicted Identifications

Conflicted Identification: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 1.00

Conflicted identification references the combination of contra- and empathetic identification; being 'as' another, while at the same time wishing to disassociate from those characteristics that are seen to be held in common.

Current identification-conflicts based in *'me at work'* are *'a person I do not like'* (0.64), *'a good student'* (0.58), *'a disruptive student'* (0.57), *'typical scientists today'* (0.56). Current identification-conflicts based in *'me at home'* are *'a person I admire'* (0.48), and *'school principal'* (0.45). Past identification conflicts based in *'me as a student teacher'* are: *'a person I do not like'* (0.65), *'a good student'* (0.59), *'a disruptive student'* (0.57), and *'typical scientists today'* (0.55). For these teachers, significant conflicted identification begins at the 0.61 level. The above data therefore suggests that the teachers' only significant conflicted identification is with *'a person I do not like'*. That said, moderate levels of conflicted identification are present in the workplace (both now and in the past) and in the home regarding entities that are also the target of empathetic identification.

We will focus on the significant conflicted identification with *'a person I do not like'*. Importantly, this entity is subject to greater contra- than idealistic identification, suggesting that this conflicted identification is a pattern of identification that is negative in its nature. Conflicted identifications like conflicted constructs represent areas around which a framework for mentorship can be focussed. Negative behaviours the teachers see in self and in *'a person I do not like'* include *'dealing with people straightforwardly'*, *'feeling there is a lot they can do to get students to value learning'* and *'becoming closely involved with students'*. The teachers' issues around these constructs would be good places to start a mentorship conversation for future growth.

Evaluation of and ego-involvement with others

Evaluation of: minimum value = -1.00 maximum value = +1.00

Ego-involvement with: minimum value = 0.00 maximum value = 5.00

Evaluation of others refers to a summation of the positive and negative scores associated with each entity. Entities as a result can have a positive or negative value.

Ego involvement refers to the overall responsiveness to an entity in terms of the extensiveness in quantity (number of characteristics possessed) and strength (where the rating of each characteristic lies along the zero-center scale) of the attributes they are rated as possessing.

'A person I do not like' (evaluation of -0.19) (ego-involvement: 4.41)

'A good student' (evaluation of 0.14) (ego: 3.93)

'A disruptive student' (evaluation of -0.05) (ego: 3.77)

'School principal' (evaluation of 0.00) (ego: 3.57)

'Typical scientists today' (evaluation of -0.14) (ego-involvement: 3.94)

The teachers hold all entities of interest to a moderate degree of evaluation. That said, *'a person I do not like'*, and *'a disruptive student'* are the most negative of the evaluations. Ego-involvement with all entities of interest is moderate. However, ego-involvement is highest for *'a person I do not like'*. That is, the teachers' will be more motivated to avoid the behaviours they associate with the entity *'a person I do not like'* than they will be motivated to behave as per an admired entity.

Evaluation of self, extent of identity diffusion, and identity variant

Self Evaluation: minimum value = -1.00, maximum value = 1.00

Identity Diffusion: minimum value = 0.00, maximum value = 1.00

Self-evaluation refers to measurements wherein characteristics associated with the various entities of self (*'me as I was'*, *'me as I am'*) are compared to characteristics associated with the ideal aspirational self (*'me as I would like to be'*). They can be positive or negative in value.

Identity diffusion in ISA is a measure of the extent of a person's conflicts of identification.

Identity variants in ISA are reported in a table that places the various entities of self within an identity variant category according to their combination of self-evaluation and diffusion. The central identity variant (indeterminate) is considered optimal. Interpreting the table requires consideration of why and how the placement of the entities of self differs from the optimal.

Figure 2

Identity variant summary of the five teachers in crisis



Me at home

Self-evaluation: 0.16
 Identity diffusion: 0.37
 Identity variant: Negative/Indeterminate

Me at work

Self-evaluation: -0.15
 Identity diffusion: 0.53
 Identity Variant: Crisis

Me, as a student teacher

Self-evaluation: -0.07
Identity diffusion: 0.53
Identity variant: Crisis

Me, as I would hate to be

Self-evaluation: -0.37
Identity diffusion: 0.51
Identity variant: Crisis

Me, as I would like to be

Self-evaluation: 0.91
Identity diffusion: 0.36
Identity variant: Confident

Most of the teachers' identity variants fall within the crisis cell of Table 3 (Figure 2). Self-evaluation of 'me at work' is slightly lower than for 'me as a student teacher', suggesting that the teachers are not moving forward toward their goals in the workplace. They feel better about self in the home than they do at work and there are fewer conflicted identifications in this domain. However, even in this domain, their self-evaluations are on the low side. 'Me as I would like to be' is associated with a self-evaluation that is too high, such that this identity variant falls in the confident cell of Table 3 (Figure 2). The implication behind the confident rating is that, the teachers have failed to think through their expectations for future performance sufficiently for their anticipated performance in the classroom to be realizable. Mentoring to temper their expectations for future performance is recommended. Mentoring is also recommended to help them overcome their conflicted identification patterns. Doing so will work to increase their self-evaluation and thereby lift their identity variants up toward the desired indeterminate cell of Table 3 (Figure 2).

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The ISA template calls for the provision of a summary of the individual ISA analysis to school administrators for the purpose of mentoring toward a stronger professional identity. An identity that holds less potential for leaving the profession. In the following text a summary of the individual teachers' analysis is presented to close this work. Regarding individual teacher analysis, the goals of illustrating the nature of an ISA analysis for a teacher in crisis has been provided to the reader in the text above. The summary that follows illustrates that ISA can and does provide information that can be used to guide the development of mentorship advice that caters to the individual stresses that the teacher in crisis is experiencing. The goal of illustrating that the nomothetic function of ISA can provide for an identity analysis across all 5 teachers is also demonstrated in the above text. While a small study such as this cannot illustrate the general nature of teacher professional identity crises, a nomothetic analysis involving far more teachers may provide useful information about the general nature of teacher professional identity crises.

The following summary of the findings for an individual teacher in crisis indicate that the information that is brought to the fore may be used to develop mentorship advice that may offset the stresses that are impacting the individual teacher's professional identity.

The primary core constructs of this teacher are *'playing games with people'*, *'feeling there is little he can do to get students to value learning'*, *'siding with the disadvantaged in society'*, *'maintaining a formal relationship with students'*, *'believing there are better jobs than teaching'*, and *'preferring to work things out alone'*. Playing games with people is subject to very high structural pressure and maximal emotional significance. It is the pivotal construct in the teacher's identity. That the teacher believes there are better jobs than teaching suggests a lack of commitment to the job. Further, that the teacher feels there is little that can be done to get students to value learning points to a deficiency in his sense of efficacy as a teacher. The latter two findings speak to a potential for leaving the teaching profession.

Two of the conflicted constructs fall in the theme approach to classroom management and teaching. One is a member of the *team player* theme, and another is the *approach to problem solving*. *'Puts the needs of students first'* is the most conflicted construct and the only one that is of high emotional significance. Focus mentorship on the most conflicted construct *'puts the needs of student first'*. The high emotional significance suggests that he will be aware that it represents a troublesome issue. To begin mentoring this teacher, ask him to describe situations that have caused stress when it comes to putting his own or the needs of student first. With this information to hand, begin the process of helping him reach firmer ground. This might require that the mentor work to develop a set of rules or examples to follow before mentorship sessions begin. Conversely, a mentor could ask the teacher to list his issues around how to prioritize his needs, and thereafter, the teacher and mentor could discuss these matters devising solutions that the teacher feels comfortable implementing.

The teacher exhibits significant idealistic identification with school principal, closest family member and a disruptive student. Relative to me at work, the school principal exhibits superior behaviours in regard to *'playing games with people'*, *'feels there is little the teacher can do to get students to value learning'*, *'sides with the disadvantaged in society'*, and *'prefers to work things out alone'*. In ISA, these superior rated behaviours represent targets for mentorship in that they express long-term behavioural aspirations. This argument is bolstered by the fact that each of the noted behaviours concerns a construct that is core to the teacher's identity, However, it is worth noting that *'playing games with people'* and *'feeling there is little a teacher can do to get students to value learning'* are not held as admirable traits in society. Further, *'a person I do not like'*, and *'a disruptive student'* are not typically admired entities. This being the case, it would be unwise for a mentor to encourage a teacher to work toward the perceived behaviours of these entities until more is known about the nature of the crisis of the identity under investigation.

Significant contra-identification (negative identification) is registered for *'a person I do not like'*, *'a disruptive student'* and *'a good student'*. Relative to *'me at work'*, *'a disruptive student'* is seen to prioritize becoming closely involved with students, prioritizing student welfare, and depending on others in making decisions. Becoming closely involved with students and depending on others in making decisions are positions that run counter to the stance the teacher holds toward these core constructs. Mentoring the teacher to help him see why a disruptive student may behave

as perceived could increase his ability to reach and teach these students and resolve the issue of this entity being the object of both ideal and contra-identifications.

At work, both now and in the past, there are similar levels of empathetic identification with the same entities of the instrument. Note however the shift in empathetic identification in the home where the school principal is the main target of empathetic identification. The shift in empathetic identification suggests potential for the teacher to change behaviour when moving between home and work. This is important, for this teacher is happier in the home than the work domain. That is, for some reason the teacher is not behaving as he would prefer whilst at work. Questioning during the mentorship process should uncover the reasons for this pattern of behaviour.

There is significant conflicted identification with '*a person I do not like*' who is subject to greater contra- than idealistic identification. This is a conflicted identification that is negative in its nature and that ought to be explored in mentorship sessions. Conflicted identifications like conflicted constructs represent areas around which a framework for mentorship can be focussed. Negative behaviours this teacher sees in himself and in '*a person I do not like*' include '*dealing with people straightforwardly*', '*feeling there is a lot he can do to get students to value learning*', '*becoming closely involved with students*', '*prioritizing student welfare*', '*siding with the advantaged in society*' and '*believing that there is no finer job than teaching*'. Exploring the teacher's issues around these constructs represents good places to start a mentorship conversation for future growth and to overcome conflicted identifications.

Most of the teacher's identity variants fall within the crisis cell of ISA. Self-evaluation of '*me at work*' is almost identical with '*me as a student teacher*', suggesting the teacher may feel stuck in his career. He experiences less conflicts in the home domain than he does at work, as in the home, self-evaluation is normal, whereas it is low for all other entities of self other than '*me as I would like to be*', which is too high. The implication behind the confident rating of this variant is that the teacher has failed to fully think through expectations for future performance. Mentoring to temper expectations for future performance is recommended. Mentoring is also recommended to help the teacher overcome his conflicted identification patterns. Success in this regard will work to increase his self-evaluation and thereby lift his identity variants up toward the desired indeterminant status.

Recommendations

The above summary indicates that ISA holds the potential to uncover aspects of the nature of an identity crisis for an individual teacher. Further, the summary analysis suggests that it may be used to provide advisements for mentoring the individual teacher, also when they experience a crisis. That is, ISA summary analyses offer guidance that a mentor teacher, in the absence of ISA training, could implement and so move the identity in crisis toward an identity that holds greater potential for staying in the teaching profession. ISA contains no reference to concepts outside the lexicon of the public beyond the core construct parameter that can be readily grasped with little training. Excitingly then, ISA-guided mentorship holds potential for moving beyond the generalized stance of current mentoring programs and toward mentoring that caters to the needs of the individual.

Finally, it is recommended that future research involve larger groups of teachers and that it investigates, in a formal manner, the potential that ISA-guided mentoring holds for the retention of

teachers and a reduction in the rate of turnover. In a similar vein, future research involving nomothetic ISA analysis of teachers in crisis should involve larger numbers of teachers such that the potential ISA holds for uncovering more about the nature of the teacher identity crisis might be made evident.

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Appendix

Table 1

Entities in the teacher instrument

Domain	Label	Classification
Mandatory Entities of Self	Me, as I would like to be	Ideal Self
	Me, as I would hate to be	Contra Ideal Self
	Me at work	Current Self
	Me, as I am at home	Current Self
	Me as a student teacher	Past self
Home Entities	My closest family member	

Work Entities	A good teacher
	A good student
	A disruptive student
	School principal
Entities Relating to Subject Taught	Typical politicians today
	Typical scientists today
	Typical artists today
Entities of Broader Society	A person I admire
	A person I do not like

Table 2

Constructs in the teacher instrument

Theme	Left Label	Right Label
Team Player	is straightforward with people...	plays games with people
	takes issue with the way things are	supports the way things are
	Believes there is no finer job than teaching	Believes there are better jobs than teaching
Approach to Class Management and Teaching	prioritizes achievement	prioritizes welfare
	feel there is a lot I can do to get students to value learning	feel there is little I can do to get students to value learning
	deals with awkward people by appealing to every day rules	confronts awkward people
	communicates well with parents	is remote from parents
Relationship with students	sides with society's disadvantaged	sides with the advantaged in society
	puts the needs of students first	puts personal needs first
	becomes closely involved with students	maintains a formal relationship
Approach to Problem Solving	depends on others in making decisions	prefers to work things out alone
	follows a firm agenda when dealing with difficulties	deals with difficulties creatively