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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUMMARY

Professional identity and competences of adult learning facilitators: Perspectives from Mongolian non-formal adult education

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Budapest, 2021

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND
COMPETENCES OF ADULT LEARNING FACILITATORS:
PERSPECTIVES FROM MONGOLIAN NON-FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Adult learning and education have been recognized as not only supporting adult learners' employability, but also serving as a means for disseminating citizenship and democracy education to adults (UNESCO Institute of Lifelong learning [UIL], 2019) and reaching those who need education most (Midtsundstad, 2019). It is clear that adult learning and education programmes must be delivered with high quality. The quality of adult learning and education is dependent on competent adult learning facilitators who deliver programmes to target groups. Thus, professional development of adult learning facilitators should be a priority (UNESCO, 1997; 2016; UIL, 2010; 2018). However, it has not been systematically addressed in many countries (UIL, 2013; 2016). If we look at the lack of professionalization options for adult learning facilitators worldwide, this tendency can be observed even in the European region where the field of adult learning and education has a long history. Similarly, in the Asia-Pacific region, to which Mongolia belongs, the professionalization of adult learning facilitators has remained an important concern (UIL, 2017).

The context of Mongolia: Non-formal adult education

Non-formal adult education, which is used in parallel with formal education, has played an important role in providing continuous and lifelong educational opportunities to adults in Mongolia since 1997. The ultimate aim of non-formal adult education is to support employment and alleviate poverty among adults through eliminating illiteracy, improving educational levels and helping adults to learn life skills (Yembuu, 2019).

Six broad types of non-formal adult education programmes are offered to adults: (1) family education programmes; (2) citizenship education programmes; (3) moral education programmes; (4) aesthetic education programmes; (5) life-skills education programmes; and (6) science education programmes (MES, 2013a; The Education law of Mongolia, 2016).

Lifelong education centres serve as public (state) settings for non-formal and lifelong educational opportunities for adults in Mongolia (Ministry of Education and Science [MES], 2013a). Currently, there are 351 lifelong education centres nationwide (National Centre for Lifelong Education [NCLE], 2018). There are two types of such centres, namely, dependent and independent. The majority of lifelong education centres are dependent centres because

they are affiliated with mainly local secondary schools (NCLE, 2018). The remaining 22 lifelong education centres operate independently from local secondary schools (NFDE, 2012).

A total of 619 professionals work for lifelong education centres in the country. There are three types of professionals in the field of non-formal adult education: administrators (directors and managers), other administrative staff (accountants, assistants, etc.), and adult learning facilitators. Adult learning facilitators, who compose 76% of the total staff in the field, are teachers who facilitate adult learning and have direct contact with adult learners. Adult learning facilitators are responsible for 13 specific tasks and activities that are tied to their main teaching role (MECS, 2010c). These tasks and activities can be grouped in three categories: (1) Tasks directly connected to the facilitators' teaching role such as assessing adult learning needs, delivering various training courses using the appropriate content and delivery methods, and developing training programmes and plans; (2) other tasks such as cooperating with other stakeholders, establishing information and data systems, and reporting; and (3) the task of increasing participation in adult learning programmes. Even though adult learning facilitators have played a major role in providing non-formal adult educational services, their professional development issue has remained fragmented. Consequently, adult learning facilitators seem to have been mostly entrusted with the responsibility for their own professional development.

Problem Statement

Individuals becoming competent adult learning facilitators could be definitely be achieved as part of a systematic professionalization process. The field of non-formal adult education in Mongolia has long been characterized by its unsystematic professionalization process for adult learning facilitators. However, one recent and significant advance in the field was the creation of a dedicated department at the pedagogical university which aims to prepare professional adult learning facilitators from the pre-service level. It is therefore crucial to find what it is that prospective adult learning facilitators are trained and prepared for. For this need to know how adult learning facilitators act as professionals in given circumstances to efficiently facilitate adult learning processes. Particularly, knowledge on adult learning facilitators' conceptualization of their profession and how they identify the competences they need to perform their professional tasks could help them construct their identities and develop these competences. Sachs (2005, p. 15 as cited in Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 178) argues that this knowledge "provides a framework for teachers [in our case, adult learning facilitators] to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand'

their work and their place in society". Prospective adult learning facilitators who are able to successfully construct their identities and develop their competences during their initial education are mentally and psychologically prepared to act as professionals while adhering to professional roles, attitudes, norms and values (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). It is worth noting that these knowledge bases are not only helpful for prospective facilitators, but also useful for serving adult learning facilitators. While conceptualizing and interpreting their identities, adult learning facilitators are able to reflect and realize more about their teaching behaviours (Yeung, Craven & Kaur, 2014) and perhaps more importantly adjust and reshape their teaching behaviours as professionals. This enables them to develop and upgrade their competences continuously and also to stay committed to their profession (Schutz, Nichols & Schwenke, 2018). For this reason, it is essential to know how adult learning facilitators understand and interpret themselves as professionals (Jõgi & Gross, 2009; Bierema, 2011).

Little is known about the professional knowledge adult learning facilitators possess because their practices have not been studied enough. Particularly, knowledge about adult learning facilitators as a professional group is lacking, even though they have been recognized as providers of lifelong and non-formal educational opportunities for adults, particularly for the less-educated adults in Mongolia. The professional identity of adult learning facilitators in particular has not been explored to a great extent at international level either, as we found few empirical studies on the topic although the role of adult learning and education has been increasing in the era of lifelong learning.

Research theoretical framework

There have been two distinct approaches in teacher education: A competence-based approach and a humanistic approach (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). The competence-based approach highlights the need for concrete criteria for good teaching, which serve as the basis of teacher development (Caena, 2011; Meijer, Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009). Criticizing the competence-based approach as too technical, as well as limiting teachers' capacities and creativities, the humanistic approach appears with an argument about the importance of teachers' own reflections on their profession (Caena, 2011; Korthagen, 2004; Meijer, Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009). However, Meijer, Korthagen and Vasalos (2009) proposed a new teacher education approach that combines both professional identity and competence development perspectives. They consider professional identity and competence to be two sides of the same coin, and consequently they should be seen as a confluence rather than prioritized one over the other

(Meijer, Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009). In order words, this combined approach emphasizes that teachers need to develop necessary competences that are required for teaching, and they also need to construct their own professional selves as teachers and understand their motivation for being teachers (Meijer, Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009, p. 298). This statement leads to our inference that professional identity and competence constitute the facilitator professional knowledge base which needs to be realized by any facilitator. Our research rests heavily upon this combined approach authored by Meijer, Korthagen and Vasalos (2009). With the combined approach, we aimed to explore professional identity and identify common competences of adult learning facilitators. Together they constitute the professional knowledge base which can be used in the professional development of adult learning facilitators in Mongolia.

The professional identity of adult learning facilitators: Adult learning professionals lack a unified identity and they are often defined with multiple identities due to the diversity and heterogeneity of adult learning and education (Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Bron & Jarvis, 2008). The lack of a coherent and unified identity creates challenges surrounding the recognition of adult learning professionals and this in turn leads to a fragmented focus on their professionalization (Brown, Karmel, & Ye, 2012; Egetenmeyer & Strauch, 2009; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Reischmann, 2015). How adult learning facilitators, who have a role for teaching adults and who belong to the non-formal sub-field, conceptualize and interpret themselves as professionals can be an apparent example of the specified, yet unified professional identity among adult learning professionals. In doing so, we adopted Kelchtermans's professional self-understanding theory to explore the professional identity of adult learning facilitators. The theory of professional self-understanding indicates a person's conception of themselves as a teacher. His conceptualization of professional self-understanding is composed of five constructs: self-image; self-esteem; job motivation; task perception; and time perspective (Kelchtermans, 2009). *The self-image* indicates the way teachers describe themselves as teachers, while the *self-esteem* component refers to how teachers perceive and evaluate their professional performance (Kelchtermans, 2009). *The task perception*, which explains teachers' idea of what their job tasks, activities and duties are, meanwhile the *job motivation* represents the motives that explain why people become teachers and keep working as teachers as well (Kelchtermans, 2009). The final component of professional self-understanding is the *time perspective*, indicating teachers' expectations about their professional futures (Kelchtermans, 2009). The author highlights that these

constructs together make up teachers' professional identities, while pointing out that the constructs are interdependent. We explored adult learning facilitators' professional identity in terms of these five constructs collectively, as we believe a comprehensive understanding of adult learning facilitators' professional identity can be produced.

Common competences for adult learning facilitators: As another core part of the professional knowledge base that directs the professionalization of adult learning facilitators, this research focused on identifying common competences that facilitators need to acquire, because standards for teaching have been recognized and utilized as a strategy for a profession building and its development (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Though adult learning facilitators' competences develop throughout their careers, it is essential for them to develop necessary competences during the initial formal education. This enables adult learning facilitators to perceive themselves as professionals (Andersson, Köpsén, Larson & Milana, 2012). This perception may have a great impact on how they construct their identities. Thus, in order to enable prospective adult learning facilitators to construct their identities during their initial education, it is important to help them develop the competences they need. To do so, this research adopted the concept of key competences modified by van Dellen and van der Kamp (2008). The concept of key competences (van Dellen & van der Kamp, 2008), based on the work of Hager and Gonzci (1996) and Kouwenhoven (2003), indicates the main idea that a person's professional key competences should be aligned to key occupational tasks that characterize a profession. Citing Hager and Gonzci (1996), the authors define competence as "the capacity to realize 'up to standard' the key occupational tasks that characterize a profession" (van Dellen & van der Kamp, 2008, p. 68). Any profession comprises of up to 20-30 key occupational tasks, and to perform these key occupational tasks to a satisfactory level, a set of appropriate competences are needed by any professional (van Dellen & van der Kamp, 2008). The set of appropriate competences are referred to as key competences (van Dellen & van der Kamp, 2008). In light of this, we identified common competences of adult learning facilitators corresponding to the tasks and activities they carry out.

The relationship between the adopted theories: As shown in Figure 2, tasks, as a component of professional identity (Kelchtermans, 2009), is linked to common competences, meaning that, to perform professional tasks, it is necessary to identify what kinds of common competences are needed for adult learning facilitators. Common competences are identified not only from the viewpoint of adult learning facilitators themselves, but also from the

viewpoints of administrators and adult learners. This allows us to create a refined competence profile for adult learning facilitators at lifelong education centres in Mongolia, which are filtered through different stakeholders' opinions.

Figure 2. The relationship between the adopted theories

Research aims and questions

The research has three main aims: 1) to explore the professional identity of adult learning facilitators; 2) to identify common competences of adult learning facilitators; and 3) to examine the relationship between professional identity and competences. Within these aims, the research poses the following questions:

1) How do adult learning facilitators at lifelong education centres in Mongolia conceptualize and interpret their professional identity?

    1.1. How do they describe themselves as adult learning facilitators?

    1.2. What are reasons for becoming and to keep working as adult learning facilitators?

    1.3. What are the main tasks of adult learning facilitators?

    1.4. How well are they doing in their jobs as adult learning facilitators?

    1.5. How do they see their professional futures?

2) What are common competences for adult learning facilitators at lifelong education centres in Mongolia?

    2.1. What common competences are needed for adult learning facilitators?

    2.2. What are the most important common competences?

    2.3. What common competences do adult learning facilitators already have?

    2.4. How should the competences of adult learning facilitators be developed?

3) How are professional identity and core competences related, if at all?

Significance and limitation of the research

Contribution to the literature: This research contributed to the literature in two ways. (1) It explores the professional identity of adult learning facilitators using Kelchtermans' (2009) five constructs of a person's professional self-understanding; namely, self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, tasks, and time perspective. We believe that a person's professional identity
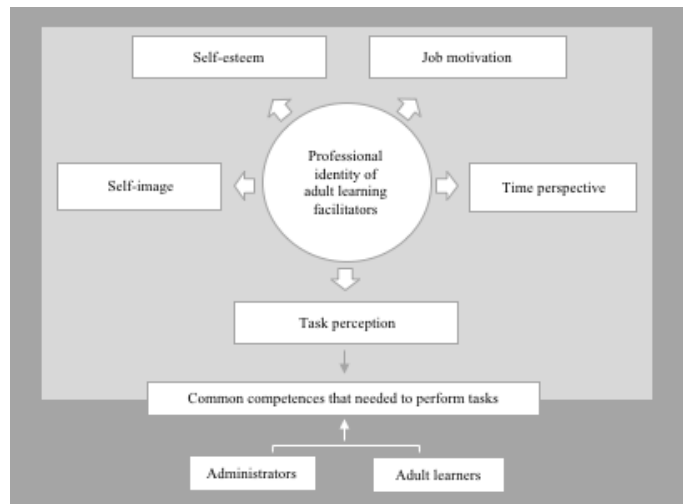
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may be comprehensively and clearly explored through these five constructs. Moreover, the research utilizes quantitative tools on teaching approaches and teaching self-efficacy to support our exploration of adult learning facilitators' professional identity. With this perspective, the research extends the existing findings on professional identity of adult learning facilitators who lack unified identities due to its diverse field. (2) The research involves relevant stakeholders in adult learning and teaching processes (namely, adult learning facilitators, their administrators and adult learners) when identifying common competences for adult learning facilitators. Existing studies mainly focus on field experts such as facilitator trainers, policy makers, and administrators, and in a few cases, the opinions of adult learning facilitators, but they tend to neglect adult learners' voices (cf. Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2011; Research voor Beleid, 2010; Jääger & Irons, 2006). By involving all stakeholders, the most suitable common competences are identified through the filter of three different perspectives. The research also examines common competences through different dimensions, including different adult teaching expertise and different educational levels of adult learners. This examination enables us to validate common competences that are required by all adult learning facilitators.

Influence on adult learning practices: The ultimate goal of this research is to create a professional knowledge base for prospective and serving adult learning facilitators for their professionalization process. Our findings on professional identity and common competences for adult learning facilitators can serve as a professional knowledge base applicable to all levels of professional development programmes. Moreover, this research could inform decision-makers to take systematic policy measures that support adult learning facilitators' professionalization, thus improving the quality of adult education and learning programmes in Mongolia. Also, the competence profile for adult learning facilitators identified in this research could be used in various ways such as professional development, recruitment, appraisal and evaluation.

Limitation of the research: This research provides descriptive insights on Mongolian adult learning facilitators' professional identity and their common competences. However, it focuses only those who work for independent lifelong education centres, which means that we excluded those working for dependent centres. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to the entire professional community of non-formal adult education in Mongolia. Moreover, in regard to the professional identity of adult learning facilitators, we did not focus on the process of how their professional identity is constructed, but rather we explored their professional identity as a product or state of a being.

METHODOLOGY

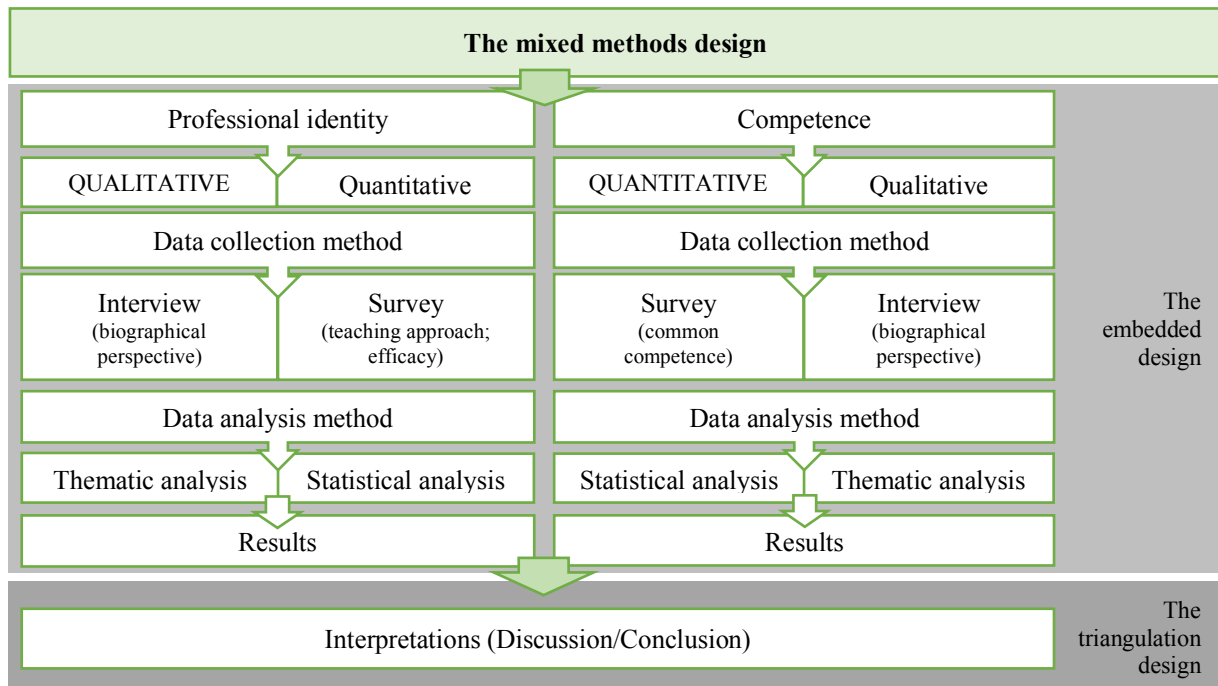This research employed the mixed methods design (Figure 2).

The mixed methods design				
Professional identity		**Competence**		The embedded design
QUALITATIVE / Quantitative		QUANTITATIVE / Qualitative		
Data collection method		Data collection method		
Interview (biographical perspective) / Survey (teaching approach; efficacy)		Survey (common competence) / Interview (biographical perspective)		
Data analysis method		Data analysis method		
Thematic analysis / Statistical analysis		Statistical analysis / Thematic analysis		
Results		Results		
Interpretations (Discussion/Conclusion)				The triangulation design

Figure 2. Detailed research design

We selected the following five centres as the primary research sites: (1) Baganuur district lifelong education centre; (2) Bayangol district lifelong education centre; (3) Bayanzurkh district lifelong education centre; (4) Sukhbaatar district lifelong education centre; and (5) Khan-Uul district lifelong education centre. Our research also covered three other independent centres in Ulaanbaatar (Songinokhairkhan, Chingeltei and Nalaikh districts) and 10 provincial areas (Orkhon, Darkhan, Arkhangai, Uvurkhangai, Gobi-Altai, Zavkhan, Umnugobi, Khovd, Khentii and Sukhbaatar). In total, our research involved 18 independent centres out of 22 independent lifelong education centres.

The research participants consisted of three different groups; namely, adult learning facilitators, administrators (directors and managers) and adult learners. In total, we interviewed 35 adult learning facilitators, while surveys on teaching approaches, teaching efficacy and common competences were collected from 105 adult learning facilitators, which included the interviewed facilitators. Moreover, 22 administrators and 150 adult learners were surveyed. Although not representative, our research covered 73.4% of all adult learning facilitators at independent centres; 22.3% of all adult learning facilitators in the country; 35.4% of all administrators, as well as 10% of total adult learners who attended long-term adult education programmes in 2019.

RESULTS

Adult learning facilitators' self-image

- Adult learning facilitators tend to define their profession as (1) a profession where adult learning needs play a crucial role, (2) as a profession in which knowledge and skills are transmitted to adults; (3) a profession that is demanding and high-pressure, and (4) a profession that is mutually-beneficial to learners and facilitators.

- Adult learning facilitators are likely to define competent facilitators as (1) qualified professionals in their subject-matter, teaching methodologies and communication, (2) professionals who possess professional traits such as being knowledgeable in multiple fields, being researchers and being willing to develop themselves, and (3) professionals who have personal traits such as confidence, respect, flexibility, ability to cope, empathy, ability to show support, accountability and non-discrimination, as well as setting positive examples and having positive attitudes. This is their ideal vision of a competent professional in the field. However, adult learning facilitators seem to be far from their ideal vision of competent professionals. They tend to question their competences, particularly in regard to their subject specialization and adult teaching methodologies.

- Adult learning facilitators tend to choose their facilitation strategies depending on the type of adult education programme they are facilitating. For instance, adult learning facilitators who are responsible for vocational adult training tend to use individual instruction in their facilitation, while adult learning facilitators who are responsible for short-term adult training tend to employ problem-based instruction in their facilitation. Moreover, facilitators, regardless of responsible programmes, tend to utilize life-oriented content and a participatory approach to their facilitation.

- In terms of teaching approaches, adult learning facilitators tend to agree with the use of both teacher-centred and student-centred approaches in their facilitation. However, taking the individual facilitators' view, we found a significant difference between the experienced and novice facilitators in terms of their teaching approaches. The experienced facilitators are more likely to use a teacher-centred approach than novice facilitators are.

- The research findings indicate that adult learning facilitators employ various techniques in their facilitation. We split these techniques into several categories based on their purpose: 1) techniques used for motivating adult learners to support their readiness to learn, 2) techniques used for assessing adult learners' prior knowledge and skills, 3) techniques used in the content delivering process, 4) techniques used for considering the diversity of

adult learners such as their prior knowledge and skills and learning speed, and 5) techniques used for supporting adult learners' autonomy.

- Adult learning facilitators tend to create open, free and friendly communication with their learners. They are also likely to be respectful, honest, helpful and supportive when communicating with adult learners.

- Adult learning facilitators tend to say that adult learners' characteristics such as their age, gender, prior knowledge and skills, life experiences, learning ability, learning needs and living environments influence on adult learners' learning. Moreover, facilitators tend to highlight adult learners' preferences in practice-based learning rather than theory-based learning. Facilitators are also likely to agree that adult learners' motivation and willingness to learn could be the single most important determinant to completing their programmes successfully.

- Adult learning facilitators tend to define their professional complexity based on adult learners' characteristics. Some facilitators tend to define their profession as an 'easy job' because of learner autonomy and responsibility. However, some are likely to highlight their profession as a 'difficult job' because of the diversity of adult learners.

- Some facilitators tend to value their profession and their professionalism as adult learning facilitators. Some value certain personal and professional traits and behaviours as professionals including being respectful, understanding others, not discriminating, communicating and inspiring learners. Other facilitators are likely to value their profession because it helps people by transmitting the knowledge and skills that those people need.

- Adult learning facilitators tend to mention measurable and non-measurable outcomes of their programmes. Measurable outcomes of vocation-oriented adult training include learned and improved knowledge, skills and increased incomes. Meanwhile, facilitators delivering short-term courses mentioned non-measurable outcomes such as changed attitudes and mindsets. Some facilitators tend to mention that they do not know what the outcomes of their courses are because they do not measure them.

Adult learning facilitators' job motivation

- The research found that both external and internal motives play a role in people becoming and remaining adult learning facilitators. Key external motives include having a stable job in a public setting. As they work in the field, their internal motives such as helping people by transmitting knowledge and skills, having more interest in their job and growing their

professional and personal competences while working for the field play a role in them staying in the profession.

● We could see that external motives are likely to gradually shift into internal motives, which make facilitators stay committed to the field.

● Moreover, we want to note here that age, as an external motive, could be an important factor for some facilitators remaining in the profession. Being close to retirement age seems to be a factor for some facilitators staying in the field.

Adult learning facilitators' task

● The research found primary and other tasks that are performed by adult learning facilitators on a daily basis. The primary tasks were mainly related to adult learning facilitation. They were (1) studying about training topics, (2) developing and updating training programmes and plans, (3) preparing and updating training handouts and aids, (4) assessing adult learning needs, and (5) selecting training methods. Other tasks performed by facilitators seem to be relevant to institutional activities. They were (1) advertising lifelong education opportunities and the centres, (2) cooperating with other organizations, and (3) reporting.

Adult learning facilitators' self-esteem

● Adult learning facilitators tend to determine their successes as (1) helping people, (2) being recognized and competent professionals, (3) learning and improving their own professional skills, and (4) positively changing attitude toward the profession and professional development.

● Adult learning facilitators are likely to define their failures as (1) lessons learned that help to grow professionally, (2) disappointment in being unqualified facilitators, (3) an inability to help adults more, and (4) missed opportunities.

● Adult learning facilitators positively evaluated their teaching efficacy, which ranged from "somewhat agree" to "agree".

● Adult learners' self-efficacy does not differ based on their working experiences.

● Adult learning facilitators who had low self-efficacy tend to use a teacher-centred approach. As they use a teacher-centred approach in their facilitation, they are less satisfied with their efficacy. There are no other differences between adult learning facilitators with high and low self-efficacy in terms of course design, technology use, classroom management, interpersonal relation or learning assessment.

- Adult learning facilitators are likely to positively evaluate their performance as professionals. Thus, their self-esteem could be positive or high. This is indeed a contradicting result. They seem to question their qualifications, but at the same time they tend to say they perform pretty well at their professional tasks.

Adult learning facilitators' future perspectives

- Adult learning facilitators tend to have both positive and negative future visions and these visions seem to be connected with the development of the field. Most facilitators seem to have positive future visions as they imagine the development and advances of their field and their own enhanced professionalism. However, few facilitators seem to have a negative future vision because they struggle to see any advances of the field.
- In line with these different perspectives, we noticed two scenarios of adult learning facilitators' careers. *The first scenario* is that the more experienced facilitators, who are over 40, tend to stay in the field while continuously updating their competences because they witnessed that their field is gradually recognized. *The second scenario* seems to constitute two different paths. The more novice facilitators, who are under 30, are likely to change their careers completely because they see their field has low recognition. Other novice facilitators tend to have breaks from their work to advance their competences by pursuing formal studies, but aim to return to adult education and learning because they value the importance of the field.
- We can conclude that how facilitators recognize the importance of the field could influence their commitment to their jobs and future career plans. How the profession is recognized and accepted by the public has a great impact on how facilitators see their field's importance.

Adult learning facilitators' multiple identities

- Adult learning facilitators' identities seem to be highly influenced by their self-esteem and emotions. Based on self-image and self-esteem constructs, we found three different identities among adult learning facilitators: 1) Identity as a teacher who is confident, 2) Identity as a teacher who is less confident, and 3) Identity as a mentor who is confident.
- In terms of self-image, facilitators may have two facilitation (teaching) perspectives: those who act as a teacher and those who act as a mentor. These facilitation perspectives seem to be dependent on facilitators' teaching qualification, as well as the types of training they deliver. For instance, the majority of facilitators who act as teachers had a teaching

backgrounds and were in charge of short-term adult training. Meanwhile, none of the facilitators who act as mentors had a teaching diploma or acquired a teaching diploma through short-term intensive training, and they were all responsible for vocation-oriented adult training. In terms of self-esteem, some facilitators seem to be confident in their professional performances, while some seem to be less confident due to their lack of qualifications and lack of facilitation experience.

Adult learning facilitators' common and core competences

- All three types of stakeholders perceive that all competence domains are more relevant to Mongolian adult learning facilitators. However, we found several statistically significant differences among the stakeholders. For instance, adult learning facilitators tend to highlight the competences of adult learning needs assessment, designing and planning programmes, supporting institutional administration issues, professional development and communication as adult learners do. Administrators tended to highlight the competence of supporting institutional administration more than adult learners did.

- In terms of controlling adult learning facilitators' different working experience and adult learners' different education levels, there were no differences between the competence domains.

- In terms of controlling adult learning facilitators' teaching approaches, adult learning facilitators using the student-centred approach tended to prioritize the competences of designing and planning programmes, and personal and professional development than facilitators using the teacher-centred approach.

- Controlling self-efficacy levels, adult learning facilitators who have low self-efficacy tended to more prioritize the competences of subject specialization domain, designing and planning programmes, professional development, monitoring and evaluation of learning processes and supporting institutional functions than those with high self-efficacy.

- Among the common competences, the five most mentioned competences by all three stakeholders were adult teaching and methodological competence, communication, designing and planning programmes, assessing the learning needs of adults, and subject specialization. However, some differences were observed. Adult learners prioritized the competence of supporting adult learners, while the other two groups did not. Moreover, administrators prioritized the competence of personal and professional development, while the other two groups did not.

● Interviews with adult learning facilitators revealed that the competences of assessing adult learning needs, adult teaching methodologies, and communication were mentioned as key distinguishing features of the profession.

Adult learning facilitators' acquired competences

● Adult learners perceive their facilitators' competence as good. However, adult learning facilitators and administrators rated facilitators' acquired competences as average.
● Acquired competences did not differ depending on the working experience of the facilitator.
● The level of acquired competence domains did not differ in terms of the facilitators' teaching approaches except the competence domain of designing and planning programmes. The only difference was that the facilitators who used the student-centred teaching approach reported their competence on designing and planning programmes was more developed than those who used the teacher-centred approach.
● In terms of controlling self-efficacy levels, adult learning facilitators who had high self-efficacy evaluated their competence more highly than those who had low self-efficacy.

Adult learning facilitators' initial qualification

● Most facilitators were trained as subject teachers for children. This means many entered the field without specialization in adult learning and teaching.
● Besides lacking specialization, most facilitators entered the field without a proper understanding of non-formal adult education and lifelong education centres. They even started their jobs without receiving an induction in many cases.

The current situation of professional development of adult learning facilitators

● Adult learning facilitators tend to be unsatisfied with national in-service programmes for their professional development in terms of both quantity and quality. Moreover, they tend to criticize the professional development training that is available saying it does not meet their needs. For instance, their need to enhance their subject specialization and adult teaching methodologies have not been met. On the regional level, in-service professional development programmes and training dedicated to adult learning facilitators are completely absent. At institutional level, adult learning facilitators are often offered a free-day from teaching to develop themselves. This is a form of informal professional development.

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- It seems that adult learning facilitators alone are responsible for their own professional development. Facilitators self-organize and develop their competences through learning from each other and by reflecting on their own experiences.

DISCUSSION

Multiple identities

The research data demonstrates that multiple identities were found among the Mongolian adult learning facilitators that we interviewed: (1) identity as a teacher with the transmitting perspective who is confident, (2) identity as a teacher with the transmitting perspective who is less confident, and (3) identity as a mentor with the nurturing perspective who is confident. These multiple identities are formulated based on their self-image referring to their facilitation perspectives and self-esteem as competent professionals because adult learning facilitators' self-image is closely connected with their self-esteem. Indeed, Kelchtermans (2009; 2018) emphasizes that professional identity constructs; namely, self-image; job motivation; self-esteem, tasks and future perspectives, are interdependent or interrelated. Therefore, in our case, the self-image and self-esteem constructs seem to affect or shape each other. Moreover, self-esteem can be expressed by emotions experienced by facilitators. Thus, when defining facilitators' self-esteem, we looked at the emotions that they expressed.

Adult learning facilitators' self-esteem, which is expressed by their emotions, can have a great impact on their identities. Particularly, unpleasant emotions, such as concern, fear, anxiety and guilt are common due to the fact that they are not specialized in their subject matters and adult teaching methodologies. Thus, their self-esteem as competent professionals seem to be less positive. Indeed, the existing studies emphasize that subject matter specialization and adult teaching methodological skills are the core competences needed by adult learning facilitators (Bechtel, 2008; Buiskool & Broek, 2011; Bernhardsson & Lattke, 2011; Research voor Beleid, 2010; van Dellen & van der Kamp, 2008; Wahlgren, 2016). Our research confirms that these competences are relevant to the Mongolian context as well. This shows that adult learning facilitators' low self-esteem is valid and understandable. This finding is in line with previous studies which suggested that emotions can have a significant impact on teachers' professional identity formation (Nichols, Schutz, Rodgers & Bilica, 2016; Flores & Day, 2006; Schutz, Nichols & Schwenke, 2018; Zembylas, 2003). Particularly, negative emotions such as "professional uncertainty, confusion, inadequacy, anxiety and doubt" (Jeffrey & Woods, 1996 as cited in Flores & Day, 2006, p. 221) may lead to adult learning facilitators questioning their identity and professional beliefs. In our research

context, adult learning facilitators are more likely to have negative emotions resulting from their low self-esteem as competent professionals.

Conflicted identity resulting from a gap between ideal and real

Adult learning facilitators know enough about adult learning needs and assessment of those needs are a key to their profession, but they are not likely to implement it. This is what we call a conflicted identity resulting from a gap between the ideal and the real. Moreover, there should be an elaboration about why they do not carefully assess adult learning needs or why they simply shift this task to someone else even though they are well aware of its importance. It is possible that they do not know how to assess adult learning needs or they may not realize that they are doing their assessment practice improperly. If these assumptions are true, then this could trigger questions about adult learning facilitators' professional competences.

Another conflict could be facilitators' ideal vision of what they should be versus their performance in reality. When asked to define themselves as professionals, adult learning facilitators are likely to describe their ideal visions of a competent adult learning facilitator. Particularly, they tend to determine adult learning facilitators in terms of the competences they should acquire. For instance, they suggest that adult learning facilitators are competent in subject-matter specialization, adult teaching methods and communication. At the same time, adult learning facilitators tend to feel concerned about their qualifications and they question their specialization in their subject-matters. Mongolian adult learning facilitators do not feel confident about their core competences as adult learning facilitators. Consequently, there is a conflict resulting from the gap between ideal perceptions and real situations.

Adult learning and education as a transmission of essential information and knowledge

Adult learning facilitators seem to share a common tendency that adult learning and education is simply a transmission of necessary information, knowledge and skills to adults. Our interviews show that some adult learning facilitators explicitly define their profession as a transmission of information and knowledge to adults. Also, adult learning facilitators are more likely to identify as 'a person who is knowledgeable in many fields' when describing competent adult learning facilitators' professional traits. They believe that adult learning facilitators need to be knowledgeable in multiple fields, so that they are able to answer all sorts of questions raised by adult learners. This finding was supported by both our interview and survey data. It seems that if they fail to answer those questions, they feel like they are losing learners' respect and only acting at being competent facilitators. However, adult

learning facilitators need to become aware of this fact and learn how to positively and confidently respond to adult learners' questions that are irrelevant from what was discussed during the training rather than trying so hard to answer all sorts of questions correctly. Perhaps even more importantly, adult learning facilitators need to see beyond adult learning and education as a transmission of information, knowledge and skills. Adult learning facilitators display both transmitting and nurturing perspectives, neither of which should be perceived as better than the other (Pratt, 1992). However, adult learning and education should be a means of helping adults to understand, cope and adjust to the world around them for themselves and others. Particularly, adults need to be lifelong learners to cope with the rapid changes in societies triggered by information, communication and technology advances and other factors such as Covid-19. Thus, adult learning programmes should focus on building and supporting adult learners' learner autonomy or self-directedness (Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005) which could be a basis for lifelong learning competences. In other words, adult learning and education should not be just a transmission of information and knowledge, rather it should be a means for empowering adults through building and supporting their learner autonomy, thus making them lifelong learners.

Professional complexity: Opposing tendencies
Our research indicates two opposing tendencies in regard to professional complexity. *On the one hand,* some facilitators tend to determine their profession as 'easy' because adult learners take responsibility for their own learning. They believe that adults are mature and are responsible for their own learning and its outcome. This is why some think that adult learning facilitators just need to do what they are expected to do and move on. What they need to do could be transmitting knowledge and skills to adults, while learning and applying those knowledge and skills into lives could be solely the responsibility of adult learners. In this aspect, adult learning facilitation can be seen as an 'easy' job with less complexity. *On the other hand,* some facilitators tend to define their profession as complex or 'difficult' due to the diversity of adult learners. Adult learners are diverse in terms of age, gender, educational background, experience, employment and life circumstance, as well their opinions, beliefs, attitudes and values.

Flexible adult facilitation approaches
Adult learning facilitators tend to consider both approaches to teaching – teacher-centred and student-centred – as applicable in adult learning and teaching. This shows that adult learning

facilitators seem to use both approaches considering their learners' needs and other contextual circumstances such as training types, duration, etc. However, when looking at individual facilitators' approaches, the student-centred approach seems to be preferred more over the teacher-centred approach. This could be explained by several points. (1) Experienced facilitators might be unable to gain knowledge and skills during their initial preparation programmes because the student-centred approach was not integrated into the curriculum. (2) Experienced facilitators might think that adult learners expect to learn in the same way they used to be when they were in school, and consequently facilitators may tend to use the teacher-centred approach. (3) Experienced facilitators tend to use the teacher-centred approach because of the duration of adult training. Some adult training lasts than an hour and within this timeframe, perhaps the teacher-centred (e.g. lecturing) approach is more suitable.

Different entry paths and their impact on unified professional identity

Our findings indicate that there are two entry paths for adult learning facilitators. *The first entry path* is those directly acting as adult learning facilitators without specialization, meanwhile *the other entry path* is those who entered the field after developing the necessary competences through specialized training programmes. However, the number of facilitators with the latter entry path are very few because specialized programmes have only recently been established. Additionally, there has been an obligation for facilitators to have a teaching diploma, although these do not need to be teaching diplomas specialized in adult learning and teaching. This is why there have been new entrants who directly act as adult learning facilitators without completing specialized training programmes.

Andersson et al (2013) assume that different entries may have an impact on shaping professional identity of adult learning facilitators. We support this claim, but we wanted to clarify it further. In our understanding, these different entries may challenge shaping unified professional identity among adult learning facilitators. Having a unified identity which distinguishes adult learning facilitators from other professionals could be a key aspect when talking about professional identity. Moreover, the lack of a unified identity among adult learning facilitators could threaten their collective practice as professionals, which enables the profession to be recognized and accepted by the public. Although one may think that having no unified identity among adult learning facilitators could be a distinguishable feature from others, we insist that there should be a unified professional identity that is shared by practitioners who belong to the same professional community.

Individual development towards a collective professionalism

Our findings suggest that adult learning facilitators self-organize and develop their own professionalism, that is, they develop and update their competences by reflecting on their actual teaching practices. This shows that daily pragmatism and individualism, as van Dellen and van der Kamp (2008) conceptualized it, have prevailed in their performance, which may threaten their collective professionalism. In our understanding, without collective professionalism, individuals are not considered professionals, meaning in effect the profession does not exist. However, they self-organize, identify individual practice through reflection and share those as a collective, even if 'just locally'. Hence, they aim to rely on notions of reflective practice and depart from individual pragmatism to create the beginnings of what van Dellen and van der Kamp (2008) describe as collective professionalism. This 'local' collectivism should be expanded through the entire professional community, and inasmuch as collective professionalism can be practiced, facilitators can be considered professionals. In light of these findings, there should be a regulatory professional development framework which supports adult learning facilitators' collective professionalism.

Common competence profile for adult learning facilitators

We identified the common competence profile for adult learning facilitators based on the common competence profiles from the European context. This common competence profile consists of 10 domains which are 1) assessing adult learning needs, 2) designing and planning programmes, 3) subject matter specialization, 4) didactical-methodological competence, 5) monitoring and evaluation of learning processes, 6) supporting adult learners, 7) supporting institutional administration issues, 8) personal and professional development, 9) communication, and 10) personal traits. These common competences are not differentiated by adult learning facilitators' different working experience and adult learners' education levels. However, there were some significant differences between different stakeholder on the prioritization of common competences. For instance, having the competence to assess adult learners' needs was less important for the participating adult learners than for their facilitators. This means that adult learners may perceive their own learning needs as less important than their facilitators do, even though in adult learning and teaching, learning needs assessment is considered a key andragogical principle (Knowles, 1980; Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005). Furthermore, assessing learning needs helps adults to understand their own learning preferences; that is, they should be able to reflect on what they want to learn, how they learn best and why they want to learn (Knowles, 1980; Knowles, Holton III &

Swanson, 2005). Therefore, acquiring these skills (both for facilitators and learners) could lead to increasing adult learners' participation rates, since in the Mongolian context too learners' perception of their own learning needs is one of the factors that influences their decision to participate in non-formal adult educational programmes (Zagir, 2014).

The relationship between professional identity and competence

Our research findings indicate that professional identity and competence are related. They seem to have a whole-part relationship. In particular, professional identity may be a whole, while competence may be a part of the whole, but a core part. When asking adult learning facilitators to define themselves as professionals, they are more likely to describe competences of good adult learning facilitators. The competences mentioned by adult learning facilitators indicate professional skills as well as personal traits that should be possessed by competent facilitators. Our claim was supported by the existing study (Rushbrook, Karmel & Bound, 2014), which found that being an adult learning facilitator in Singapore means having acquired particular competences. This shows that facilitators' professional identity is defined by a close connection with their competences. Also, Pratt, Rockmann and Kaufmann (2006) argue that professional identity indicates what an individual does. 'What an individual does' indicates professional tasks and activities that are performed by the individual. To perform those professional tasks and activities efficiently and sufficiently, the individual needs to possess competences. In our understanding, this shows the relationship between professional identity and competence, but we claim that 'what individual does' does not alone justify his or her professional identity. Moreover, Meijer, Korthagen and Vasalos (2009) insist that professional identity and competence should be seen as the two sides of the same coin, but this is reflected in teacher education. In our study, these are phenomena that have a whole-part relationship. We believe that competence could be a core part of describing adult learning facilitators' professional identity. This means that if someone defines him or herself as a professional, he or she needs to have certain competences that are unique to the profession. However, professional identity is not just a notion that is represented by competences that are needed to perform professional tasks, rather it is a whole notion of a teacher self which includes their motivation, self-esteem and future visions along with their competences.

CONCLUSION

We found that some Mongolian adult learning facilitators whose main task is to teach adults are motivated internally and have positive future professional expectations, while some are

concerned about their current competences, which they think are far from ideal. Adult learning facilitators have formed different identities as a result of their responsible programmes, initial professional background and their adult teaching beliefs. Their self-esteem as professionals has a significant impact on their identities. Particularly, many facilitators have low self-esteem as professionals, which impacts their identities. Moreover, adult learning facilitators' professional identity can be characterized by specific competences which they should acquire. Those specific competences were verified by different, yet relevant stakeholders and by their different characterizations. At least three core competences; namely, subject matter specialization, adult teaching methodologies and communication, should be possessed by any facilitator as a minimum standard. Our research findings focusing on the Mongolian context extends literature of international perspectives on adult learning facilitators' professionalism and the profession as a representation of the Asia and Pacific region, where this kind of research is scarce.

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