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Original research paper

“I AM TILTING AT WINDMILLS”: TENSIONS IN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MODEL OF THE AGONISTIC SELF*

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we present an exploratory study on tensions in teacher professional identity based on the Model of Agonistic Self. The sample comprised nine class and subject teachers employed at two primary schools in Belgrade. The research was conceived as a multiple-case study in which thematic analysis was used as an auxiliary method for analyzing the data obtained via a semi-structured interview. The criterion for the selection of tense situations was the presence of one of the four types of tense relations in the agonistic self: acceptance with critique, productive tension, acute conflict, and permanent conflict. These relations were interpreted as different forms of psychosocial dynamics and ways of resolving psychological tension among participants. Subsequently, we thematically categorized the selected situations. We identified nine themes in relation to which our participants had professional dilemmas. Our findings indicate that the same professional dilemma within a teacher's self can manifest itself in different kinds of tense relations. This suggests that it is not sufficient to direct research attention towards the content of the narratives about professional dilemmas, but that it is also necessary to explore different mechanisms of psychosocial dynamics through which these tensions develop and get resolved.

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This perspective on teachers' professional dilemmas represents a contribution to the creation of new models and the refinement of existing models of teacher professional development.

Key words:

teachers' professional dilemmas, teacher professional identity, dialogical self, Model of the Agonistic Self, qualitative methodology.

■ INTRODUCTION

One of the key features of professional identity is found in its tense nature (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Alsup, 2008; Niessen, 2007). A sense of self as a teacher is developed in the context of different values, professional demands, and roles found within everyday teaching practice. These diverse elements of experience and meaning are often conflicting, which makes their integration into a coherent narrative about oneself as a teacher rather challenging and prone to frequent changes. Research has revealed the existence of contradictory demands in relation to traditional and modern teaching methods, tensions between the academically oriented educational ideology and practical experiences in the classroom, and conflicts between teachers' personal beliefs and professional expectations or between teachers' personal and professional identities (Alsup, 2008). Tensions and conflicts are particularly amplified in transitory phases of a teacher's career, such as a transition from a non-educational context (e.g., a company) into the education system or from one education level to another. In such situations, teachers experience a crisis in terms of their former roles and existing competencies and face the challenge of including new roles and competencies into their professional repertoire (Monereo, 2019).

Empirical findings on conflicts in the creation of a sense of self are aligned with the new understanding of professional identity as a continuous, never-ending process of interpretation of diverse professional experiences as well as negotiation and balancing between alternative positions of subjectivity, all of which makes the process dynamic (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2000; Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite, 2010).

The Social Origins of Identity: Social Discourses as Sources of Identity Tensions

A characteristic of professional identity that decisively determines its tense nature is its social origin. Contemporary research on identity has often been shaped by influential ideas proposing that the tension in the domain of mental life concerning the sense of self stems from turmoil and conflicts between ideological forces in the outside world, which reflect on the person's inner world (Bakhtin, 1929/1984;

Hermans, 1996; 2018). Gergen (1991) similarly concludes that opposing impulses and tendencies in self-conceiving arise as a result of the self being saturated with diverse social perspectives and practices. In this sense, the tension in teacher professional identity partially stems from the complexity of the education system as a context characterized by educational discourses that offer opposing ways of conceiving the role of a teacher, incoherent and changeable education policies, conflicting interests of different actors, and contradictory expectations of the wider community.

For two decades, the education system of the Republic of Serbia has been in constant transition and undergoing various reforms (OECD, 2020). Even though the latest trends place an emphasis on creative and interactive methods, teamwork, and similar solutions, the traditional, teacher-centered approach is still dominant (OECD, 2012). On the other hand, the curriculum is centralized and leaves little room for individual adjustments in accordance with teachers' needs and preferences (OECD, 2020). Such education policies send a dual, contradictory message, which can manifest itself in the form of internal tension or a conflict between two value systems within a teacher's self. The central aspect of this contradiction is reflected in the fact that on the one hand, policies declaratively encourage teacher creativity and innovativeness in pedagogical work, with an emphasis on the significance of the development of critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills among students, while on the other hand, student success (and consequently, the quality of teachers' work) is still measured by achievement on factual knowledge tests ("And then you are completely confused, you wonder what you should do, whether you are a good teacher if you make them learn by the book, the same way you had to learn, or if you are a good teacher if you let them be creative").

In addition to opposing models of knowledge transfer and learning outcomes, the local education system is characterized by the coexistence of discordant discourses of children's nature, upbringing, and psyche. Traditional discourses on the cultivation of children's nature advocate a reserved and strict relationship with children. Since the end of the 19th century, they have been opposed by the modern psychological discourse, which reached its peak influence on the shaping of school practice in our country following the appointment of school counselors. The psychological discourse speaks in favor of bringing the practice closer to children, forming trust-based relationships, and recognizing students' individual differences (Džinović, 2010). At the individual level, this conflict can be observed in the internal relationships between psychological, pedagogical, and educational (and other) voices.

Shifts and clashes between different social values in the context of education and upbringing manifest themselves in changes in teachers' main concerns (Fuller, 1969; Guillaume & Rudney, 1993; Simić, 2014). For example, young teachers used to strive to maintain the image of a teacher as an authority figure, an expert on the subject, and a person who imparts knowledge, while young teachers today attribute

greater importance to their relationships with students and the implementation of adequate teaching practices (Simić, 2014). However, in our schools and society, the models of teachers as authority figures and experts in particular scientific fields still persist, which is why themes related to the abovementioned models remain important to teachers. This can also be observed in the enduring prevailment of traditional teaching practices in which the teacher is the lecturer and the one who imparts knowledge instead of being a facilitator who guides the process of knowledge construction (Džinkić & Milutinović, 2018).

Teachers' concerns likewise change during individual professional development. For example, years of work experience lessen concerns about livelihood and being considered an expert authority as well as concerns about the effectiveness of teaching methods, grading, and colleagues, but what grows is concern related to society's attitude towards education and teachers' status in society (Simić, 2014). A study conducted in Serbia that aimed to verify and validate Fuller's three-phase model of teacher concerns (Fuller & Brown, 1975, cited in Vujisić-Živković & Vranješević, 2019) showed a shift in concerns, from the ones related to a teacher's sense of self as an authority figure and ways of overcoming practical problems in the classroom to concerns pertaining to the improvement of the process of education and upbringing and cognitive and emotional benefits for students (Vujisić-Živković & Vranješević, 2019). From the perspective of the Model of Agonistic Self, in an individual teacher, these concerns manifest themselves as discrete, personified ideologies, that is, voices that struggle over influence on the teacher's stream of consciousness and professional practice.

Identity Multiplicity: Tension Conceived from the perspective of the Model of the Agonistic Self

Apart from the social context, contemporary studies have suggested that another source of tension in identity in general and teacher professional identity in particular lies in its inherent multiplicity (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000). Nowadays, many authors advocate the approach according to which the self and identity comprise a multitude of components that are relatively autonomous and constitute somewhat discordant representations of the self in different situations. Within this approach, the dialogical self theory has been particularly influential and it has become a popular framework for research on teacher identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). This theory is based on a model of the expanded, multivoiced self that is open to the social environment and composed of a multitude of I-positions as personal perspectives that the person alternately adopts, thus endowing each of them with a voice and allowing for their mutual negotiations (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Hermans, 2018). Based on the dialogical self model, Akkerman and Meijer (2011)

define teacher professional identity as an unfolding dialogue between numerous I-positions that leads to the establishment of a relatively coherent sense of self and its maintenance in different social investments over the course of a teacher's career. This definition shows that the dialogical self theory acknowledges contradictoriness, conflicts, and discontinuity in the expression of a sense of subjectivity, while simultaneously emphasizing the presence of 'centralist forces' within the self that allow for the formation of a whole in spite of disparities (Hermans, 2001).

The Model of Agonistic Self emerged as an elaboration of the dialogical self model in the direction of a greater acknowledgement of the constitutive role of power relations in the dynamics of the multivoiced self (Džinović, 2022). What defines the agonistic self is that the self is seen as an encounter of numerous internal and internalized voices struggling for prevailment (Džinović, 2022). Since it is impossible to separate the dynamics of the self from interpersonal relations as well as institutionalized practices and discourses in which intrapsychic and interpersonal processes are embedded, it is necessary to recognize the self as a part of a wider strategic situation comprising tense relations between the self (its internal and internalized voices) and external voices, which are together embedded in the institutional and wider cultural contexts (Džinović, Grbić & Vesić, in press; Grbić, Džinović & Vesić, under review). The role of the social context in the shaping of the dynamics of the agonistic self is additionally emphasized by the recognition of its dual effect: formative – which implies that the context is a source of positions of subjectivity to be internalized and idiosyncratically interpreted as voices of the self; and legitimizing – which pertains to the active legitimization or delegitimization of the existing voices of the self by the context's discursive products, such as norms, procedures, and material objects.

This study is a part of a wider research on teacher professional identity, within which we collected and analyzed data including but not limited to narratives or meanings teachers used to conceptualize tensions in their professional sense of self (see Research Context and Participants, Data Gathering, and Research Procedure). In our previous work, we explored tensions in teacher identity, analyzing them from a formal point of view and operationalizing them as types of dyadic relations between voices (Džinović, Grbić & Vesić, in press). The concept of *voice* was defined as a personified, voiced, and named ideology that encompasses a relatively coherent set of values and action orientations. We identified eight functions that voices of the self can perform and six types of dyadic relations in which they can engage. What follows is a brief overview of these functions and relations.

What can a voice do within a person's self? Voice functions. Ideologues are voices that represent an individual's core values and personify professional purpose, thus representing the cornerstone of professional identity. Kings are Ideologues that teachers recognize as the current perspectives responsible for teaching students (in interviews, teachers named them the Teacher, the Lecturer, and sometimes, the

Motivator). Kings are the central voices that prevail over numerous other voices, while they themselves rely on *dominant Ideologues*, which most commonly personify important people from the past that teachers saw as role models (e.g., the Family voice, the Teacher Fairness voice). Kings have direct assistants called *Executors* that use their practical knowledge and skills to implement the ideology of their King (e.g., the Encourager, the Animator, the Actor) and *Facilitators* that use their interactions with external voices (e.g., students) to set the scene for the King to take over and educate students (e.g., the Psychologist). The King, Executors, and Facilitators constitute the *King's Coalition*. Teachers' self also encompasses voices whose values differ from their central values personified in the King (e.g., the Upbringer, the Enlightener). We labeled these influential voices as *Advocates*, due to their ability to force the King and its coalition to modify their interactions with students and realize goals that are important to Advocates. In addition to these four groups of voices with which teachers strongly identified, our findings revealed the presence of two types of ideologies that personify aspects of their experiences and behavior, but towards which teachers have a negative or ambivalent attitude. The first type includes *Illegitimate Facilitators*, voices that personify anger, socially unacceptable behavior, and radical beliefs (e.g., "Students are insolent and brash, their brains are washed out."), causing conflicts with other voices, which is why they are delegitimized by the King's Coalition and the dominant Ideologue. Still, their impulsive actions after experiencing interpersonal problems (e.g., students' undisciplined behavior) set the scene for the King to reappear and continue realizing its goals (e.g., teaching students; which is why we identified these voices as Facilitators). The other type includes *Protestors*, personifications of the feelings of exhaustion, frustration, and sadness (e.g., the Emotional) or value orientations that clash with the values of the King's Coalition (e.g., the Angel), which rarely manage to seize control over teachers' behavior. Particularly important Protestors are *Antagonists*, which personify the sense of pointlessness of investing efforts, worthlessness, and thinking about a career change (e.g., the Grumpy, the Rebel). Finally, the last two voice functions include *Process Modifiers* (e.g., Controller) and *Subsequent Evaluators* (e.g., the Evaluator), which represent personifications of the process of personal reflection and comment on the strategic situation during or after it takes place (e.g., after class). Subsequent evaluation may be aimed at harmonization with personal or professional values (e.g., "Is the class sufficiently interactive?") or bringing marginalized perspectives to the fore (e.g., "The role of the Upbringer leaves me exhausted.").

What kinds of interactions exist between the voices of the self? Relations between voices. Identification and acceptance with critique are reserved for relations with the dominant Ideologue. In the case of *identification*, the King adopts the entire value system of the dominant Ideologue and expands it to include additional, analogous beliefs. On the other hand, in *acceptance with critique*, the King (or, e.g., the Illegitimate Facilitator) adopts only a part of the dominant Ideologue's value system and opposes

its other aspects (see below). *Team work* is the relation type found among voices that belong to the King's Coalition: the Executor and the Facilitator act as a team in favor of the King, helping it realize its goals. The relation between the King's Coalition and influential voices that modify the King's interaction with external voices can be that of *cooperation* (Advocates) or *productive tension* (Advocates, Process Modifiers, and Subsequent Evaluators). Finally, all voices apart from the members of the King's coalition can come into *conflict* with the King.

Tense relations between voices within a teacher's self

When it comes to relations in which tensions are particularly pronounced, in the focus of this paper are acceptance with critique, productive tension, and conflict.

Acceptance with critique is a complex relationship that involves the acceptance of some and the rejection of other elements of a voice's ideology. According to our model, the King, which appears later in development, develops through identification with the dominant Ideologue, but elaborates its value system over time by critically distancing itself from some aspects of the dominant Ideologue's ideology ("I think that they [grandma and grandpa – dominant Ideologues] would not take it... Times have changed and I have to take on roles that are different from theirs"). However, acceptance with critique is also characteristic of relationships between dominant Ideologues and Illegitimate Facilitators ("I remember my grandma telling me: "If they do not listen to you... speak in a low voice." Yeah, right... they only respond to forte dynamics... something dramatic and dynamic."). In this case, the dynamics are even more complex, as they involve both complete identification (in terms of the value position) and the utter incompatibility that characterizes conflicts (in terms of how the value position should be implemented).

Productive tension allows for the simultaneous implementation of two partially compatible ideologies. Namely, an influential voice forces the King to partially modify its performance in order to maintain prevailment in relation to external voices. In this case, behavior is perceived as coherent on the outside, while participants' phenomenological experience still involves the awareness of the tension between different streams of thought and action that are channeled into a joint, directed activity ("The Lecturer loves it when children participate", while the Controller restrains it: "Yes, but not all the time and not 100%"). Thus, if the circumstances change, productive tension can shift to a conflict the same way that an acute conflict can be resolved through the reestablishment of productive tension.

A *conflict* is a manifestation of the highest tension in the dynamics of the agonistic self, as it represents a relation between ideologies characterized by mutual exclusivity. It differs from productive tension in that prevailment comes at the price of suppressing¹ opposing ideologies.

There are short-term, *acute conflicts*, whose emergence is greatly influenced by temporary changes in the power balance between voices within the strategic situation in which the self is found. Most often, such conflicts are the result of the breakdown of the relatively stable relationship between the King and the Advocate or the Process Modifier, voices that previously managed to harmonize the realization of their ideologies through productive tension or cooperation, in spite of their differences. The outcome of this relationship breakdown is always favorable for one of the parties (e.g., the King, which the teacher named the Lecturer completely neglects the Process Modifier named the Controller, “because of being happy that the children are participating”, thus “forgetting about the syllabus and the curriculum”), which leads to the escalation of the conflict within the strategic situation (“The Controller forces the Lecturer to be reasonable: “That is enough, Lecturer, this is not a kindergarten. They have come here to learn”). Acute conflicts escalate and pull other voices into the conflict, which is another indicator of the undermining of the previously established order of power and the frail harmonization of tensions within the teacher’s self.

There are also relatively *permanent conflicts* between voices, which are primarily characteristic of relationships between the Ideologue and voices that resist it cross-situationally, including the Protestor and particularly the Antagonist. Likewise, some aspects of the educational context are in permanent conflict with certain Ideologues, as noted previously.

Research Aim

After describing tensions in teacher identity from the perspective of formal aspects of the dynamics of the agonistic self (as relations of acceptance with critique, productive tension, and conflict), we come to the goal of the present study. The aim of this paper pertains to determining the most significant tensions in teacher professional self in terms of their content, i.e. concrete discordances that characterize teacher identity and everyday professional practice. Accordingly, we formulated the following research questions: 1. Which voices most commonly enter relations of acceptance with critique? 2. Which voices habitually form relationships characterized by (stable) productive tension? 3. Which voices most frequently come into acute conflicts? 4. Which voices stay in permanent conflict in terms of the contents of their ideologies?.

¹ In this paper, suppression denotes the kind of prevailment of one voice over another that results in the complete silencing of the suppressed voice.

■ METHOD

Research whose results are presented in this paper constitutes a part of a wider study on teacher professional identity from the perspective of the Model of Agonistic Self. Since we consider it crucial for understanding the methodological choices and findings presented in this paper, we here provide a brief but comprehensive description of data gathering and analysis processes, emphasizing segments that are particularly important for the present paper, that is, the analysis of tensions within teacher identity in terms of the content of these tensions.

Research context and participants

The research was conducted in two primary schools in the central areas of Belgrade, which participated as partners in a research project directed at encouraging the implementation of innovative teaching practices. Teachers employed at the aforementioned schools were invited to participate in the research, which involved interviewing them about their professional experiences and old and new professional roles. Nine teachers volunteered to participate, including seven subject teachers and two class teachers. Most participants taught Serbian or a foreign language. They belonged to different categories in terms of years of work experience: 1-10 (N = 3), 10-20 (N = 4), and > 20 (N = 2). We believe this contributed to the diversity of their perspectives and the richness of data.

Data gathering

We gathered data using the Agonistic Self Interview (ASI), which we developed for the purpose of this research. This semi-structured interview represented an operationalization of the Model of Agonistic Self (Džinović, Vesić & Grbić, 2021; Džinović, Grbić & Vesić, 2021; Džinović, Grbić & Vesić, in press; Grbić, Džinović & Vesić, under review; Grbić, Vesić & Džinović, 2021). The first part of the interview focused on gathering data on the structure, that is, the set of voices of a person's self, thus laying the foundation for the second part of the interview, which collected data on the dynamics, that is, the distribution of power between the identified voices and the types of relations the voices entered. Teachers were asked to produce a graphical representation of their professional roles, which constituted an auxiliary technique used to encourage teachers to elaborate on the contents of voices' ideologies and relations.

When it comes to the structure or the repertoire of voices, teachers were encouraged to list and describe their professional roles, values, duties, and practices that they recognized as common in their professional engagement (e.g., “From your perspective, what is important for a teacher to be and do? How do you like to organize your lessons? What teaching method do you prefer? How would you name this role? Try to recall a situation in which you were this kind of a teacher. What did it look like? Could you name another professional role that is important to you?”). After eliciting their internal voices, which teachers felt were authentically theirs, we moved on to eliciting internalized voices, which represented personifications of respected others (e.g., “Think of a person whose words or behavior you remember and sometimes call to mind when you are preparing or teaching a class. Describe this voice.”). Finally, we asked our participants to describe their perceptions of different actors in the education system with whom they interacted, which our model labels as external voices.

The segment related to the dynamics of the agonistic self focused on data about dominant versus subordinate voices (e.g., “Which voices do you recognize as powerful, louder than others, and successful in realizing goals that are important to them? Which situations reveal this? What other voices are present but do not manage to influence your practice? What prevents them from exerting influence?”). Furthermore, in this segment, we learned which voices cooperated and which ones opposed one another or entered conflicts (e.g., “Which of your roles go well together? Can you recall a situation exemplifying their harmonious accord? Which voices are at each other’s throats? What does this look like in practice? How does this confrontation end?”). Data of particular relevance to this research pertained to voice pairs that teachers perceived as discordant and personifying opposite values and practical orientations.

Research Procedure

Participants were interviewed twice. After the first interview, we analyzed data for each teacher individually and described the voice repertoires in their professional identities and typical interactions between those voices in everyday work situations. A simplified and linguistically adapted report on the individual analysis was given to each teacher for the purposes of participant validation and collection of further data that would allow us to test our hypotheses, resolve dilemmas, and elaborate the existing theory (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). The described participant validation was encompassed by the second interview, in which five teachers participated orally, while four teachers whose initial data were less ambiguous provided their responses in written form. Based on the data obtained in the second interview, we significantly expanded individual reports, which were then transversally analyzed.

All participants verbally consented to audio recording conversations with them. The interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes, with the first interview conducted at teachers' respective schools and the second interview conducted at the institution to which the researchers were affiliated. Data were collected between April 2019 and February 2020.²

Data Analysis

The research was conceived as a multiple-case study, which allowed for the use of idiographic data for the purpose of formulating a psychological theory (Willig, 2013; Yin, 1994/2014). We conducted a reflexive inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019). For the purpose of this paper, the analysis was specifically directed at producing: 1) a categorization of types of tense relations within teacher professional self; and 2) a categorization based on content or narratives offered by teachers. The first step in the categorization process was the selection of situations that we identified as tense. The selection criterion was the presence of one of the four types of tense relations in the given situation: acceptance with critique, productive tension, acute conflict, and permanent conflict. These types were obtained as inductive categories in our previous research on the dynamics of the agonistic self (Džinović, Grbić & Vesić, in press; Vesić, Džinović & Grbić, 2022). In the following step, we performed a content-based categorization of all situations within each tension type, (e.g. acceptance with critique), and formed categories such as the *tension between innovative and traditional teaching*. This procedure was repeated for each of the four types of tense relations used for situation selection. This allowed us to determine which content-based categories (e.g., the tension between innovative and traditional teaching) were intrapsychically manifested through different tense relations (e.g., through both acceptance with critique and productive tension) and which types of tensions within a teacher's self were only realized through a single tense relation (e.g., the tension between the role of the knowledge imparter and the upbringing role of a teacher always arose in situations in which teachers encountered problems with students, with the cooperation between these two voices turning into an acute conflict). The analysis resulted in the mapping of multiple content-based categories within each four types of tension between voices (Table 1).

² At the time, the relevant research institution did not have an ethics committee, which made it impossible to obtain a confirmation that the research met the ethical standards for scientific research.

The process of generating content-based categories started in individual case studies, with the analysis of each subsequent case serving to validate, revise, and expand the analysis of the previous case (Yin, 1994/2014). This process was followed by a transversal thematic analysis, which yielded the final categorization of common intrapsychic tensions which will be further presented. In line with Braun and Clarke's reflexive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019), the authors engaged in joint data analysis and further elaborated the category system through constant discussions and exchange of perspectives on categories' contents and meanings. We believe that these discussions contributed to the clarity and plausibility of the presented results. To ensure transferability, we decided to briefly present different discourses shaping the current practices in the national educational context and frequently cite original participant statements in the Results section, in order to allow readers to independently assess the plausibility of the isolated categories and their interpretations.

■ RESULTS

Table 1 shows the themes in relation to which teachers pointed to ambivalent values and courses of action. Likewise, the table shows one or more types of tension, defined within the Model of Agonistic Self, through which each of the identified ambivalences are manifested.

Table 1: How the Four Types of Tension Thematically Manifest in Teacher Professional Self

TENSIONS		THEMES								
		Innovative Vs. Traditional Teaching	Letting Emotions Permeate the Professional Practice vs. Being Reserved	Motivating Students Vs. Achieving the Planned Outcomes	Setting Boundaries Vs. Being Friends With Children	Teacher Vs. Upbringer	Fairness Vs. Adjusting the Criteria	Respect Vs. Disrespecting the Teacher's Authority	Enjoyment in Work Vs. Minimal Effort	Students Are Developing vs. Children Are Unprepared
Acceptance With Critique	x		x							
Productive Tension	x			x						
Acute Conflict	x			x		x		x		
Permanent Conflict	x		x				x		x	x

1. The Tension Between Old Values and the Values of the New Age: Acceptance with Critique

The system of a teacher's core beliefs on what the education process should be like is personified in the voices that perform the function of the King in the teacher's identity. The King's ideology is developed by relying on the values of respected others, mainly colleagues of authority. In the teacher's identity, these values are personified in the dominant Ideologues. At the same time, the King adjusts its beliefs and practices to suit the contemporary educational context, which means that it opposes some aspects of the dominant Ideologue's values. What follows is a discussion on these points of divergence.

1.a. Innovative vs. Traditional Teaching. One of the central points of divergence between the King and the dominant Ideologue is the theme of innovative versus traditional teaching. Therefore, although the dominant Ideologue is a voice that represents the cornerstone of a teacher's value system and professional identity, it is not the voice that decisively shapes the professional practice. This means that the dominant Ideologue never comes to the fore in the externally visible social interaction, but rather acts as "the chief advisor in the kingdom". What follows is an example from the narrative of one of the participants.

Tea's King, which she calls the Educator, relies on the Family voice as the dominant Ideologue and adopts its perspective of a traditional teacher as an authority figure as well as the family narrative on endurance, perseverance, and positive energy as the key values. However, the Educator recognizes generational changes that necessitate a new approach: *It was completely different then, so I cannot rely on them, but they left an imprint, passed on values that we should all foster, that children should learn and uphold. Grandma and grandpa were extremely strict, unbelievable so... the Educator is not strict or stern... If you look at the tradition – grandma and grandpa taught frontally, they talked and children were quiet... My Educator needs to learn new things, expand its knowledge. I do not enjoy teaching frontally, it is an antiquated method and it does not work with the new generation. I think that times have changed... Children have a different attitude towards us and I do not think that they could take it... So I have to take on roles that are different from theirs".*

1.b. Showing Emotions: Composed vs. Explosive Teacher Behavior. The Illegitimate Facilitator is similar to the King in that it can adopt a part of the dominant Ideologue's value system while partially opposing it. Most commonly, the Illegitimate Facilitator personifies anger that is expressed through impulsive and aggressive behavior in the classroom, as an attempt to defend the dominant ideology from what teacher perceives as an malevolent student behavior. Due to resorting to such behavior, the Illegitimate Facilitator comes into conflict with the traditional values personified in

the dominant Ideologue, which pertain to teachers' dignified behavior, soft tone, and patience in resolving problems with students.

Tea's Illegitimate Facilitator, which she calls the Boogeyman, shares the values of a respectable and authoritative teacher with the dominant Ideologue, the Family voice. At the same time, it opposes the Family voice, primarily in terms of the ways these values should be fostered: *Children need to learn that there are rules, a system that they need to follow when they grow up... the Boogeyman is like the bad cop who needs to maintain order. An enforcer of law and order... A student told me "If you were my mother, I would be so scared of you"... It was then that I realized I was not aware of my behavior... It was like a volcanic eruption... I remember my grandma telling me: 'You know, if they do not listen to you, speak in a low voice. Keep lowering your voice or stop speaking.' Oh, really? They cannot wait for me to stop speaking, so they could have their fun. They only respond to things that are fast. And dramatic and dynamic.*

2. Balancing Conflicting Values: Productive Tension

In some cases, teachers manage to find a way to harmonize and simultaneously realize markedly different educational goals and demands. Unlike in acceptance with critique, where the King completely rejects the dominant Ideologue's views that it finds outdated, in this form of resolution of an intrapsychic conflict, the King is forced to change its interaction with students in order to meet the demands of another influential perspective (the Advocate, the Process Modifier, or the Subsequent Evaluator).

2.a. Innovative vs. Traditional Teaching. The conflict over organizing classes in a traditional or modern way is a reflection of two opposing educational discourses that coexist in our educational context. When teachers internalize it, it emerges not only as the conflict between the King and the dominant Ideologue, but also as the conflict between the King and another influential voice – the Advocate. Then the King and the Advocate can establish a relatively stable relationship of productive tension, which results in the King incorporating elements of both approaches into its teaching practice. Still, our participants found this to be a tense and not entirely harmonious solution, in spite of the synthesis of the two value positions into a new quality of thinking and behavior.

Mina's King, which she calls the Teacher, personifies traditional values: *The teacher advocates order, hard work, and discipline... It is the strictest voice, it follows the norm, does everything by the rules because that is the only way to acquire knowledge... because those are the old dogmas, that is how we were taught to learn and how we were taught to teach others.* The voice that Mina calls the Enlightener performs the function of the Advocate, which encourages the adoption of a more modern approach

to teaching: *The Enlightener lets them express themselves... They can express themselves freely and break free from the norms... they can be creative, even too much. I ask them not to be little tin soldiers, but to say anything that comes to their minds.* Mina perceives the relationship between these voices as tense, but complementary: *In the meantime, the Teacher finds out that it needs to be creative... But the Teacher has to... influence them and make sure they do not abuse their freedom. I hope this is what everybody does in life, not going into either of the extremes. It would be ideal if everybody asked for everything to be present.*

The line of conflict between the traditional and the innovative is where two other interrelated but separate intrapsychic conflicts arise, which teachers resolve using the same mechanism: by establishing relations of productive tension between voices personifying opposing demands. This allows them to partially realize both perspectives.

2.b. Motivating Students vs. Achieving the Planned Outcomes. Some teachers emphasize their motivational role in the professional practice (Olga: “If the lesson is not interesting enough, creative enough... if you do not try to think of something new all the time, you can see this drop, children are not motivated to learn the subject... There is no place in this line of work for people who are not prepared to dance, jump, and sing with the children.”). However, there are also voices that emphasize the importance of achieving the planned goals and the need to focus on memorizing facts. Most teachers manage to strike the optimal balance between these opposing approaches, which is why their relation in a teacher’s self mostly takes the form of a stable relationship between two moderately tense subjectivizations.

Aleksandra calls her King the Lecturer and describes it as a voice that prefers interactive teaching: *Because the Lecturer is happy when children participate.* However, she recognizes the importance of adhering to the syllabus and the curriculum and this awareness is manifested in the voice she calls the Controller (which performs the function of the Process Modifier): *The Controller is the one who maintains order in the classroom and makes sure the class does not turn chaotic. It reminds me to always take care of everyone so I can be sure that all students are safe, no one falls down the stairs, and so on.* In the relationship that the teacher perceives as tense, the Controller constantly restrains the voice of the Lecturer, which is easily influenced by students when they show that they enjoy interactive learning: *Yes, but not 100% and not all the time. ... The Controller needs to be constantly present to remind the Lecturer not to cross boundaries. It needs to regulate, make sure order is maintained.*

2.c. Setting Boundaries vs. Being Friends with Children. A dilemma that is particularly common among young class teachers is established along the axis of setting boundaries versus being friends with children. On the one hand, there is the classic educational imperative that requires the teacher to act as an adult in relationships with students and thus gain their respect. On the other hand, there is the need to be open, close, and friendly. The voices of maturity exert great influence on the voices that would establish overly close relationships with students, which results in teachers striking a balance between being distant and having close relationships with students.

Aleksandra, who is a young teacher, recognizes a voice she calls the Adult, which performs the function of the Process Modifier. This voice has a crucial role in her professional identity, since its tense relations with other voices help the teacher maintain boundaries in her relationships with children: *Actually, the Adult monitors these roles, follows them all the time in order to remind them that boundaries need to exist. Particularly because of these boundaries, because they – the Pedagogue, the Friend, and the Lecturer – love children and they are extremely open to children. Which is good. But again, it is a thin line between... being open while at the same time making it clear that we are the adults and the ones who organize work in the classroom. The Adult has these tense relationships with them and reminds them of that. Otherwise, they would get too close to children and lose all authority.*

3. When Problems Lead to a Clash of Values: Acute Conflicts

Thematically speaking, acute conflicts most often revolve around the same dilemmas that used to be commonly resolved through productive tension. Even in the case of previous harmonization of different values through cooperation, there is still a potential for conflict. What transforms these relations of productive tension (or cooperation) into a conflict is the behavior of students as external voices or a change in the educational context. Namely, students or the context can support one perspective at the expense of the other or undermine the realization of one of the two perspectives. What follows is a brief period marked by the actualization of only one of the two perspectives that were previously simultaneously realized. Then the neglected voice enters a conflict with the reinforced voice and the situation is resolved by reverting to the previous relationship of productive tension (or cooperation) between the two voices. Finally, acute conflicts can arise between internal voices in a teacher's self and external voices (e.g., students), which further fuels internal conflicts. These conflicts predominantly concern the theme of respect for the teacher.

3.1. Escalation of a Tense Relation: From Productive Tension to Conflict

3.1.a. *Innovative vs. Traditional Teaching.* As shown previously, our participants usually managed to simultaneously foster both traditional and modern educational values, with a tense but stable relationship between them. Our results revealed that when teachers were influenced by changes in the context and when they gave preference to modern approach at the expense of the older one, they soon began to struggle with intrapsychic dilemmas and contestations from external voices and the conservative aspects of the context. The resolution of this acute conflict between voices personifying contemporary methods and voices personifying traditional teaching was found in reverting to a stable relationship of productive tension between them, wherein elements of both perspectives were adopted.

Rada calls her King the Lecturer and describes it as a voice that strives to ensure the acquisition of factual knowledge by applying traditional methods: *It provides an outline, a framework, and the Motivator is the spice.* The voice that Rada calls the Motivator performs the function of the Advocate and it emphasizes persistence and the importance of developing critical and divergent thinking: *To me, it is crucial that they think, make mistakes, and use those mistakes to reach the right conclusion... They need to learn to identify problems and solve them so they could understand that life is all about trying and not giving up... It is like sports, you like what you do, it is hard but you overcome obstacles, not everything is lovely and fun, you discipline yourself and find your own source of motivation.* When the availability of a modern textbook strengthens the Motivator, it temporarily silences the Lecturer: *Now, we are going through something completely new... I chose a textbook that is filled with various instruments and contains no definitions.* However, the voice that Rada calls the Reexamination (which performs the function of the Subsequent Evaluator) undermines the Motivator: *And yet, I keep asking myself whether it could yield all the achievements they need to enroll in secondary school.* Parents do the same: *I can see that they are [judging me against] something traditional... Very few parents have said that it is good that we are encouraging them to think. No, there are no definitions, there is nothing to learn, there is barely a page full of text.* The voice of Reality chimes in: *I tried to make it ideal, but we all know that is impossible, because it is not all up to me, no matter how hard I tried.* As a result of these multiple conflicts, the Motivator loses power, which leads to the reestablishment of productive tension with the Lecturer as the main voice in the teacher's work with students: *The voice of the Lecturer grows stronger... The Lecturer underestimated itself a bit.* In this example, we can observe the phenomenon of acute conflict escalation, with the conflict involving not only the King (the Lecturer) and the Advocate (the Motivator), but also the voice of the evaluator (the Reexamination), external voices (Parents), and the context through the narrative of inability to fulfill the ideal expectations.

3.1.b. *Motivating Students vs. Achieving the Planned Outcomes.* As in the case of striking a balance between traditional and modern teaching, the fragile balance between focusing on student motivation and focusing on the acquisition of factual knowledge is easily disturbed in some teachers, which results in a conflict between voices personifying opposing goals. However, this dynamic is resolved by reverting to productive tension.

Aleksandra points out that when students participate, they encourage the voice of the King, which she calls the Lecturer, to completely neglect the need to achieve lesson goals, which are of paramount importance to the voice she calls the Controller (which performs the function of the Process Modifier): *This is when the Lecturer literally ignores the Controller. It starts to think that it is better and smarter than the Controller.* Aleksandra highlights the importance of the voice of the Controller in such situations: *We need to adhere to the syllabus and the curriculum, which sometimes causes anxiety, especially for us, younger teachers. Older and experienced teachers know that they can skip something, that not everything has to be done, that it is possible to catch up with the curriculum. And we still somehow do everything by the rules and we are afraid, we are still not confident enough to skip something and this causes tension...* When the Lecturer loses authority and boundaries are crossed, the Controller opposes the Lecturer: *That is enough, Lecturer, this is not a kindergarten. They have come here to learn, to acquire new knowledge and you are here to help them achieve that, give them a strategy to follow.* This comment is powerful enough to make the Lecturer 'come to its senses', which leads to the reestablishment of the relation of productive tension between these voices, which allows the teacher to focus on the lesson plan.

3.2. *The Collapse of Harmonious Relations: From Cooperation to Conflict*

3.2.a. *Teacher vs. Upbringer.* The relationship between the King, which personifies the approach focusing on educating students, and the Advocate, which encourages teaching children social and moral values, mostly takes the form of cooperation, due to the compatibility between the ideologies of modern knowledge transfer and the upbringing of children. However, when the changed circumstances (e.g., an incident) prevent the King from realizing the goals of the upbringing voice during a regular lesson, this cooperation turns into a conflict. The upbringing voice temporarily forces the knowledge imparting voice off the stage and interacts with students in order to ensure that they adopt social and moral values. Once the issue is resolved, the two voices resume their cooperation.

In Jana's case, the voice she calls the Teacher has the status of the King and it focuses on the development of critical thinking: *It is important for students to be able to share their views and interpretations of what we do in class. But not without arguments – I always say: If you do not like a book or a chapter, feel free to tell me... but provide good arguments to justify your opinion.* This teacher also has a voice that she named the Upbringer: *It is important to use classes to teach children life lessons... Maybe it is due to the nature of my subject, but I admit that I often use classes to teach them social and moral values.* When the Lecturer fails to impart values, a conflict between the roles arises: *When I see that it is something [student behavior] unacceptable, in terms of manners, behavior, dialogue, I spend the entire class talking to students.* This conflict can escalate, with multiple voices opposing the Upbringer – the internalized voice that Jana named Some Teachers claims that she should just teach the lesson, the external voice of Parents says that only learning outcomes are important, and the voice that Jana named the Tired (which performs the function of the Protestor) emphasizes that: *This role leaves me tired and exhausted as I actually do something that I believe is primarily the role of a parent.*

3.3. *When Students Cause Problems: Conflicts With External Voices and the Appearance of the Illegitimate Facilitator*

3.3.a. *Respect vs. Disrespecting the Teacher's Authority.* Tensions in interpersonal conflicts influence the dynamics of a teacher's self because they most often involve Illegitimate Facilitators, whose performance leads to the escalation of internal conflicts. Most common interpersonal conflicts involve students and arise in different situations during class. Conflicts with students pertain to the theme of respecting the teacher's authority versus disrespect and unappreciation. They arise when students, from the perspective of the teacher, oppose the King by sitting with their feet on the desk, refusing to listen to the teacher, or using their phones in class, which leads to chaos and leaves the impression that children are in charge. Students' resistance is met with the appearance of the Illegitimate Facilitator (Tea: "When you find yourself in this chaos, how do you reduce it to an acceptable level? Then the Boogeyman appears and starts shouting and threatening them. But this lasts for two minutes and the class slides back into chaos."). Although the short-term prevailment of the Illegitimate Facilitator ensures efficient disciplining of students, it simultaneously antagonizes other internal voices. In professional identities of inexperienced teachers, it is common that the Illegitimate Facilitator has not yet been fragmented from the ideological position personified in the dominant Ideologue and/or the King, which is why the King is the one that holds the harsh tools for making students respect the teacher's authority. This can be seen in the following example.

This is how Olga describes an incident with a student: *The child was sitting with his feet on the desk, he refused to do anything, sit properly, or go to the principal's or pedagogue's office, thought that he was untouchable and explicitly stated that, thus undermining my authority, because if I fail to react, I have no hope of getting anywhere, both in terms of the lesson and with students in that class... He said that he would not go out, that he knows his rights, thinking that he knows the law better than we do.* First, the voice that Olga calls the Psychologist tries to establish order: *My dear child, what will you amount to, what secondary school do you plan to enroll in, do you know that you cannot behave like this in secondary school, you will be expelled, I told him all sorts of things.* After the student's prolonged resistance, the voice of the King, which the teacher calls I Without a Mask, takes the stage and directly defends its position: *I hope that your parents have enough money, because they will have to finance a creature like you for the rest of their lives. Everybody went silent.* This voice has the elements of the negative positioning of students and the harsh practice of sanctioning, which have not yet developed into separate voices in this young teacher: *Today, children are protected like polar bears, they are untouchable, you cannot make them leave the class even if they hit you with a book.* The voice Olga calls the Reflexive Practitioner, which performs the function of the Subsequent Evaluator, confronts the King after class: *Then I came home and asked myself whether it was wrong to say that. Would it harm the child?* However, the effectiveness of this harsh act helps the King preserve its prevailment and repress reexaminations encouraged by the Reflexive Practitioner: *Then I realized that maybe it was good that I said that. I am not that kind of a person, I cannot tolerate such behavior, that is not how I was raised. I believe that it is my role as a teacher to try to influence those kids.*

4. Irreconcilable Opposites: Permanent Conflicts in Teacher Professional Identity

Protestors are personifications of teachers' personal attitudes and emotional experiences whose appearance in strategic situations Ideologues position as personal weaknesses to be suppressed. Among Protestors, Antagonist represents the greatest threat, since it brings teachers' core values into question, along with the professional purpose which is personified in Ideologues. Therefore, it is crucial for the King to force it off the stage.

4.1. *The Emergence of an Undesirable Perspective: The Conflict with the Protestor*

4.1.a. *Showing Emotions: Fatigue and Stress - Experiencing fatigue due to problems in personal life.* Sometimes, Protestors state that teachers are human beings who can encounter various challenges, which can leave them tired or in a bad mood. (Olga: “Usually, at the end of the academic year, when we are tired... I do not feel well and I cannot jump, sing, and dance.”). However, they get overpowered by Ideologues who see showing emotions of this kind as unprofessional behavior.

The voice Tea calls the Emotional, which performs the function of the Protestor, expresses extreme exhaustion using irony: *I have spent the whole night trying to reduce my kids' fever of 39 degrees, sure, I feel awesome.* However, the King, the voice Tea calls the Educator, retorts: *We should not show them that... what I experience in my personal and family life... No matter how tired I may be, I should not expect them to care. That is my problem, not theirs. This is my job. Why should I tell them that and try to make them sympathize? There is no need for that.* This way, the King usually suppresses the Emotional and later, when a student asks: *Are you alright, teacher?*, since: *My face sometimes shows that I am tired, it happens to everyone,* the King responds: *I am fine.*

4.1.b. *Showing Emotions: Fatigue and Stress - Stress and exhaustion as reactions to demands for continuous professional development and constantly high levels of enthusiasm.* Fatigue emerges as an antithesis to the imperative of continuous professional development and investing maximum effort into educating students and improving one's teaching practice. Protestors state that such aspirations are not good for teachers, since they cause them to feel exhausted and tense, but they usually fail to modify the King's interaction with students and adjust the level of personal investment.

Tea's narrative offers a good example of the King's strong ideology pertaining to the importance of constant self-improvement: *I am highly self-critical, I am never satisfied and I always feel that I could do better, which some people say is good because it makes you improve and work on yourself.* At the same time, the Emotional as the Protestor reveals her awareness of the price she pays for that: *But it is not good for me, because I keep finding flaws and that is what I do not like about me... I find it extremely stressful... Really, the pressure is huge.* Still, the imperative of self-improvement is not perceived as externally imposed but as an inherited and unchangeable personal characteristic: *I try to fight it, but that is just who I am. I was born that way, my mom was like that and so am I,* which is why the voice of the Protestor remains marginalized.

4.1.c. *The Fairness Imperative vs. the Need to Reward Students.* The teachers in our sample shared a strong ideology prescribing the objectivity of teachers, equal treatment for all students, and grades that always accurately reflect students' knowledge levels. On the other hand, there were Protestors that required teachers to be lenient with some students, under extraordinary circumstances.

Jasmina is a young teacher and she offers the following description of the position of her powerful voice, which she calls the Level: *It is extremely important to me to be fair to children and not to have any favorites. I want all children to get what they deserve. I really try not to give anyone a lower grade and I make sure everyone gets a chance.* The voice Jasmina calls the Compassionate performs the function of the Protestor and suggests: *...these emotions could make me consider lowering it a bit (the threshold for a particular grade), but the Level rarely allows it, even in a challenging situation in which she is pressured by a parent: I will listen to what the parent has to say, but I will not change what I already determined was the child's knowledge level... It could never happen, someone's biased opinion or pressure could never make the Level give in and change what has already been decided.*

Finally, we come to the most serious form of intraindividual conflict among teachers, in which the voice of the Antagonist makes professional efforts seem completely futile.

4.2. *The Undermining of the Sense of Professional Purpose: The Conflict With the Antagonist*

4.2.a. *Enjoyment in Work and a Sense of Fulfillment vs. Minimal Effort.* The King in a teacher's professional self, which personifies the sense of fulfillment, happiness, satisfaction, and enjoyment in teaching (Olga: "I really love what I do... I enjoy my work.") is confronted by the narrative of the Antagonist, which sends the message that it is pointless to invest efforts and that the teacher is professionally thwarted, which may make it appealing to resort to the strategy of minimal effort and minimal expectations in terms of finding fulfillment in work. The dilemma between being an enthusiast and investing as little effort as possible gets worse under the influence of negative messages from other teachers, personified as Protestor voices, which often become internalized as a threatening narrative on the kind of teacher one would not want to be (Olga: "Some would say: Why should I care? Let his [undisciplined student's] mother teach him how to behave, I only have to put up with him for a few more months"). In cases of prolonged prevailment of the Antagonist, teachers consider a career change as a possible solution. Crucial to the appearance of the Antagonist is a change in the context – the school declaratively fosters enthusiasm for teaching, but when teachers leave this environment, they are troubled with thoughts that diminish the sense of fulfillment and job satisfaction.

What Tea finds defeating is the imbalance between the amount of effort she invests in her job as a teacher, which is a result of the ideology of her King, the Educator, and the financial reward for her efforts: *I really love my job and I work more than I have to*. But then, the Grumpy (the Antagonist) appears: *Why do you work so hard? How much are they paying you? After 13 years of teaching experience, I work 100% and I get paid 75%. Sometimes I wonder: "God, why did you even decide to become a teacher?"... My colleagues say: "You should only work as much as you are paid." But I will never work that way. I hate that saying: You get what you pay for. I never want to lose my enthusiasm, but if I do... I will get a job as a dishwasher. I will do the dishes in peace, with no pressure... But the Grumpy is not present when I teach, I leave it outside the classroom... When it grabs hold of me, I quickly make it go away.*

4.2.b. Students Are Successfully Developing vs. Students Are Unprepared for the Overall Personality Development. Teachers often described their mission as *overall student development*, which they found to represent the most significant fruit of a teacher's labor. The narrative in question pertains to the importance of engaging children and encouraging their creativity, teaching them how to think, encouraging them to speak their mind and work independently, which contributes to the overall development of their personality (Jana: "To come up with new ideas and become liberated, they need to share their thoughts... This also contributes to students' personality development."). When these values are undermined, what arises is a temporary sense of pointlessness of investing efforts (Bisa: "This lack of interest and mild lethargy, in Domanović's words, this is what I find most defeating."). Antagonists amplify the need for a career change, as it seems impossible to realize the main goals of education.

In Rada's case, the voice she calls the Motivator performs the function of an influential Advocate whose goal is to inspire students and motivate them to be persistent: *Be persistent, change, find the solution, do not give up, do not seek blame for the current failure, keep trying... I am their helper... wind beneath their wings*. However, the voice Rada named the Voice of Reality performs the function of the Antagonist by negatively positioning students and sending defeatist messages: *But with today's children, it is not enough to be the wind beneath their wings, you need to carry them on your back, together with their parents (and grandparents and cousins) ... Teachers do not have it easy... I often wonder if I can change that, help them understand the subject better, but nowadays, all my efforts seem futile and excessive.*

4.3. How Does Context Fuel Permanent Conflicts in Teacher Professional Self?

4.3.a. *Innovative vs. Traditional Teaching: Interactive methods.* Teachers explicitly highlighted the influence of the education system on the teaching practice. They emphasized that the education system's bureaucratic approach stifled their efforts to implement more innovative and creative methods and encourage students to think critically. Some teachers perceived the education system as a source of contradictory demands, which heightened intrapsychic tensions. On the one hand, it legitimized innovative and creative practices through modern textbooks, new subjects, and mandatory application of cooperative and experiential learning approaches. On the other hand, it still fostered the use of the traditional approach, with its insistence on administration and the existing syllabus and curriculum (Tea: "It is all good and well, but it is extremely hard to implement in our system because we do not live in America. I think that many people in this system suffer from anxiety").

Mina articulated how teachers feel torn in the current education system: *I am disappointed because nothing changes, we go back to the old system, which was detrimental to both teachers and students. On the one hand, they declaratively require you to be creative, but then make you accept their tests that they use to assess student knowledge, where children need to know some facts and it does not matter what they think, only the facts matter... and then you are completely confused, you wonder what you should do, whether you are a good teacher if you make them learn by the book, the same way you had to learn, or if you are a good teacher when you let them be creative. And you try to strike a balance, a bit of this, a bit of that, and in the end, you get something that makes absolutely no sense... After they said they would reduce the administration... everything goes back to the way it was, what is important is what is written here or there and what you actually do does not matter at all.* Then enters the voice that Mina calls the Rebel, which performs the function of the Antagonist: *But I have given up, I cannot be bothered anymore, I cannot fight anymore, everyone insists on something different and these are mostly people who have never set foot in a classroom... Ever since I began teaching, everything has been pulling us back and in Čopić's words, we hit the cold, hard ground.... in the end, I am like Don Quixote and I wonder what I am even trying to do here. That is sad.*

4.3.b. *Innovative vs. Traditional Teaching: Inclusive education.* Another source of tensions stemming from the context is found in inclusive education as a manifestation of innovative tendencies in the education system. The system values narratives about the need for all children to be accepted, included, and allowed to reach their full potential. However, from the teacher perspective, there are arguments that students in special education programs do not manage to become socially integrated and that there are negative effects on the learning outcomes of the rest of the class.

Mina harshly criticized the way inclusive education was systemically implemented: *I think that these children – we have had plenty of examples in our practice – no matter how much we tried and how long we stayed, they cannot make friends at school, because other children are terribly cruel before entrance exams. You cannot expect a child who is 7, 8, 9 years old to understand that another child is different, that this child is aggressive because of being different, that this child is special. First of all, these children suffer, and second of all, teachers cannot devote attention to all 30 students in a class. This negatively affects students who may be more advanced, who need us, too... There is very little time. I think that everybody loses here, including other students and this student and more advanced students and the teacher who is trying to do something here.*

4.3.c. *Respect vs. Disrespecting the Teacher's Authority.* Finally, teachers problematized the issue of teacher authority and reputation. Before, the ideal teacher was strict but fair and maintained high teaching quality, thus earning the love and respect of students, which made the teacher's efforts purposeful. However, it is difficult for teachers to preserve this narrative about themselves, due to their diminished reputation and the devaluation of the teaching profession. The following example shows how teachers' awareness of these unfavorable aspects of the social context strongly legitimizes the voice of the Antagonist, which reinforces teachers' doubts about the purpose of remaining a teacher.

Ivona discusses a change in the sense of worth and teachers' reputation, of which she is aware: *I never saw authority figures as people who shout, who are... harsh. To my mind, an authority figure is someone who can leave a strong impression by saying little and always says the right thing at the right time... Such people are charismatic and possess something that is not arrogance but a kind of simplicity, perhaps, perfection in simplicity... The voice she calls the Skeptic has the role of the Antagonist and offers the following argumentation: But when... children who do not know what they are talking about say the most horrible things about your profession, the job to which you are dedicated, the job you love, and just, how to put it, spout nonsense to your face, you simply stop and think to yourself: Wait a minute. For the money I earn, is it worth working hard and investing effort just to go through what I am going through? This is the general state of the country, which is just horrible.*

■ DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our results showed that teachers often felt torn between different educational values and practices. According to the Model of Agonistic Self, these ambivalences in the form of tense relations between different professional roles or *voices* appear and persevere within teacher professional identity. The identified themes are in line with the results of previous studies, with the novelty being the *identification of different ways these tensions develop and get resolved* in teacher professional identity. Therefore, in this section, we first focus on the contributions of the Model of Agonistic Self to the understanding of tensions within teacher identity. Namely, the four types of tense relations that we explored in this paper could be observed as different ways in which the psychosocial dynamics unfold and psychological tensions are defused in teachers' professional sense of self. Some of these ways allow for teachers' oriented action in everyday professional practice, while others are manifestations of temporary professional disorientation. Another novelty lies in the finding that one and the same professional dilemma within the self can manifest itself in different types of tense relations, meaning that different teachers solve the same dilemma in somewhat different manners.

From the perspective of our model, when there is a stable order of power manifested in acceptance with critique, productive tension, and permanent conflicts, conditions are met for the teacher's relatively coherent and clearly directed behavior. However, when it is impossible to silence some voices or establish a tense agreement between them, this leads to internal discord and professional disorientation, which manifest themselves in acute conflicts and the strengthening of antagonistic voices.

In this sense, *acceptance with critique* signifies teachers' favoring of one perspective, with an awareness of social and cultural changes that engendered a shift away from traditional roles and methods. Thematically speaking, the tension between traditional and innovative teaching is the most common tension in teacher professional identity and it manifests itself in acceptance with critique as well as other forms of tension. The frequency of this finding indicates that this theme is a continuous source of dilemmas in the development of teacher professional identity (Alsup, 2008). The manifestation of this theme through the relation of acceptance with critique between developmentally older and developmentally younger voices suggests the appropriation of the collision between two social discourses – the one that shaped the old research practice and the one that represents an innovative view of education. In the form of acceptance with critique, the tension between traditional and innovative teaching arises in teachers who have a critical attitude towards older practices and highlight the importance of interactive teaching, animating students, and understanding their psychological dispositions and variabilities. The mechanism of acceptance with critique also allows for the resolution of dilemmas related to showing emotions, in which the discourse of the need for “dramatic and dynamic”

ways of grabbing students' attention overpowers the ideal of composure and restraint in class management that guided the earlier generations of practitioners.

Unlike acceptance with critique, in which teachers remove elements they deem outdated from their professional practice, *productive tension* represents the matching and simultaneous realization of relatively distinct value orientations. The finding that this was one of the ways the dilemma of traditional versus innovative teaching manifested itself among our participants suggests that in addition to teachers that reject traditional beliefs and methods, there are teachers who strive to adjust their teaching to meet the criteria of the two opposing value systems. On the one hand, there is the belief that a good teacher demonstrates a great command of the content in class, while on the other hand, there is the awareness of the importance of encouraging students to develop the necessary competencies through critical dialogue guided by the teacher-mentor as well as other forms of interactive learning. The subjective feeling pertaining to a lack of harmony between the joined opposing elements was also observed within dilemmas relating to teachers' focus on motivating students versus adhering to the syllabus and the curriculum and closeness versus boundaries in relationships with students. Therefore, productive tension can be observed as a mechanism through which an individual teacher can harmonize discordant educational goals and teaching quality criteria set at the level of the education system (OECD 2012; 2020).

Acute conflicts. However, findings indicate that teachers constantly face situations in which irreconcilabilities are amplified and one side overpowers the other, that is, acute conflicts arise and result in the brief prevailment of "modern" teaching methods and the emphasis on encouraging interactivity and student creativity. Acute conflicts can also occur in relations between voices that focus on imparting knowledge and voices devoted of upbringing. In our study, these voices usually cooperated well within each teacher's self, which was supported by the context of primary schools as institutions dedicated to education and upbringing. Still, students' increasingly common disciplinary and personal problems made teachers' upbringing role more significant, at the expense of the role of a knowledge imparter. This change of context additionally legitimized voices personifying teachers' upbringing role, which contributed to the occurrence of acute conflicts between two otherwise compatible teacher roles. However, the integral part of an acute conflict is its escalation, which allows for the reversion to the original relation type. For example, if the conflict between traditional and modern teaching results in the prevailment of the voice personifying modern methods, this encourages the other voices of the self and other real-life actors in the education system (e.g., parents and other teachers) to oppose this novelty. On the one hand, this suggests that at the intrapsychic level, there is resistance to the undermining of the pre-established order in the self, which allowed for the fragile power balance between influential voices. On the other hand, the way other actors in the education system react to the temporary

implementation of innovative solutions points to difficulties in introducing changes into the teaching practice in the absence of adequate systemic support (OECD, 2020).

Permanent conflicts. Permanent conflicts reflect teachers' inability to reconcile differences and find a way to integrate them into their teaching practice. Therefore, our assumption is that unlike in productive tension, which involves the merger of different tendencies into singular action, in this case, conditions for clearly directed action are met when some voices permanently delegitimize and silence voices that are incompatible with them.

Permanently undesirable perspectives are personified in Protestors and Antagonists. Our participants consistently emphasized the undesirability of letting emotions permeate their professional practice, which is in line with the controversial and insufficiently legitimized status of emotions in teacher professional identity (Džinović, 2010; Hargeaves, 1998). It is possible that from the enduringly dominant perspective of teachers as experts and authority figures (Jerković, cited in Simić 2014), emotionality is seen as a lack of objectivity and a weakness that an individual needs to overcome in order to become a good teacher. The permanent delegitimization of the voices of Protestors also allows for the resolution of dilemmas related to fair and impartial grading, leaving individual criteria adjustments reserved for rare and unique circumstances. Far more damaging are conflicts with the voices of Antagonists, which are indicators of teachers' struggle to preserve a sense of professional purpose. Our participants highlighted dilemmas related to the extent of their influence, arising when they fought against the feeling that all their efforts were in vain. Likewise, they questioned their sense of intrinsic fulfillment stemming from meeting the demands of their work and struggled to remain enthusiastic when faced with voices that legitimized investing minimal effort.

Finally, our participants explicitly referred to warring and irreconcilable aspects of the context. These included the insistence on certain aspects of modern teaching in spite of insurmountable practical obstacles and the dramatic systemic diminishment of respect for teachers and teachers' reputation. These dilemmas slowly develop as teachers gain professional experience (Simić, 2014). It would seem that the rhetoric on teachers' inability to exert influence on students tightens over time, which is potentially supported by the increasing awareness of the poor status of the teaching profession. These growing contextual tensions represent manifestations of the increasingly intense undermining of the well-established power balance between different discourses within the educational context, which consequently reflects on teacher professional identity. This encourages agonistic perspectives on the teaching profession and reinforces teachers' dilemmas related to a career change, thus calling for comprehensive systemic solutions.

Although tensions cannot be abolished, managing them allows for positive changes in teacher identity. Bell and Gilbert (1994, cited in Vujisić-Živković & Vranješević, 2019) see teacher professional development as a process involving personal, professional, and social development, wherein one aspect of development is not possible without the others. The results presented in this paper as well as our paper on formal characteristics of tensions (Džinović, Grbić & Vesić, in press) provide guidelines for devising interventions in the dynamics that lie at the foundation of both the agonistic self and social interactions to which the agonistic self is closely related. Programs based on our guidelines would directly and equally focus on personal, professional, and social development, considering that the Model of Agonistic Self constitutes a framework for understanding a broad spectrum of individual functioning. Devising effective solutions for heightening the productive tension between significant Ideologues could lead to the prevention of intense acute conflicts in a teacher's sense of professional self. Our findings indicate that in the case of this form of tension, it is important to systemically aid teachers in the integration of upbringing values and practices into everyday pedagogical work, having in mind that our participants identified this as a necessary but insufficiently practically recognized teacher role, as well as in the introduction of innovations that would be sustainable in the given context, which still mainly fosters the traditional approach to education.

On the other hand, the heightening of productive tension through the amplification of Protestors' influence on the dominant Ideologues leads to the acknowledgment of emotions in the practice of education and upbringing and the establishment of more sustainable standards of personal achievement, which constitute crucial strategies for the prevention of burnout. Our findings could contribute to the improvement of professional development programs, which would be directed at strengthening teacher's self-regulation skills and based on an awareness of limited resources, thus ensuring that teachers' personal investment is better planned and appropriately limited. From the perspective of the Model of the Agonistic Self, this would result in the development and strengthening of positions such as the voice one teacher named the Relaxed and Force-Free, which represents a strong antithesis to the voice of Ambitiousness, which advocates relentless effort "to the last breath". Such interventions would also focus on assuaging the feelings of guilt and professional inadequacy, which our participants highlighted as common in discussions on recognizing personal limitations and the need for ensuring personal wellbeing. It would be highly beneficial for teachers to combine the practice of balanced professional investment with long-term maintenance of teaching quality.

Finally, if teachers were encouraged to discover and try out new ways of defending Ideologues that represent professional purpose, this would help defuse conflicts with voices that personify the harmful sense of professional despair. This would involve encouraging teachers to: a) rely on colleagues' support in challenging situations as well as positive messages from colleagues; b) remind themselves of specific positive experiences with students and evoke situations in which they felt professionally competent; c) engage new resources for the maintenance of professional enthusiasm and a sense of fulfillment by enriching the repertoire with new voices that would perform the functions of Executors or Facilitators of the Ideologues whose ideologies encompass teachers' core values; and d) invest time in activities that prevent the generalization of a small number of unpleasant experiences to the entire professional practice, which would reinforce the voices of Antagonists.

We recognize two main limitations of this paper, with one concerning the sample and the other pertaining to the data gathering method. In terms of the sample, the limitation is reflected in the exclusive participation of female teachers, with no comparison with the experiences of male teachers. Likewise, the representatives of class teachers had fewer than five years of work experience, while subject teachers' work experience had a much broader range. Furthermore, this research did not take into account any other potentially relevant information about participants, such as data on their educational background and previous training for the teaching profession. Finally, the research was conducted at primary schools. It is possible that the dynamics of teacher professional identity would be organized around different themes if the sample included secondary school teachers. In terms of methodological limitations, the research exclusively relied on data obtained via a semi-structured interview and did not include an independent analysis of the characteristics of the education system, which could have provided a better insight into the role of the context in the manifestation and resolution of the identified tensions in teachers' identities. Furthermore, considering that teachers' concerns change with experience (Vujisić-Živković & Vranješević, 2019; Simić, 2014), it would be reasonable to assume that the themes around which the dynamics are organized likewise change, which could be verified in longitudinal research. For example, future research could determine whether the dynamics in the identities of inexperienced class and subject teachers are organized around disciplinary issues and the maintenance of authority, which would be evident in the more frequent appearance of Illegitimate Facilitators, while greater experience would shift the towards issues related to quality, purpose, and benefits for students, which would manifest itself in the more common presence of the narrative of the Antagonist. Having in mind that this was an exploratory study, further research is necessary to validate and further elaborate on the findings on the mapped tension types. We hope that these research efforts could help in the creation of teacher professional development programs and the improvement of teachers'

professional motivation, relying upon the foundations of the Model of the Agonistic Self.

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