

Uitto, M., Lassila, E.T., Jokikokko, K., Kelchtermans, G., & Estola, E. (2021). Using artefacts in narrative pedagogies: a case from beginning teachers' peer group meetings. *European Journal of Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2021.1889506>

**Using Artefacts in Narrative Pedagogies: A Case from Beginning Teachers' Peer Group Meetings**

Minna Uitto<sup>a\*</sup>, Erkki T. Lassila<sup>a</sup>, Katri Jokikokko<sup>a</sup>, Geert Kelchtermans<sup>b</sup>, and Eila Estola<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Faculty of Education, University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland*

<sup>b</sup> *Centre for Educational Innovation and the Development of Teacher and School, University of Leuven, Leuven, Belgium*

\*Corresponding author: Minna Uitto, Faculty of Education, P.O. Box 2000, 90014 University of Oulu, Finland. E-mail: minna.uitto@oulu.fi

# **Using Artefacts in Narrative Pedagogies: A Case from Beginning Teachers'**

## **Peer Group Meetings**

Artefacts can evoke stories. This article explores the use of artefacts in narrative pedagogies in the context of teachers' professional development during the induction phase. The research question is: What kind of stories about beginning teachers' work does the use of artefacts in narrative pedagogies evoke? The article is based on two peer group meetings in which nine Finnish teachers working in day care centres and primary schools participated. The findings illustrate how the use of artefacts offers an entrance into teachers' daily routines, relationships and practices as well as how artefacts can become important actors in teachers' classrooms. This article contributes to the emerging literature on the meaning of artefacts in educational practices and beginning teachers' professional development. Additionally, the article contributes to the still not fully recognised potential that artefacts can have in narrative pedagogies in pre-service and in-service teacher education.

Keywords: artefacts, beginning teachers, narrative pedagogies, professional development, teacher education

## **Introduction**

This article focuses on the use of artefacts in narrative pedagogies in the context of teachers' professional development during the induction phase. Previous research has demonstrated the potential that narrative pedagogies have for teachers' professional development; narrative pedagogies highlight not only the importance of actually telling and sharing stories but also their potential to evoke critical reflection, sense-making and learning because they can be challenged and questioned by the audience (Estola, Heikkinen, and Syrjälä 2014; Huber et al. 2013; Kelchtermans 2014).

Teacher development is a personal and professional process and relates to both teachers' actions and their thinking (Elbaz-Luwisch 2005; Kelchtermans 2009). Teachers are expected to continue learning and developing professionally throughout their careers (Avalos 2011; Harju and Niemi 2018). However, the first few years after graduation, in particular, have been identified as a critical stage in teachers' professional development (Heikkinen, Jokinen, and Tynjälä 2012). Hence, it is not surprising that previous research on the early stages of teachers' careers, the induction phase and related professional development is extensive (Avalos 2016; Fox et al. 2015; Pillen, Beijjaard, and den Brok 2013; Tammets, Pata, and Eisenschmidt 2019). Additionally, an increasing amount of research has focused on finding ways to support teachers in their professional development during the induction phase (Devos 2010; Feiman-Nemser 2001; Ingersoll and Strong 2011; Kemmis et al. 2014).

To support teachers and their professional development, narrative pedagogies have been introduced in research as a powerful tool (Estola, Heikkinen, and Syrjälä 2014; Goodson and Gill 2011; Howe and Arimoto 2014; Kelchtermans 2014; Ropo and Huttunen 2013). However, the actual enactment of these narrative pedagogies in practice has rarely been analysed, especially in terms of their content – i.e. the kind of stories they produce. Furthermore, even less research has addressed the potential of artefacts in narrative

pedagogies in the context of teachers' professional development during the induction phase. This article aims to fill this gap by asking: What kind of stories about beginning teachers' work does the use of artefacts in narrative pedagogies evoke?

### **Theoretical framework**

Narrative pedagogies refer to the variety of pedagogical approaches and methods that draw on storied accounts in the process of supporting teachers' (in our case, beginning teachers<sup>1</sup>) professional development. We emphasise that the philosophical underpinnings of narrative pedagogies are based on social constructionism: knowledge is constructed with others in a social meaning-making process (Carter 1993; Casey 1995–1996; Estola, Heikkinen, and Syrjälä 2014). As a consequence, narrative pedagogies are essentially interactive and relational; they require the meaningful dynamics of a storyteller, an evolving story and an audience that engages with the story (Kelchtermans 2014).

Telling or writing stories of one's experiences have been demonstrated as powerful tools to foster teachers' professional development in both pre-service and in-service settings (Clandinin and Connelly 1996; Conle 1996; Elbaz-Luwisch 2010; Hanne and Kaal 2019; Howe and Arimoto 2014; Kelchtermans 2014). As Estola, Heikkinen, and Syrjälä (2014) pointed out, sharing experiences in the form of small stories and discussing them in groups may help teachers and student teachers to make sense of their own thoughts and learn new ideas related to teachers' work (see also Strangeways and Papatraianou 2016). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) highlighted that by crafting a story, teachers attempt to make sense of observed and experienced phenomena. According to Strangeway and Papatraianou (2016), stories provide open-ended problem-solving practices and develop teachers' skills and confidence in managing and even embracing the uncertainty that is an inevitable part of teachers' work (see also Kelchtermans 2009). Further, narrative pedagogies may help teachers

recognise and embrace other perspectives and, in doing so, unearth their own tacit knowledge and beliefs (such as their own purposes and motives) and develop them professionally (Elbaz-Luwisch 2010; Kelchtermans 2014; Strangeways and Papatraianou 2016).

Conle (1996) demonstrated how one participant's story can trigger experiences of similar incidents in other members; this 'resonance' among the various stories enables teachers to participate in one another's experiences. In this way, peers can also contribute to teachers' professional development (Elbaz-Luwisch 2010). Thus, the questions, re-telling, challenging and deepening of discussion enacted by peers and facilitators are needed to extend and theorise the meaning and relevance of the stories (Kelchtermans 2014). As Kelchtermans (2014) and Clandinin (2013) noted, there is a need to link storytelling with forms of narrative inquiry, in which the stories and teachers' beliefs are critically analysed and questioned.

Recently, the work on narratives in education has been enriched by authors stressing the importance of spatial arrangements and materiality in teachers' sense-making of their work (Benjaminsen and Sorensen 2011; Fenwick, Edwards, and Sawchuk 2011; Hultman and Lenz Taguchi 2010). Specifically, the study of artefacts<sup>2</sup> has revealed that they are not just passive tools but that they operate as active actors in defining and constructing the actual working conditions for teachers (März, Kelchtermans, and Vermeir 2017; Vermeir and Kelchtermans 2020). Social science researchers are beginning to pay increasing attention to the material dimension, often focusing on artefacts used in different practices. Lehtonen (2014) discussed how artefacts are simultaneously material and symbolic. As material objects, artefacts have certain fixed qualities, and they are produced for certain purposes. The symbolic meaning connects artefacts to human behaviour; the same artefact can have different meanings to different people and in different cultures and environments (Burkitt 1999; März, Kelchtermans, and Vermeir 2017; Vermeir and Kelchtermans 2020). Lehtonen (2014) further

argued that artefacts in their symbolic function ‘talk’ in a sense to people, who see their actions and ambitions reflected in the artefacts. Prior research has also suggested that artefacts may act as meaningful prompts for storytelling by enhancing different ways of knowing, telling and remembering (Bell and Bell 2012).

## **Conducting the research**

### ***Methodology***

This research is based on video recordings of two peer group meetings, called the Friday and Saturday meetings herein. Altogether, nine teachers working in day care centres and primary schools participated in the meetings. They had already been interviewed before the meetings as part of a wider research project on the emotional dimension of beginning teachers’ work.<sup>3</sup> The peer group meetings were offered to teachers as a professional development opportunity to thank them for their participation in the research project. At the time of the meetings (in 2014), the participants were in their second year of teaching. Hence, they were at the beginning of their teaching careers.<sup>4</sup> All of them were female. There was one meeting per group, and both meetings lasted about three hours each. The meetings were inspired by the principles of peer group mentoring, which emphasise the meaning of a particular time and place for peers to share their experiences and thereby learn from each other (Heikkinen, Jokinen, and Tynjälä 2012; Uitto et al. 2016).

There were two facilitators in each peer group meeting. During the Friday meeting, Author 5 and Author 1 were the facilitators, and, in the Saturday meeting, the facilitators were Author 5 and Author 3. The facilitators were responsible for time management and encouraged teachers to talk about their work using different narrative pedagogies. One of these narrative pedagogies involved artefacts, as the beginning teachers were invited in advance to bring an artefact to the meeting that meaningfully related to their current work

situation. The invitation was purposefully left open for teachers' personal interpretation and choice.

We define the storied accounts that teachers told about artefacts as small stories. In line with Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008), we understand small stories to be brief in length and produced within interaction. The small stories appeared in the teachers' discussions in a random order and were related to their everyday lives and social interactions (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012). Small stories are seen as reconstructions that are produced in particular kinds of cultural and social contexts and time (Elbaz-Luwisch 2005; Riessman 2008; Spector-Mercel 2010). The peer group meetings constituted a specific social context for storytelling and reflection (Hadar and Brody 2013; Heikkinen, Jokinen, and Tynjälä 2012).

Each peer group meeting began with an introductory round in which both the teachers and the facilitators briefly introduced themselves. Although some teachers had met before, most of them did not know each other. Some teachers had also met the facilitator(s) previously. This acquaintanceship contributed to a sense of openness and trust and thus supported the meetings as a 'safe space,' which helped the teachers to open up and share experiences about their work. After the introductory round, the facilitator directed the storytelling towards the artefacts: "We can proceed in free order. One of you can begin and tell why you brought the particular artefact, explain what in your view the artefact is telling, and how it relates to your work. Afterwards, we can all step in and briefly relate to the story, comment on how it is connected to your own story as a teacher?" (Saturday meeting). The participating teachers and facilitators sat in a circle. The teachers talked about the artefacts one by one in free order. Most often, the other participants came with spontaneous questions, commented, or reflected on the story, linking it to their own experiences. This storytelling

regarding the artefacts lasted about 20–30 minutes in each peer group meeting. Table 1 introduces the participating teachers in each peer group meeting and the teachers' artefacts.

Table 1. Overview of the teachers and artefacts

<b>Peer group meeting</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Artefact</b>
<b>Friday</b>	Hannele (E)	Spinning top
<b>Friday</b>	Emilia (E)	Key necklace
<b>Friday</b>	Katriina (P)	Chameleon-shaped toy
<b>Friday</b>	Hanna (P)	Reception bell (the one that hotels have)
<b>Friday</b>	Emma (E)	Owl brooch
<b>Saturday</b>	Anna (E)	Notebook with teaching material
<b>Saturday</b>	Laura (P)	Piece of knitting
<b>Saturday</b>	Maria (P)	Locomotive
<b>Saturday</b>	Sanni (P)	Diary

*Note.* E = early childhood education teacher. P = primary school teacher.

The facilitators highlighted research ethics during the meetings; they reminded participants that their participation was voluntary, that the meetings were confidential, and that participants had complete control over what they wanted to share. All participants gave written consent for the use of the group discussions as research material.

### ***Interpretative analysis***

The video recordings of the peer group meetings were transcribed verbatim, including meaningful para-verbal information (long pauses, laughter, and gestures). After familiarising



ourselves with the transcriptions to build an overall picture of the peer group meetings, we moved to more specific analysis. First, we analysed the beginning teachers' small stories about their individual artefacts. During this phase, we noticed that the artefacts operated differently in the teachers' small stories and had different meanings. We then analysed the small stories thematically. This second phase in the analysis was holistic; as when interpreting the small stories regarding the individual artefacts, we took into account the whole discussion of the artefacts in the meeting (Riessman 2008; Spector-Mersel 2010). At this point, we identified three overlapping themes in the stories evoked by the artefacts: (1) daily routines, (2) relationships and (3) artefacts as actors in the classroom. For ethical reasons, we use pseudonyms for the teachers' names and have omitted some details – for example, related to the artefacts – to protect the teachers' anonymity.

## **Findings**

### ***Stories about the daily routines***

We found that the use of artefacts elicited stories about the daily routines in the teachers' work. The artefacts evoked descriptions of intense hurry, time, the search for balance with different tasks and routines and confusion in their work. For example, Hannele related her artefact (a spinning top) to being continuously in a hurry and her worry about its consequences for her wellbeing. Emilia's artefact (a key necklace) triggered her to describe her balancing learning different tasks and still being a professional teacher. Sanni, who taught 4<sup>th</sup> graders (children aged 10 years old) at the time, brought her diary (a teacher's notebook with notes for each day/week) to the meeting:

Facilitator: And what does your artefact tell us about your work and thoughts?

Sanni: Yes, it relates well to what Laura [another participant] said about controlled chaos. This year has only just started, and yet, my diary already looks like it has exploded [Others laugh].

It has many papers with notes sticking out from it. There are all kinds of notes, also from meetings, unpleasant ones as well. From my diary of last year, I collected all kinds of nice memories, notes that I received from colleagues and students from my former class. I can dig from here all kinds of little memories. So, if it feels tiring during the workday, these will cheer me up. [...] [The diary is] the most important tool. Sometimes it feels that I have to write down: remember to breathe, to eat, and to sleep [Others laugh]. I have to write down here everything, since it feels like all the memory space in my head is already full. A very important tool, which is always with me and helps me to remember all the things I shouldn't forget. But exactly that controlled chaos, I have the same [experience]. [Sanni tells about being involved in many committees, projects and activities.] Here are lots of memo lists, things I was supposed to do or remember, but I had to add next to them 'had no time,' 'had no time' ... [Maria, another teacher, gives a laugh], had no time, so I have had to pull the curriculum a bit on the side and emphasise more the social aims. [...] [Pause.]

Facilitator: Thank you. Do you want to add a comment or does this sound familiar? [Some laughs.]

Laura: Yes, it does. We have in common with Sanni that we sort of have as a hobby other stuff related to work. [...]

Maria: That sounds familiar too. I mean, having to decide what to leave out and what to focus on. [Others humming in confirmation.]

In this story, the artefact is related to the teacher's daily routines, particularly to the experience of intense time pressure and workload (Ballet and Kelchtermans 2008). However, the diary as an artefact enabled unpacking in a more detailed and concrete way how the time pressure and workload affected beginning teachers' daily routines. Already, Sanni's qualification of the diary as looking 'exploded' hints at the multiplicity of tasks in the work. The impact of the time pressure becomes evident from the comment that even the most basic needs in life had to be written down if they were to be remembered properly next to the more

technical, instrumental notes on teaching contents and trying to schedule time for them. Furthermore, the diary operated as a little portfolio, containing material souvenirs from the year before, providing a private source for wellbeing and emotional refuelling throughout tiring workdays. Here, Sanni verbalised the time pressure as “controlled chaos” and linked it to another participant’s story. This expression was used earlier in the discussion by Laura. Laura’s artefact was a piece of knitting, symbolising that her work situation “at the moment is controlled full chaos [others laughing]. I have already come a long way, following a path, [like] in this piece of knitting, that respects certain instructions and prescriptions but yet still proceeding with a bit of my own style.’

Another story demonstrating how artefacts evoked stories about the daily routines in teachers’ work came from Anna. Anna’s artefact was a notebook that contained teaching material related to children’s literature. Anna had herself developed this teaching material in teacher education:

Anna: During the last term, when I was in pre-primary school [...], I had this great [teaching] material of course already ready, but I didn’t use it [with the children] at all [laughs] [...] I am now in this profession for the first time, and I really need to get in this [profession]. In a way, I must have mercy on myself. I’m learning that I live by the clock. I’m learning to know all the children and how to be with the parents. Therefore, these great projects have to wait. [...] I have promised to myself that I can now be a novice who is in a new place [gives a laugh] [...] and is in a panic and does not know anything about anything.

In this story, the artefact (teaching material) is used to depict tensions within the teacher’s work. According to the teacher, she had developed ‘great’ teaching material to be used with the children. However, she had not actually used it because the daily work routine manifested differently in practice. The teacher metaphorically emphasised how she lived “by the clock”

and how she realised the need to focus first on getting to know the children and their parents. She also emphasised being “in this profession for the first time” and how she was “a novice,” as well as how she had realised, she did not have to do everything at once. From the viewpoint of teachers’ professional development (Avalos 2011; Feiman-Nemser 2012), it is significant that the artefact enabled the beginning teacher to verbalise what she considered important and at the core of being a teacher – the children and their parents.

The stories evoked by the artefacts about the participants’ daily routines were concrete, vibrant and lively, including details about the teachers’ work. This enabled others to grasp the stories and relate to them. It can be empowering for a beginning teacher to know that other colleagues have similar experiences and share the same concerns related to their work, such as time pressure and the difficulty in managing the multitude of tasks (Uitto et al. 2016). Furthermore, it demonstrates how artefacts actually facilitate the storytelling of daily and concrete experiences, whose actual meaning and impact can be difficult to express and explain.

### ***Multiple relationships in the work***

The artefacts also evoked stories about the multiple and diverse relationships in the teachers’ work. These relationships self-evidently included those with students, but teachers’ relationships with themselves and with cultural images of teachers were also considered.

Maria, who taught fifth graders (children aged 11 years old) at the time, brought a locomotive with her that a student had made for her:

Maria: I have here this locomotive that I got as a Christmas present last year from a student in the first class I taught [...] I have kept this locomotive on my teacher’s desk [since then]. [...] I had this feeling that this student thinks of me as a locomotive. [...] I really am this locomotive that leads this class, and I have the responsibility. I keep it in the work as a

reminder of what is my meaning for the students. Maybe, it is at the same time a source of energy for me – let's go on here as a locomotive through the wind and the snow. [...] We are moving on nice and steady, so this is a really describing item.

Anna: At times a bit off track [...] [Others laughing].

Maria: Yes, but then you just reverse just as steadily [Moves the locomotive backwards; others laughing] and choose another track. [...] Students are so important individuals, and it is always lovely to learn to know them well. I can remember this girl so clearly how she was as a person and a learner. They are important people.

Sanni: And you always remember your first classes.

Maria: Yes, yes.

Sanni: I sometimes was amazed when older colleagues said that you will always remember your first class, but it must be true.

Here, the artefact, the locomotive, operates on symbolic and metaphorical levels when the beginning teacher describes her relationships as a teacher with students and her daily work responsibilities within these relationships (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lehtonen 2014; Schön 1979). Maria's story resonates with other research findings, showing how new teachers first emphasise supporting and helping their students, whereas teachers later focus more on themselves and coping in ever-changing and challenging situations (Thomas and Beauchamp 2011). In Maria's story, the locomotive seems to emphasise both aspects while also bringing up her sense-making of being a teacher and being engaged with the students (Ericson and Pinnegar 2017).

The symbolic and metaphorical meaning of the artefact also invited other participants to join in, creating a linguistic structure that triggered their own reflective thinking. Anna, for example, widened the meaning by including the image of a locomotive running the risk of going off track. Maria connected it to her emphasis on the teacher–student relationship as the core of being a teacher and the importance of getting to know one's students personally, while

Sanni and Anna related the locomotive to being a beginning teacher and always remembering one's first own classes. The story further illustrates how the locomotive, as a material object that literally rested between the human participants, opened up a conversational space in which they could engage with the object and each other. Thus, new stories, various reflections and interpretations are elicited and – in an indirect way – enable the teachers to talk about themselves and reflect on what really matters to them professionally, emotionally and educationally (Conle 1996; Estola, Heikkinen, and Syrjälä 2014; Kelchtermans 2014). This further exemplifies the claim of März, Kelchtermans, and Vermeir (2017) that artefacts in narrative pedagogies can 'operate' as actors.

There were other examples of artefacts evoking stories about relationships. Hanna described her student relationships via a reception bell, introducing its sound as “a sign [for students] that it is time to calm down, listen up and pay attention to what the teacher has to say.” Emma's artefact was an owl brooch, which her friends had urged her to buy:

Emma: It is this symbol – as wise as an owl – it is always somehow related to teachers. It came to my mind that now, being in work life properly, I also assume that I have certain skills and knowledge. And, then, as we already discussed [in this meeting], you try to put [your skills and knowledge] to good use in practice while balancing with the time available. It is that kind of searching for balance, so, [I am] still in the beginning. Still, I think this [owl] is positive and colourful. I think that maybe little by little with my own persona, [I will find my way to be a teacher]. Like this owl is also a persona. [...]

Facilitator: Hmm, and some day you will be an owl [all laugh].

Emma: Yes. [...]

Facilitator: It is a nice symbol. What does this idea of an owl evoke in you? Do you recognise the owl in yourselves? [Others giggle] [...]

Hannele: This so-called aiming for perfection is probably pretty typical for teachers. [Others humming in confirmation.] I could imagine.

Katriina: You are the one building those aims and goals for yourself. And when you graduate, you have studied for so long, and you are really looking forward to being able to pass all that knowhow and knowledge on [as a teacher]. Then you notice that ‘oh no!’ – now, it all actually starts. [Others laugh.]

In this story, the artefact (the owl brooch) facilitated the conversation by calling on the shared cultural meanings (metaphorical) and evoked stories about the relationships between oneself and the broader social and cultural images of a teacher in society. On the one hand, the beginning teacher connected the owl to searching for her own way of being a teacher with knowledge and skills. On the other hand, she presented the owl as a cultural image of teachers: teachers – like owls – are supposed to represent wisdom. Furthermore, the beginning teacher explicitly raised the normative issue, presenting the artefact as symbolising the ideal teacher she was striving to be in her relationships with others; she desired to be, or at least to be seen by others, as a wise teacher.

Again, the story illustrates an artefact’s power to invite people to join the conversation. Hannele related the artefact to teachers aiming for perfection, and Katriina mentioned the students and their teaching. The discussion surrounding the owl brooch shows how the use of artefacts in narrative pedagogies enables beginning teachers to share their experiences and find resonance while also experiencing their thinking and reflection being pushed forward creatively (Conle 1996). This is possible because of the shared cultural (symbolical, metaphorical) understanding of the meaning the owl referred to (Lehtonen 2014). Although, at first sight, the teachers related the owl brooch through very personal and individual stories, it became obvious how one could see normative images of teachers from the broader culture reflected in those associative small stories. For example, the cultural

expectation related to teachers is that they have knowledge and expertise and will act ‘wisely.’ Experiences of resonance can thereby be meaningful in terms of professional development as they provide peer support (Elbaz-Luwisch 2010; Uitto et al. 2016) and – maybe even more importantly – social recognition from significant others (Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002).

### *Artefacts as actors in the classroom*

The artefacts in the meetings revealed how artefacts can become active actors in the classroom. Katriina, who taught first and second graders (children aged 7–8 years old) at the time, brought Pete [pseudonym], who is “the class mascot, a chameleon [toy] with a very versatile pattern and colour”:

Facilitator: It would be nice to talk more about Pete and how it has come to your classroom and how is your relationship with Pete? [All laugh.]

Katriina: A very close one. [All laugh.]

Facilitator: Yes, and what does Pete mean to you and the children?

Katriina: [...] I brought this chameleon with me when I went abroad [a particular city mentioned] last summer [...] As Pete is from abroad and doesn’t speak Finnish, we learn a bit English with Pete in language immersion [in the class]. I didn’t have to do anything else than just bring it to the classroom, and the children were so excited and pleased about it. They go and caress it at the end of every day. This is a therapeutic toy; it is quite heavy. I knew that there are quite lively children in my class. When I noticed this toy on my holiday trip to abroad, I thought that this would be a good way to calm [children]. This is also a kind of reward. Those who can work [well] will get Pete on their lap or on their desk. [...] Also, always when I hold Pete in my hand... I sometimes feel so wound up in the middle of all that haste. Pete is quite a good reminder also to myself that I need to relax a bit and throw myself and empathise. In a way, the child’s world is there, and then I am able to enjoy the work in a



different way when I can goof around a little. My own stress funnily goes away when I can play along.

Hanna: I regret a bit that I didn't take my Sven [pseudonym] with me [All laugh.] I have Sven-owl in my own classroom.

The artefact, Pete, is presented clearly as an important actor in the beginning teacher's classroom. Prior research has discussed how metaphors provide frames of reference for teachers to make sense of their practice (Craig, You, and Oh 2017). Here, the artefact does not only operate on a metaphoric or symbolic level in describing the teacher's practice but as a material object; it is even explicitly positioned as an educational actor. The meaning Pete has for children as an actor in the classroom becomes apparent, as in the teacher's description of how they autonomously engage with Pete and develop a relationship with the toy, even without the involvement of the teacher. The students say goodbye to Pete at the end of the day, and Pete has become the focus of collective affection in the classroom. This is in line with how other researchers have documented different artefacts enabling discipline and learning routines in the classroom independently of the teacher's interventions (Benjaminsen and Sorensen 2011; Juutinen and Viljamaa 2016).

Pete is tightly interwoven in the teacher's practices with the children. English is learnt together with the artefact, as Pete is a "non-Finnish speaker" in the classroom. Furthermore, taking Pete on one's lap proves effective in helping the children calm down when they get too restless or loud in the class. Furthermore, the stories about Pete reveal how the artefact influences the teacher's relationships with the children and provides access to their personal world. The artefact reminded the teacher about the need to relax and to be present in the moment with the children. Hence, the artefact evoked detailed storytelling, revealing the beginning teacher's pedagogical practices (teaching as well as establishing classroom

routines; März, Kelchtermans, and Vermeir 2017) in creating emotional bonds with the students.

Moreover, the story of Pete and how he operates as an actor in the classroom revealed the sophistication and coherence in the way beginning teachers can verbally express their professional pedagogical thinking and reflect on their practices. Katrina's story showed in detail why she wanted to have Pete in her classroom, and, via multiple examples, she explained Pete's educational meaning and impact on life in her classroom. Other participants responded to the story with laughter, which illustrates the meaning of non-verbal responses in sharing stories (Uitto et al. 2016). Furthermore, Hanna's small comment about regretting not taking her class mascot with her demonstrates how the use of artefacts in narrative pedagogies can create experiences of finding shared practices as teachers.

## **Conclusions**

Although researchers have described different narrative pedagogies (Estola, Heikkinen, and Syrjälä 2014; Goodson and Gill 2011; Kelchtermans 2014; Ropo and Huttunen 2013), there has been less research regarding the educational potential that artefacts can have in these pedagogies. This article therefore tackles the issue through the analysis of beginning teachers' peer group meetings, focusing on how the use of artefacts operates in narrative pedagogies in the context of teachers' professional development during the induction phase.

We found that the use of artefacts in narrative pedagogies has the potential to evoke small stories about the teachers' daily work in a vivid, concrete and detailed way (Bamberg and Georgagopoulou 2008; Estola, Heikkinen, and Syrjälä, 2014; Estola et al. 2007). The findings also illustrated how the use of artefacts offers deeper understanding of teachers' daily

routines, relationships and practices. Furthermore, we found evidence that the artefacts may actually become important actors – both in the enactment of the narrative pedagogies and in teachers’ classroom practices.

The article adds to the emerging literature on the meaning of artefacts in educational practices and beginning teachers’ professional development (Benjaminsen and Sorensen 2011; März, Kelchtermans, and Vermeir 2017; Vermeir and Kelchtermans 2020). The findings show that in the context of peer group meetings, the artefacts can create a conversational ‘space’, inviting, evoking and triggering small stories as well as stimulating the participants to creatively engage, interpret and interact. As a pedagogy, interactive storytelling also made it easier for participants to relate to and understand stories, reflecting on them, examining nuances or creating new understandings or associations. The artefacts were found to facilitate teachers’ participation in each other’s experiences, as the artefacts evoked stories, reflections and interpretations from the other participants. Thus, the artefacts enabled shared meaning-making and collaborative learning with peers through dialogue and exchange (Goodson and Gill 2011).

Furthermore, the artefacts created a safe space for others to join in the discussion and comment on the stories, as they were less about the storyteller and more about the artefact. Using artefacts in storytelling may help teachers to create distance from themselves as people, making the discussion feel like it is about something ‘outside’ them – literally the ‘thing’ (artefact) between them (Kelchtermans 2014). As such, the artefacts brought comfort and provided support and safety in the conversational space, facilitating the authentic sharing of stories about their daily work as teachers.

The findings show the important pedagogical role facilitators have in manifesting the potential of artefacts in narrative pedagogies. The inviting and probing questions and comments by the facilitators were necessary to push, deepen and develop the storytelling, as

became apparent in the case of Pete the chameleon. However, this requires intense concentration, creative involvement and ‘presence’ (Rodgers and Raider-Roth 2006). It is not always easy to find ways to meaningfully make connections between the different stories. It is also not always easy to link them to more theoretical and societal aspects of teachers’ work in a way that contributes to professional development rather than conservatively repeating and confirming taken-for-granted normative cultural images of teachers.

Depending on the aims of the groups, there are different possibilities for how artefacts can be used in narrative pedagogies to support teachers’ professional development in pre- and in-service teacher education. Artefacts are particularly useful for evoking rich and lively stories from teachers’ daily work and the teaching career as well as thoughts related to the future. These experiences and thoughts can then be further elaborated upon and thematised on a theoretical level as well as critically challenged in groups with other participants and facilitators (Kelchtermans 2014).

This article contributes to the still not fully recognised potential that artefacts can have in narrative pedagogies in pre-service and in-service teacher education. It is important for teachers’ professional development that teachers have opportunities to verbalise their own knowledge and understanding related to their work (Elbaz-Luwisch 2005). This article shows that artefacts can operate to create these opportunities in narrative pedagogies – especially during the induction phase – as the artefacts can reveal the complexities of teachers’ daily work.

## Note

---

<sup>1</sup> In this article, a beginning teacher refers to a teacher with less than two years of teaching experience.

<sup>2</sup> In prior research, depending on the author, entities in the material dimension are referred to as artefacts, objects and things. For the sake of consistency, we have chosen to use the word artefact.

---

<sup>3</sup> “Disentangling the emotional dimension in beginning teachers’ work,” an EMOT project (2013–19) funded by the Academy of Finland under grant number 265974.

<sup>4</sup> There is no inspection system in Finland, and teachers, including beginning teachers, are relatively autonomous. Early childhood education teachers work in day care centres with children from 1–6 years of age. Primary school teachers teach children from 7–12 years of age in grades 1–6. Six-year-old children begin pre-primary school. Pre-primary schools are taught either by early childhood education or primary school teachers. Primary school teachers are required to have a master’s degree. Early childhood education teachers are required to have a bachelor’s degree, but many of them also complete a master’s degree at some point in their careers.

### **Acknowledgements**

This work was supported by the research project entitled “Disentangling the emotional dimension in beginning teachers’ work” (EMOT; 2013–19), funded by the Academy of Finland under grant number 265974 and by the Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation. The data collection in this work was carried out with the support of LeaF–Research Infrastructure, University of Oulu, Finland.

### **Notes on Contributors**

Minna Uitto, PhD, is an adjunct professor and post-doctoral researcher within the Faculty of Education at the University of Oulu, Finland. Her research focuses on the relationships and emotions of teachers’ work.

Erkki T. Lassila, PhD, is a post-doctoral researcher within the Faculty of Education at the University of Oulu, Finland. His research interests include teachers’ work as a socio-material practice, gifted education and narrative methodologies.

Katri Jokikokko, PhD, is an adjunct professor and university lecturer within the Faculty of Education at the University of Oulu, Finland. Her research focuses on intercultural education, emotions and beginning teachers.

Geert Kelchtermans is a full professor of education at the KU Leuven (University of Leuven, Belgium), where he chairs the Center for Innovation and the Development of Teacher and School (CIDTS). His research focuses on the practices and development of educational professionals as situated in their organisational and institutional working conditions.

Eila Estola is a professor emerita within the Faculty of Education at the University of Oulu, Finland. Her research interests include teachers' work, identity, ethics and early childhood education.

## References

- Avalos, B. 2011. "Teacher Professional Development in Teaching and Teacher Education Over Ten Years." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27 (1): 10–20. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007.
- Avalos, B. 2016. "Learning from Research on Beginning Teachers." In *International Handbook of Teacher Education*, edited by J. Loughran and M. L. Hamilton, 487–522. Singapore: Springer.
- Bamberg, M., and A. Georgakopoulou. 2008. "Small Stories as a New Perspective in Narrative and Identity Analysis." *Text and Talk* 28 (3): 377–396. doi: 10.1515/TEXT.2008.018.
- Ballet, K., and G. Kelchtermans. 2008. "Workload and Willingness to Change: Disentangling the Experience of Intensification." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 40 (1): 47–67. doi: 10.1080/00220270701516463.
- Bell, M. E., and S. E. Bell. 2012. "What to Do with All This 'Stuff'? – Memory, Family and Material Objects." *Storytelling, Self and Society* 8 (2): 63–84. doi: 10.2307/41949178.
- Benjaminsen, N., and E. Sorensen. 2011. "Circulation of Authorizations in the Classroom: A Socio-Material Process." *Science as Culture* 20 (4): 433–453. doi: 10.1080/09505431.2011.605922.
- Burkitt, I. 1999. *Bodies of Thought. Embodiment, Identity and Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Carter, K. 1993. "The Place of Story in the Study of Teaching and Teacher Education." *Educational Researcher* 22 (1): 5–12, 18. doi:10.3102/0013189X022001005.
- Casey, K. 1995–1996. "The New Narrative Research in Education." *Review of Research in Education* 21 (1): 211–253. doi:10.3102/0091732X021001211.
- Clandinin, D. J. 2013. *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

- Clandinin, D. J., and F. M. Connelly. 1996. "Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes  
Teacher Stories—Stories of Teachers—School Stories—Stories of School."  
*Educational Researcher* 19 (5): 2–14.
- Clandinin, D. J., and F. M. Connelly. 2000. *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in  
Qualitative Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Conle, C. 1996. "Resonance in Pre-service Teacher Inquiry." *American Educational Research  
Journal* 33 (2): 297–325.
- Craig, C. J., J. You, and S. Oh. 2017. "Pedagogy through the Pearl Metaphor: Teaching as a  
Process of Ongoing Refinement." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 49 (6): 757–781.  
doi:10.1080/00220272.2015.1066866.
- Devos, A. 2010. "New Teachers, Mentoring, and the Discursive Formation of Professional  
Identity." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26 (5): 1219–1223.  
doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.03.001.
- De Fina, A., and A. Georgakopoulou. 2012. *Analyzing Narrative. Discourse and  
Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Elbaz-Luwisch, F. 2005. *Teachers' Voices: Storytelling and Possibility*. Greenwich CT:  
Information Age Publishing.
- Elbaz-Luwisch, F. 2010. "Writing and Professional Learning: The Uses of Autobiography in  
Graduate Studies in Education." *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 16 (3):  
307–327. doi:10.1080/13540601003634404.
- Ericson, L., and S. Pinnegar. 2017. "Consequences of Personal Teaching Metaphors for  
Teacher Identity and Practice." *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 23 (1):  
106–122. doi:10.1080/13540602.2016.1203774.
- Estola, E., H. L. T., Heikkinen, and L. Syrjälä. 2014. "Narrative Pedagogies for Peer Groups."  
In *International Teacher Education: Promising Pedagogies (Part A)*, edited by C. J.



- Craig and L. Orland-Barak, 155–172. Bingley, UK: Emerald. doi:10.1108/S1479-36872014000002201.
- Estola, E., S.-L. Kaunisto, U. Keski-Filppula, L. Syrjälä, and M. Uitto. 2007. *Lupa puhua. Kertomisen voima arjessa ja työssä* [The promise to speak. The power of storytelling in everyday life and work]. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. 2001. “Helping Novices Learn to Teach: Lessons from an Exemplary Support Teacher.” *Journal of Teacher Education* 52 (1): 17–30. doi:10.1177/0022487101052001003.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. 2012. *Teachers as Learners*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.
- Fenwick, T., R. Edwards, and P. Sawchuk. 2011. *Emerging Approaches to Educational Research. Tracing the Sociomaterial*. London-New York: Routledge.
- Fox, R. K., L. S. Muccio, C. S. White, and J. Tian. 2015. “Investigating Advanced Professional Learning of Early Career and Experienced Teacher Through Program Portfolios.” *European Journal of Teacher Education* 38 (2): 154–179. doi:10.1080/02619768.2015.1022647.
- Goodson, I. F., and S. R. Gill. 2011. *Narrative Pedagogy. Life History and Learning*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Hadar, L. L., and D. L. Brody. 2013. “The Interaction Between Group Processes and Personal Professional Trajectories in a Professional Development Community for Teacher Educators.” *Journal of Teacher Education* 64 (2): 145–161. doi:10.1177/0022487112466898.
- Hanne, M., and A. Kaal, eds. 2019. *Narrative and metaphor in education. Look both ways*. London: Routledge.
- Harju, V., and H. Niemi. 2018. “Teachers’ Changing Work and Support Needs from the Perspectives of School Leaders and Newly Qualified Teachers in the Finnish Context.”

- European Journal of Teacher Education* 41 (5): 670–687.  
doi:10.1080/02619768.2018.1529754.
- Heikkinen, H. L. T., H. Jokinen, and P. Tynjälä, eds. 2012. *Peer-group Mentoring for Teacher Development*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Howe, E., and M. Arimoto. 2014. “Narrative Teacher Education Pedagogies from Across the Pacific.” In *International Teacher Education: Promising Pedagogies (Part A)*, edited by C. J. Craig and L. Orland-Barak, 213–232. Bingley, UK: Emerald. doi: 10.1108/S1479-368720140000022014.
- Huber, J., V. Caine, M. Huber, and P. Steeves. 2013. “Narrative Inquiry as Pedagogy in Education: The Extraordinary Potential of Living, Telling, Retelling, and Reliving Stories of Experience.” *Review of Research in Education* 37 (1): 212–242.  
doi:10.3102/0091732X12458885.
- Hultman, K., and H. Lenz Taguchi. 2010. “Challenging Anthropocentric Analysis of Visual Data: A Relational Materialist Methodological Approach to Educational Research.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 23 (5): 525–542.  
doi:10.1080/09518398.2010.500628.
- Ingersoll, R. M., and M. Strong. 2011. “The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research.” *Review of Educational Research* 81 (2): 201–233. doi:10.3102/0034654311403323.
- Juutinen, J., and E. Viljamaa. 2016. “A Narrative Inquiry About Values in a Finnish Preschool: The Case of Traffic Lights.” *International Journal of Early Childhood* 48 (2): 193–207. doi:10.1007/s13158-016-0165-1.
- Kelchtermans, G. 2009. “Who I am in How I Teach is the Message: Self-Understanding, Vulnerability and Reflection.” *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 15 (2): 257–272. doi:10.1080/13540600902875332.

- Kelchtermans, G. 2014. "Narrative-Biographical Pedagogies in Teacher Education." In *International Teacher Education: Promising Pedagogies (Part A)*, edited by C. J. Craig and L. Orland-Barak, 273–291. Bingley, UK: Emerald. doi:10.1108/S1479-368720140000022017.
- Kelchtermans, G., and K. Ballet. 2002. "The Micropolitics of Teacher Induction. A Narrative-Biographical Study on Teacher Socialisation." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 18 (1): 105–120. doi:10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00053-1.
- Kemmis, S., H. L. T. Heikkinen, J. Aspfors, G. Fransson, and C. Edwards-Groves. 2014. "Mentoring as Contested Practice: Support, Supervision and Collaborative Self Development." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 43: 154–164. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2014.07.001.
- Lakoff, G., and M. Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lehtonen, M. 2014. *Maa-ilma: Materialistisen Kulttuuriteorian Lähtökohtia* [Starting Points for Materialistic Cultural Theory]. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- März, V., G. Kelchtermans, and K. Vermeir. 2017. "Artifacts as Authoritative Actors in Educational Reform: Routines, Institutional Pressures, and Legitimacy in Student Data Systems." *Journal of Educational Change* 18: 439–464. doi:10.1007/s10833-017-9309-9.
- Pillen, M., D. Beijaard, and P. den Brok. 2013. "Tensions in Beginning Teachers' Professional Identity Development, Accompanying Feelings and Coping Strategies." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 36 (3): 240–260. doi:10.1080/02619768.2012.696192.
- Riessman, C. K. 2008. *Narrative Methods for Human Sciences*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

- Rodgers, C., and M. Raider-Roth. 2006. "Presence in Teaching." *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 12 (3): 265–287. doi:10.1080/13450600500467548.
- Ropo, E., and M. Huttunen. 2013. *Puheenvuoroja Narratiivisuudesta Opetuksessa ja Oppimisessa* [Accounts about Narrativity in Teaching and Learning]. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Schön, A. 1979. "Generative Metaphor: A Perspective on Problem-Setting in Social Policy." In *Metaphor and Thought*, edited by A. Ortony, 254–283. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spector-Mersel, G. 2010. "Narrative Research: Time for a Paradigm." *Narrative Inquiry* 20 (1): 204–224. doi:10.1075/ni.20.1.10spe.
- Strangeways, A, and L.-H. Papatraianou. 2016. "Case-Based Learning for Classroom Ready Teachers: Addressing the Theory Practice Disjunction through Narrative Pedagogy." *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 41 (9). doi:10.14221/ajte.2016v41n9.7.
- Tammets, K., K. Pata, and E. Eisenschmidt. 2019. "Novice Teachers Learning and Knowledge Building during the Induction Programme." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 42 (1): 36–51. doi:10.1080/02619768.2018.1523389.
- Thomas, L., and C. Beauchamp. 2011. "Understanding New Teachers' Professional Identities Through Metaphor." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27 (4): 762–769. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.12.007.
- Uitto, M., S.-L. Kaunisto, G. Kelchtermans, and E. Estola. 2016. "Peer Group as a Meeting Place: Reconstructions of Teachers' Self-Understanding and the Presence of Vulnerability." *International Journal of Educational Research* 75: 7–16. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2015.10.004.

Vermeir, K., and G. Kelchtermans. 2020. "Innovative Practice as Interpretative Negotiation. A Case-Study on the Kamishibai in Kindergarten." *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 26 (3-4): 248–263. doi:10.1080/13540602.2020.1820978.