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ABSTRACT

This two-year longitudinal study explores how an earlier international teaching experience influences the way six newly qualified teachers perceive their current teaching practice and professional self-understanding during personally significant experiences. The concept of an experiential continuum, a key concept in these findings, suggests that every experience reflects back on previous experiences and modifies later experiences. We identified 12 individual examples of personally significant experiences in which newly graduated teachers described how their previous international teaching experience informed their present teaching practice. Our study shows that experiential continuity identified during significant personal experiences in newly qualified teachers' teaching practice influences them when interpreting: (1) professional beliefs regarding teaching knowledge; (2) moral questions regarding the teacher they want to be or become; and (3) their international teaching experience as a tool for placing new experiences in perspective. The study describes practical cases of how experiential continuity can help newly qualified teachers to understand why they make certain personal or moral interpretations in their teaching induction phase and what this means for the teacher they want to become.

Introduction

The induction period for newly qualified teachers is generally characterized by their individual search for the teacher they want to become and reflection on their motives for becoming a teacher (Day *et al.* 2006; Olsen 2008, Beauchamp and Thomas 2011, De Vries *et al.* 2014, Banning 2015). Newly qualified teachers try to find a balance between adapting their professional beliefs to the socializing forces within their new school culture, while holding on to existing professional beliefs they value and wish to keep (Poole 1996, Day 1999, Loughran *et al.* 2001, Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002, Rots and Aelterman 2008, Biesta 2014). Several studies have shown the complexity of the transition from student to teacher (e.g. Flores 2006, Ruohotie-Lyhty 2013) and the importance of significant experiences (Smith *et al.* 2009), such as periods of tension and challenges during this transition, that test and form newly qualified teachers' professional beliefs (Loughran *et al.* 2001) and often result in professional development (Smagorinsky *et al.* 2004, Kelchtermans 2009, Pillen *et al.* 2013, Ruohotie-Lyhty 2013). Although these

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studies acknowledge the importance of significant experiences for teachers' professional development, there is a lack of empirical research on exactly how to evaluate professional development.

According to Kagan (1992, p. 74) professional beliefs are implicit assumptions, which are a core aspect of teachers' personal knowledge in their daily work. Kelchtermans (2009) and Fives and Buehl (2012) describe professional beliefs as a filter or a framework through which teachers perceive their work, teacher–student interaction, pedagogy or subject matter, and consequently they give meaning to actions in their daily teaching practice. Teachers' beliefs are generally considered key for understanding teachers' behaviour, including classroom decision-making, judgements and routines; they can also inform teachers' teaching purposes and preferences or images regarding the teacher one wants to become (Pajares 1992, Kelchtermans 2009, Meirink *et al.* 2009, Biesta *et al.* 2015). Teachers' beliefs are frequently not consistent with their teaching practice, which highlights the subjective, ambiguous and complex nature of professional beliefs (Meirink *et al.* 2009, Wallace and Priestley 2011, Fives and Buehl 2012, Biesta *et al.* 2015). In Pajares's (1992, p. 307) words, beliefs are 'a messy construct'.

Several studies indicate that professional beliefs are constructed and influenced by context and past experiences (Nespor 1987, Goodman 1988, Fives and Buehl 2012, Tam 2016). Newly qualified teachers' awareness of experiential continuity in the context wherein they work is key for their professional development (e.g. Dewey 1938, Kelly 1955, 1963, Illeris 2013, Bukor 2015). Dewey (1938, pp. 28, 35) describes continuity of experience as an 'experiential continuum': 'the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after'. Dewey (1938, p. 44) stresses that any experience is part of a social interaction, thus making the principles of continuity and interaction inseparable. According to Dewey (1938) recognizing continuity, or an experiential continuum is a moving force that results in growth.

Relatively few empirical studies compare teachers' experiences during institutional training with similar personal experiences during the induction phase. There is little insight on how perceptions of experiential continuity affect newly qualified teachers' professional beliefs in the present context (Kelchtermans 2009, Fives and Buehl 2012, Rots *et al.* 2012). An awareness of experiential continuity can help newly qualified teachers to make sense of how their past experiences affect their professional behaviour, the professional beliefs they value and why they make certain professional judgements (Rodgers and Scott 2008, Beauchamp and Thomas 2009, Kelchtermans 2009, Biesta 2014, Bakker 2016). Newly qualified teachers, teacher educators and school coaches who understand the origin of certain professional beliefs or professional qualities have a better understanding of a teacher's professional development.

This two-year longitudinal study documents how a previous international teaching experience informs the personal interpretative framework of newly qualified teachers (Kelchtermans 2009) during personally significant experiences (Smith *et al.* 2009) that occur in their induction phase. An international teaching internship is a relevant case because newly qualified teachers who have already experienced a culture and educational system that is different from their own will have been supported or challenged in the enactment of their beliefs (Fives and Buehl 2012, Tam 2016). Challenges include negotiations of contextual, social and cultural meaning outside of their familiar, national educational systems (Montgomery 2010, Marx and Moss 2011).

Theoretical framework

This case study explores the concept of experiential continuity (Dewey 1938) within the context of newly qualified teachers' professional development. The key experience in this study is a previous international teaching experience, which took place during the newly qualified teachers' training programme. An interpretative phenomenological approach is used to identify teaching experiences in a newly qualified teacher's first year of teaching in which their previous international teaching experience becomes personally significant (Smith and Osborn 2003, Smith *et al.* 2009). Finally, we use the concept of a teacher's personal interpretative framework (Kelchtermans 2009) to understand what experiential continuity (Dewey 1938) meant for the newly qualified teachers' professional development.

Experiential continuum

Dewey (1916, 1938) described life as a continuous succession of various situations. According to Dewey (1916), the nature of an experience includes active and passive elements and combines trying and undergoing. Within this dynamic interaction with other people or objects, an individual tries to use knowledge and skills learned in one situation for handling future situations (Dewey 1938, pp. 43–44). Dewey's (1938, p. 44) idea of experiential continuity meant that an individual 'does not find himself living in another world, but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world'. Dewey (1938, p. 28) emphasized the importance in education of identifying 'the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully or creatively in subsequent experiences as part of an individual's growth and learning'. Dewey's (1938, p. 69) pragmatic approach to human experiences included searching for purpose and meaning through observation of the experience, knowledge of what had happened in similar situations in the past and judgement of the significance of an experience.

Significant personal experiences

The concept of an experiential continuum begins with an individual's understanding of an experience and its significance, which is at the core of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith and Osborn 2003, Smith *et al.* 2009). In IPA, significant personal experiences (SPEs) are considered to be important life experiences wherein the individual is 'prompted to contemplate, worry, or try to make sense of what is happening, and which often has existential significance' (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 188). An experience becomes significant when 'the everyday flow of lived experiences takes on a particular significance' and the individual tries to make sense of the experience (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 1). New experiences are interpreted in relation to former stories of the self to sustain a sense of coherence and structure in self-experiences (Heidegger 1962/1927, Gadamer 1990/1960, Crossley 2000, Smith *et al.* 2009). This interpretation concurs with Dewey's (1938) description of experiential continuity.

In the induction phase, newly qualified teachers' significant personal experiences are often situations of distress and tension when professional beliefs are challenged (Meijer 2011, Rots *et al.* 2012, Pillen *et al.* 2013, Ruohotie-Lyhty 2013). The distress and uncomfortable feelings caused by experiencing this discontinuity usually motivate newly qualified teachers to try to cope with the discontinuity and restore continuity (Dewey 1938, Akkerman and Bakker 2011, Akkerman and Meijer 2011). Continuity presents a situation in which they are again able to act or interact (Akkerman and Bakker 2011). Experiences where teachers attempt to cope with obstacles and challenges to restore continuity are significant, because they have learning potential, especially when a teacher can relate discontinuity to a previous experience (Dewey 1938, Tsui and Law 2007, Akkerman and Bakker 2011, Hora and Millar 2011).

Sense-making of individual experiences with existential significance generally occurs through narratives and reflection, enhancing an understanding of who we are in relation to others (Heidegger 1962/1927, Schön 1983, 1987, Gadamer 1990/1960, Loughran *et al.* 2001, Baxter Magolda 2007, Goodson *et al.* 2010). Braskamp *et al.* (2009, (p. 105)) describe it as follows: '[sense-making] reflects one's sense of self-direction and purpose in one's life, becoming more self-aware of one's strengths, values, and personal characteristics and sense of self, and viewing one's development in terms of one's self-identity'.

Teachers' personal interpretative framework

Kelchtermans' (2009) theoretical approach of a personal interpretative framework is used to understand how the experiential continuum has an influence on newly qualified teachers' professional development (Kagan 1992, Ruitenberg 2011). Kelchtermans describes a teacher's personal interpretative framework as 'a set of cognitions and beliefs that operates as a lens through which they perceive their job situations, give meaning to it and act in it' (Vanassche and Kelchtermans 2016, p. 2). This framework is

the always-temporary mental sediment of a teacher's professional learning over time that results from previous experiences and a meaningful interaction with his or her professional environment, and thus has a dynamic nature (Kelchtermans 1993, 2009).

Similar to Dewey (1938), Kelchtermans (2009, p. 270) acknowledges the dynamic nature of professional development and the importance of previous experiences, especially for what he describes as uncomfortable situations. The dynamic nature of a new teacher's personal interpretative framework surfaces when their teaching knowledge and professional beliefs are confronted and challenged by others' opinions and practices (Kelchtermans 2009, Ruitenberg 2011, Ruohotie-Lyhty 2013). Kelchtermans (2009) states that exposure to others is inevitable in teaching and that teacher's vulnerability plays an important role in understanding teachers' professional development. This vulnerability has three possible sources: exposure to external circumstances, the unpredictability of the profession and the moral nature of the decisions that teachers have to make (pp. 265–266). According to Kelchtermans, acknowledgement of this inherent vulnerability is important in understanding teachers' professional development.

Kelchtermans (2009) distinguishes a teacher's professional self-understanding and a teacher's subjective educational theory as two interwoven domains, which together construct a teacher's personal interpretative framework.

Professional self-understanding

The first domain of a new teacher's personal interpretative framework is professional self-understanding: an on-going process that includes experiencing making sense of events and the subsequent influence on the self (Kelchtermans 1993, 2009). Professional self-understanding not only refers to a new teacher's understanding of their present teaching experiences, but also emphasizes the important influence of past experiences on their self-image as a professional. There are six dimensions of professional self-understanding (Kelchtermans 1994, 2009): self-image, self-esteem, task perception, job motivation, job satisfaction and future perspective (Table 3).

Subjective educational theory

The second domain of a new teacher's personal interpretative framework is their subjective educational theory. Subjective educational theory is the personal system of knowledge and beliefs that a teacher uses to make sense of their professional educational framework (Kelchtermans 2009, Vanassche and Kelchtermans 2016). The framework reflects the basis on which a new teacher grounds their personal decisions or judgements for action. It answers the questions: 'How can I effectively deal with this particular situation? and 'Why would I work that way?' (Vanassche and Kelchtermans 2016, p. 3).

The content of a teacher's subjective educational theory is based on previous significant experiences wherein a teacher felt that their teaching approach or perspective was working (Kelchtermans 2009), as well as experiences with discontinuity (Akkerman and Meijer 2011). Kelchtermans (2009, p. 264) emphasizes that reflection is key in teachers' awareness of decisions in action and judgements.

The main research question of this paper is: How does an international teaching experience from the past affect newly qualified teachers' personal interpretative frameworks during significant experiences in their current teaching practice?

Methodology

Research group and data collection

Data were collected over two years, during the teachers' international internship in the teacher training programme (October 2013–July 2014) and the first year of their teaching induction phase (September 2014–July 2015). The participants were part of a larger group of students with various disciplinary

Table 1. Participant background.

Participant	Teaching subject	International internship	Current teaching position
Adriana	English	Wales	Secondary school
Amy	History	UK	Secondary school*
Ellen	History	Wales	Secondary school**
Marc	Geography	South Africa	Secondary school/University of Applied Sciences ***
Simone	History	Norway	Secondary school
Suzanne	History	South Africa	University

*Amy could not find a teaching position at the beginning of the school year and joined this research project again from November 2014 onwards when she found a teaching position;
**Ellen switched schools in January 2015;
***Marc's log reflections and interviews were based upon experiences in his secondary school only.

backgrounds. We asked eight students from fairly homogeneous disciplines to participate in this study voluntarily. Two participants decided to withdraw from this study after finishing their teacher-training programme in July 2015, due to a lack of time. This case study is based upon the experiences of the six remaining participants from 2013 until 2015 (see Table 1).

Data sources

Multiple datasets were used (Miles and Huberman 1984) – individual interviews, inquiries, self-reflections and a monthly log book – to collect rich, detailed data (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 56, Table 2). Participants were asked to continuously give examples to justify their views and understand their thinking in their logbook (Loughran *et al.* 2001, p. 11).

Two in-depth, semi-structured interviews were held before and after the participants' international teaching practice (October 2013–June 2014). The first interview focused on background, past experiences and professional beliefs related to internationalization. The second and retrospective interview identified the participant's SPEs during their international teaching internship. During their stay abroad, the participants wrote individual reflections and completed two structured inquiries regarding perceived (dis)continuity. These data sources have also been used for other analyses (Mesker *et al.* 2017a submitted, 2017b submitted).

Additional data were collected during the participants' induction phase (September 2014–June 2015). Each participant described SPEs in their logbooks. The researcher predefined the nature of personal experiences as an obstacle, a moment of hesitation, an encounter or a positive moment. Participants were instructed to write objectively and freely about SPEs in their daily teaching practice, to avoid a preoccupation with the role of an international experience in the classroom. Participants' individual reflections in their logbooks included a description of the SPEs, whether a specific perspective(s) was dominant during the experience and why. Examples of perspectives that the participants

Table 2. Overview of individual datasets, frequency and focus its objective.

Data source	Frequency and situated in time	Focus
Semi-structured interview	(1) Before international internship (2) After international internship (3) Halfway through first year of teaching	(1) Individual biography (2) Personal and professional development (stay abroad) (3) Professional development/experiential continuity
Structured inquiry	(1) Fifth week of international internship (2) Tenth week of international internship	(1 & 2) Perceived socio-cultural differences (stay abroad)
Self-reflection	(1) Halfway through international internship (2) End of first year of teaching	(1) Perceived (dis)continuity during teaching abroad (2) Perceived (dis)continuity during induction
Log reflections	(Monthly) during the first year of teaching	Individual reflections on significant experiences

could describe were their personal biography, a novice teacher or a world citizen. The perspectives were used to gain insights into the type of beliefs that were at stake.

During a semi-structured interview midway through the induction year, each participant was asked to describe SPEs wherein they perceived (dis)continuity while working at their current Dutch institute. They were also asked to elaborate and explain their log reflections in order to verify the researcher's interpretations. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. At the end of the first year of teaching, each participant was asked to write a final self-reflection describing (dis)continuity in their professional development in the two years of this study, with at least one example in their teaching practice. The main objective of using the concept (dis)continuity was to have an understanding of the ways that SPEs had, or had not, affected the participant's personal interpretative framework

Data analysis

A multiple case study design (Miles and Huberman 1994) was used as research methodology to explore instances of the experiential continuum of the six participants. We used IPA (Smith and Osborn 2003, Smith *et al.* 2009) to describe and analyse SPEs during an international teaching internship and induction year. The IPA research approach is based upon three theoretical underpinnings: phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography.

IPA uses phenomenology (Heidegger 1962/1927, Merleau-Ponty 1962, Husserl 1982) to examine SPEs (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 188). The researcher is often involved in a double hermeneutic circle (Smith and Osborn 2003), where he or she is 'trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of what is happening to them' (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 3). Finally, IPA is also ideographic – the objective is to understand in detail how someone perceives an experience and tries to make sense of it (Smith *et al.* 2009). Therefore, IPA studies usually include a small number of participants and are often designed as case studies.

Based upon IPA (Smith 2004, Smith *et al.* 2009), datasets from each participant were studied repeatedly through close reading – 'line-by-line analysis of the experiential claims, concerns, and understandings of each participant' (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 79) – to identify SPEs in the induction phase. Meaningful text fragments and important utterances were selected (Smith *et al.* 2009, pp. 79–80) wherever professional beliefs were at stake. A provisional code was given to detected professional beliefs (Miles and Huberman 1994). The codes were both descriptive (summarizing the issues addressed in the fragment) and interpretative (analysing the personal or professional perspectives that the participants believed were important) (Smith *et al.* 2009, pp. 83–84). Emergent themes were identified within the experiential material of each individual case (Smith *et al.* 2009, pp. 91–92). An audit trail procedure (Akkerman *et al.* 2008) was used to specifically examine the coherence and plausibility of the interpretation of the SPEs that the participants described from their stay abroad (Smith *et al.* 2009, p. 80).

In the second round of analysis throughout the induction year, we compared (Smith *et al.* 2009, pp. 92–96, Boeije 2010, p. 83) the participants' descriptions of their international teaching experiences and experiences during their induction year to establish whether or not the participants were integrating their international experience in their current teaching practice. The comparisons identified SPEs wherein experiential continuity occurred.

In the final stage of our analysis, the double hermeneutic circle (Smith *et al.* 2009, pp. 35–36) was essential. We used Kelchtermans' (1994, 2009) theoretical concept of a teacher's personal interpretative framework deductively to interpret how the previous cross-cultural experience influenced the individual participants' current teaching practice and professional self-understanding (Table 3). We studied the participants' individual SPEs to locate described examples of experiential continuity and analysed (a) dimension(s) of professional self-understanding that had played a role; (b) professional beliefs that were important in the dimension(s) of professional self-understanding; (c) how experiential continuity influenced a participant's actions; and (d) how a participant described the international experience's influence on his or her current professional self-understanding or teaching practice.

Table 3. The six dimensions of professional self-understanding.

Dimension of professional self-understanding	Explanation of the dimension
Self-image	The aspect that describes how teachers perceive and typify themselves, which is also based upon the views of others
Self-esteem	The evaluative aspect of teachers' self-understanding – how teachers perceive their task, duties and responsibilities
Task perception	The normative component in teaching, when teachers make value-laden considerations and choices in answering the question: 'What must I do to be a proper teacher?'
Job motivation	Refers to teachers' motives, and why someone wants to become a teacher and ultimately stays or gives up teaching
Job satisfaction*	Shows how satisfied teachers are with their professional situation *concerning factors they do not have a (direct) influence on*
Future perspective	Reveals teacher educators' expectations about their future in the job and are the result of an on-going interactive process of sense-making and construction

*Kelchtermans has left out this dimension since 1994. A recent study by Bill Banning (2015) on teachers' vocation re-valued this dimension for describing experiences that include situations wherein teachers are not in control, caused by governmental rules, school management and other. Banning's addition to Kelchtermans' (1994, p. 89) original description is in italics.

Results

The newly qualified teachers in this study described 90 SPEs in their self-reflections and interview during their first (induction) year of teaching. In 12 individual SPEs, the participants described experiential continuity in verbal and written statements. In the 12 SPEs, the teachers' previous international teaching experiences influenced their current personal interpretative framework in three ways:

(1) interpreting professional beliefs regarding teaching knowledge and how to use this knowledge;
(2) interpreting moral questions regarding professional beliefs and the teacher one wants to be or become;
(3) interpreting their international teaching experience to put current experiences into perspective.

Exemplary cases

We illustrate the three ways in which recognition of the experiential continuum in SPEs affected the participants' personal interpretative framework by presenting exemplary cases. We describe the origin of experiential continuity during an international teaching experience and its significance for newly qualified teachers in their induction year of teaching practice, and give examples of what experiential continuity means for the participants' professional self-understanding.

Interpreting professional beliefs regarding teaching knowledge

We found that in seven SPEs the participants made attempts to integrate new teaching knowledge from their international internship into their current teaching practice. Findings indicate that during SPEs wherein the participants interpret how to use teaching knowledge from their stay abroad, they (re)consider specific aspects of their teaching practice that affect their subjective educational theory. In practice, during those seven SPEs teaching knowledge from their international experience enabled the participants to make personal choices regarding (1) teaching methodology; (2) teaching pedagogy; and (3) teacher–student power distance.

Most participants described difficulty integrating their professional knowledge from their international internship, which influenced their self-esteem and job satisfaction. Acknowledgement of an experiential continuum helped newly qualified teachers to think back on successful or unsuccessful

teaching strategies and teaching knowledge during their stay abroad, which helped them to make personal choices and interpret their professional behaviour during SPEs in the present.

We highlight one case where experiential continuity helped a newly qualified teacher (Amy) to reflect upon the use of teaching methodology as a significant experience while teaching abroad and how her international experience continues to be of value in her current teaching practice.

Case 1: Amy

In her interview before her international internship, Amy indicates, as part of her self-image, that activating teaching strategies and differentiation is key for her teaching practice. She teaches at a school in the UK that is situated in an underdeveloped area with high unemployment rates and a strong emphasis on child safeguarding. In the beginning of her internship, Amy experiences discontinuity in teaching methodology.

> All my classes had pupils with mixed abilities, a whole spectrum of different capacities and intelligences…Students had different needs and often had behavioural problems. In the Netherlands those students might be at schools for special educational needs…It meant that you have to understand the individual level of each student. What can you realistically expect from a student?

During her internship, Amy gradually notices that what she considered as discontinuity at the beginning of her internship is in fact a unique learning experience that strengthens and broadens her professional belief about differentiation in teaching. She increasingly values the way her British colleagues work, and, after returning from her internship, when she is asked in the interview what she perceives as her most important professional development, Amy says:

> That must be differentiation in my lessons. The fact that I am aware how important differentiation is, as well as preparing how to differentiate. For example, designing supportive teaching materials, extra challenging assignments…You become very creative…In the UK they also test differently compared to the Netherlands. In the UK, they mostly test skills…In the Netherlands they have a separate lesson where they teach knowledge, while at this school at the end of every lesson it is checked what pupils have learned…This is definitely something I want to use in my future teaching. I really enjoyed that.

In her first year of teaching in the Netherlands, in several of her log reflections, Amy describes how her professional belief regarding differentiated teaching is still an important aspect of her teaching practice.

> What I especially use from my international experience is how you construct a lesson. In England, it is expected of a teacher to not talk more than 10 out of the 50 minutes during a lesson…My stay abroad helped me to focus to not use monologues, by being creative in assignments, by initiating student-centred activities, by making the students realise what is important, and what is not. All those aspects should be in my lessons and were very important in England. During a lesson, you should constantly check whether students have understood. That is really challenging and difficult when you have 29 students in your classroom, like I do now.

Amy frequently makes cross-cultural comparisons between her teaching activities in the UK and her current teaching practice, and reflects on how those comparisons help her in making personal choices in her teaching practice.

> I am under the impression that, despite the fact that as a beginning teacher you are really busy, I found some peace and quiet to think. Just to look back at teaching activities I used during my teacher training programme and the international teaching internship. Which activity worked at the time, which one did not. In other words, which teaching activities were successful and do I want to use my current teaching practice?

At the same time, in her final reflection at the end of her first year of teaching, Amy described her continuous efforts to differentiate lessons and how this is not common at her current school. Although this influences her job satisfaction and motivation, it forces her to self-reflect on a professional belief that was perhaps more common during her stay abroad.

> Differentiating lessons is almost absent in my current work. It's not really part of the school's teaching methodology, which means I have to individually integrate in my lessons…My personal ideals that are for the greater part shaped by my teaching experience in Newcastle have thus developed in a different direction as my colleagues'…I take my role of counselling students very seriously, and I don't want a break in my passion for differentiation.

Amy's international teaching experience helps her understand why she values specific teaching knowledge, such as differentiation, as well as convinces her that pursuing this professional belief is a personal

choice that is important for teaching her students. She doesn't want the existing school culture, or the way her colleagues work, to affect this task perception.

Interpreting moral questions regarding professional beliefs and the teacher one wants to become

Our study illustrates that in five SPEs, the newly qualified teachers' perception of an experiential continuum influenced the moral dimensions of their professional self-understanding regarding the teacher they wanted to be or become. The study participants perceived these five SPEs as more intense and complex in their self-reflections, thus creating a feeling of urgency to make sense of the professional belief at stake. SPEs often preoccupy newly qualified teachers during most of their induction year. Participants' judgements and deliberations are generally perceived as a struggle affecting their self-image and self-esteem. On one hand, this is caused by the fact that the participants are very sensitive about this professional belief because it was significantly challenged during their stay abroad. On the other hand, personal aspects such as character and personal biography play an important role in SPEs.

In SPEs that relate to the moral dimensions of teaching, the participants are not able to make straightforward use of their international experience and the outcome of the SPE is unclear or open-ended. This contrasted with SPEs wherein the participants use teaching knowledge. Participants' sense-making required a longer process of retrospective review of strategies used in the past, as well as attempts to make sense of lessons learned abroad within the broader moral context of wanting to become a good teacher. Thus, acknowledgement of an experiential continuity triggers moral questions and reflections. The newly qualified teachers try to understand why the professional belief at stake has been so important for them as teachers during the past two years, and what the experiences means for their task perception.

We highlight two cases wherein participants interpret moral questions regarding professional beliefs and the teacher they want to become. Marc's case specifically shows how a cross-cultural context enhances moral questions of cultural sensitivity. Adriana's SPE revolved around the professional dimension of a future perspective, which was lacking in all other SPEs.

Case 2: Marc

Marc has travelled often and lived abroad as a PhD candidate. This has made him aware of the importance of cultural differences before his internship. However, his teaching experience in South Africa, where cultural differences are explicit, enhanced this awareness, and showed him its importance in a classroom setting. In the interview after his internship, Marc described how poverty, inequality and racism is part of the daily lives of both students and teachers and how essential it is for teachers in South Africa to be able to work in multicultural classrooms. The following fragment also shows how this experience affected his self-image and self-esteem.

> Multiculturalism inside and outside of the classroom is characteristic for South Africa…You learn how to switch between your own culture and the other culture, both professionally and personally…In our training this was called bi-culturalism, switching between cultures. When I discussed this with my fellow student teachers, we talked about it as 'the two worlds'…I have seen that I have been able to cope with those cultural differences in my daily teaching practice. You don't know beforehand if you are open-minded towards other cultures and are able to handle such differences.

Marc's visit to a school in the township of Soweto, triggered a deeper awareness regarding the importance of cultural differences and the role a teacher can play, which has had an influence on his task perception.

> We visited a school for orphans, or at least children whose parents cannot take care of them. They are left behind. In this school they get lessons, it's like a project…This experience made quite an impression on me and it has showed me that such a project works…You can see such a situation with your own eyes…It is difficult to explain, but it becomes part of you…I carry it with me as a person and a teacher.

The visit to the township and his daily teaching practice showed Marc that it is his task as a teacher to make students aware of the importance of cultural differences as future citizens.

> The experience inspired me to enlarge cultural differences in my future teaching practice in order to create a respect for each other's culture. The cultural boundaries within our society are becoming more vague…We need to create more respect. I think you need to create that respect both personally and professionally.

After returning from South Africa, Marc has generally taught multicultural classes. This makes it rather obvious that Marc recognizes continuity in his professional belief regarding the importance of awareness of cultural differences, strengthening his task perception. As he clearly states in one of his log reflections,

> As a teacher, I want to make my students aware of cultural differences and teach them to handle those cultural differences in a respectful way…In the Dutch classroom you have an immense mixture of different cultures. I could take any name list of one of my classes, and I would not see any Jansen [most common name in the Netherlands]. It is very culturally diverse…As I teacher I have to handle cultural differences in the classroom. Perhaps it's less extreme than in South Africa, but it definitely plays a role in my teaching.

Both in the interview and his final reflection on his first year of teaching, Marc interprets how his professional belief has helped him in his classroom.

> I thought this whole internationalisation event, experiencing different cultures, well, that is something you leave behind and you hardly need any more as a teacher. But that is nonsense…I experience continuity in the culturally diverse backgrounds of my current students…Internationalisation and cultural differences play an important role in my work as a Geography teacher…Especially when I discuss geographical concepts such as world citizenship and globalisation.

In his final reflection at the end of his first year of teaching, Marc concludes that being a culturally sensitive teacher is something he doesn't take for granted and it remains a moral quest for him, both as a teacher and citizen.

> Personally, I think am well able to adapt to my current [school] culture. At the same time, it is rather difficult to apply acquired insights from my international teaching experience in this school culture, because I am so accustomed and part of this culture, as a former student, and as a citizen.

Case 3: Adriana

Adriana's SPE is the only SPE wherein examples of each dimension of professional self-understanding were found. In the interview before departing to her international internship, Adriana mentions that one of her professional (and personal) higher purposes in life was to work and live abroad. During her internship at a Welsh international boarding school this future ambition was strengthened.

> At the international school where I worked teachers were more career orientated, which doesn't necessarily apply to Dutch schools. If you work at a Dutch school, it doesn't mean you have far future objectives, you know, somewhere you want to end up…This international boarding school, where everyone is ambitious, including students, has definitely influenced me otherwise.

At the same time, the ambitious Welsh school culture makes her think back on her school career and missed opportunities, thus enlarging the scope of experiential continuity in her moral reflections.

> It makes me think back of my time as a student at secondary school and university. When I did my master's in English, I could have done much more, I could have made more of an effort and could have achieved more.

The inspiring context of the international school has a strong influence on all aspects of Adriana's professional self-understanding, especially with regard to her future perspective.

> I would really like to teach at a similar, international school. As a teacher, you can focus much more on subject knowledge. Students are very motivated and it's fun to teach literature. I enjoyed it a lot. Unlike Dutch schools, where classroom management is an important issue. It makes me wonder: am I the right type of teacher for the Dutch educational system?

In the end, Adriana's future perspective is a defining dimension in her professional self-understanding. The type of school she wants to work in is not only influenced by her professional beliefs, but also by her personal expectations.

> Working as a teacher at an international school fits with my personal objectives, because I want to live abroad… It has become an important ambition. My horizon has broadened after this international internship…I realise now, this is truly what I want to do.

After returning from Wales, Adriana obtained a position in a Dutch school. In the beginning, she mainly interpreted her current teaching experience by comparing it to her international school which influenced her self-esteem and job motivation.

> You can consider this Welsh international school the 'crème de la crème'…The best universities visited this school, to select students, such as Harvard, Cambridge and Oxford…In Wales I could do literature analysis, and I was really using my subject knowledge, something which I enjoy. In my current school, I am mainly teaching basic things, such as grammar and speaking.

A few months later, Adriana was offered a part-time position at the international school, which she describes in several of her reflections as a moment of hesitation. Although she seemed certain about her future career choices before, Adriana now finds it difficult to make a decision: in what type of school will she thrive as a teacher? Adriana frequently tries to make sense of why she has doubts.

> It's in my character to really go for it, to not go out of the way for any obstacle…I really learn a lot at my current school, especially with regard to pedagogy. I don't want to leave my current school, because I am loyal, and I don't want to let my colleagues and students down, after only a few months. The school has a shortage of staff, and they are really trying to build something new. I think I can contribute to it.

Eventually, she is not offered the job, and thus Adriana does not have to make a choice. At the end of her first year of teaching, Adriana interprets her doubts.

> I get a clearer image of the type of teacher I want to be. I also get a clearer image of which type of education is more effective…This experience made me realise, that working at a bilingual school, or an international school, can be an unpleasant experience, if they are set in their habits…Working at this innovative school has shaped my perspective on education, without being hampered by traditional frameworks…Despite the fact, or perhaps thanks to the fact that I work at a totally different school as the international school during my internship, the new experience has made me a better teacher.

This insight affects Adriana's self-image and task perception and influences her moral perspective regarding the teacher she wants to become, although the outcome is unclear.

> I often still felt like a student teacher during all the new experiences in the past year. However, I could further develop and substantiate my teaching ideals…I now realise that as a teaching professional, I can develop my ideals and my perspective on education in whatever educational system and use it in Dutch education, as well as internationally.

Interpreting the international teaching experience as a way to put experiences into perspective

In a third result, we present examples wherein perceptions of experiential continuity have helped newly qualified teachers to put experiences into perspective during their induction phase, especially when they felt vulnerable. Participants described this aspect of experiential continuity as a more general, defining dimension that occurs simultaneously with interpreting professional beliefs regarding teaching knowledge and moral questions regarding the teacher one wants to become.

During SPEs when participants felt vulnerable, they frequently thought back to similar moments of vulnerability they had experienced during their stay abroad. This type of cross-cultural comparison gave the participants comfort during struggles in their induction phase and helped them to see their experiences in their proper context. The participants frequently stressed the psychological advantage of this aspect of their previous international experience during these SPEs. In their self-reflections, the professional aspect of self-esteem is essential, because the newly qualified teachers believe that their international experience helped them to make the right choices and understand what they truly want. We highlight examples from log reflections and interviews.

Suzanne thinks an experiential continuum helps her to feel confident during times of tension.

> When something goes wrong, or someone asks me to do something, I feel I don't panic easily and I feel I will manage, because of my South African experience, where I was thrown in the deep. I recognize it in my current teaching practice.

Amy describes how the international experience has helped her to adapt to a new teaching context.

> I honestly consciously think about my international experiences almost every day. For example when I check and compare teaching experiences, what works in a certain context, and what doesn't. I am preoccupied with those things, because of my stay abroad.

Simone thinks experiencing an alternative cultural perspective made her more flexible.

> I have become much more flexible because of the international teaching internship, and this trickles through in my professional development as a beginning teacher…Because I have experienced so many different perspectives and teaching styles, I learned to adapt to things I initially didn't enjoy, or feel comfortable with.

Conclusion and discussion

This study explored how a previous international teaching experience affected newly qualified teachers' personal interpretative framework (Kelchtermans 2009) during significant experiences in their current teaching practice. We used the concept of experiential continuity (Dewey 1938) to describe the teacher's acknowledgement that past experiences materialize in their present teaching practice.

Dewey (1938, p. 44) has argued that each human being seeks continuity in life and learning, 'where successive experiences are integrated with one another', which he described as experiential continuity. This two-year longitudinal study described how six newly qualified teachers integrate a previous international teaching experience in their present current teaching practice during SPEs. Our main aim was to understand newly qualified teachers' professional development by exploring how experiential continuity influences their personal interpretative framework (Kelchtermans 2009).

Teacher educators have limited insights into how previous teaching experiences play a role in newly qualified teachers' present teaching practice, or how a newly qualified teachers' personal interpretative framework develops from institutional training to their induction phase (Kelchtermans 2009, Fives and Buehl 2012, Rots *et al.* 2012). This explorative study found 12 SPEs wherein a previous international teaching experience influenced newly qualified teachers' professional development in the present. In the SPEs, the six newly qualified teachers were able to integrate their previous international teaching experience in their present teaching practice. This influenced their personal interpretative framework in three possible ways: interpreting their professional beliefs regarding teaching knowledge, moral questions regarding the teacher one wants to be or become, and international teaching experience as a way to put experiences in the present into perspective.

In seven SPEs, experiential continuity helped participants interpret professional beliefs they valued within their subjective educational theory (Kelchtermans 2009) – in teaching methodology, pedagogy or interaction with students. In those SPEs, we found examples of the practical use of a previous experience during a problematic experience in the present, as Dewey (1938) originally described. Newly qualified teachers' awareness of this experiential continuity is especially relevant within the context of novice teacher's socialization, wherein filtering teaching knowledge is an important aspect of finding one's way within a new school culture, including traditions and procedures (Day 1999, Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002, Fives and Buehl 2012, Biesta 2014, Pillen *et al.* 2013) and for understanding or improving educational processes (Fives and Buehl 2012). These seven SPEs showed how experiential continuity can help newly qualified teachers make personal choices in aspects of the mandatory knowledge and skills they were taught during their teacher training programme that they valued and found to be useful for their daily teaching practice in their induction phase (Loughran *et al.* 2001, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, Biesta 2014, Bakker 2016).

In the five SPEs wherein moral questions regarding the teacher one wants to become were key, experiential continuity helped participants to make moral choices in their search for the teacher they want to become, or motives for becoming a teacher (Day *et al.* 2006, Olsen 2008, Beauchamp and Thomas 2011, Banning 2015). In those SPEs, the newly qualified teachers touch upon a key aspect

of education: what is the purpose of education and what is my role (Dewey 1938, Biesta 2011, 2014). These moral questions were especially relevant in the two SPEs of cultural sensitivity. Experiential continuity strengthened participants' beliefs that cultural sensitivity is essential for addressing students in multicultural classrooms and being a role model as a teacher. Marc considers this an important moral quest as a teacher and a citizen. Suzanne describes it as follows:

> I consider myself to be flexible, open, culturally sensitive and empathic. [From the international experience] I have learned to transform those characteristics into strengths – something I can be proud of, also as a professional… Because I am so conscious of internationalisation, cultural diversity, being bi-lingual and being bi-cultural, I am also pre-occupied with global engagement. I am pretty morally driven, both in my personal as well as my professional life.

Such moral notions regarding education, reflect both Dewey's (1916, 1938) as well as Biesta's (2010, 2011) ideas that education is a social process that should also support democratic habits. Marc and Suzanne's SPEs show how culture can be a key aspect in this process.

Throughout our interpretative analysis, we found that that the three ways a teacher's personal interpretative framework can be influenced are not strictly delineated dimensions, but rather often interwoven within an SPE. This is in line with Kelchtermans (2009) description of teachers' personal interpretative frameworks. This was the case in SPEs wherein the participants felt vulnerable, and frequently stressed the psychological advantage of thinking back to similar experiences during their stay abroad. Thus, experiential continuity can help newly qualified teachers restore continuity while perceiving discontinuity in their induction phase (Akkerman and Meijer 2011), by giving comfort and making sense of what might appear to be a problematic or challenging situation at the time.

Implications for teacher educators

Teacher educators and schools support newly qualified teachers by preparing them for various challenges in their induction phase (Kelchtermans 2009, Meijer *et al.* 2009, Biesta 2014). An important aspect in this preparation is an acknowledgement of the importance of teachers' personal interpretative framework in their professional development (Kelchtermans 2009). Fives and Buehl (2012) state that an understanding of how beliefs, and especially belief change, work is a key aspect for understanding this type of professional development. However, educators still struggle with finding the right strategy to position the personal and moral aspects of teachers' professional development, often caused by a lack of knowledge and skills (Willemse *et al.* 2005, 2008, Meijer *et al.* 2009, Warnick and Silverman 2011, Sanger and Osguthorpe 2013).

Findings in this study indicate that educators and researchers interested in understanding what a teacher's personal interpretative framework means for their professional development, should further explore cross-cultural experiences. Biesta (2010) has described the relevance of cross-cultural experiences (and similar types of experiences) as a pedagogy of interruption. Teaching abroad also 'interrupts' by disturbing an existing balance, so that existing beliefs are no longer taken for granted. This study illustrates how experiencing cultural otherness and unfamiliarity exposes student teachers' existing professional beliefs and knowledge, and makes them aware of how their own personal interpretative framework is also culturally determined (Jang and Kim 2010, Fives and Buehl 2012, Marginson 2014, Chi-Kin Lee 2016, Tam 2016). Experiencing a cross-cultural context can thus both trigger a teacher's professional development, and facilitate understanding.

Limitations of the study

The sample of this study included experiences of six newly qualified teachers. Our main aim was to find examples of experiential continuity and understand its significance for the newly qualified teachers. A larger sample would provide teachers, educators and school coaches with a broader understanding of what this continuity means for newly qualified teachers and additional insights into relevant patterns of experiential continuity. A longitudinal study that included more years of the induction phase would provide additional insights into the role of experiential continuity in teachers' professional development.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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