EXPLORING THE NARRATIVE IDENTITY OF HUNGARIAN TEACHERS IN SLOVAKIA

Dr. Patrik Baka, Dr. Terézia Stredl, Dr. Kinga Horváth
J. Selye University (Slovakia)
Dr. Zsuzsanna Huszár
University of Pécs (Hungary)
Dr. Melinda Nagy, Dr. Péter Tóth, Prof. DSc. András Németh
J. Selye University (Slovakia)

Abstract. The focus of the present paper is to investigate the narrative identity of Hungarian teachers in Slovakia and to identify their identity factors. The first section of the study introduces the demographic and pedagogical characteristics of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Following that, we explore the concept of narrative identity and the possibilities for its research, with a strong emphasis on the Grounded Theory methodology, on which this research is based. Next, we present the specific characteristics and focal points of our research, as well as the group of interviewees, consisting of teachers from various regions of southern Slovakia. Finally, we will analyze in detail the common findings from the in-depth interviews, which we will categorize according to the Grounded Theory methodology and interpret based on the concepts (key terms) within those categories. The four categories we identified are "dynastic patterns", "professional foundation", "critical horizons", and "national identity and culture".

Keywords: narratives; pedagogical identity; in-depth interviews; grounded theory; Hungarian minority

Introduction

The economic and cultural effects of globalisation, the radical changes in the natural environment and the acceleration of migration in recent decades have led to raising the question of the national idea and the relationship between national, majority and minority identities, as well as the relationship between European and non-European cultures. As part of this, the importance of ethnic minority issues is illustrated by the activities of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), an independent, international interdisciplinary institution founded in 1996 in the German-Danish border city of Flensburg. In addition to practical and policy-oriented research of the organisation, it also provides information, documentation

and advisory services on issues relating to minority-majority relations in Europe1).

As a result of the above-mentioned trends, research in the field of education science has also been influenced by the emergence of various themes of ethnic identity. Accordingly, this is also an international trend, and have a connection with a research which was launched in 2019 at the Hungarian-language Faculty of Teacher Training at Selye János University in Komárom. This project examines the characteristics of minority and professional identity of Hungarian teachers in Slovakia. Our research can be understood as the intersection of three fields: pedagogical research, identity research and minority studies. The aim of our research is to explore the factors that determine the personal identity of Hungarian minority teachers in Slovakia. More precisely, the research entails their professional image, their declared pedagogical views, their views on the relationship between the Slovak majority and the Hungarian minority, and the elements of their minority identity. The above-mentioned objectives were achieved by using quantitative and qualitative research tools (questionnaires and narrative interviews). The questionnaire survey among active Hungarian teachers in Slovakia was carried out using a self-developed online questionnaire (Horváth et al., 2019; Huszár 2019; Huszár et al. 2021; Németh 2019; Pukánszky 2019).

The study aims at presenting the results of the research section based on narrative in-depth interviews. This qualitative approach explores the social micro-world of selected members of multigenerational pedagogical families from the perspective of everyday life and narrative memory. Furthermore, it reveals the characteristic elements of the internal, personal and the pedagogical identity, which partly consist of the minority identity of.

1. Demographic and pedagogical characteristics of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia

Members of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia became citizens of one of the successor states to the disintegrating Austro-Hungarian monarchy, first Czechoslovakia after the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty and then Slovakia, which became independent in 1992 (Szarka 1998; Simon 2012; Popély 2014). By the end of the 20th century, the ethnic and religious diversity that once characterised the nation-states of Central and South-Eastern Europe had greatly diminished for various reasons (Szarka 2005). The number and proportion of people who identify themselves as Hungarian nationals has declined over the last century. As for changes in the ethnic composition of Hungarian settlements in Slovakia, relevant census data and analyses (Gyurgyík 2006) show that the previously homogeneous composition of Hungarian settlements has changed considerably in recent decades and is essentially mixed. According to the latest data from the 2021 Slovak census, the Hungarian population of around 422,000, the most populous nationality in

Slovakia, accounts for 7.75 per cent of the total population of 5.5 million, with 82 per cent of the country's population being Slovak-speaking and 8.5 per cent Hungarian-speaking. In the ten years since the last census, the number of people who identify themselves as Hungarian has decreased by about 36 000. In the same decade, the number of those who call Hungarian their mother tongue has decreased by 46,000, which is slightly more than the number of those who call themselves Hungarians because of their national identity.

According to 2014 data, Slovakia has 263 Hungarian schools (with 29,715 pupils), which account for 12% of all schools in Slovakia. The majority of kindergartens in Hungarian-populated settlements (263) are Hungarian regarding the medium of instruction, but there are also a significant number of joint Hungarian-Slovak kindergartens (78). There are 26 Hungarian medium schools[1] 7 of which are bilingual, with 3,657 students in 2014. Hungarian teachers are trained at the Comenius University in Bratislava, the Selye János University in Komárom and the Faculty of Central European Studies at the University of Constantine Philosopher in Nitra[2].

2. Research history, theoretical background
2. 1. Main substantive foci in minority studies

The former literature reviews (Huszár 2019a, 2019b), which provided the theoretical basis for the research, highlight sociological and social psychological approaches in the previous research actvities, including historical, ethnographic and linguistic approaches. (Bárdi 2017; Bárdi et al. 2011; Feischmidt 2014; Gyurgyík 2006; Gyurgyík et al. 2010; László 2000; Morvai 2015). Besides Veres (2003), the issue of Hungarian minority and pedagogical identity in Slovakia has been examined in several recently published works (Árendás 2009; Lampl 2001, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2018, 2019; Lanstyák 2009, 2011; Martonyik 2019; Nagy et al. 2018; Puskás 2000).

2.2. The theoretical background of narrative identity research

Narrative itself can be defined as a text type that introduces a chain of temporally and causally related events. Stories do not only surround us, but it also contribute how we interpret our reality, order the events of our lives, and determine a certain interpretation of these events (Barthes 1977, p. 79; László 2005, p. 94). Narrative identity was first discussed by Alasdair MacIntyre. According to him, our own identity is perceived as a unity since we see our whole life as a unity too. Furthermore, our life story is our own articulation of this unity and thus it can be associated with our identity (MacIntyre 1981, p. 218; Mihalik 2016, p. 59; Taylor and Carr 1991).

Life history narratives are also (re)constructions of reality as experienced by the individual, through which we give meaning to our lives and to ourselves (Pólya 2008). Narrativity is both a tool and a process of construction, while at the

same time it imposes certain constraints on it. On the one hand, it takes effect in a structural (i.e. beginning, middle, end) and functional (i.e. condensation, emphasis) way. On the other hand, it is also performs in a social level, since the story has to be shareable (László 2005, p. 29).

Bruner (2001) distinguishes two basic modes of thinking. According to him, one can approach the physical reality in a much more pragmatic way – humans usually consider it controllable, causal and independent – while people create relationships between individuals and the social reality according to the narrative patterns of stories, with a much more subjective approach. He calls the former the pragmatic mode of human thinking, while the latter one is the narrative mode. The pragmatist seeks general truth; the narrative tends to find connections between life events (Bruner 2001; László 2005, p. 95; Ehmann 2002).

The textual analysis methods of Gergen and Gergen (1983) have been greatly influenced by the methods of literary studies. According to the authors, it is not by accident that the story begins where it does, and it is not a coincidence that the chosen events are given a prominent position in it – since they all point towards a certain conclusion. They have classified each narrative according to the direction, in which it has developed over time, also taking into account its dynamics. Following this idea, a story can be: I. Progressive/ascending – it represents a positive change or development from the point of view of the individual; II. Regressive/descending – the events become worse and worse, and the narrator suffers a loss of position; III. Stable – there is no change in such a narrative. The central motif is usually a commitment to some value, to which the individual remains devoted despite obstacles (Berán 2014, p. 72; Pataki 2001, p. 250).

The life-history model of identity has been a key element throughout McAdams' scientific career. It was based on his research on the development of cognitive abilities and on Erik H. Erikson's theory of identity (Erikson 1997, p. 37). McAdams describes the life story as constructed by four types of elements along which the content analysis of the narrative can be carried out (McAdams 1988): I. Nuclear episodes – the cardinal life events of the life story; II. Imagos – the characters who have been of particular importance in the story; III. Ideologies – the ethical, ideological principles and ideals that provide the background; IV. Generativity scenarios – the individual's vision, motivations and goals for the future which are believed to be achievable (Adler et al. 2015).

Grounded Theory is a method of analysis in narrative identity research, where doubt about assumptions is the most prominent feature. Grounded Theory was pioneered by American sociologists Anselm L. Strauss and Barney Glaser (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The term 'grounded' refers to the fact that the analysis is based on systematically analysed data rather than on some preconceptions (theory). In this way, the data-centred approach both generates theory through the interaction of analysis and ongoing data collection (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 17). The

analysis does not seek to know objective reality, but the individual, unique reality of the other person. Research questions are determined by the personality of the researcher, which also result in an obvious personal involvement of the research. Nonetheless, the research does not follow pre-determined patterns but the researcher and research questions are adapted to the constantly changing situations, and in the process assumptions of the researcher could be clarified (Gelencsér 2003, p. 144).

This process is labelled by Glaser and Strauss as coding, which "means breaking raw data down into parts, conceptualizing it, and then putting it together in a new form" (Gelencsér 2003, p. 147). This is the task of the researcher, and is most easily seen as an in-depth textual analysis. Its smallest units are the *empirical indicators* that correspond to the actual data – the events, their perceptions, actors' interactions – in the sources. The empirical indicators, which are logically and thematically related as a result of comparisons, are grouped according to the concept towards which they point. A *concept* is a notion established by the researcher and confirmed by multiple types of data. At the third level of analysis, the most abstract *categories* occures, which are made up of several concepts and through which the theory itself can be unified. The more sources and data one work with, the more precise and saturated the meaning of our categories might be (Pandit 1996). An established theory is above all concerned with the patterns of interaction of different social actors and how they change under the influence of circumstances. Although the procedure is extremely time-consuming, it is a useful data-supported method of investigation (Gelencsér 2003, pp. 153 – 154), which can also be applied to narrative identity research, in parallel with the approaches developed by Bruner, Gergen and Gergen, and McAdams.

3. Exploring the narrative identity of Hungarian teachers in Slovakia

The identity of Hungarian teachers in Slovakia will be analysed in the following section. In this context, our research aimed at finding the main characteristics of the professional and minority identities of three successive generations of teachers through the social micro-worlds of the persons involved in the study, by means of everyday life and narrative memory. Based on the above theoretical theses, the following research questions were formulated:

I. What are the recurring identity-defining elements that play a key role in determining the narrative self-identity of Hungarian teachers in Slovakia?

II. What is the significance of the minority identity of Hungarian teachers in Slovakia and how does it manifest itself in their teaching activities?

III. What patterns can be observed in the relationship between the generations of teachers of different traditions and what are the most important differences in the definition of their self-identity?

Narrative life course interviews were conducted with Hungarian teachers from different regions of Southern Slovakia. The sample was composed by seven women and two men, broadly in line with the gender distribution of the Hungarian

teaching population in Slovakia. The interviewees all came from teacher dynasties, i.e. families where at least three generations of teachers had succeeded each other. Each of the first, second and third generations had three members. In this way, the in-depth interviews not only gave us insights into the life histories of individuals, but also contributed to have an impression of the similarities and differences in experiences within and between generations.

Our questions were divided into seven question complexes, the order of which could be freely adapted to the course of the interview. The focal points of the research methods presented in the theoretical part were also integrated into our interview questions. Each question complex could be defined by the following keywords:

I. Inspiration: the circumstances and dilemmas of the career choice, the interviewee's (professional) role models, the social environment, etc.

II. Self-realisation: discussion of the development of the professional career, discussing in turn its stages, its main successes, possible crises, etc.

III. Family traditions: the role of the family, the role of the teacher predecessors and their memories, the most characteristic features of their work, their influence on their own career, their desire to keep their descendants on the right track, etc.

IV. Initial situation: opinion on pedagogy, possible changes, definition of the basic mission/purpose, successes and failures, relationship between education/knowledge transfer, etc.

V. Transformation: assessment of the current situation of the profession, changes in the position and role of teachers (positive and negative experiences), own proposals to the management, etc.

VI. Identity key: the importance of Hungarian identity and cultural cultivation, its manifestations in the professional career, the role of the school in cultivating the national identity, membership in different organisations (professional, cultural, political), local patriotism, etc.

VII. Vision: goals, perspectives, etc.

The recorded interviews were transcribed into text and analysed in detail using the pyramidal, hierarchical approach of Grounded Theory. Then, focusing on the common experiences of three to three mutually reinforcing interviews for each generation, we examined the specific identity factors of each genealogical level separately. However, the latter phase of the work automatically implied that the individual-specific data (empirical indicators) of each interview were abandoned, due to their large number and fragmented nature. The *concepts* are grouped according to the *categories* besides them (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Gelencsér 2003).

4. Similar and peculiar experience of pedagogue generations

In the following subchapters, we attempt to evaluate the similar and peculiar

experience of different generations derived from the narrative pedagogue identity interviews. This gives us an insight into the basic identity factors of the entire Hungarian teaching community in Slovakia. Results of the evaluation are given in a thematic context order. Each subchapter is obtained from categories showing some similarities and distinctive features.

4. 1. Dynastic patterns

Emergence and stagnation: our interviewees perceive the teaching profession as a path to social emergence only in the case of first generation of teachers. This claim is reinforced by the need of the state and the general public respect for teachers whose stable jobs are guaranteed by the educational institutions later. Concerning other generations, remaining in the profession is interpreted by the job security and thus it is perceived as a stagnation, which in turn is increasingly negatively affected by the decline in social recognition and material rewards.

Continuum: Although the parents of Generation I teachers had a different occupations, they fully supported the endeavour of our interviewees to pursue becoming a teacher, which they saw as an opportunity for social elevation. Generation I teachers were conscious dynasty founders since they had a strongly supportive attitude in encouraging the next generations in becoming teaching professionals, as did Generation II teachers. Members of Generation III perceive the career in education as a pre-determined fate but its transmission does not become their aim.

Following role models and critique: the role models of Generation I members were first and foremost their own teachers, to whom in case of the Generation II joined their parents as unquestionable ideals. "If you have the model of the man you should be every day, you don't have much chance of straying from the beaten track. In my eyes, my father was the ideal in terms of career choice" (KG, 66, 2nd generation, female). Interestingly, there is a change in Generation III, which pays tribute to the memory of beloved teachers and at the same time idealises grandparents who were teachers. However, this generations is also the most critical one with its own teachers and teacher-parents, whom did not have any good memory since they had excessive rigour and exaggerated expectations.

Parent and child, teacher and student. Members of the Generation I prone to avoid teaching their own children. Nevertheless, members of Generation II had mixed results in this regard. Some of them avoided it, others experienced favouritism, and a third group encountered expectations from their parents. As for Generation III, there was a consistent experience of accusations of favouritism from peers, but also excessive expectations from parents.

Pedagogy as a way of contacting: it is a general experience that being a teacher has meant of having an effect on shaping friendships and even influenced the relationship between family members in case of the interviewees.

Origins: members of all the three generations refer to various youth performing activities as facilitating activities of becoming a teacher, e. g. amateur acting,

singing, music, dancing and recitation. Moreover, creative activities helped Generation I members to overcome the difficulties emanated from retirement. In case of Generations II and III, the home environment, linked to pedagogy and culture, was also a decisive factor. As children, they were exposed to the teacher role models of their parents, participated in the activities of their parents and often pretended to be a teacher during games.

4. 2. Professional guidelines

Knowledge transfer and education: Generation I mentions the knowledge transfer and education on equal basis, but members of the second and third generations clearly put an emphasis on education and personal development. The latter is intertwined with the correction of behavioural patterns brought from home.

Child-centredness: sensitivity to children is a natural link between the three generations. As for Generation I, this mingled with a philanthropic support. "It was snowing, the road was freezing, it was cold. Then the little girl had no shoes on. So I went home and looked for shoes for her. [...] We knew that there would be no words of thanks or anything, but what could we do, that was it" (MK, 72, first generation, female). In case of Generation II and III interviewees, emphasising the importance of equality of children seems to be important. Concomitantly, Generation III also find it essential to avoid comparing children, due to the increasingly obvious social differences.

Pedagogical principles: members of Generation I admittedly focused on ensuring the sense of achievement and the integration of the peculiar world of children. counterbalanced by rigour. At the same time, Generation II focused primarily on consistency and straightness as inner qualities, entailing a supportive environment and facilitating creativity. Generation III emphasised humanity and fairness complemented by flexibility, openness and intimacy.

Professional commitment: despite the difficulties described below, all three generations are characterised by a commitment to the teaching profession, which has become indisputable either from the start of their careers or after overcoming the difficulties of the first few years they spent as professional teachers in schools. Members of Generation II referred to teaching and self-cultivation as both leisure time activities or a job. Work, however, was most often defined as a passion in their case.

Feedback: in particular, Generation II and III members mentioned the importance of feedback from students, referring to it as an incentive and litmus test of the success of their work.

Functions: out of the three generations, attitudes of members of Generation I towards leadership positions could be perceived as the most positive item. Generation II is more ambivalent in this regard, with the enthusiasm of those who have held the position previously mixed with the enthusiasm of those who aspire to positions but never have held it before. Generation III shows a lack of careerism.

4.3. Critical horizons

The devaluation of the profession: all three generations reflected on the general

loss of authority and social recogniton of the teaching profession. Although Generation I based this claim not on its own experience but the experience of the next generations. Still, there were already individuals who spoke about teaching with sarcasm due to its poor financial esteem.. Similarly, Generation II strongly resented the excessive bureaucratic requirements of the profession and proposed the possibility to introduce the protected status of teachers following the Hungarian model to regain social recognition, under which harassment and violence against teachers is punishable. However, it was also suggested that an obvious cultural role could also contribute to regaining the prestige of teachers. Generation III reacted to the loss of status with the greatest proportion and intensity. "Well, unfortunately, it's not so good now. I don't think there is that respect anymore [...] Maybe there are still a few teachers who can still be respected in this time and in this world, but they have to earn it" (SH, 29, 3rd generation, female). According to their perception, schools were not sufficiently supportive of their teachers in order to retain the capitation payments for their students. They believe that the over-emphasis on rights of students might hinder to fulfil their obligations; that aspect was also mentioned by members of Generation II. In accordance with the belief of Generation III, fairness towards students is now insufficient to gain their respect. The latter could only be achieved through discipline. Nevertheless, the available methods to achieve it are very limited.

Criticism of parental attitudes: according to the members of Generation I, the decline in respect for teachers goes in hand with hand to the decline in respect for their parents. Even though they often lose control over their own children, parents blame teachers for any shortcomings in education of children and they also tend to turn towards teachers with increasingly critical attitude. "Because it was somehow different at home. It wasn't the child who had the last word, but the parents. If the parents say it's black now, it's black and it stays black. [...] Today's children are much smarter [about technology], much different. [...] They are much more critical [of the teacher], they take it differently. The parents don't respect him, and if the parents don't respect him, the child won't respect him either" (MK, 72, 1st generation, female). Members of Generation II say almost the same. They also highlight that the sense of responsibility of parents has changed drastically and children could not be blamed for this. Although they accuse teachers of mistreating children, parents miss educating moral principles for their kids. Instead of tutoring their children, parents are concerned with themselves. Generation III now clearly reports that teachers are completely vulnerable to accusations and expectations of parents.

Gaps in education: each generation, and in particular Generation III, stressed the importance of acquiring practical knowledge as opposed to the theoretical expectations that prevails in the current school system. They also mentioned the increasing difficulty of raising the interest of children. The flood of content of the

online media platforms make it almost impossible to compete with the stimuli offered by the school, which is exacerbated by the characteristic theoretical orientation. Some members of the generation have also mentioned the increasingly poor reading comprehension skills of pupils.

The Slovak language as a challenge: All generations pointed out the blind spots in Slovak education. Teachers believe that Slovak should have already been taught as a foreign language, as English is much more successful in Hungarian schools in Slovakia than Slovak[2]. Several interviewees also stressed their own difficulties with the official language. This reveals a multi-generational deficit in the teaching of Slovak by now.

Online teaching: Essentially, all generations have pointed out only negative aspects of online teaching. The lack of personal contact and attention also the difficulties in maintaining awareness. To the contrary, having an insight into the home environment was not desired either since it could highlight the significant differences of the social background of students.

Institutional shortcomings and suggestions: All generations mentioned that textbooks with different levels of the depth and methodology, teaching supportive materials and more precise guidance adapted to the different types of schools would be required to increase the quality of education. At the same time, these elements would also alleviate the burden on teachers. In particular, Generation III mentioned the importance of the cohesive working culture of teachers and the way of strengthening each other. Additionally, they believe that schools ought to protect its teachers and not parents. Representatives of Generation II also raised the idea of self-governance in schools.

4.4. National identity and culture

Defining Hungarian: All interviewees referred to their own national identity as a basic and determinative principle but members of Generation I and especially in Generation II had the most prominent patriotic sentiments. For them, the inexorability of the Hungarian national consciousness was associated with an ambivalent relationship to the majority nation (Slovak) ranging from being superior to Slovaks to be adapted to the Slovakian culture. The third generation also referred to their Hungarian national identity as a self-evident layer of their personality, but in these interviews the national sentiment was not as characteristic as in case of the first two generations. Additionally, their perception was enriched with emphasising tolerance and anti-chauvinism.

Education of Hungarian identity: Generation I consciously maintained a pedagogy dedicated for preserving the Hungarian identity. Generation II strengthened this pedagogy by incorporating elements from the ancient Hungarian culture. For them, national commemorations were important forums of expressing their Hungarian identity. Furthermore, they took an active part in the organisation of these commemorations. For members of Generation III, it was beyond question

whether they attend to Hungarian schools and teach in these type of institutions. This generation also perceive commemorations as important events but with a limited popularity and a different approach regarding the tone of the ceremonies of the Generation II.

Hungarian children in Hungarian schools: As far as possible, members of all three generations strongly support the enrolment of Hungarian children in Hungarian schools and encourage parents to follow their advice.

Deterioration of tradition: "Our teachers in Bratislava also prepared us that if we were to teach, like the teachers in the Hungarian schools between the two wars, we had to be the cultural all-rounders of the villages. This was expected of us where we were placed" (ACs, 82, 1st generation, male). The cultivation of folk traditions, local patriotism, the organisation of folk-art performances and active participation in them are also a characteristic element of the first two generations. In case of the Generation III, these activities fade away or not appear as characteristic types of activities. Traces of local patriotism can be identified in this generation only in MA theses and seminar assignments dating back to the time of their university training.

Deterioration of the Csemadok[3]: The attitude towards the cultural organisation of Csemadokfollows the changes in attitude towards tradition. Members of the first two generations referred to Csemadok as a cardinal, community-organising and fundamental institution of (Slovak) Hungarian culture, of which they were also active participants. According to the reports of Generation III, however, a decline in the importance of the organisation can be detected and the interviewees belonging to this generation did not even participate in its work.

Symbolic SZMPSZ[4]: The Association of Hungarian Teachers in Slovakia occurred in all generations, but even those who hold a membership spoke about its symbolic nature. Furthermore, the organization did not have significant function in neither of the generations in contrast with the Csemadok.

Depoliticisation: All generations try to hold a distance from politics. In Generation I, this distance is maintained consciously. On the contrary, disinterestedness is prevailing in case of members of the Generation III., Even though one of the interviewees from Generation II was actively involved in politics, his peers from the same generation were similarly determined to keep themselves away from politics. Concerning the behaviour pattern of Generation I, the silent or latent criticism as an attitude for expressing political views can be explained by the peculiar legacy of the Socialist political system.

Conclusion and summary

The present study was conducted to investigate the narrative identity of Hungarian teachers in Slovakia. After presenting the demographic characteristics of the community, we summarised the possibilities of narrative identity analysis (Bruner, Gergen and Gergen as well as McAdams), the foci of which also formed

the basis for our interview questions. We discussed in detail Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory method, which can be described as an in-depth qualitative text analysis and formed the basis for our study.

In our research, we analysed in-depth interviews with nine Hungarian teachers (seven women and two men) in Slovakia. The interviewees came from teacher dynasties, i.e. families in which at least three generations of teachers had succeeded each other. Each generation comprised three to three persons. The most important components of each generation's narrative identity were summarised, and finally the results of each generation were analysed in relation to each other.

The answers to the first of our research questions, which asked about the key elements of the narrative identity of Hungarian teachers in Slovakia, and the third, which asked about the interaction and identity differences between the different generations of teachers, are as follows:

While the first generation of teachers saw the teaching profession as an opportunity to make their mark, the others tended to follow a safe path known to them through their parents. The first two generations were very committed to passing on the profession, but for the third generation this is no longer a priority. For the first generation it was the teachers they liked, for the second it was the parents who had become the ideal, and for the third it was the parents themselves who were criticised. Only the first generation considered knowledge transfer and education equally important, while the other two clearly gave priority to education. Child-centredness is a cross-generational experience, but rigour (Generation I), consistency and encouragement of creativity (Generation II), and humanity, flexibility and personality (Generation III) seem to be essential strategies. All three generations are confronted with the loss of values of the teaching profession, but for Generation III this is the most pressing problem. A key role is played by the changing attitudes of parents, who despise teachers themselves but expect them to educate their children.

Our second research question related to the presentation of minority identity as a teaching strategy. In this context, it can be said that members of all three generations regard their being Hungarian as a fundamental layer of their identity and consider the formation of a Hungarian consciousness important. They try to integrate elements of this into the material of many lessons. However, compared to the national attitudes of Generation I and especially Generation II, these aspects are much less dominant in the narratives of Generation III.

The experiences from the analysed interviews show that professional, dynastic, national, minority and regional identities form a close, almost inseparable unit in the first two generations of Hungarian teachers in Slovakia. However, tendential changes can be observed in the third, most recent generation, in which practically all analysed identity layers have been devalued. The weakening of the dynastic lineage is the least problematic, while the erosion of national, minority and regional

identities seems to be accompanied by assimilation processes in the background. On an institutional level, however, it would be possible to strengthen professional identity, as the financial and legal consolidation of the profession could also indirectly contribute to strengthening social prestige.

NOTES

1. ECMI Mission, 2021. Available from: https://www.ecmi.de/the-centre/our-mission [Viewed 2023-4-24].
2. Szlovákiai Magyar Adatbank – Databanka Maďarov na Slovensku, 2019 [in Slovak]. Available from: https://adatbank.sk/lexikon-kategoriak/oktatasugy-3/ [Viewed 2023-4-24].
3. Secondary schools include grammar schools and vocational schools, where students study for 4 – 5 years. The age range is 15-20 years. Secondary schools end with a school-leaving examination. Equivalent: "secondary school", "high school".
4. Since the change of regime in 1989, the Slovak language has been taught in Hungarian-language schools according to the same criteria as in Slovak schools. However, the teaching of archaic Slovak texts, classical literature and grammar at the upper secondary level is an increased problem for Hungarian pupils, many of whom have only a minimum level of Slovak when they start school. And the theoretical focus of language and literature teaching, as opposed to the practical one, only hinders catching up.
5. The 1949 founded Csemadok is the largest cultural organisation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.
6. The acronym refers to the Association of Hungarian Teachers in Slovakia.

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✉ **Dr. Patrik Baka**
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-9278-453X
Web of Science ResearcherID: AAH-1623-2021

Dr. Terézia Stredl
ORCID iD: 0000-0001-9671-4240

Dr. Kinga Horváth
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-2995-2473
Web of Science Researcher ID: FCO-2093-2022
J. Selye University
Komárno, Slovakia
E-mail: bakap@ujs.sk
E-mail: stredlt@ujs.sk
E-mail: horvathki@uj.sk

✉ **Dr. Zsuzsanna Huszár**
ORCID iD: 0000-0003-3351-2363
University of Pécs
Pécs, Hungary
E-mail: huszar.zsuzsanna@pte.hu

✉ **Dr. Melinda Nagy**
ORCID iD: 0000-0001-7127-3055
Web of Science Researcher ID: A-5702-2010

Prof. Dr. Péter Tóth
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-5886-144X
Web of Science ResearcherID: GDL-5899-2022

Prof. DSc. András Németh
ORCID iD: 0000-0001-9770-9830
Web of Science ResearcherID: J-9137-2013
J. Selye University
Komárno, Slovakia
E-mail: nagymelinda@gmail.com
E-mail: tothp@ujs.sk
E-mail: nemeth.andras@ujs.sk