SOCIAL INTERACTION EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNING UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN BUILDING OCCUPATION-RELEVANT COMPETENCIES

Birutė Anužienė
Klaipėda Universitety, Klaipėda State University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania

Salomėja Šatienė
Klaipėda State University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania

Abstract. *The article presents findings of a qualitative study focused on analysis of social interaction experiences of beginning teachers in higher education, whereby social interaction is construed as a dialogue, conversation, socio-cognitive conflict, and intersubjective solutions thereof, which influence the process of formation of new competencies.*

The aim of research is to show the prevailing experiences of beginning university teachers in building competencies within the context of social interaction - socio-cognitive conflict - situations. The research is based on the interactional ethnography approach. The research participants were newly hired teachers of different universities in Lithuania. The research shows that the degree of asymmetry in social relations is subject to differences in the status, experience, competencies, or age of the agents. In the context of intensity of socio-cognitive interaction, where it involves a small number or single-direction exchanges of views and opinions, socio-cognitive conflict will not necessarily be progressive in building new competencies. As regards the features of social and affective interaction, the situation of convenience - confrontation is the most favorable for the acquisition and formation of cognitive structures - competencies. Social and cognitive abilities of participants in a socio-cognitive conflict, as prerequisites for cognition, are essential for the acquisition of new structures - competencies.

Keywords: *social interaction, socio-cognitive conflict, university teachers' competencies.*

Introduction

Social interaction is viewed as a form and a process of communication whereby individuals and groups exchange specific social symbols, systematically influence each other, and adapt to each other, and which is often followed by establishing mutual understanding and social solidarity, and formation of particular social behaviour (Matulionis, 2002). An academic community may be associated with a kind of federation uniting actors of various profiles scattered across a variety of disciplines, departments, and faculties, who possess and nurture very different professional and social representations, activity methods, symbols, culture, technologies, etc. Following Bourdieu

(1997), university may be defined as a field with its own competition, specific interests, aims, etc. In such a variegated field of academic activity, during social interaction, different ideas, views, approaches, and beliefs frequently "intersect", and an individual's concepts, knowledge, information, social representations or views are confronted with some new information perturbing and contradicting the information held, with different knowledge, views or beliefs, i.e., the individual encounters a socio-cognitive conflict (SCC) situation. Due to the complexity of the university environment, professional integration of beginning university teachers may not be going as smoothly as one would expect. Professional integration is hampered by the fact that the university teachers who have just started an academic career are encouraged to immediately get involved in research programs and projects, to understand and master the academic culture and different aspects of activity organization, and to perform their teaching activity applying an adequate didactic and andragogical approach to higher education, i.e. they are urged to carry out the activities for which some of them are not prepared due to lack of knowledge, competencies or experience. Therefore, aiming at speedy and successful professional integration, the beginning university teachers are faced with the necessity of immediate extensive learning at their workplace in social interaction situations, when communicating with heads of departments, colleagues, students, or university social partners for the construction and development of the competencies needed for their academic activity. This is not an easy task, which may explain why almost every beginning university teacher faces a certain crisis, which Nault (2005, p. 48) calls a period of "survival". This fact demonstrates the relevance of focusing on analyzing social interaction experiences of newly hired university teachers, when social interaction is understood as dialogue, conversation, and socio-cognitive conflict and intersubjective solutions thereof, which impact the construction of new structures – competencies - in the cognitive process. There have been no studies of this kind reported. One of the authors of the present study - B. Anužienė (ex. Jatkauskienė) – has analyzed SCC as an epistemic factor in the students' acquisition of new knowledge and representations. However, neither the students' experiences nor those of the teachers were researched in the social interaction perspective. This led to the main *research problem question:* What kinds of social interaction experiences of beginning university teachers - specifically, socio-cognitive conflict experiences - prevail in building occupation-relevant competencies? The research question is clarified in detail by *the subject matter of research* – social interaction situations of building competencies relevant to academic work within the context of experiences of newly hired university teachers. *The aim of research* is to reveal the prevailing experiences of competence building of beginning university teachers in the perspective of social interaction – socio-cognitive conflict situations. *The research methods* include a scientific literature analysis, and

ethnographic interview (dialogue and conversation method) for data collection when the research participants open up and tell their experiences of one or another situation. The *thematic analysis* was chosen as a data processing and interpretation method due to its flexibility, and providing the possibility for the researchers to think independently and assess the situation analyzed.

Literature Review

The construction of the beginning university teachers' competencies in the social interaction situation is based on the socio-constructivist model of learning applied in an academic environment (Joita, 2005), Piaget's (2020) idea of the two stages in learning related to the state of disequilibrium and equilibrium, and the concept of perturbing information (Thievenaz, 2017). Beginning university teachers may be viewed as adult learners, whereas SCC may be viewed as disequilibrium of the learning process arising through interaction with other individuals in the learning process and caused by differences in social representations, views about a fact, phenomenon, object, information, knowledge, and other confrontations (Sacco & Buccarielli, 2008, p. 2). SCC is considered a cognitive development factor when it enables the learner to assess and accept the other persons' views and change their own social representations of the fact, phenomenon, object, thus acquiring new knowledge and competencies, and integrating them into the system of one's knowledge, competencies and representations, and finding a solution to a learning, cognitive problem (Darnon, Doll, & Butera, 2007, p. 231). Some authors (Davis et al., 2011; Buchs et al., 2004) point out that the new information or knowledge may correspond with the representations and ideas held by the individual and also expand the boundaries of knowledge. This is expressed as a process of equilibrium or balance, which does not cause any SCC. When the new knowledge does not correspond to the individual's representations and the existing knowledge, it may be declined. Thus, the individual may experience a state of shock - a socio-cognitive conflict – or disequilibrium as the individual is confronted by cognitive disagreement. The disequilibrium may be expressed as destabilization of thinking, which makes the individual feel threat to the self (Buchs et al., 2004). Therefore, the person looks into the new information, reconsiders it seeking to attain the state of equilibrium.

Starting with Piaget's (1964) research findings and moving towards Androwkha and Jezegou's (2019) research, it is unquestionable that the SCC concept has been transformed. However, the importance of SCC in learning and competence construction in social interaction situations has not diminished. In the 70s, SCC was analyzed by scholars in the field of social psychology, and later it became a subject matter of interdisciplinary research of a variety of areas of human activity. In the recent decades, research has focused on the impact of

SCC in learning contexts including SCC task design in collaborative learning with respect to students' motivation and affect (Asterhan et al., 2010); children's cognitive development in pre-school setting with robot integration in learning (Benvenuti & Mazzoni, 2020); learning of culturally homogeneous groups by socio-cognitive conflict in the online learning setting (Weinberger et al., 2013); socio-cognitive conflict as a pedagogical technique in teaching science (Foster, 2012); didactic management of SCC in a higher education setting (Zaharia, 2013); relationship between moral problems and socio-cognitive conflict in terms of emotions and complexity of thought (Myyry & Helkama, 2007); socio-cognitive conflict in the context of students' dietary choices focusing on the way epistemic goals and socio-cognitive climate in argumentation affect achievement of epistemic outcomes (Brocos et al., 2022); socio-cognitive conflict in the perspective of metacognitive self-regulation (Schnaubert et al., 2021). Interdisciplinary analysis of SCC has revealed the concept and highlighted its positive impact on social interaction and the adult learning process in particular (Sacco & Buccarielli, 2008). For a long time, SCC was considered a negative phenomenon in learning and competence building. Only in the last decades, it has been viewed positively, stating that SCC can stimulate learning by becoming an epistemic source of new knowledge, competencies or representations of a heterogeneous group (Darnon et al., 2007).

Methodology

The research adopted the *interactional ethnographic approach* (Skukauskaite & Green, 2022), combining the research methods and theoretical perspectives which allow revealing and describing how the members of a social group in a particular social interaction situation construct new knowledge, competencies, meanings, views, actions and understanding being influenced by various factors of social interaction.

The thematic analysis of the research findings is based on the conceptual approach of *the socio-cognitive conflict theory* (Bourgeois & Nizet, 2005), according to which there are four factors identified, which influence the effects of the social interaction in the process of acquisition and construction of new structures - competencies: *the degree of the asymmetry of social relations; the intensity of socio-cognitive interaction; the social affective qualities of interaction; the individuals' cognitive and social abilities* (p. 161). This approach allowed the authors of the study to carry out a *thematic analysis* without getting lost in the participants' experiences, and helped to understand not only the contours of the situation but also gain a deep insight into its essence.

During the process of data collection and analysis of transcripts, the greatest attention was given to those episodes of the interviews/conversations

which were directly linked with the research question: What kinds of social interaction of beginning university teachers - specifically, socio-cognitive conflict experiences – prevail in building occupation-relevant competencies?

The data collection and transcription of the interviews was carried out in September to November, 2022, meeting the research participants in different towns. Eight university teachers from different Lithuanian universities were invited to take part in the interview sharing their experiences of the beginning of their careers, the situations of professional integration and social interaction. Six university teachers agreed to take part in the research, including one male and five female teachers from the towns of Klaipeda, Kaunas, Vilnius and Siauliai. The participants' age ranged from 38 to 64, and the duration of work experience was from 8 to 30 years. The convenience strategy of data collection was adopted inviting familiar teachers to participate thus seeking a smoother conversation and elimination of potential tenseness or embarrassment. Following the principles of interactional ethnography, there was a research plan designed including the estimated duration of the interview, the form, ethics criteria, and organizational aspects of interviews. There were 4 interviews of different length conducted with each participant, which were recorded, listened to and transcribed. During the first interview, there was a consent form signed by the participant. The participant was asked about the experiences of beginning their career at the university, their personal stories when they faced a SCC, and thus acquired the relevant competencies. During the following interviews they were asked to continue their story, revealing some particular details of the first interview that were of interest to the researchers looking into the participants' experiences, the factors of social interaction, and context. The participant's experience, described by the researchers, the story recounted, and the interpretation thereof was checked by the participants to make sure it corresponded to the participant's ideas, and it was approved, or it was corrected.

The thematic analysis was carried out following the principles of Braun & Clarke (2012) methodology in the following stages: (1) *The researchers familiarizing themselves with the data*, which included transcribing the recordings, writing comments and reading notes. The aim of this stage was not only to make notes, but also to become thoroughly familiar with the transcripts, and notice the things which were relevant to the research question; (2) *Generating Initial Codes,* which included systematic data analysis through coding. The coding was performed in a traditional way without using computer software. The stage was completed with a review of the codes and the data extracts collated; (3) *Searching for Themes*, which in the present study included comparing the themes with the *socio-cognitive conflict theory* (Bourgeois & Nizet, 2005). The researchers had to decide which themes were significant and provided answers to the research question, and which subthemes might be identified, which meant looking into the code clusters; (4) *Reviewing Potential*

Themes, which involved checking whether there were sufficient meaningful data to support the theme, and whether the theme was sufficiently coherent; (5) *Defining and Naming Themes,* when the researchers named and defined the themes relating them to the aforementioned essential factors identified in the *socio-cognitive conflict theory* (Bourgeois & Nizet, 2005) having influence on the effect of social interaction on the acquisition and construction of new structures - competencies, and describing the meaning of the themes; (6) *Drawing Conclusions,* which were produced drawing on the whole data analysis.

The study was carried out following the principles of research ethics associated with qualitative research – respect for persons, confidentiality and anonymity, beneficence and non-maleficence, and justice (Žydžiūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017).

Research Findings and Discussion

The degree of the asymmetry of social relations. The research participants were asked to share their experiences, thoughts and views of starting their careers at the university. The most vivid episode of the participants' experiences is provided in Table 1, and the experiences of other participants, which complement it, are provided in the text below the table. When analyzing the data, it was noticed that the theme of *the degree of the asymmetry of social relations* is characterized by unique expression, eloquently justifying the subject matter of its subthemes – the influence of the attitude of a competent head of department with significant academic experience; the beginning university teacher's confidence in the colleagues and themselves; the impact of a positive attitude of the colleagues; realization of the socio-cognitive conflict.

Table 1 **The expression of the theme of the Degree of the asymmetry of social relations**
(created by the authors)

Expression of the subject matter of the subtheme	Interview episodes illustrating the expression of the subject matter of the subtheme	Essential facts and analysis
The influence of the attitude of a competent head of department with significant academic experience	*I can remember the very first day at the department. In front of me there was a dignified grey-haired elderly woman, head of department. I felt so tiny, all shrunken up before her. Nobody asked me to sit down, so I kept standing. "You have a diploma, so you can start working. Tomorrow there are the first lectures, and you will find the timetable downstairs.*	There is an obvious high level of the asymmetry of relations, which is determined by the difference in competencies, experience, age and status. The dominant subject - head of department - responds to the state of a new employee with a low level. The needs of being informed and

	Can you read? That's fine. Go to the library and find yourself a coursebook for the beginning". I wanted to ask: "What should I do? How should I work? What should I say to those students?" I felt like shouting: "I have a diploma of an interpreter, but these are foreign language classes for political science students. Would you recommend a coursebook?" I didn't ask, I didn't dare to, I was scared (R3)	constructive communication are not met. A considerable challenge at the beginning of one's career having no adequate means for activity, having no idea of the very essence of the activity, and being afraid to ask. There are evident dynamics of the representation of social relations from positive to negative.
The beginning university teacher's confidence in the colleagues and themselves	*In the morning, I had an impression, that I would not survive if I fail, and that would be followed by bullying, stress, and fear. But one needs to get up and go to the university. I was saying to myself: "You have completed such difficult studies, you know the language, and you are young, and this will help you understand the students in the class. You have to somehow adapt your knowledge to the audience. But I don't know how to do that"* (R3)	There is absence of confidence in one's competence or strength, there is no support, and lack of help from colleagues during the difficult period of adaptation. The role of the social task is important to the beginning teacher.
The impact of a positive attitude of the colleagues	*I am heading towards the department office, and I see a woman at the end of the corridor smiling at me. She asks me: "Are you new here? Are you just starting?" I reply to her: "Yes, absolutely new and inexperienced". She laughs and says: "Come with me, I will show you a good coursebook. And there is a Teacher's book with the answer key. You will not fail. Everything will be fine. We have all been through that, and as you see, I am still safe and sound"* (R3)	A positive attitude of a colleague helps to overcome the fear, and creates positive pre-conditions for acquisition of new competencies. A third party - a colleague - coming to the social interaction situation has a positive effect on acquisition of new cognitive structures. There are dynamics of the representations of social relations from negative to positive.
Realization of the socio-cognitive conflict	*I had been hoping for and expecting a different beginning, and it seemed as if everything turned upside down in my mind. Unfortunately, there was nobody but colleague A. to help me overcome the frustration which I experienced the very first day* (R3)	The situation encountered on the first work day reveals the socio-cognitive conflict faced, whereas a high degree of the asymmetry of social relations inhibits acquisition of new information, knowledge or competence, which demonstrates that in this situation SCC may not be considered a positive factor in competence development.

The degree of the asymmetry of social relations may be determined by differences in the status, experience, competencies and age. According to Bourgeois and Nizet (2005), a high degree of asymmetry in the partners' status, experience, competencies, or age does not provide a favorable way to resolve the SCC which would facilitate acquisition and modification of cognitive structures. However, other participants shared their experiences of less drastic beginning of their careers, which may be illustrated by the following episode: *"...on the very first day I was assigned a very competent mentor. I wished she had given me more of her time, but actually she was not able to help me much. She was very busy participating in a project, focused on preparing for a partners' visit, so I didn't feel like being a nuisance, and did not dare to bother her. I imagined the start of my dream job a little different... the first two months were really stressful, as I did not know who to ask for help when some problems arose, and there were quite a few"* (R5). Darnon, Butera and Mugny (2008) point out that too large a gap between the partners' positions in terms of experience or competencies, is not useful for acquisition of new cognitive structures. This was evident in the episode recounted by a participant: *"the situation was such that I had to relocate and find a new job. Although I had considerable academic experience, having started work at a university in another city, I faced some problems of work organization – I had little understanding of the internal information systems of the university. I felt ill at ease about asking my colleagues how to use the systems, as considering my pedagogical name and academic degree, which was higher than that of most of the teachers at the department, I felt obliged to be proficient with the modern technologies. However, I did get over this fear of looking incompetent, and asked for help, as in that situation the academic degree was not helpful compared to the experience of my new colleagues, and the fact that the new job meant a lot to me" (R1).* When analyzing the research data, it became evident that the participants experienced not only SCC, but also a cognitive conflict. Following Piaget's (2020) theory, there are two stages in learning based on the state of disequilibrium and equilibrium**.** Disequilibrium comes from ignorance or inability to act (i.e., cognitive conflict), and may be expressed by *"I don't know what to do"* as in the episodes recounted by R3, and R1. In the case of SCC, disequilibrium is caused by disagreement with the other individual's ideas, views, etc., and may be expressed by *"I disagree/disapprove/oppose"*. This disequilibrium may be associated with the problems of affective nature, like *"I'm useless, I am not able to do that"* (the episode recounted by R3). Equilibrium - the SCC resolution - is attained through the process of assimilation-accommodation, during which new experience and knowledge is acquired, and the individual broadens the field of understanding, knowledge and activity (the episode recounted by R1). In this situation, the process of social interaction reveals itself, in which the participant (the episode recounted by R1)

is able to handle the SCC, understands and re-examines his/her views and beliefs, and successfully resolves the SCC acquiring new abilities and knowledge. The differences in the learner's concepts, testing hypotheses and observations, or the results of analyses may cause the so-called 'cognitive shock' – cognitive conflict or loss of balance (Jatkauskienė et al., 2019). If it occurs in interaction with other individuals, the cognitive conflict becomes a SCC. Therefore, the mechanism of a cognitive conflict is the same as in the case of a SCC. The difference is only in the fact that it is present during interaction with other individuals (Daele, 2009). Bourgeois and Nizet (2005) identify four factors determining the impact of asymmetry on the socio-cognitive conflict and acquisition of new cognitive structures: involvement of a dominant third party into the relationship (as it was expressed in the episode recounted by R3); the level of the dominant subject's response (experiences of R3 and R5); representation of social relations (the episode recounted by R5); the social significance of the task (the episode recounted by R1).

The intensity of socio-cognitive interaction. It corresponds to the intensity of verbal interaction, frequency of disagreements, and the intensity of the partner disagreement. If the interaction of individuals involves a small number of exchanges of views or ideas, or if the exchange is mainly one-sided, SCC may not lead to progress or stimulate construction of new competencies (Darnon, Butera & Mugny, 2008). The intensity of social interaction may have a positive effect on learning and construction of competencies if positive verbal and non-verbal communication and the substantiation of the arguments provided is taken into account. The means of social interaction include the following types: verbal and non-verbal (gestures, facial expression, body posture), focused and non-focused (e.g., behavior in workplace and home environment); direct and indirect.

Table 2 **The expression of the theme of Intensity of socio-cognitive interaction**
(created by the authors)

Expression of the subject matter of the subtheme	Interview episodes illustrating the expression of the subject matter of the subtheme	Essential facts and analysis
Intensity of verbal interaction	*At the beginning, there wasn't much communication with colleagues; there were only monthly department meetings; I would only say hello or goodbye when I had an encounter with a colleague; thus, I did not know anybody personally at the department. I just expected the communication to be more intensive* (R2); *At the beginning, that communication was not very*	At the beginning of academic activity there is lack of intensive verbal/non-verbal interaction, although the participants had such a need. This may be associated with emotional security, as beginning university teachers do not know their colleagues, are not very good at using the

	smooth... I had to learn the colleagues' "jargon", and they also were very loud... (R1); *A year or two later, I could start talking to the colleagues (of course, not everybody) without any introductory polite phrases or small talk like "hello, how are you" when encountering them in the corridor, and feel emotionally secure* (R6)	professional "jargon", have not familiarized themselves with the organizational culture of the university, the procedures and requirements of activity.
Frequency of disagreements	*I proposed to improve the teaching methods as the students complained about the lectures of some of the teachers being boring, and I also wanted to improve my own didactic skills. My proposal was declined as worthless. I remember the exact wording: "You are talking nonsense - you have just started working, and now you are about to destroy things". I might have lacked arguments. However, I did not hear any solid arguments to support the rejection of my approach* (R3); *There was a new Master's study programme being developed by the department. I had just started my career. Nearly every day, there were disagreements arising among the teachers of the department as to the issues of the vision of the ultimate goal, the needs for the potential study subjects, the approach to the university's mission in the development of student competencies, ensuring professional integration, etc.* (R5)	In the first case, the SCC was not positively resolved, as the other individual's idea and approach were not considered, and no solid argumentation was produced. The SCC having not been resolved, the participant's teaching competencies and those of the other teachers were not developed. In the second case, the disagreements between colleagues produced some preconditions for re-examination of the participant's associations, images or processes. Thus, the disagreements and solid arguments produced by the colleagues enabled development of the participant's new cognitive structures, and construction of new competencies. The SCC is positive when it is resolved at the epistemic level (ideas, arguments), rather than relational level.
Exchange of approaches and ideas	*There have always been the exchanges of views and ideas and they still go on, but I think, they do not cause any concern or stress until it poses a threat to the individual's competence or authority. I sometimes refrain from expressing my idea as my colleagues may see it as my desire to 'excel myself' with my knowledge* (R4); *In most cases I did not share my idea, especially with the head of department or the*	The exchange of approaches and ideas is positive provided it does not pose a threat to the competence of the individual in the SCC, and there is no considerable difference in the social status of the individuals in conflict. Otherwise, the difference in approaches or opposition becomes a relational conflict, which

	professors as there was too large a gap between their status and mine (R3); *At the beginning of my career, I somehow timidly took part in round-table discussions or exchange of ideas, as you have to have that experience so that you can share it. However, I should say that every afternoon I spent at that round table gave me an opportunity to learn and hear something new* (R1)	emphasizes unhealthy interpersonal competition or influence. There is an inner dialogue going on, during which an individual adopts the new information or knowledge and integrates it into their system of knowledge and representations, or rejects it after consideration. SCC generally speeds up the process of learning, or even the changes of one's position.

The findings of this empirical study are in line with the insights of some other scientific research. The social exchange theory developed by both Homans and Blau (Mentus, 2014) explains social behaviour when analyzing exchanges of approaches and ideas, and emphasizing the individualistic pursuit of personal gain and the stages of social exchange including the individuals' personal relationships of exchange; differentiation of status and power; legitimization and institutionalization; opposition and change (Mentus, 2014). Therefore, social exchange may not be equal, and the inequality of exchange may result in power differentials.

The social affective qualities of interaction describe the atmosphere in which relationships develop. The atmosphere of the relationship between two partners is based on two aspects which consist of a few ways: irritation - convenience, or opposition - approval. According to Monteil (1988, as cited in Bourgeois & Nizet, 2005), the convenience – confrontation situation is the most favourable for acquisition of cognitive structures. It would be erroneous to believe that each social interaction, or each SCC facilitates construction of new competencies or enriches a person's knowledge. Social interaction depends on the importance of specific objects, events or people for individuals or groups.

Table 3 **The expression of the theme of Social affective qualities of interaction**
(created by the authors)

Expression of the subject matter of the subtheme	Interview episodes illustrating the expression of the subject matter of the subtheme	Essential facts and analysis
Convenience situation	*When my status was lower than the opponent's, I pretended that I agreed with the opponent, whereas I did not actually change my approach* (R4); *It was very important to me to understand if*	The importance of a different social status in SCC resolution is emphasized. In the first case, focusing on

	everybody thought the same way, or it was just the one who was talking. If it was an idea of the majority, I adopted it and re-examined my approach (R6)	consideration and resolution is observed (R4). The other cases demonstrated decentering.
Confrontation situation	*When the opinions diverged considerably, I compared my idea with those of others, and this helped to find the right solution to the problem, find an alternative* (R2); T*here was somebody at the department who would never agree with a different opinion, in no way; that person couldn't understand other people's points of view, and it was taken to the personal, relational level* (R3)	There is focusing on reasoning and resolution (R2). In the other case, there is decentering, as the confrontation moves from the cognitive to the social level, which does not create positive conditions for SCC resolution.

When analyzing the essence of SCC, two dimensions of a primary representation of an event, fact, phenomenon or object are identified: *cognitive* (the person's knowledge of or familiarity with the fact, event, phenomenon) and *affective* (the person's feelings and response to the fact, phenomenon, object) (Jatkauskienė et al., 2019). Every fact triggers an action or response, which is based on the primary representation of the fact or phenomenon. The learner's affective (emotional) security is a major condition for the SCC in this situation to become a source of learning and competence building, and a developmental factor (Jatkauskienė, Norkienė, & Nugaras, 2019). Conversely, the individual will not be able and/or willing to constantly experience emotional imbalances, i.e., will disengage from the cognitive process. This demonstrates that the cognitive problems arising in the course of learning or discussion, are not as threatening as the problems of an affective nature, and adequate SCC regulation can help to resolve the SCC so that it promotes learning and competence building, and facilitates cognitive development (Butera, Sommet & Darnon, 2019). In the SCC situation, there are two ways of reasoning and decision making: focusing and decentering (Jatkauskienė et al., 2019). In the case of focusing, the individual may give too much attention to the elements observed, and being focused on them, may have difficulty understanding other people's views. In the case of decentering, the individual is able to understand the other person's view. If during a discussion, the participants are only focused on their own patterns of thinking or reasoning, and ignore other points of view, other ways and possibilities for solving the problem, it can be stated that focusing occurs. Conversely, if the participants in the discussion give consideration to others' points of view, and thus construct alternative patterns of solving the problem, it can be stated that decentering occurs. Such decentering takes place with respect to the social representations held by the participants in the discussion, and their social status. The scholars who research SCC (Daele, 2010; Androwkha & Jezegou, 2019), argue that decentering in the SCC situation is a

very important source of adult learning, as the confrontation of ideas and views becomes a driving force of learning, competence building and knowledge construction.

The individuals' cognitive and social abilities is also an aspect of SCC. Cognitive skills as prerequisites of cognition, i.e., existence of the learner's cognitive structures, are necessary for acquisition of new structures, as following the *constructivist learning concept, the construction of a new structure of knowledge is determined by existence of the previous structure.*

Table 4 **The expression of the theme of Individuals' cognitive and social abilities**
(created by the authors)

Expression of the subject matter of the subtheme	Interview episodes illustrating the expression of the subject matter of the subtheme	Essential facts and analysis
The SCC partners' empathy and ability to listen and ask questions	*I believe we can reconcile all views, and solve the problems, and benefit from that. You only need to feel empathy for another person - "try and be in their shoes"* (R1); *It will be bad if you are afraid to ask when starting your activity, and even worse, of you try and ask, but nobody can even hear you, or they may not want to hear you. Or they have no time for you. What are you? Only a greenhorn newbie...* (R3)	Compassion, empathy, listening to another person in the everyday situations of social interaction ensure faster professional integration and competence building.
Argumentation skills	*The ability to present arguments largely depends on your knowledge, and abilities and that you are not afraid to say that in public. Of course, this may be quite difficult at the beginning of your career, as you don't know the people, doubt your competence, and don't want to be a nuisance. However, you need to "grow a spine" by yourself. Then it will be easier to find alternative solutions, and feel emotional security* (R4)	Argumentation skills are useful when confronted with perturbing conflicting information, ideas or views. It is an advantage in resolving SCC. The individual's social and cognitive skills as prerequisites of cognition are essential for acquisition of new structures - competencies.
Perceived self-efficacy	*Everyone should gain and nurture their social skills. This is a guarantee of your self-efficacy. Then we feel we can do something big and significant... when you appreciate and reflect on the usefulness of different views, we consider them and reflect on how to improve ourselves* (R1)	Being with and within a group of colleagues is a perfect environment for SCC expression, and development of self-efficacy.

Irrespective of the individual cognitive skills, the learner needs the social skills which enable effective communication in conflict situations. Darnon, Butera and Mugny (2008) argue that the individual may not possess a solid basis of previously developed social and cognitive skills pursuing a positive effect of the conflict on acquisition of new structures. The colleagues in the SCC situation have to master communication and argumentation skills in order to gain advantage from collaborative learning.

The research participants' experiences revealed that SCC in many cases may develop into a cognitive conflict which arises in both an explicit (mentoring, collaboration, activity observation, etc.), and implicit situation of social interaction, when there are different social representations of the problem of the beginning university teacher. Therefore, the results of the present research may be applied in practice in a higher education institution when introducing or developing a more effective model of formal mentorship, which would stimulate professional integration of beginning university teachers, and facilitate acquisition of occupation-relevant competencies by creating the necessary SCC conditions, utilizing the available resources, etc. (see Figure 1).
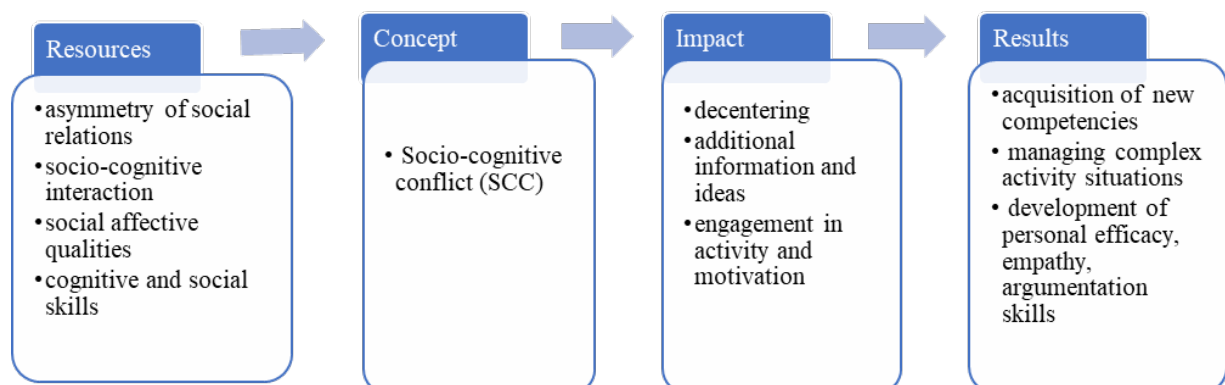

Figure1 **SCC resources, impact and results in practice** *(created by the authors)*

The figure shows that understanding of the epistemic prerequisites for SCC, the knowledge of SCC resources, and utilization of its advantages in practice when organizing mentoring for the beginning teachers has considerable impact on decentering and acquisition of additional information. Therefore, taking advantage of the possibilities of SCC in practice may reduce the degree of asymmetry in social relations by transition from asymmetry to managing relationships, thus avoiding the loss of the beginning teacher's competencies. Understanding of the intensity of socio-cognitive interaction and practice may provide emotional security to the newly hired person, accelerate building the relevant competencies, strengthen motivation and the sense of personal efficacy.

Conclusions

1. In scientific literature, SCC is a theoretically-grounded concept which has considerable influence on the construction on occupation-relevant competencies in the social interaction situation. Following Bourgeois and Nizet's (2005) conceptual approach, it can be stated that in the construction of occupation-relevant competencies of beginning university teachers in the SCC situation, the level of asymmetry of social relationships is determined by the differences in the teachers' status, experience, competencies, and age. The level of the dominant subject's response to the state of a new staff member may be low. The unfulfilled needs for being informed and constructive communication may become a considerable challenge at the start of an academic career.

2. In the perspective of the intensity of socio-cognitive interaction, when the interaction involves a small number or one-sided exchanges of views or ideas, the SCC may not lead to progress in the construction of new competencies. At the beginning of an academic career there may be a lack of intensive verbal/non-verbal interaction, even though beginning teachers express their need for communication. The lack of more intensive socio-cognitive interaction may be linked to the need for emotional security.

3. In the perspective of the qualities of socio-cognitive interaction, the convenience – confrontation situation is the most favorable for acquisition and construction of cognitive structures - competencies. There is focusing and decentering of reasoning and resolution observed, as confrontation is transferred from the cognitive to social level, which may not create the conditions required for positive resolution of the SCC.

4. The SCC participant's social and cognitive skills as prerequisites of cognition are essential for acquisition of new structures - competencies. The social and cognitive skills possessed ensure faster professional integration and competence building in everyday social interaction situations.

List of References

Androwkha, S., & Jézégou, A. (2019). Présence socio-cognitive lors d'une activité collective et à distance synchrone: une étude empirique réalisée auprès de trois groupes d'enseignants en situation de formation». In *Revue Internationale des Technologies en Pédagogie Universitaire/International Journal of Technologies in Higher Education (RITPU/IJTHE), 16*(3), 22-38.

Asterhan, C. S. C., Butera, F., Nokes, T., Darnon, C., Schwarz, B. B., Butler, R., Levin, J., et al. (2010). Motivation and affect in peer argumentation and socio-cognitive conflict. In K. Gomez, L. Lyons, & J. Radinsky (Ed.), *Learning in the Disciplines: Proceedings of the 9th International Conference of the Learning Sciences* (ICLS 2010), 211-218. Retrieved from: https://repository.isls.org/bitstream/1/2801/1/211-218.pdf

Aumont, B., & Mesnier, R.-M. (1992). Les mécanismes du conflit socio-cognitif. In *L'acte d'apprendre*, 191-195. Paris: PUF.

Bandura, A. (1985). *L'apprentissage social*. Mardaga.

Benvenuti, M., & Mazzoni, E. (2020). Enhancing wayfinding in pre-school children through robot and socio-cognitive conflict. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *51*(2), 436–458. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12848

Bourdieu, P. (1997). *Les usages sociaux de la science. Pour une sociologie clinique du champ scientifique*. Paris: INRA.

Bourgeois, E., & Nizet, J. (2005). *Apprentissage et formation des adultes.* Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic Analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds*.). APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology*, *Vol. 2:* Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, Neuropsychological, and Biological, 57-71. Washington DC: American Psychological Association. DOI:10.1037/13620-004

Brocos, P., Jiménez-Aleixandre, M. P., & Baker, M. J. (2022). "Be rational!" Epistemic aims and socio-cognitive tension in argumentation about dietary choices. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13:933062. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.933062

Buchs, C., Butera, F., Mugny, G., & Darnon, C. (2004). Conflict Elaboration and Cognitive Outcomes. *Theory into Practice, 43*(1), 23–30.

Butera, F., Sommet, N., & Darnon, C. (2019). Sociocognitive conflict regulation: How to make sense of diverging ideas. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *28*(2), 145-151. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721418813986

Daele, A. (2009). *Débattre pour apprendre. Pédagogie Universitaire-Enseigner et Apprendre en Enseignement Supérieur*. Retrieved from: http://pedagogieuniversitaire.wordpress.com/2009/06/05/debattre-pour-apprendre

Daele, A. (2010). Le conflit sociocognitif à l'université: une revue de littérature et quelques propositions. In *Revue AIPU,* tome 3.

Darnon, C., Butera, F., & Mugny, G. (2008). *Des conflits pour apprendre*. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.

Darnon, C., Doll, S., & Butera, F. (2007). Dealing with a disagreeing partner: Relational and epistemic conflict elaboration. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 22*(3), 227–242. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03173423

Davis, A., & Winstone, N. (2011). Educational Implications. In A. Slater & G. Bremner (Eds.), *An Introduction to Developmental Psychology*, 587-612. Chichester, UK: BPS Blackwell.

Foster, C. (2012). Creationism as a Misconception: Socio-cognitive conflict in the teaching of evolution, *International Journal of Science Education*, *34*(14), 2171-2180. DOI:10.1080/09500693.2012.692102

Jatkauskienė, B., Andriekienė, R.M., & Nugaras, M. (2017). Professional Integration of University Faculty in Terms of Organizational Culture and Transition of Professional Identity. *Social welfare interdisciplinary approach*, *7*(1), 88-103.

Jatkauskienė, B., Norkienė S., & Nugaras M. (2019). Socio-cognitive conflict as an epistemological source of new knowledge and social representations. *SOCIETY. INTEGRATION. EDUCATION*, *5,* 131-147.

Joita, E. (2005). Constructivism and constructionism in the formation of the design of the training. In E. Joitta (coord.), *Constructivist strategies in the initial formation of the* students. Craiova: Publishing House Universitaria, 239-274.

Matulionis, A. V. (2002). *Sociologija.* 2-oji laida. Vilnius: Homo liber.

Mentus, V. (2014). Social power in exchange theories: Homans's and Blau's considerations of the relationship between the power and the exchange. *Socioloski pregled*, *48,* 165-182. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5937/socpreg1402165M

Myyry, L., & Helkama, K. (2007). Socio-cognitive conflict, emotions and complexity of thought in real-life morality. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *48*(3), 247–259. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9450.2007.00579.x

Nault, G. (2005). *Étude du fonctionnement et du potentiel d'une communauté de pratique en ligne pour le développement professionnel d'enseignants novices.* Doctoral thesis, Montréal, Université du Québec à Montréal.

Piaget, J. (1964). *Six études de Psychologie.* Paris: Éditions Denoël (Médiations).

Piaget, J. (2020). *L'Équilibration des Structures Cognitives*. Paris: PUF.

Sacco, K., & Bucciarelli, M. (2008). The role of cognitive and socio-cognitive conflict in learning to reason. *Mind & Society, 7*(1), 1–9.

Schnaubert, L., Krukowski, S., & Bodemer, D. (2021). Assumptions and confidence of others: the impact of socio-cognitive information on metacognitive self-regulation. *Metacognition Learning* 16, 855–887. Skukauskaite, A., & Green, J. L. (2022). *Interactional Ethnography. Designing and Conducting Discourse-Based Ethnographic Research.* Routledge.

Thievenaz, J. (2017). *De l'étonnement à l'apprentissage. Enquéter pour mieux comprendre.* Duvain – la - Neuve: De Boeck Supérieur. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/edso.2654

Weinberger, Marttunen, M., Laurinen, L., & Stegmann, K. (2013). Inducing socio-cognitive conflict in Finnish and German groups of online learners by CSCL script. *International Journal of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning*, *8*(3), 333–349. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11412-013-9173-4

Zaharia, I. (2013). On didactic management of sociocognitive conflict. *Scientific Papers Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development*, *13*(1), 457-464. Retrieved from: http://managementjournal.usamv.ro/pdf/vol.XIII/Art74.pdf

Žydžiūnaitė, V., & Sabaliauskas, S. (2017). *Qualitative Research: Principles and Methods.* Vilnius: Vaga.