# An analytical process for constructing patterns of participation for studying teacher’s identity

Danai Dafnopoulou

Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden

This presentation taps into the need for operationalisation and transparent analytical methods to study identity problematised in research. An analytical process for studying a teacher’s identity with the Pattern of Participation framework is proposed. A teacher’s reflections on two empirical episodes from a mathematics classroom of collective and individual interactions between her and the students serve as examples. An inductive approach to the data analysis was followed. The analytical process suggests categorising the codes created on how the teacher recognises herself and others in her talking, the actions she refers to (general or specific, past or present), and what is valued by her and other actors. The categorisation gives insight into multiple practices and figured worlds related to a teacher’s experiences in school interactions.

This presentation focuses on methodological concerns on the topic of teachers’ identities. Research on teachers’ identities has been problematised for the lack of presentation of the analytical processes researchers adopt when studying teachers’ identities. This presentation aims to illustrate how the theoretical notions of the framework called Patterns of Participation (Skott, 2019) for studying teachers’ identities arise from teacher’s talk about classroom interactions during interviews1.

## Teachers identity in relation to Patterns of Participation

Teachers’ identity is assumed to be formed in interaction with others (Skott, 2018), in this case, in interaction with students in the classroom. The teacher’s identity here is viewed as the teacher’s shifting experiences of being, becoming and belonging in classroom interactions with students, according to Skott (2018). The teachers’ shifting experiences during interactions are interpreted through the theoretical construction of different *patterns of participation*. A pattern of participation is a presentation and description of the significant *practices* and *figured worlds* in an interaction. The framework builds on symbolic interactionism and assumes that in every interaction, there are two simultaneous processes teachers engage in. An indication to others what they need to do and an interpretation of others’ actions (Skott, 2019). A premise is that practices and figuredworlds inform teacher’s interpretation, contributing to the interaction (Skott, 2019). Social practices are no predetermined social phenomena that do not belong to any individual created as the individual participates in an endeavour while interpreting the situation in multiple ways (Skott, 2018). Figured worldsare “socially and culturally constructed realms of interpretation in which specific actors and characters are recognised, and certain acts and particular outcomes are seen as more valuable than others” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). The distinction between the two concepts is that the latter does not require the teacher’s involvement in renegotiating its broader meaning in society to exist locally (Skott, 2018). Teacher’s reflections on classroom interactions provide insights into the practices and figured worlds that contribute to such interactions from a teacher’s perspective.

## From reflections2 about classroom interactions to patterns of participation

In the interviews, while the teacher talks about classroom interactions, the analysis focuses first on recognising the actors or objects the teacher refers to (e.g., herself, students, mathematics, etc.). The next step is to examine how the teacher recognises herself and others during her talk (e.g. “All students here have Swedish as a second language”). Moreover, recognising actions the teacher refers to and with which actorsrelated is looked for (“Because I do not want to reveal if it is correct or wrong”). Concerning the action referred to, a categorisation of specific or generalaction and the recognition of the related context allows a distinction between practices or figured worlds (e.g. “they must reason, set words to their thoughts”). The tense used, also reveals if the teacher refers to and draws from past or present practices (e.g. “in teacher education (…) they *say* that understanding is the basis. (…)”). Moreover, more information about participating in classroom interaction is searched, and what is being valued or not is looked for. Overall, different aspects checked in the teacher’s talk about classroom interaction are combined and double-checked according to the context of the discussion. Finally, interviews allow understanding of the teacher’s perspective, but only on some parts of classroom interaction. For that reason, another analytical process of the actual interactions is needed to be considered and then related to the interviews.

### Notes

1. Data from a doctoral project focusing on one multilingual mathematics teacher in a grade 4 multilingual mathematics classroom in Sweden are retrieved.

2. Interviews about discussing two instances from the classroom are used here. One instance refers to a planned whole-class discussion about fraction subtraction, and the other to an unplanned interaction with a multilingual student about geometric figures.

## References

Holland, D., Lachicotte, Jr, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Harvard University Press.

Skott, J. (2018). Re-centring the individual in participatory accounts of professional identity. In G. Kaiser, H. Forgasz, M. Graven, A. Kuzniak, E. Simmt & B. Xu (Eds.), *Invited lectures from the 13th International Congress on Mathematical Education* (pp. 601–618). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72170-5_33>

Skott, J. (2019). Changing experiences of being, becoming, and belonging: Teachers’ professional identity revisited. *ZDM Mathematics Education*, *51*(3), 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11858-018-1008-3>