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'Behind every profession is a person': Students' written memories of their own teacher–student relationships

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ABSTRACT

This article employs a narrative approach in examining the intertwining of the personal and professional in teacher–student relationships. A total of 141 Finnish people of various ages wrote about their teachers; specifically, the article focuses on memories related to their teachers' personal lives. Such memories illustrate the inevitable presence of teachers' personal lives in schools and show how teacher–student relationships develop in private contexts during and after the school years. Teacher education should provide tools and means of supporting teachers to consider the personal and professional in teacher–student relationships. Nowadays, social media challenges teachers to reconsider these aspects.

1. Introduction

'Will I give my private telephone number to my students?' 'Will I tell my students about my personal life and family?' 'Will I live in the same district in which I teach?' These are some of the questions teachers ponder, not only during pre-service teacher education (Kelchtermans, 2005), but also while teaching (Hakala, 2007; O'Connor, 2008). The questions are complex and multisided. The personal nature of teacher–student relationships, and the fact that teachers work with their persona, is widely recognised (Nias, 1989). Teachers' own stories about their work illustrate "the interweaving of the personal and the professional in teachers' lives" (Clandinin & Huber, 2005, p. 56). Yet, there is a convincing argument about the need for teachers to set boundaries between their work and personal lives, including their relationships with students (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009). Therefore, teachers are constantly striving to achieve a balance between their personal and professional lives (Aultman et al., 2009; Hargreaves, 2000). However, we have less of an understanding about how this is seen by students; how students view their teachers' personal lives and what meaning this has for teacher–student relationships from the student perspective.

When former students wrote to me about their teachers, they remembered biographical facts about their teachers; how they, as students, discovered something about their teachers' personal lives, or how they met their teachers in private contexts during and after the school years. This article focuses on such memories to examine what they tell about the intertwining of the personal and professional in teacher–student relationships. These memories are approached through narrative research: I understand that as people are recalling their teachers, they are telling, making sense of and considering the meanings of their memories from the perspective of their present lives (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005; Riessman, 2008).

2. Touching the personal in the professional

In this article, the following aspects of 'personal' in teachers' work are significant: Firstly, it is emphasised that teachers cannot but work as themselves, through their persona (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005; Nias, 1989). Secondly, the personal nature of teacher–student relationships is highlighted: although relationships develop in the professional context of the school and in the middle of a group of students, they are person-to-person relationships (see Newberry, 2010; Van Manen & Li, 2002). Next, these aspects will be discussed further with a focus on the sometimes conflicting expectations and assumptions.

Clandinin and Huber (2005) remind us that teachers' knowledge and how they view teaching, and themselves as teachers, develop not only through the process of their school work, but also in other life contexts: "Teachers teach who they are" (p. 43). It is through their personal lives and life histories that teachers are working (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005; Sikes, 1999). According to Kelchtermans, "The person of the teacher is always somebody at some particular moment in his/her life, with a particular past and future" (2009, p. 263). Therefore, teachers find it impossible to separate their personal and professional images of self (Nias, 1989).

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There is yet another side to the matter of teachers working through "who they are": different cultural expectations and regulations are attached to teachers and their personal lives. The presence of these cultural images of teachers must be acknowledged, because, as Mitchell and Weber (1999) point out, these images seem to endure, and in turn influence how teachers' work is understood. Only recently has research begun to emphasise teachers as bodily, gendered and sexual beings, whereas previously teachers were often directed to hide those aspects of their lives (Vuorikoski, 2005). This manifested itself in rules concerning teachers' social lives and ways of dressing (Mitchell & Weber, 1999; Vuorikoski, 2005). Evidence of these regulations also appears in students' school memories: from the student viewpoint, teachers are often heavily related to school and their personal lives are surrounded by mystique (Mitchell & Weber, 1999; Salo, 2005).

From an historical viewpoint, the idea of 'model citizenship' has been strongly present in Finland, as different educational texts show (Simola, Heikkinen, & Silvonen, 1998). Kauppila, Ahvenharju, Moore, & Antikainen (2007) reveal that for earlier generations of teachers, their profession determined and regulated their personal and professional life. Being a teacher meant being a model not only for students, but also more widely in the community, and being an example extended to teachers' personal lives (Mitchell & Weber, 1999; Ojakangas, 1998; Vuorikoski, 2005). For example, it used to be common for elementary school teachers, especially in rural Finland, to have apartments in the school buildings, and their homes were seen to model an ideal home to their students (Tuomaala, 2004, p. 129).

Although the youngest generations of teachers in the study by Kauppila et al. (2007) relate being a teacher only to school, one may ask whether the idea of teachers as model citizens has totally disappeared. In Hakala's (2007) research, teachers of the twenty-first century do not directly commit to model citizenship, but still recognise themselves as being exemplary and influential. They considered for example, going to a bar, and the use of alcohol: the boundaries of what is appropriate behaviour for them as teachers, inside and outside school (pp. 65–70). Hence, teachers regulate themselves and their personal lives in response to traditional cultural expectations (Mitchell & Weber, 1999).

Understanding teacher–student relationships as person-to-person relationships emphasises the importance of teachers creating personal relationships with their students in order to acknowledge the individuality and the whole being of students (Carr, 2005; Newberry, 2010; Van Manen & Li, 2002). Researchers, for example, talk about the need for teachers to have "close bonds" (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1060), or to establish "human contact" with their students (Andrzejewski & Davis, 2008). Also, teachers themselves want to connect with students in personal ways (Newberry, 2010), and students seem to value teachers who are fully present in their teaching (Kelchtermans, 2005). Van Manen and Li (2002) talk about teachers' personal pedagogical relationships with their students, and suggest that these develop not only inside the walls and time of the classroom and school, but also outside of them (see Hargreaves, 2000).

Yet, it can be wearing, too, for teachers to be continuously present for their students. The concept of boundaries in teachers' work has been raised in recent times. A relevant question seems to be not only how teachers define the boundaries between their personal lives and work, but also how they negotiate the lines between what is personal and professional, and what is informal and official in their relationships with students (Aultman et al., 2009; Carr, 2005; Lahelma, 2002). Hargreaves (2000, 2001) approaches these boundaries through the concept of emotional geographies, as he describes the different spaces of distance and closeness in the diverse relationships teachers forge in their work. Teachers may experience complex feelings in setting boundaries with students: they may choose to be personally present for students, but in a way expected of them as professionals, as O'Connor's (2008) research illustrates. The secondary school teachers in her research expressed their desire to create caring relationships with students, but in a professional way by drawing lines between their personal lives and work, and by keeping a proper distance between themselves and their students (see Nias, 1989).

Negotiating boundaries is also necessary because relationships that are too personal can expose teachers to misinterpretations and accusations (Carter, Foulger, & Ewbank, 2008; Manos, 2007). Manos (2007) describes the risky situations teachers should avoid in their interactions with students: they should not tell students about their personal lives, nor give telephone numbers or personal email addresses, nor be alone with them, nor invite them to their homes. Furthermore, teachers (both male and female) have recognised the danger of becoming too close: although touching or making personal remarks to students can be seen as ways of connecting, teachers may decide to avoid these for fear of being misinterpreted (Andrzejewski & Davis, 2008; Mitchell & Weber, 1999, pp. 154–156).

3. Methodology

In principle, any (former) student was a potential participant in my research. However, I wanted to reach those who would find the topic significant and would therefore voluntarily participate. In September 2006, a Finnish magazine, *The Common Good* (*Yhteishyvä*),[1] published my request[2] for people to write about their teachers and to submit that writing as material for my study. The memory material turned out to be rich: in total, 141 letters and emails of various lengths from 116 women and 25 men. After receiving all the stories, I contacted the writers and asked them to write about additional memories; some did and those further writings are included in the material.

The participants represent a diverse portrait of Finnish society, with varied educational and occupational backgrounds. They all attended Finnish schools, in both rural and urban settings, although at different times. Nearly half the writers were over 60 years of age; however, the age of the writers ranged from 16 to 87 years. The writers often recalled teachers they had as children or young adults.[3] Finnish children begin school at the age of seven. After a Finnish school reform in the 1970s all children began attending comprehensive school, which consists of primary school (grades 1–6) and lower secondary school (grades 7–9). After that, studies are usually continued either in upper secondary school, or in vocational school. Before the reform, there was a parallel school system: this usually meant that children first attended four years of elementary school, after which some continued their studies and some applied for grammar school, which included the route to upper secondary school. (see Jakku-Sihvonen & Niemi, 2006; Simola et al., 1998; Tuomaala, 2004.)

[1] *Yhteishyvä* magazine is aimed widely at both women and men of different ages. The magazine is a free paper delivered to the owner-customers of S Group, a Finnish chain of stores. According to *Yhteishyvä*, the magazine had a distribution of 1,340,000 in 2006.

[2] "Do you remember your teacher? A student of education Minna Uitto is collecting memories for her PhD-research. Do you want to participate in the research by writing memories about your own teachers? The form of the story is free, as well as the length. Every memory is valuable. The writings will be treated with absolute confidentiality. Memories or parts of them can be published in research reports […] Attach to your writing information about your age, gender, educational background, and your contact information."

[3] The memories mostly surround basic education and upper secondary school: the writers were around seven to eighteen years of age at the time. There are also, however, memories of vocational education, adult education, and higher education.

The writers recalled several or all of their teachers, sometimes in chronological order or (a) particular teacher(s) was/were chosen. The memories concentrate on specific moments detailing time, place, characters and events; or they refer to how the teachers were 'in general' or to routines or repetitions (cf. Riessman, 2008, p. 99). Not only do the writers recall how their teachers were and what happened between student and teacher, but they consider the meanings of those memories for themselves (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005). Memories of teachers are part of people's life stories: these writings focus on the teachers, but also tell about the lives of the writers and who they were as students. Memories occasionally extend over writers' school years.

Writing about teachers had diverse personal relevance for the writers. Some considered this explicitly: writing was seen as a moment to look at the past, as a chance to thank the teacher, as an opportunity to help the researcher, or a way to tell something they had not told before. Writing provided time and space for the writers to choose what and how much they wanted to tell. Compared to oral storytelling, Kosonen (1998, p. 293) sees writing as a reflective process in which words are more carefully chosen. Writing has its benefits, but it is likely there were people who did not participate in the research because they found writing too difficult or time-consuming. From the viewpoint of context, one must not forget that it is school, and particularly teachers, that are recalled in the study. Researchers have discussed how, besides personal memories, we have images of school encountered through culture, literature and media (Lahelma, 2002, p. 369; Mitchell & Weber, 1999). These images can influence what is told and what is not.

The memories are approached through narrative research. Only by inviting people to tell can we get a glimpse of their memories. Carter (1993) reminds us how, particularly through stories, it is possible to attend to the richness, diversity and complexity that is involved in the experiences of teaching (see also Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Although the writers recount their personal memories, the memories are told in a specific context and for a particular purpose and audience (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005; Riessman, 2008; Spector-Mersel, 2010). As Carter (1993) points out, this means that stories are constructions that can never tell everything. Yet, while the stories are partial and told from a particular viewpoint, they are to be considered true and significant for the writers. As people are remembering, they are directing their gaze towards the past, but always through their present life situation; memories are not permanent or final, but recalling is an active, interpretative, and changing process (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1992).

4. Phases of analysis

The analysis of the memories was inductive and developed during the process. There were four phases of analysis; however, rather than following each other chronologically, these phases partially overlapped (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 132–135). During these phases, the memories were read from different 'distances', and in different ways. The following phases of analysis can be distinguished:

1) I analysed the set of 141 writings. Shared and varied contents of the memories were examined, and a table with summaries of the content and plot of each story was made. Analysing the plot meant attention to the proceeding of the story and to its turning points and episodes detailing a particular event (Riessman, 2008). Analysis also focused on the time and place (where and when the memories were situated) and on the central characters (who were the teacher(s), in which level of the school and how the student(s) were present) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).
2) I noticed recurring memories related to teachers' personal lives, and became interested in how these lives appeared to students. A re-reading followed: all memories related to teachers' personal lives were taken into account, even the briefest. The following themes were identified: memories dealing with the teachers' families, relatives, backgrounds, homes, particular life events and life phases, their health, birthdays, leisure time, personal interests and other engagements. Some student recollections also involved meeting a teacher outside of school. However, I also recognised the silence of some writers on these issues (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005). They either did not say anything on the subject or, as a female writer in her mid-twenties stated about her first teacher, "I didn't know where the teacher lived nor did I know her family. She probably didn't ever tell about such personal matters" (letter 32).
3) Stories written by 17 women and 7 men were selected for closer analysis. In these 24 stories, memories of teachers' personal lives were an important aspect, and writers often recalled specific events involving them and their teacher(s). Fifteen of the writers were over 60 years of age,[4] six were between 50 and 59 years, and three were between 30 and 39 years at the time of the writing. Not all mentioned their occupation, but most were now pensioners and four of them had been teachers by profession. There were also writers with careers in universities, business, media and health care.

   I read the selected writings story-by-story and analysed them holistically, which meant reading the memories in relation to the whole and paying attention to the context of the writing (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 214). Besides studying what and in what connection writers discussed the themes related to teachers' personal lives, how these themes were recounted was also studied (see Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005, pp. 64, 65). Although the focus was on the selected stories, I reflected the stories and interpretations made about them against the whole of the material.

   Three ways of telling about teachers' personal lives were distinguished. Firstly, biographical facts about teachers were recalled. These facts were sometimes recounted in quite declaratory and introductory ways, and interpretations were sometimes made based on what the students knew about their teachers' personal issues. Secondly, how these personal lives became visible to students in the school was recalled. This occurred in varied ways, including through teachers' personal accounts. Thirdly, teachers' personal lives were revealed to students as they met teachers in private contexts during and after the school years.
4) I focused on analysing the two latter ways of telling that discussed how teachers' personal lives were revealed to students. Since both students and teachers are present in the memories, I asked what the memories told about teacher–student relationships (see Uitto, 2011).

   The memories were examined by analysing both the contents and ways of telling about the relationships: how teachers and students are recalled in relation to each other and what significance these memories had for students and their relationships with teachers from students' perspectives. This phase of analysis showed the intertwining of personal and professional in teacher–student relationships. Teachers' personal accounts were described as learning experiences. Through their personal

[4] There were eight writers between 60 and 69 years, five writers in their early 70s and one writer in her mid-80s. One writer did not mention his age, but had retired.

lives, teachers were seen in a different light. Teachers' personal lives were inevitably present in school. Through teachers' personal involvement, relationships could become more personal, but also remain professional. Teacher–student relationships also developed outside of school, and they sometimes continued after school years, also as friendships.

The results are presented in a narrative way: stories or memory episodes inside a story about a particular teacher are quoted widely in order to value the voices of the writers (see Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 217). The stories are narratively thick. Through extensive quotes, it is possible to weave together the results established in the different phases of analysis and hence, to illustrate the various ways the personal and professional intertwine in teacher–student relationships. All names of people and places in the quoted memories have been omitted or changed for ethical reasons. Other details that are possibly too recognisable have been left out.

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Teachers tell their students about their personal lives

Based on the recounted memories, teachers' personal lives became visible to students in the school. Teachers are remembered as telling students about themselves, their life histories, personal life events, youth, families, hobbies, personal interests or journeys. The following memory describes how a specific moment—when students found out something personal about the teacher—could be remembered. Terhi, in her late thirties, recalls only her first teacher:

> I changed school after grade one, so this teacher only taught me for a year. She[5] stuck out in my mind nonetheless as a pleasant, warm-hearted teacher. It made a particular impression on me when one day the teacher told the entire class about her mother's death and that she was sad for that reason. It was good that we children were valued and told about that sort of thing. The issue was of course very dramatic for seven-year-olds, for whom there could be little worse than a mother's death. Nonetheless, the teacher's calm and sure behaviour said a person could work with and survive that sorrow.
> The teacher noticed my dyslexia and I got help for it straight away. [Describes how the mild disorder went away and how the teacher was ahead of her time.]
> Upon defending my doctoral thesis, the good first steps my teacher had helped me take came to mind again and, when I ended up working in the same area, I looked for her number in the phone book and called to thank her.
> The teacher was surprised. She no longer remembered her student of 30 years previously, despite trying hard to and looking at a picture of the class, but was nonetheless happy about my call and to hear that her student had become a doctor. I learnt to my surprise that she had taken psychology as her major at university and for that reason had been so ahead of her time in recognising dyslexia (email 8).

As Nias (1989, p. 150) points out, "All teachers come to their work as people," and she goes on to say this means personal issues, concerns and problems follow the teacher from home to work. This idea of a teacher working as a person, as a particular "somebody" (Kelchtermans, 2009), becomes very concrete in Terhi's memory. She recalls the teacher sharing a personal life event with the students, showing emotion and being able to connect with the students through that personal account. For different students, teachers' personal stories serve different purposes and hold different meanings. For Terhi, the fact that the teacher told them about her mother's death showed her appreciation of the students. Her memory demonstrates how a teacher's personal account can be meaningful for relationships. Once something personal was revealed about the teacher, it made the relationship more personal. The teacher appeared not only as a teacher in the memory, but as a child of a mother—in a similar position to that of the students.

Besides the relational perspective, the teacher's account had pedagogical significance in this memory. Terhi emphasises what she learnt from the personal account: people can survive dramatic events. In addition to the actual subject matter, such informal lessons that extend over the official curriculum and teach about life can be meaningful experiences for students (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1994; Lesko, 1988). Yair (2008) noticed this as he studied students' key experiences related to the students discovering something new about themselves in the context of higher education. They occasionally described encounters with teachers as meaningful, although there were no actual educational aims. For example, teachers' words of wisdom became important for the students (p. 99). Kelchtermans (2009, pp. 265–267) acknowledges the value of surprise, passivity and something spontaneously happening in education, in addition to the intentional and planned activities.

Unlike some writers, Terhi does not recall it as rare or exceptional for a teacher to reveal personal issues during class. Whereas Terhi's teacher told her students about her personal life, some teachers may want to keep their personal and professional lives consistently separate. Aultman et al. (2009, p. 640) note that teachers talk about these "self-disclosure boundaries." Setting them can be very concrete in the everyday practices of schools. Teachers can remain silent about their lives outside school and focus on discussing only matters related closely to their work, and similarly, students may not be encouraged to share their personal matters (Metso, 2004). In a study by Hargreaves (2000, pp. 822–823), secondary school teachers relate student emotions to matters outside the school, rarely to school or teachers. These emotions are seen as difficult and distracting, which, for Hargreaves, is an example of how professional distance is visible in teachers' work.

Terhi's student memories are complemented by adult memories: she had recently been in touch with her teacher. At this point, the memory illustrates how teacher–student relationships can change over time and continue after school years. Kosonen (1998), who studied women's memories of physical education in school, believes students' relationships with teachers should be seen as multisided processes that involve changes. Later personal contact is described by Terhi as a chance to thank the teacher, but also a possibility for shared recollections: her teacher's studies in psychology helped explain why the teacher noticed her dyslexia. After my secondary contact, Terhi writes to me:

> I think your research topic is very good. Teachers perhaps may not come to consider in their everyday working life how they influence their students. It's natural after all that the influence of teachers is large, since children spend a lot of time with them and a teacher's actions may have big effects on students. My own teacher was astonished too when I told her how she'd made an impression on me as a child by talking about her own mother's death. She said hopefully she hadn't caused traumas for any students with her words. In reality, her brave and calm

[5] In this memory, the gender of the teacher is not stated explicitly by the writer. Finnish has only one, gender-neutral third-person pronoun, *hän*, which can refer to a female or a male. For the sake of readability, the teacher is referred to as female in the article. Nonetheless, that the teacher is recalled without gender is an interesting point for the previous discussions in research about teachers having been directed towards being professionals without gender, body or emotion (Vuorikoski, 2005).

attitude towards the issue was a good example that one can cope with sorrow.

In this sense, Terhi now brings the teacher's perspective to her memory. The teacher had seemed surprised about the impact of her talk and that her student still remembered the situation. Similarly, as Barone (2001) states, one could talk about the traces teachers leave on students' lives. Van Manen and Li (2002, p. 218) discuss teachers' personal involvement in students' lives, although it is not necessarily recognised by the teachers themselves. Also, the involvement can be different than what the teacher might expect, as Terhi's memory illustrates. Terhi's teacher expressed concern about the possible trauma her talk might have caused, which illuminates teachers' awareness of the need to carefully consider how much and in what ways they tell students about themselves. They see the consequences their stories may have and the need to negotiate the boundaries of their actions (Aultman et al., 2009). This is a paradox for teachers: how to be personally present in relationships with students, but not too personal by finding a balance between the personal and professional (e.g., O'Connor, 2008).

5.2. Teachers' personal lives inevitably become visible to students

Aside from teachers telling students about themselves, there were other ways in which their personal lives became visible to their students. There are memories of how teachers' children had been classmates of the writers, how teachers' birthdays had been celebrated, how students found out about their teachers' romances, or how they discovered a teacher had health problems. Such memories demonstrate that teachers cannot escape being present through their personal lives, even within school. The following memories illustrate this from different perspectives. One of the five teachers that Reino, now in his mid-sixties, writes about was a male teacher in upper secondary school:

> At the beginning of the class it quickly became clear what mood [teacher's nickname] was in and if trouble was coming. You had to be careful about topics for presentations. The most difficult area was sports. He had run track events when younger, so you could talk about them. Ski jumping was like a red rag to him, you had to be careful of it. If you chose the wrong topic, you were told immediately that it wasn't 'suitable for a Finnish lesson.' I did a presentation on Enrico Caruso. It was well received; our teacher was keen on singing, after all. [Tells further examples about the topics for presentations] (email 53).

Reino's memory shows that teachers' personal values and interests inevitably appear in their teaching. Whereas Terhi's memory suggested the value of teachers' personal involvement in their work from a student perspective, this is a different kind of memory. The teacher's personal interests or opinions are present in his teaching, but it is recalled that students had to learn and know these interests in order to succeed in giving presentations. The teacher appears as arbitrary (Uitto, 2011): students came to know what the 'proper' topics were and about the teacher's interests as the topic was introduced.

The next writer, Matias, now in his early-thirties, writes very comprehensively about his various teachers, one of them a substitute teacher:

> When I was in grade one [of upper secondary school], the undisputed curiosity among the teachers was a man substituting for the psychology and religious studies teacher and whose presence spoke of a strong use of alcohol outside working hours. Apparently he sometimes also taught lessons while a little hungover. He returned from a skiing or Easter holiday with a broken vein in one eye. He said he had been on holiday in Spain, but no one was left with any confusion over how the holiday had been spent. Despite everything he was an intelligent and likeable man. On the final day of school, the then candidates for the national matriculation examination gave him a funny face sculpture as an award for being 'the year's most-liked teacher' (email 1).

This memory is a further example of how teachers' personal lives are inevitably revealed to students. In the original memory in Finnish, it is ambiguous whether Matias means they had, as students, met the teacher outside of school, the teacher having used alcohol, or whether the teacher's use of alcohol during his free time was clear to the students at school. In either case, it seems teachers' personal lives can become visible to students without the teacher intending it. Lahelma (2002)[6] discusses the intertwining of informal and official layers in everyday school life. Indeed, teachers cannot "keep the informal outside of the lessons" even if they wanted to (Lahelma, 2002, p. 379). In this memory, despite the teacher's words, the students made assumptions about his personal life based on his appearance and behaviour. While teachers inevitably have more knowledge about their students' lives than the other way around (Bull, 1993), student memories, such as the previous one, suggest students come to know about their teachers as private persons and interpret and guess, sometimes with other students. Although there was a contradiction between what the students 'knew' and what the teacher said, the overall memory by Matias of the teacher–student relationship is still positive.

A glimpse of teachers' personal lives was seen by those writers who recalled visiting their teachers' homes as students. A teacher's home was remembered as a professional and personal place: both of these aspects are present in the memory by Antti, now in his seventies, who wrote about several teachers in his elementary school. Antti begins writing about one of his teachers by stating biographical facts about him and his interest in sports. He then focuses on describing his teacher's home:

> After Christmas, Matti Virtanen, the son of the [district] cantor, came to teach grades three and four; he had glasses and had graduated at Christmas at the teacher training college. [Recalls different sports, skiing competitions, and the teacher's interest in sports that connected the teacher and the boys]. I think I got to be—or ended up—in the position of one of Virtanen's favourite or trusted students, as I had to carry out various different services. Once the teacher told me to go to his apartment and fetch his watch, which he had forgotten or lost. The apartment had received the bachelor treatment; it looked like he had been in a hurry to the morning devotions at the school. After a longish search the watch was found nonetheless. […]
> These sorts of special assignment didn't come with any extra freedoms. Once I couldn't recite my religious studies homework about prophet Amos. The result was of course extra work for being lazy. In the afternoon after lessons had finished, Virtanen went to his apartment and ordered me to come and recite my homework when I had learnt it. Thinking I'd learnt my homework, I went carefully to his apartment. He was shaving in front of a mirror. Of course, at the door, reciting my Amos homework, my memory failed me a few times and the teacher came to look at my religious studies book, face covered in lather, and helped me finish after a fashion. Later when we've met, I've reminded

[6] Lahelma (2002, p. 368) and her research partners distinguish conceptually three intertwined layers of school: official, informal and physical. Whereas the official layer means "teaching and learning, the curriculum, pedagogy and formal hierarchies", the informal layer has to do with informal hierarchies and the interaction between different actors of the school, such as teachers and students.

> Matti of it, asked, 'Do you remember when we slacked off on Amos together?'
> […] Irma Marttila lived in the attic, Matti Virtanen under her. Apparently principal Heikkinen's supervision of the young teachers living in the south end of the school wasn't effective enough, because the next autumn, [they] moved as a teacher couple […] (letter 38).

In this recollection, the teacher's apartment is remembered between the informal and official layers of school (cf. Lahelma, 2002). As teachers were seen as model citizens, teachers' homes, which often used to be situated in the school buildings, were half-public places that modelled an ideal home (Ojakangas, 1998; Salo, 2005, p. 74; Tuomaala, 2004, p. 129). Antti remembers fetching items from the teacher's apartment needed by the teacher in school, and the discipline and rules of the school extended to the home, for example, in entering with care. Although the teacher and the student met in a seemingly personal place, at the teacher's home, the situation could still be described as a professional one and the purpose of the meeting was related to school practices. In the case of Antti, his homework was re-examined there. Similar to Antti's recollection, some students recalled writing their exams, or studying at their teachers' house, or teachers organised times for students to visit their homes. Also, the memory suggests the regulations placed on teachers' personal lives (Mitchell & Weber, 1999), as Antti recalls somewhat humorously that the principal's surveillance did not prevent two teachers, who were living in the same building, from getting married.

Teachers' homes were also described as personal places that opened up a window to their personal life. A certain feeling of privacy and intimacy colours Antti's memory. The teacher's home appears as a location of a love story. Antti's memory heavily details how he as a student saw the teacher's home. He recalls the messiness of the apartment that seems to break the idea of teachers' homes as models, but that tells something personal about the teacher. The memory also shows a different image of teachers than do Mitchell and Weber (1999), who list the expectations children may have of teachers: they do not go to the toilet, do not smoke or drink and do not have personal lives outside school (p. 128). In addition, the examination of homework is remembered as very informal, as the teacher helped the student while shaving; the situation is later recalled with the teacher together. Antti's letter reveals that he too became a teacher. This is another example in which the relationship between the teacher and the student continues after the student's school years. In this instance, they became colleagues.

5.3. Meetings in private contexts

Some of the memories focused on contacts and meetings with teachers in private contexts, while still students or after (see also Salo, 2005, p. 43). For example, in school years, writers were involved in the same social activities as their teachers, or teachers had organised student clubs. Glimpses of teachers' personal lives were revealed to students as teachers were met outside school and these meetings could be important for teacher–student relationships, as in the following memory. Liisa, in her mid-fifties, recalls seven teachers in grammar school. As often happens, her recollections of the teachers move between school and private contexts. In the following memory she describes two teachers:

> Our school was led by the Marjas: Marja the principal, who also taught gymnastics and sports sometimes; and Marja the vice-principal, who was the history and civics teacher. In the summers between upper secondary school I had a summer job in a bank and went open-air swimming in the morning. […] On the dimly-lit upper bench of the sauna sat only two women and looking at them more closely I recognised them as the Marjas from our school. Only the three of us were in the sauna, an event that was repeated on many mornings over the summer. I still remember the feeling of equality in the company of these two strong women. There was never a principal–teacher–student setup to our discussions or our other dealings with each other, just three women naked in a sauna talking women's things. No gossip was talked there.
> Sometimes the Marjas might ask my opinion on a school matter from a so-called student's perspective, but usually the topics of discussion were very everyday and universal. I do remember that we also laughed a lot together. When we met in the autumn after school started, after the break, I noticed that the feeling of equality I had experienced hadn't gone anywhere. As if the three of us were still linked by some bond; I mean, if you compared it to the Marjas' speech or behaviour with other students. I felt again that behind every profession is a person—under the right circumstances.
> This lesson has been an important and useful one ever since. Perhaps for that reason, no strong 'fear of the lord'[7] has taken root in me, although my generation is used to respecting people with public authority (email 55).

Liisa's memory illustrates a change in the positions of the teachers and the student: these positions did not exist in the private meetings, but rather the relationship between these three females is remembered through a feeling of equality. The relationship with the teachers developed as personal. Liisa recalls the laughter and talking about everyday matters and how the teachers showed interest in her thoughts and opinions. Regular and private meetings with the teachers outside of school are remembered, as they created a unique bond. The memory shows relationships between teachers and students are also constructed outside school in private contexts (see Van Manen & Li, 2002).

As is illustrated in Liisa's memory, such meetings outside school made it possible for students to see teachers in a different light. Similarly, secondary school teachers in the Hargreaves (2000) study viewed such informal moments, alone with a student, as important for the development of teacher–student relationships: teachers felt they were able to meet the students in a different role (and vice versa) than in the classroom and that they could get to know one another better by talking about issues unrelated to school (see also Newberry, 2010). Liisa notes how she learnt that teachers are people, which for her was an important lesson in terms of other relationships with authority figures. Hence, the memory is a further example that what might be remembered of teachers and learning are experiences connected to informal lessons rather than formal teaching (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1994; Lesko, 1988; Yair, 2008).

As Salo (2005) studied student memories of teachers, she noticed it could be confusing for students to learn their teachers were "just like people" who get married or have homes (pp. 70–74). In the memories of this article, some writers describe their contradictory feelings related to meeting teachers in private contexts (see Tuomaala, 2004). These feelings are illustrated in the next memories, written by two women: Eeva, in her mid-sixties, recalls seven of her teachers. Fifty-year-old Tuula discusses three of her elementary school teachers.

> Teacher Mirjam Kettunen [Tells about the teacher's good teaching methods and her own growing interest in the German

[7] The phrase 'fear of the lord' is commonly used in Finnish ('*herranpelko*') as a figure of speech. In this meaning, 'the lord' refers to authorities, or people in higher positions.

language] lived in [district] and travelled from there to [district] by bus, so you might sometimes see her in the town centre waiting for a bus. I thought, 'I wonder can she see to the other side of the street, 20 m away?' but to be certain, I curtsied and said hello. I noted her eyesight was good when she answered me back; best notice to say hello! [Describes a very positive later meeting with the teacher and how she, as a student, although interested in the language was still scared of the teacher like other students] (email 3).

My first male teacher was also from the time elementary schools were around. [Recalls how the teacher favoured boys and treated students unfairly]. He sometimes came to visit my parents, but I felt then and still feel now that I don't know how to relate naturally to him. I've met him too now and again over the years, and he's succeeded in upsetting me even as an adult. I last met him in the spring of this year in a large department store in a nearby town (he's been retired for years now). He praised my brothers' success in school—and mine—so much that I feel he only sees success, not the person. It's a really sad thing if a teacher can't see a child, only the success one child reaches and another doesn't (email 59).

The memories of the first writer, Eeva, of her German teacher in grammar school are diverse. The recollection of meeting the teacher on the street illustrates how it is not just what happens in school between teachers and students that is significant from a student's perspective. Students' relationships with teachers also develop outside school (Hargreaves, 2000; Van Manen & Li, 2002). Despite the private context, the meeting with the teacher turned out to be a very professional one: Eeva recalls how the rules of the school about greeting the teacher were valid and the teacher also followed them. The memory illuminates that students may need to think about how they are expected to behave towards teachers in such private situations. In Tuomaala's (2004) research, students who recall going to school in the 1920s–1930s, bring up how their behaviour was monitored on their way to school: besides teachers, other villagers saw to their proper behaviour (p. 124). Eeva's memory reminds us about teachers as model citizens; students are to show respect towards teachers outside school, and being a teacher seems to carry over to personal life and to meetings with students outside school (Kauppila et al., 2007; Mitchell & Weber, 1999).

Also, in the second memory, the meeting with the teacher is described as a professional one and the positions of one being a teacher and the other a student were still present although the student, Tuula, was now a grown-up and they met in a private context. Based on the memory, it seems the teacher's attention was still focused on his former student's school success. This tells something about the teacher's involvement in his work. When Nias (1989, pp. 115–116) interviewed primary school teachers about their work, this involvement showed in what they said about students and teaching being very much in teachers' thoughts during their off-time. Based on the details, the writer's relationship with her teacher included many seemingly personal aspects: the teacher had visited her family—he obviously remembered his student and her brothers and their school success—and they had met more than once after the student had left school. Yet, for Tuula, the relationship still remained distant and lacked a personal connection, as the teacher is described as still not able to see his student as a person. This highlights the meaning of student experience. The teacher's and Tuula's memories of the shared time in school seem different, and it is suggested the teacher does not know the student's true feelings. The memory illustrates that teacher–student relationships may extend into a private context while remaining professional.

5.4. Teacher–student relationships turn into personal friendships

Not so much attention in educational research has been paid to how teacher–student relationships can develop and continue as friendships (as an exception, there is Barone, 2001). A writer called Elli is one of the few who talks about her later friendship with a teacher. Elli, in her mid-seventies, first sent me student memories of her teachers and only briefly referred to a later friendship with one of them. After my secondary contact, she sent me a story that focused on the friendship:

My friendship with my teacher Alli Ikävalko ended after my third school year. After I moved to another school to begin grade four. There was a hiatus in our friendship for over three decades. Until I was in [town] in a department store […] shopping, where I saw Alli-teacher for the first time in a long while. After we'd caught up, I asked, 'So where does teacher live now?' She said she lived in [part of town] and the address was the same as my mother-in-law's. She invited us to visit; I went and brought my mother-in-law there too. It started from there. […] I visited her a lot as we lived close to each other. And as we both aged, it felt important to talk about things old and new. [Describes the teacher's frequent changes of residence and visiting the teacher alone or with other ex-pupils. Describes how the teacher made coffee and the writer waited on them. Reminisces about the preparations for the teacher's birthday. The teacher's ex-pupils gathered to celebrate the birthday at the school at which the teacher had taught.]

Then in spring [year], the teacher had to go to the hospital for treatment. Her health got worse in the early summer, and she passed away [date and time]. [Describes the teacher's funeral and the memorial ceremony.]

A long friendship had come to an end. Alli's relative asked me did I want something for my trouble, as I had done a lot with Alli. I answered, 'I just want that coffee pot of Alli's, nothing else.' […] I learnt that our friendship was an oddity for some school friends. 'Why must you take care of her; she has relatives?' they asked. I answered that I was just a friend to her (letter 64).

Teacher–student relationships are often described as those between children and adults, and are defined by their institutional context, asymmetry, limited time and compulsory nature (e.g., Bull, 1993). Elli's memory, too, first discussed the child–adult relationship from the student perspective: how their friendship ended after she changed school. However, she then went on to recall how a later meeting with the teacher in a private context continued their friendship. Elli's memory reminds us of how teacher–student relationships can be processes that contain changes and different phases (Kosonen, 1998): relationships with teachers can continue after the student is no longer a student. Newberry (2010) recognises several phases in student relationships with teachers; also, she emphasises the relationships as processes with different non-linear phases. Elli's memory demonstrates how teachers' and students' different life phases become interwoven after the actual teacher–student relationship has ended.

Not only do teachers leave traces in their students' lives, but students also leave traces in their teachers' lives, as stated by Barone (2001). In Elli's memory, the positions of teacher and student changed into positions of friends, and it is suggested that Elli also looked after her teacher. Barone (2001), who became interested in the "enduring outcomes of teaching," went back to the same teacher of arts whose teaching he had followed many years earlier, and interviewed both the teacher and his former students. For some of those students, it was their teacher's values, lessons or philosophy of life that they now saw as meaningful in their own lives. In Elli's memory, the teacher and the student are recalled to have been concretely present in each other's everyday lives.

6. Conclusions

The student memories of teachers show teachers' personal lives are present in school. The writers described finding out something personal about their teachers, or of teachers telling students about their lives. Such situations could form as important learning experiences for the students (see Lesko, 1988), and they illustrate that there is a personal and informal side to relationships between teachers and students. Knowing about teachers' personal affairs, or meeting with them privately outside school, could be significant in allowing teacher–student relationships to develop in a personal way. However, memories hold different meanings for students. Meeting teachers in private contexts could touch upon seeing the teacher in a different light, or change the relationship with the teacher, whereas some meetings were recalled as still professional by nature and relationships with teachers remained somewhat distant. The student memories illustrate the comprehensive nature of teacher–student relationships, since they can include different phases and multiple sides (Hargreaves, 2000; Newberry, 2010; Van Manen & Li, 2002). Not all of the recalled relationships ended with school, but sometimes continued after it.

Current discussion on personal and professional aspects in teacher–student relationships is marked by how teachers should have personal relationships with students, but maintain a certain distance from students and not reveal too much about personal matters (e.g., O'Connor, 2008). However, the memories suggest that students inevitably discover personal matters about their teachers, even in ways that teachers may not be aware of. In addition, the memories show that teacher–student relationships develop outside the everyday routines of school in the form of casual meetings and contact in personal life. Such memories demonstrate that, whereas teachers can partially define how much they show of their personal lives and they can make boundaries between their lives and work (Aultman et al., 2009), it is difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to keep their personal lives totally outside their work.

Due to the impossibility of drawing complete boundaries between personal lives and work, both pre-service and in-service teacher education should provide tools and means of supporting teachers to become aware of and to work with the personal and professional aspects of their work and student relationships. At the beginning of this article, questions related to private phone numbers, personal accounts and living arrangements were raised. Those may seem like black and white questions that teachers can answer with either yes or no. However, these questions are situation-bound and in the end intertwined with how close to or distant from their students teachers are, and how teachers are personally and emotionally present to students (Hargreaves, 2000, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2005). The teachers described in the writers' memories did tell about themselves and invite students to their homes, or were alone with their students. Yet, previous research shows that these situations can be potentially risky and emotionally wearing situations for teachers (Manos, 2007; O'Connor, 2008). Both student and practising teachers need to have means to acknowledge the complexities related to the personal and professional in teacher–student relationships and the potential risks of being too personally present.

The writers recall face-to-face meetings or other concrete contact with teachers outside school, but current forms of social media, such as Facebook and MySpace make it possible to have virtual relationships in private contexts. The kinds of relationships teachers have with their students outside school is a relevant and complicated question and needs to be addressed in teacher education as well. Students and teachers are increasingly active participants in social media. As a teacher's work is a public occupation, attention has been paid to the possible problems of teachers being Facebook friends with their former or current students: a need for clear instructions has been voiced (Carter et al., 2008; Foulger, Ewbank, Kay, Osborn Popp, & Carter, 2009). Social media is also a further example of teachers not being able to fully control the knowledge about themselves and their personal lives. For example, googling teachers by name can reveal much about them as private persons (Carter et al., 2008). Therefore, new forms of media raise further challenges for teachers in considering the personal and professional in their relationships with students.

Periods of teaching practice during teacher education offer concrete places for student–teachers to discuss the intertwining of the personal and professional in their everyday relationships with students. In addition, special attention in teacher education must be paid to teachers' awareness of the different cultural expectations, regulations and ideals concerning teachers' work. Teachers are bound to face these images in their work with students, parents, and colleagues, who all have their own expectations about what it is to be a teacher. Movies, photographs, books, historical documents and Internet sources about teachers offer a fruitful starting point for considering these images that lie deeply in people's minds and in culture (Mitchell & Weber, 1999). Furthermore, possibilities for teachers to deal with their own memories about the personal and professional aspects in teacher–student relationships should be provided (see Clandinin & Huber, 2005). Memory-work and sharing memories in groups can function as ways to "reinvent" memories for student and practising teachers (Mitchell & Weber, 1999). These reinventions are needed to see one's own memories from new perspectives, and also in order for teachers to recognise their own personal images and expectations about teachers' work as they impact what kinds of teachers they want to be.

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