



**Eötvös Loránd University
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Doctoral School of Education
Educational Research Doctoral Program**

Adolescents self-portrait from narrative perspective

The self-knowledge competence and their development opportunities in
pedagogical practice

PhD theses

Consultant: Dr. Franz Schaffhauser PhD

Tókos Katalin

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Objectives and subject definition

This dissertation concerns itself with the pedagogical interpretation of concepts of self-knowledge competence, assessing teenagers' spontaneous self-portrait and personal competence tools and opportunities for their development.

Throughout the world, the concept and practice of competence-based education is becoming better known and accepted. Its main features are an emphasis on the learning process, prioritizing the organization of independent learning, building on life experiences from all sources, mobilizing existing knowledge bases as a possible source of understanding, practical orientation, immediate feedback, and providing quantifiable, verifiable results. (Kraiciné, 2006.). In Hungary, the introduction and development of new education/training models has been intensive in the recent past. Now, however, is still the phase of trials and development. In accordance with European Union guidelines, under the auspices of the Hungarian National Development Plan, the primary emphases of the development are: the spreading of competence-based educational methodology, the development and introduction of educational programs and packages that link transmission of knowledge with the intentional and deliberate development of abilities and skills, and offering flexible knowledge that is usable in the long term.

The self-knowledge competence we studied was not developed as part of an independent program package, but rather was placed among the social/life management competency areas, mainly in program packages recommended for type C (outside the classroom) activities.¹ Experts speak of the "incidental" occurrence of self-knowledge competence development in school settings (Jakab, 2004, Kerber, 2006): although present overall in the Hungarian National Base Curriculum (NAT), pertaining to the entirety of the document, in other words, at a strategic level, in highlighted development tasks (self-image and self-knowledge), in the materials of certain areas of knowledge, in the form of subject integration, cross-curricular topics, or modules, but the realization of these during local planning often remains on the surface, or is glossed over during a once weekly modular subject. It is also a fundamental problem, whether something that for a long time has been missing both structurally and attitudinally from public education can be squeezed into the framework of a class. In other words, whether teachers are suitable for performing the necessary development tasks without sufficient training in psychology or group leadership.

Based on the above - namely, that there is no uniformly accepted pedagogical paradigm regarding developing self-knowledge competence - this study is concerned with interpreting the concept from a pedagogical perspective and with the problems of measuring and developing it. Under the framework of a series of empirical studies, it examines adolescents' views of themselves and their self-knowledge competence, in order to attempt, with the results in hand, to demarcate and organize the theoretical and practical considerations of self-knowledge competence development, to offer points of reference for the methodological dilemma of the "teachability" of the self-knowledge module, considered to be "incidental" in public education, and to point out options for using the results in teacher training.

The most important **questions** to which we sought answers:

- How can the concept of self-knowledge competence be understood from a pedagogical perspective?
- How can Hungarian pedagogical practice be characterized in the field of self-understanding competence development?

¹ Development has begun in the areas of pre-school education, reading comprehension and composition, mathematical-logical competence, foreign language competence, social/life skills competence and career path building competence.

- What are the most important characteristics of the self-images formed by teenagers aged 14 to 18?
 - what kind of content does the so-called spontaneous self-image, which is teenagers' free determination of self?
 - what kinds of significant self-stories, life events do teenagers use to represent themselves, and what is the social context of these events?
 - what kinds of identity-forming, self-determining modes can be identified in their self-stories?
- How can the narrative approach and analysis be used in a pedagogical study?
- How can the results be used to identify the theoretical and practical considerations of developing self-understanding?
- What kinds of opportunities arise for the utilization and integration of these research results in teacher training?

Theoretical background

Our study is deeply rooted in self-image research.

In the *first chapter* of the study, we clarify the concepts of self-image, and closely associated concepts such as self-concept, self-representation, self-schema and personality terminology from a psychological perspective. In other words, self-image and self-knowledge are primarily psychological entities, which could provide a basis for the pedagogical interpretation of the self-system and its development. We would like to emphasize that although teaching and its applied branches face many challenges from psychology (Bagdy-Telkes, 1988), the practical goals of personality development are not determined by psychology for pedagogy. Then we deal with the questions of interpersonal theories of self, social approaches to the individual, since these models provide a sufficient frame of reference for the development and peculiarities of the relationship between the creation of self-image, self-knowledge competence and the environment which influences them.

Self-portrait is a paradox phenomenon, its definitions are many, differing among paradigms, with different aspects being emphasized or believed to be important, but what all theoretical constructs accept with regards to self-image is that its establishment is a function of our relationship with our person and our physical environment. From the social determination of the self, from a social approach to self-knowledge, we find the role of social context to be deterministic in connection with interpreting the concept of self-knowledge competence, too. In accordance with other authors (Markus-Wurf, 1987, Cantor-Kihlstrom, 1987, Koncz-Kovács, 2000), we define self-image as the dynamic balance between believed, subjective self-image (the way I see myself: imagine, feel, believe), assigned image (the way others see me: the social image), and reflected (the way others represent me). The concept was interpreted in different ways based on paradigms and schools of thought, for its denotation, different expressions were used, but it appears that the self that symbolic interactionists (Cooley, 1902, Mead, 1934, cited in Koncz-Kovács, 2000) began to describe as the mirrored or reflected self, thus emphasizing its social product nature, is the synonym of the concept of self that - due to cognitive research - is noted as self representation, self-schema. In the self as schema or representation type ideas the self-schema contains not only personal, but also social representations as well (Markus, 1987), the other may be expressed in what the person would like to become, or might think he or she should become, in other words, in the possible selves (Markus-Nurius, 1986) or in the expected self (Higgins, 1987). Most recently, the coherence-creating self is interpreted in a narratology framework, and seen as a part of the process of creating the personal life story (Gergen and Gergen, 1983, McAdams, 1988, Polkinghorne, 1991, Dennett, 1992, Pataki, 2001, László, 2005).

Highlighted aspects of interpersonal theories of self, the narrative approach to self

The basis of our study was formed by theories presuming a social determination of self, which consider the relationship between the self and others to be deterministic in terms of developing the self-system. We concentrated mainly on ideas concerning feedback, reflected evaluation, social comparison and expectation, self-verification, which examine how others provide self-relevant information for maintaining and evaluating the self. In pedagogy, the kind of effects peer groups have on the self-content and self-esteem of adolescents as well as the expectations of teachers is not a consideration to be overlooked. The expectations of teachers have a significant influence on children's skill development, their evaluation of control, as well as the values they attach to achievement. (Jussim, 1986, -cited in Markus-Cross, 1990. 64.), but immediate feedback from others is also an important factor in developing self. There is a higher probability of incorporating feedback into the self if the person perceives the other as very competent (Webster-Szobieszek, 1974), or if the feedback is validated or verified by others as well. (Backman-Secord- Pierce, 1963 - cited in Markus-Cross, 1990. 64.).

Within interpersonal theories of self, we considered one of the novel approaches, the narrative concept of self, to be deterministic during interpretation. Its basis is that the self (self-system) and its mode of operation is considered an analogy of storytelling (such as a narrative), and assumes that the self organizes its immediate experiences, the events in its personal life story into a continuous narrative structure. (Gergen-Gergen, 1983, McAdams, 1988, Polkinghorne, 1991, Pataki, 2001, László, 2005). At the beginning of the 1980s, Gergen, K.J. and Gergen, M.M. introduced the concept of narratives concerning the self into the psychological literature, which implies that the person organizes events relevant to the self and the relationship between these events in a timeline, and attempts to create coherent connections between the events in his or her life, in other words, organizes them into a story. Thus the self can be seen as a narrator, a personal story-teller, and the contents of the self as stories, or narratives.

The metaphor of the narrative is identity as a continually restructured life story (McAdams, 1988), since the story that a person composes about him- or herself will have especial significance in terms of his continuity, unity and integration of his or her self, as well as other qualities of his or her identity. It is possible to make inferences concerning the state of identity and level of self-knowledge from self-narratives, life stories, or life story events (Fitzgerald, 1992, Pataki, 2001). These significant life events and self-stories are capable of highlighting certain aspects of the self, and express self-representational qualities, since they affect the person's existence, living conditions and prospects.² In Hungary, the examination of the concept of identity and narrative perspective is largely associated with the name of Ferenc Pataki (2001). This study offers an overview of those major narrative identity models (McAdams, 1988, Barclay, 1996) and concept frameworks which allow self-stories to become testable empirically. It is possible to make deductions concerning the quality of identity and peculiarities of self-representation. It also searches for the usability of narrative analysis within the framework of a pedagogical study.

An incomplete list of the most frequent principles of narrative organization: time, narrator's perspective as a principle of narrative composition, archetypes of the narrative

² Fitzgerald (1988, 1992) introduced the technique of story-telling of significant life events into his studies of autobiographical memory. He asked test subjects to recall and tell him five events which they think would definitely be included in their autobiographies. These always have personal relevance, although they are embedded in a social, cultural and historical context.

genre, narrative coherence, the function and roles of characters in the narratives, etc. (Pataki, 2001, Ehmann, 2002, Pólya, 2004, László, 2005).

Adolescent self-portrait in light of empirical studies

Earlier - mainly cognitive - studies concerned with adolescent self-portrait and self-knowledge features concentrate mainly on self-concept and school performance, the connection between learning and academic self-portrait, while emphasizing the specificity of self-concept (Pintrich-Schunk, 2001). In the hierarchically organized cognitive model of self-concept (Hattie, 1992), the subsystems of self-image are related to behavior and performance. They also found a connection between global self-image and school performance, though this was not too strong. They found a much stronger correlation between self-image concerning school performance or skills and academic performance. (Burns, 1982). Other studies have shown (Brookover, Thomas and Petterson, 1963 - cited in Kőrössi, 2004) that there is a strong positive correlation between self-image and evaluation by significant others perceived by the student, with perceived evaluation being a necessary and sufficient condition for the formation of a positive aptitude self-image, but a positive self-image is only a necessary, but not sufficient condition for good performance.

As a result of motivation research, the emphasis has been shifted in the case of academic self-image, school performance to inner processes and self constructs. These ideas highlight the individual's inner constructs, interpretations and the meanings they assign, and consider such variables as intentions, expectations, goals and commitment to be observable predictors of academic performance. They emphasize that additionally, how the person evaluates his or her effectiveness, efficiency and competence also plays a very important role. (McCombs, 1999 - cited in Pajares-Schunk, 2001). Today, in pedagogy, the view that self-evaluation and the experience of self efficiency that develops as a result of learning activities may be considered a kind of subjective academic achievement and strongly influences performance is gaining popularity. (Zimmermann, 2002, Combs, 2001 - cited in Pajares-Schunk, 2001).

As a result of the revival of qualitative pedagogical research in recent years, studies which validated "the child's voice", using constructivism as a theoretical framework put the emphasis on students' image, views, concepts, academic self-concept, student concepts of themselves, and use a methodology which builds on getting to know the children's personal views from various perspective and greatest depth by making them speak and tell stories. (Golnhofer-Szabolcs, 2005, Rapos, 2007). However, the interpretive framework of the present study consists of theories presupposing a socially determined self-image, since we assume that knowledge, recognition and self-exploration are developed through social interaction and community relationships (Gergen, 1983, Bruner, 2001). In order for children to create their own world, give meaning to reality, themselves and what they have lived through, a discourse with another, a narrative is required. They encase their pasts, presents and futures in stories, which stories help them to identify themselves, and thus have an important identity-making function, too. Academic recognition, personality development also take place in the world of meanings, dialogues, narratives, and as such the narrative can also be interpreted as one of the possible tools of personality development and learning.

Pedagogical personality models in service of development tasks, interpreting self-knowledge competence from a pedagogical perspective

In the *second half* of the study, we deal with the interpretation of self-knowledge competence from a pedagogical perspective, and the questions of measuring and developing it. We took it as a basic premise that the type of personality interpretation greatly influences the direction, quality and effectiveness of pedagogical development activity, and it makes a difference along what kind of personality interpretation we seek support for concrete types of

development. (Bábosik, 2004.). The starting point for our interpretation was taking into consideration personality development goals which form the foundation of competence-based teaching, and also the examination of pedagogical personality models which could serve as practical support for targeting and defining development tasks. Furthermore, we examined how the concept of self-knowledge competence could be interpreted in light of the documents regulating the content of teaching, competence-based teaching, and competence-models, how Hungarian teaching practices can be described in terms of self-knowledge competence development, which are the main characteristics of functional self-knowledge development programs, and how all this helps our own definition process. Then we turn to the problem of measuring self-knowledge competence - through multi-dimensional self-image examination methods through narrative examination methods, with the question of the usability of narrative methods.

The most important personality development goals and tasks of the 21st century can be defined overall in terms of cognitive-, social- and individual-, as well as in orienting personality development goals and improving competencies. (Borosán, 2007). In the current professional discourses concerning competencies, there is a confusion of terminology: they use it as synonym of the psychological dimensions of learning, of meta cognitive thinking, of learning basic skills, of cross-curricular goals and key competencies, or as a temporary expression of pedagogical reform and concepts. (Brassósi, 2005). When generally describing the concept of competence, some fundamental features can be determined that are worth taking into consideration during the defining process³: competence is a combination of skills considered to be informal, is always connected to action, can be precisely described, makes performing tasks possible, does not exist in itself, independent of the solution of the problem to be solved, and of the person using it during the problem-solving process. It is always connected to a specific relationship, to a concrete situation, and brings up the problem of portability and penetrability. Competencies generally affect three skill families: knowledge, or empirical body of knowledge; know-how, in other words, skills and experiences, and the ability to form relationships and/or forms of social behaviors. ⁴.

To make sense of the self-knowledge (personal) competency, - in addition to the models of József Nagy (1994), István Bábosik's personality model (1997), and the personality conception of constructivism (Nahalka, n.d.)- we used the theoretical model worked out under the auspices of OECD's DeSeCo project (Definition and Selection of Competencies).⁵. We interpreted **self-knowledge competency**, as a summary of the above experiences, as a cross-curriculum competency, reciprocally related to social competency, and a key competency that forms a basis, as a set of abilities, skills and knowledge analogous to the autonomous behavior category. The important aspect of this line of thinking is that a person needs such competencies that can be used in various areas of life which provide an opportunity for him or her to work out his or her self-image and be able to express that appropriately. Practicing self-knowledge competency means the emergence of self-determination and personal identity (including values), and also the practice of relative autonomy in the sense that in a given

³ Bellier, J.P. (1998): Competencies, training and usability. Vocational Education Review. Nr. 2. 12. 21.

⁴ According to the Key Competencies workgroup created under the auspices of the Teaching and training 2010 work program, key competencies must be interpreted as a multidimensional concept, as a combination of knowledge, skills, talents and attitudes, which are closely associated with the ability and methods of learning. In March 2000, the Lisbon European Council asked EU member states, the Council and the Committee to work out a European frame of reference for key competencies to be acquired through life-long learning, and the Key Competencies workgroup was established as a result of this. In: Kinga Demeter (ed.): Competence. Challenges and interpretations. www.oki.hu

⁵ DeSeCo is OECD's Defining and choosing competencies project, whose goal is to work out an overarching theoretical framework for defining and choosing competencies, which could function as the basis for research and development, and a point of reference for various measures.

context, an individual himself decides what kind of role he or she wants to play, and to make that happen in an active and responsible manner, constantly reflecting on the process.

As a result of the above theoretical frameworks and models, attempts to identify and describe in detail the elements and components of certain areas of competence began, as a result of which, an increasing number of competence lists and competence models were born. The model worked out under the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) movement (Maurice, J., 2003), which, by creating a suitable class environment, inspires the development of social and personal skills and competencies and of behaviors that are socially and personally competent, and is specifically adjusted to curricula and an academic, class framework, holds the dimension of Self to be one of the fundamental elements of social competence. It designates the dimension of Self as one of the main areas of social competence, whose major elements are:

- a system of values and motivations that create inner control, moral maturity
- development of congruent behavior
- self-confidence and autonomy based on a realistic understanding of self
- creating a realistic level of expectations, ability to cope with failure, the ability to handle success
- endurance, sufficient willpower, the ability to make decisions and take responsibility

Through an integrative approach to the above competency models and descriptions, within the concept of self-knowledge competency - which includes the understanding, skills, abilities, attitudes, learning and self-regulatory strategies, the possession of a reliable self-image and the ability to translate it into the language of needs and wishes, acts of will, decisions, choices and actions by a person constantly reflecting on him- or herself - the following components may be identified:

Competencies related to self-knowledge

1. emotional awareness: precise identification of our emotions
2. independence, synchronized self-image
3. identification of our emotions basis
4. roles

Existence of self-regulatory strategies

5. handling emotions
6. independent decision-making
7. conscious planning,
8. openness, acceptance of opinions
9. paying attention to others
10. self-control

The competencies of self-efficiency

11. positive self-esteem: optimistic feelings with regards to ourselves
12. constructive self-perception: health self-confidence, inner control, belief that I have control over what happens to me

The NAT mentions the development of self-image and self-knowledge among highlighted tasks, it appears overarchingly, with regards to the entire document, at a strategic level, and in the text of various subject areas, but in practice, the teaching of cross-curricular topics, modules, and module subjects is realized in a contradictory setting (Kerber, 2006). There are studies which seek opportunities for development within the framework of classes and the school environment - for example the János Arany block within the János Arany Talent Development Program, the Skill and Aptitude Development Program, the Social and life skills competency program package, but these have not been integrated into the process of public education.

The methods and process (logic) of the empirical (qualitative) series of experiments

The *second large section* of the dissertation introduces our series of empirical studies, whose fundamental **goal** was to explore adolescents' image of themselves and their self-knowledge competency, to examine the usability of narrative analysis within a pedagogical self-image study in order to use the results to attempt to designate important considerations for self-knowledge competence development. This section showcases the reasons for the choice of research paradigm, the consequent choice of methodology, and the series of experiments and their results.

In contrast to earlier studies which mostly approached adolescent self-image from a quantitative perspective, we assumed that we are able to best approach adolescent self-knowledge characteristics and self-knowledge competency if we ask them to introduce or characterize themselves indirectly through stories or metaphors. We thus accept that the child him- or herself is a being capable of evaluating, giving and constructing meaning (Szabolcs, 2001), and we may be able to highlight such hidden characteristics and traits which would not be revealed through direct self-description. Our study was not determined by previous hypotheses, rather, we composed questions and problems, which we wanted to explore from as many angles as possible, specifically through the semantic interpretation of the participants, using triangulation that ensured the validity of qualitative studies.⁶ (Szabolcs, 2001, Sántha, 2006). Following the specialized process logic of qualitative studies, we adopted the following researcher attitude: we accepted that our research activity, by its nature, could take unexpected turns (Fuchs-Heinritz, 2000 - cited in Sántha, 2006), so we continually maintained this principle of openness and flexibility. Since in qualitative studies, data collection, analysis and interpretation often occur concurrently, we saw ourselves to be in such a specialized researcher position, which could gain meaning in the framework of a dynamic that inspires constant activity, thinking and reflection. Because of the personal relationships and communicative process developed with participants in the study, feedback during research was continuous, which meant that our data had to be re-analyzed and re-interpreted. With this logic, we got to the point where in order to determine the considerations for developing self-knowledge competence it became necessary to form an idea of how the developers and teachers themselves feel about the possibility of improving self-knowledge competence. For this reason, we arrived at "theoretical saturation" (vö. Gelencsér, 2003) through a series of experiments that consisted of a number of phases.

Given the nature of the study, we used the following **methods**:

- **Narrative analysis** - to analyze adolescents' self-stories, explore their self-knowledge traits, examine the social context of self-stories, study internet-based introductory texts
- **Metaphor analysis** - to examine and understand adolescent self-determination, self-knowledge processes
- **Focus group interview** - to get to know students' and teachers' school experiences related to self-understanding

Regarding the non-random sample selection process that is typical of qualitative studies, a total of 124 subjects were included in the study - with a layered, accessibility-based sampling process - selected from the 9th and 12th grade students of an alternative high- and vocational school in Budapest, with whom we had earlier contact from class visits and observations. We

⁶ The gist of triangulation technique: the concurrent use of various methods and source groups in order to ensure the validity of methods used in qualitative research (Szabolcs, 2001. 103.), the other reason for its use is that triangulation prevents the researcher from accepting the validity of initial impressions too easily. (Goezt-LeCompte, 1984. 11).

considered previous personal acquaintance to be an important consideration, hoping that we can increase the ratio of honest manifestations, since in a self-introduction, self-description, there is always the pattern of wishing to appear in a good light, and this is one reason we leaned towards introductions through stories and metaphors. We considered a newer consideration to include people in the sample who participated or are participating in some kind of self-knowledge activity, whether in-class or out of class, and that they are students who are either at the beginning or at the end of their high school studies.

Age Type of school	9th grade		12th grade		Total
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
Alternative high school	29	23	-	4	56
Vocational school	32	7	24	5	68
Total	60	30	24	9	124

1. Table: Distribution of the sample by gender, age and type of school

Narrative analysis: examination of self-stories

I. In the first phase of the study - which took place in the 2005-2006 school year - we examined adolescents' image of themselves, the characteristics of self-determination, self-knowledge competency based on self-stories, significant life events, as well as the metaphors they formed about getting to know themselves. Basing on Fitzgerald's technique (1992), we asked teenagers to tell the story of an important event related to them. The instructions were as follows: *"Tell the story of an event about yourself that is important for you, and that you think might best reflect you, and would definitely be included in your autobiography, if you were ever to write one. Give it a title, too!"*

Narrative analysis is the empirical, text-based study of how stories work, and how and for what people use them. (Szokolszky, 2004. 484.). The narrative approach in the beginning began to examine the function of narratives in relation to life stories, with autobiographical research becoming an independent sub-field, and since these provided an excellent groundwork for the study of identity formation and self-representation, various narrative identity models and narrative analytic frameworks and conceptual constructs were quick to follow.

Based on our theoretical and methodological inquiries regarding the analysis of narratives, we identified the following analytical codes and principles of narrative organization:

- Types of significant self-stories

- Social context for self-stories:

- Characters and their traits

- Interpersonal relationships

- Associated feelings

- Narrative perspective

- "Voices": whose voice the self speaks through, from which perspective

- What kind of ego-ideal is revealed by the stories

- Addressing the audience: what is their function

- The subject of narratives:

- Topics: what are the frequent topics within individual stories

Motifs, patterns

Rating commentaries

Modes of identity forging

Examining the connection between the self and the narrative brings up a few problematic questions, which influence interpretation, for example the relationship between the story-based truth and psychological truth, the questions of fairness and credibility, whether individuals are merely storytellers or makers of their own life stories, how many selves help create a life story, how do we, the researchers, know what did in fact happen and what is fiction, how can we interpret these stories at all? Those dealing with this method accept that with regards the question of "it really happened like this," the credibility of the story is not what is important, but rather the subjective viewpoint expressed within it. We do not primarily reach the truth value of facts with these life stories, but rather the narrator's worldview and identity. (Bögre, 2003).

Metaphor analysis

By analyzing metaphors, we wanted to shed light on how an adolescent sees the process of getting to know him- or herself, the process of getting self-knowledge, which is closely related to the mode of identity forging, too. What kinds of self-exploratory modes does he or she know, and how does he or she see its significance in his or her own life? For this reason, in one part of our study we asked teenagers to compose a simile (*Getting to know myself is like.... because*), which is related to metaphor analysis, insofar as it connects to items. The interest in metaphor analysis has increased because it may shed light on an inner world in the mind that may be difficult to approach due to self-control. (Vámos, 2003. 28.). Metaphor analyses typically start by transferring meaning between two items. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, Kövecses, 1997, 1998, Vámos, 2000 -cited in Rapos, 2005). Based on the semantic content of these semantic ranges, sets may be created, which could serve a more nuanced study of the concept being studied with their style values, and by recalling the concepts belonging to their circle of associations. (Vámos, 2000).

Focus group discussion

Following the self-stories and metaphors, we conducted interviews of 20-25 minutes in each group to find out about teenagers' school experiences regarding self knowledge. The focus group discussion appeared to be best suited to examine these views, since the method forms a transition between the interview and observation, and provides an opportunity to observe open metacommunicative elements, which may be in close relationship with the emotional aspects of opinions about self-knowledge.

Narrative analysis of introductory texts on the internet

II. In the first research phase, during the focus group discussions, in each group, internet-based socializing, chatting and identity-trials proved to be a central theme with regards to getting to know themselves, so after processing the stories and metaphors we decided to include the introductory texts from an internet-based self-knowledge portal in the study, in order to see how in this faceless communication channel the content and quality of self-introductions changes. Self-introductory texts were examined along the following lines: identifying self-determination dimensions, which qualities (positive or negative) were favored during self-description (and the relationship these had to each other), what kinds of identity-categories were used, the nickname as an identity-expressing category, and identifying typical, systematic communication patterns.

The results and interpretation of the series of empirical studies, our major conclusions

The results from various phases of our study interpreted in relation to each other can be summarized as follows:

1. During a narrative interpretation of adolescents' **self-stories**, it turned out that they have a difficult time with the task of defining themselves. When examining self-stories, we saw list-like roster of qualities, loosely connected events, and primarily by emphasizing an emotional aspect, with stories that are less likely to follow a timeline of story-making. Of the 124 participants, 45 replied that they have no such important event in their lives that they consider to characterize them well. The weight of affective approach and unpracticed self-reflection intimates that they have no perspective on their life processes, do not possess suitable inner words and points of reference to define themselves. From a thematic perspective, the significant events and self-stories mentioned by the students can be organized into the following categories: ⁷

1.	Encounters: friendship, love	19
2.	School-related stories: studying, applications, performance	18
3.	Non-school performance: sports, art	13
4.	"Anthropological root experiences": birth, death, illness, family breakup	12
5.	Recognition and realization: truth, reality, characteristics	12
6.	Experiences related to work	3
7.	Communal experiences: parties, excursions	2

2. Table: The frequency of significant types of self stories

Two types of narratives led the list of the self-stories and significant events chosen to introduce themselves: stories related to so-called social interactions, with friendship and love, and stories related to school, school performance. These two categories comprise 46% of all the stories. The two categories show a tight correlation not only because the protagonist defines him- or herself along the lines of his or her identity as a student or classmate, but while in the other self-stories, the social context for these are populated by other characters as well (such as family members, role models), and the student role may be supplemented by a new identity category, but in the two main categories, they interpret event almost exclusively from the perspective of the student and peer relationships. On this point, our study bears a similarity to Golnhofer and Szabolcs (2005) study, who examined students' self-image, and study habits, and found that "the student role swallows the individual, the personality." The reason for this is presumably to be found in the fact that youth consider school to be their primary activity, with adults (teachers and parents) mainly evaluating them based on school successes.

Self-stories related to social relationships are infused with strong emotions, with adolescents defining themselves and their relationship to the other along emotional dimensions, within the framework of a strong dependence. They organize the stories along a schema that shows the pattern of "disappointment-new beginnings-hoped for/achieved good relationship". The self is not responsible for the story, so in all cases, they line up more negative characteristics to describe the other, with the stories still pointing towards a positive conclusion, since the self would like to reestablish or replace the faulty relationship as soon as

⁷ We added to the basic categories identified during a 2001 study by Pataki two of our own, the categories of school-related and out-of-school performance. The remaining stories fit into Pataki's types.

possible. The story is told by a self who is powerfully dependent on the other, often fighting uncertainty and fear, whose relationships in many cases are weighed down by conflict.

Stories related to school and school performance are also significant tools for self-perception and self-definition, but they often perceive school not as the place for acquiring professional skills, or the place for forced attendance and studying, but rather as the "school of life" where one primarily receives help for getting to know oneself and life. School appears as a single character which incorporates school life and the entire structure of the culture, "who" prepares one for the future. In these narratives, the teacher or classmates barely make an appearance by name. The impersonal nature of the stories and their lack of relationship systems implies that students do not expect help in preparing for a successful life from teachers, or individual learning situations, or acquiring lexical knowledge, but rather from that complex social environment which is represented by the school with its entire structure and culture.

In those cases in which the protagonist self experiences danger, vulnerability, fear (due to parents' divorce, family breaking up, death) in which the he or she is not responsible for the course of events, we often see the storyteller use the "voice of the adult." The teenagers who tell their stories in these narratives carry some kind of emotional burden or responsibility, and it is uncertain that they can expect clear help in processing it. In these cases, the self appears in the role of an "adult helper" that itself would require help.

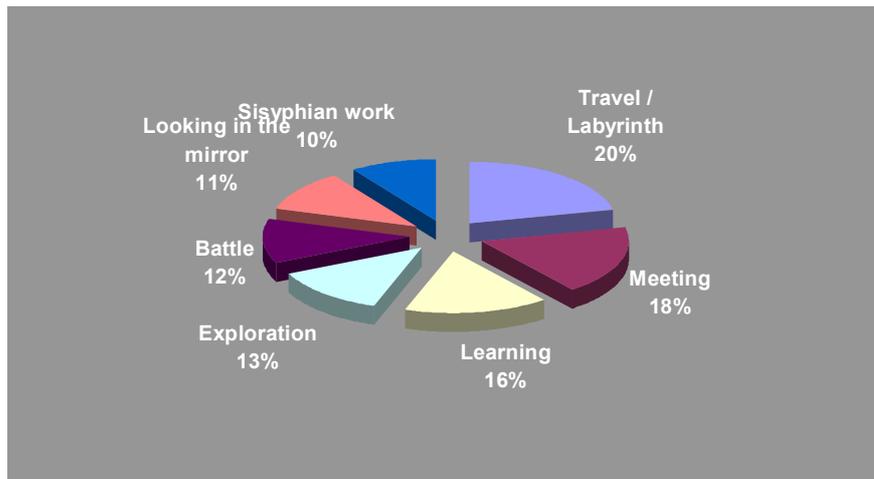
The narratives - with a few exceptions - in all cases close with the statement of some kind of moral. Although we are unable to provide a clear answer to the reasons for their occurrence, we assume that since adolescents told these stories from a much narrower time perspective, mainly starting their stories from the present or the recent past, presumably it was not the depth of experience or the intensity of the self-reflection that prompted them to formulate these morals, but probably the attempt to preserve that ideal view of themselves which they largely "secured" through their self-introductions.⁸

2. The **metaphor analysis** - during which we wanted to find out what tools adolescents had for getting to know themselves, how they see the process and task of getting to know themselves -also revealed some characteristic tendencies regarding the peculiarities of adolescent self-knowledge.

We took the process of self-knowledge (the subject of the question, its goals) to be the kind of process where the subject and object of acquaintance, that which is getting to know, and that which is becoming known, to be separate from each other, and the significant other plays a key role. The process is headed in some direction, has a beginning and a result, occurs somehow, and has a timeline. For a better understanding of the goal concept, answers and metaphors served as a basis, which based on their semantic proximity could be organized into increasing units (primary source concepts). The most frequent association was among expressions clustered around TRAVELING/LABYRINTHS, accounting for 20% of the answers. These metaphors link the process of self-knowledge to traveling, being on the road, getting lost on the road, and searching for the path. Elements of the circle of metaphors: road, cave, forest, labyrinth. The second cluster we designated as MEETING, in which students interpret self-knowledge as analogous to getting to know another person (18% of the responses). The frequency of the answers belonging to the remaining groups is smaller - LEARNING/GROWING 16%, EXPLORATION 13%, BATTLE 12%, LOOKING IN THE MIRROR 11%, SISYPHIAN WORK 10%, but an analysis of the interior content and

⁸ According to Pataki (2001), the drawing of these morals of the story is presumably not the consequence of a conscious intention, but rather the deepened self-reflective situation that may prompt the individual to emphasize his or her self-validating motives.

structure of these concepts and semantic ranges revealed significant typical answers and semantic equivalences.



1. Figure: The distribution of source concepts of the self-knowledge target concept

In connection with the semantic, imagery and structural analysis of the primary source concepts, we took note of the fact that the easiest to grasp structural elements were those that provide the main direction of students' emotional attitudes towards getting to know themselves, with regards to the modes and the results of the self-knowledge process. After summarizing the positive and negative adjectives, the majority of pictures with pessimistic content that exuded a sense of incompleteness, endlessness began to become obvious. This allows us to deduce that students tend to view the process of getting to know themselves as largely a negative, unfathomable, intangible thing.

Although the metaphors and similes given by the students did not yield a statistically significant group (20% of the responses were comprised of elements from the largest group, the TRAVEL/LABYRINTH group, but in this group of metaphors were also the most number of elements: endless road, dark cave, labyrinth, dark woods, blind map, wild nature, and the interior structure of this type of metaphor is also the most detailed), so as a result of the examination of the above affectively charged aspect, and the structural analysis of source concepts - and its relation to the goal concept - we got to the semantic metaphor of self-knowledge. The essence of the path to self-knowledge we found to be most tangible in the metaphor of the ENDLESS ROAD, which best exemplifies the long, exhausting, difficult, goal-less and interminable process, which students express in almost every type of metaphor when they attempt to express the complicated process of getting to know themselves in pictures or words.

3. Beyond self-knowledge characteristics, we examined students' opinions and their experiences with school-based development of their self-knowledge through a **focus group interview**. It is apparent from the answers that although the requirements for self-knowledge competency development are embedded into school's subject structure, within classes entitled self-knowledge, behavior culture, communication, coexistence studies, during interviews students gave voice to their opinion that they do not like these "forced" classes, because they must study it within a framework that is the same as all their other subjects, which makes true self-knowledge more difficult. Advisory class still carries the weight of the task of self-knowledge development (26%), while outside school activities (18%) and conversations with friends (21%) offered more opportunities for improving self-understanding than classroom-based group work (3%) or perhaps other subjects (7%). The school-based presence of self-knowledge is held to be important by 69% of the participants, while 30% of them say that it is

not important to teach or develop self-knowledge within school. Those who replied in the affirmative consider it to be important primarily because it aids them in getting to know themselves and others better, and deepens their self-knowledge (43%). In 2nd place they mention help in developing interpersonal contacts (11%), and there appeared some answers, though at a smaller rate, according to which it makes it easier to be successful in life (5%), or helps in solving problems (5%). In these replies, students express what self-knowledge competency development and generally, competency-based education sets as a goal, which is for students to gain such skills and abilities in school which aid them in getting to know themselves better, and also allow them to be more successful in life and solve their problems. Among the students of this alternative high school, this category of being successful in life and solving problems does not appear. Presumably, they feel themselves less in need of help to be successful in life. Those who do not believe that teaching self-knowledge within school mainly argue that it is a private matter. This choice seems to be more common among alternative high-schoolers (19.6%), other reasons: because students will not take it seriously, it is not vitally important, it is not the school's responsibility, or because the topic does not interest them. 61% of the respondents could more imagine the teaching of self-knowledge within a school framework in an unstructured, small group discussion, not as a mandatory class. But there are those, too, who do not believe it to be possible at all within a school framework (11.7%), or believe that such a class is entirely unnecessary (10.8%). They mentioned several self-knowledge methods and techniques, including role-plays, dramatic reenactments, debates, tests, surveys, readings, graphology, but during these conversations, it became clear that they are largely afraid of participating in these tasks because they feel it to be forced, or are embarrassed in front of their classmates by the situations that develop, and do not dare to be entirely truthful. The students of the alternative high school expressed their opinions regarding this more critically, and from their metacommunicative signals, it appeared that they feel more confident and self-assured in this area. Vocational school students were less able to express their critical opinions, and were less confident in their expression.

4. During the focus group interviews, students named internet dating and chatting as one of the most favorable test runs for self-knowledge, where there are many opportunities for getting to know each other more honestly, so we included the analysis of an online forum's introductory texts in our study of adolescent self-knowledge types.

In the self-descriptions given to the question "What do you think of yourself?" adolescents mainly characterized themselves through feelings, inner, abstract qualities, and these compose the decisive portion of self-introductions (vö. Körössy, 1997/2002). The ratio of positive (expected) qualities to negative qualities is higher, but their fluctuating mentions and the constant back and forth between them, the hesitant nature of adolescents' attempts at revealing the history of these qualities, and the often-times cryptic nature for the adolescents themselves are reflected in these short self-descriptions. Overall, 16 positive and 12 negative qualities were mentioned, but the ratio of mentioning for the positives is much higher. The list of good qualities: positive thinker, self-confident, carefree, happy, in love, normal, cheerful, social, kind, enthusiastic, smart, helpful, good manual dexterity, knows people well, laughing, childish. The list of bad qualities: bears grudges, capricious, strange, moody, ironic, looser, shallow, indifferent, lazy, irritable, egoist, irritating. As it can be seen, they use mainly abstract, inner qualities, other dimensions of self-definition are entirely missing from their self-descriptions. They work less hard at exploring the history of their qualities, if they do try, then they appear to do so for reasons outside themselves that are difficult to grasp or entirely incomprehensible. The expression of this hesitancy can be seen in their use of punctuation: dashes denoting a break in thoughts, long lists or a lack of punctuation. A characteristic

pattern in these self-descriptions was the rapid reactions to some kind of emotional problem or "bad" quality: helpful replies, often in the form of quotes or in replies attempting to express some significant truth about life.⁹ This was similar to the appreciative comments during the analysis of the self-stories, behind which was presumably the ideal self, striving to show itself in the best colors, and offering solutions to problems.

The chosen nicknames of forum members, in addition to serving their function as attention-getters, did not fall very far from the true identities of their owners, and in some ways express either their present or their expected, ideal image of self. The majority chose nicknames for themselves which - based on the explanations - expressed their primary characteristic, the way they truly are (Laugher, Demonheart, Chimera, Cottoncandy, Dirt, Chi, Chick, etc) but there were also nicknames inspired by music groups (Ossian88), song titles (Aicha), works of literature (Lucifer), mythological creatures (Chimera), these presumably attempted to express the ideal image of self. In this communication medium, adolescents link events incidentally, randomly, so textual organizing methods such as narrative coherence or time, narrator perspective are more difficult to grasp as narrative strands. For the analysis of the examined self-stories and self-descriptions it seemed prudent to also use considerations for conversational analysis, thanks to which we detected a similarity between the semantic patterns of life philosophies found in self-stories analyzed along the lines of narrative considerations, appreciative comments, and the responses of the present self-introductory texts which attempted to express some larger life truths. We posit the statement of the ideal self behind both.

5. The results of our theoretical and empirical studies point out how urgent the deliberate development of self-knowledge competency as an organic part of educational tasks, incorporated into a curriculum and within in a class setting, at the same time, there are still many uncertain factors regarding methodological questions. In our study for this reason we wished to aid this development process with a few methodological suggestions beyond introducing the methods that can be used for measuring, and the theoretical framework that serves as the basis of development. Since the development of self-knowledge competency takes place in a group setting, in a web of interpersonal connections, the starting point for understanding could be provided by the view of the group as a method and framework. In our study, we interpreted the peculiarities of self-knowledge groups and group methods, as well as the class as self-knowledge study groups, as well as their fundamental differences.

The development of self-knowledge competency - within a curriculum and class setting - can be imagined as most effective within the framework of an adaptive pedagogical practice, which considers it most important to use the basic needs of the students as a fundamental starting point, and adjusting the process of education and pedagogy to this, creating a supportive environment. Since the process of social and self-knowledge acquisition in school takes place in a world of environmental responses, dialogues and events, the narrative as a learning method, as a learning tool may provide an opportunity to help students form a coherent and valid story for themselves out of the multitude of occurrences during class, and to keep placing themselves within it again and again as a function of the events. Since the development of these competencies requires personal involvement, and acquiring experiences based on learning, we consider the use of such methods, learning organizational modes and techniques for its development to be necessary which allow room for the

⁹ The studies based on conversation analyses identified similar patterns, for example, that the conversing partners performed a so-called corrective work if any kind of error slipped into the conversation, assuming those to be errors when one of the parties said or assumed something that required correction. The other party would not correct it directly, but rather provide the partner with an opportunity to correct him- or herself (cited in Szokolszky, 2004.)

discussion of personal problems, are based on the various forms of cooperation, provide an opportunity to try oneself in various roles in role-playing situations, ensure lifelikeness, provide an opportunity to experience situations based on direct observation, expressing opposing viewpoints, group evaluation and self-evaluation, and for using supportive methods of evaluation in the service of self-directed study.

Suggestions (or an example) of the usability of the results in teacher training

6. The stated goal of the dissertation was to show how both the theoretical and empirical results of the research could be used in teacher training. Building on the theoretical and empirical results of our study, we worked out a training curriculum which could prepare teacher candidates for the task of developing self-knowledge competence. We tried the training during the teacher training in the 2007/2008 teacher training in Pécs. We considered it a starting point of forming our conception that: the task of teacher's self-knowledge and personality development is the same as preparing them for using techniques for finding out, evaluating and developing student competencies, and the skill-level ability to use them. Without this, fear is more difficult to assuage in a candidate, or perhaps the rejection which may be triggered in a candidate by a lack of sufficient psychological background in response to using a self-knowledge development method or procedure, or in relation to the so-called slippery questions and topics of real adolescence. Based on the reflective paradigm, it is important to bring to the surface our own views regarding the development of self-knowledge, and their reflective use, but these in all cases must be complemented by a safe methodological basis and knowledge which is aimed at finding out a student's competencies and development, and is based on practical experience.¹⁰ . We imagined the truly optimal realization within a subject which is expressly practical, builds on cooperative work model activities, and offers the candidates a chance to get to know adolescents' self-knowledge development and competency development, and the teacher's role within it, including theoretical and practical repercussions, through personal experience within a playful, relaxed atmosphere. In addition to the theoretical aspects - examining the semantic apparatus of self-knowledge competency development topics: competency models, pedagogical and student competencies, personal and professional self-knowledge, the opportunities of developing self-knowledge competency within the content management documents such as NAT, module curricula, pedagogical programs, pedagogical program packages under development, etc. - candidates would learn about various self-knowledge assessment and development techniques, methods and games within the framework of experiential group work, and which can be effectively used in everyday teaching (metaphor analysis, narrative analysis, semantic map, interview analysis, dramatic enactments, situational exercises, debate methods).

The most important goal of the training was to offer theoretical points of reference which serve the function of the multifaceted approach to students' competencies and their differentiated development, by developing the teacher candidate's own personality (realistic self-assessment, adequate self-expression, effective teacher-student communication, consciousness of self effect, professional self-knowledge), and by making the candidate's own views conscious and develop a self-reflective point of view. The training, based on the study's

¹⁰ Within the framework of reflective teacher or pedagogue training, most training institutions strive to offer self-knowledge and communication development as well as the acquisition of competencies necessary for the teaching profession in an interesting methodological and thematic offering within the subjects of the pedagogical-psychology module, trainings, personality development groups, under the auspices of a teaching-learning philosophy, whose starting point is always reflecting back on reality and bringing subjective views to the surface, determined by the candidate's reflection and motivation toward his or her own work.

theoretical and practical results, could provide a basis for developing further teacher training curricula, whose goal would be to prepare teachers for performing the tasks of developing personal competence.

Theoretical and practical significance of the dissertation

7. We believe the theoretical and practical significance of the dissertation can be summarized as follows:

We reinforced the competency-based training efforts of public education by showing that the concept of self-knowledge competency still hides much uncertainty in its interpretation, there are few theoretical models that can be well utilized in practice, pedagogical experience regarding development is incidental, and is itself still in the stages of trial, experimentation and development. By examining the Hungarian public educational practice and development attempts, we shed light on the discrepancies stemming from the duality of "theoretically yes, in reality no." With pedagogical, narrative psychological interpretive directions, we pointed out the usability of the possibilities hidden in an integrative approach, the usability of the narrative paradigm as a framework of reference and as a method. In possession of the theoretical and practical results of the study, we offered suggestions for the methodological questions of self-knowledge competency, which can be used during the process of developing educational program packages. Our teacher training program built on the results of this study could provide a basis for developing further training materials, which could successfully prepare teachers for the task of developing self-knowledge competency.

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