



---

## Theoretical article

### EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN EDUCATION: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

**Theofania Psaroudaki**, Ph.D. student

**\*Department of Psychology, SWU "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria.**

Email: [fanhpsaroudakh@yahoo.com](mailto:fanhpsaroudakh@yahoo.com)

#### ***Abstract***

*Professional identity is a multifaceted construct that has garnered considerable attention within the fields of education and psychology. This article delves into the intricate nature of professional identity, examining its definitions and dimensions. Moreover, it investigates the influence of demographics, such as age, gender, and years of service, on the development of professional identity among educators. Additionally, the article explores the critical connection between job satisfaction and professional identity, emphasizing the positive correlation between the two.*

**Keywords:** *Professional Identity, Job Satisfaction, demographics, teacher identity, social interaction.*

#### **Professional Identity: A Synthesis**

Professional identity is a subject of extensive study across disciplines such as social sciences, philosophy, and psychology. Scholars have worked to define it, with influences from various thinkers. Drawing from philosopher Mead (1934), it is clear that professional identity is closely tied to one's sense of self, formed through social interactions. Erikson (1968) further emphasizes how identity evolves within social contexts, changing throughout life. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) support this idea, highlighting the ongoing transformation of identity through interactions.

Ball (1972) distinguishes between adaptable “established” identities and stable “essential” identities. Lasky (2005) expands on this, explaining how individuals define their professional selves based on experiences and external expectations. Bandura (1982) adds the importance of self-efficacy for self-confidence in professional roles.

Jarvis-Selinger et al. (2012) introduce the idea of identity development at two levels: individual and collective, emphasizing the complexity. Reid et al. (2011) stress that knowing the profession and learning its work are integral to forming a professional identity.

Best and Williams (2018) view professional identity as a blend of values, beliefs, and experiences that evolves over one’s career. Mahmoudi-Gahruei et al. (2016) emphasize dedication to the profession, influencing commitment and satisfaction. Pennington and Richards (2016) explore the significance of teacher identity, merging roles, personal identities, and life experiences.

In essence, professional identity is not static but shaped by diverse factors. It’s a dynamic process influenced by personal experiences and external forces, providing a holistic perspective on professional identity development.

### **The Impact of Demographics on Professional Identity**

Various demographic factors, including gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, years of service, and education level, have been examined to understand their impact on the development of professional identity. Research in this area seeks to uncover the relationship between these demographic variables and the complex notion of professional identity.

Tsolakidis (2018) conducted a study on teachers’ professional identity across different educational levels, taking demographic aspects into account. The research identified significant differences based on education level, school location, and years of service. However, no statistically significant variations were found in relation to gender and age.

Ji (2010) investigated teachers’ perceptions of professional identity at various career stages. The findings revealed that individuals who had left the teaching profession exhibited the lowest levels of professional identity, while students with no teaching experience demonstrated the highest overall professional identity scores.

Schepens et al. (2009) conducted research with prospective teachers, highlighting the crucial role of the type of education received in shaping professional identity. The study emphasized that the education one receives predicts self-efficacy, professional orientation, and commitment.

Vieira et al. (2017) compared perceptions of professional identity between health and engineering undergraduate students, finding no significant gender-related differences but noting substantial disparities between self-perception and how others perceive individuals, particularly in the health field.

## EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN EDUCATION

In the field of counseling, Turner and Knight (2015) examined the development of professional identity among trainee counselors, considering demographic factors such as gender and years of experience. Their research revealed disparities between novice and experienced trainee counselors, with the more experienced participants showing greater progress in professional identity due to their extended exposure to the field.

Woo et al. (2017) explored differences in professional identity among master's students, doctoral students, and counselor educators in the counseling field, underscoring the evolving nature of professional identity. Their study showed significant differences between the three groups, indicating a progressive view of professional identity development.

Li et al. (2020) conducted research among Chinese general practitioners to comprehend the factors influencing professional identity. The findings unveiled statistically significant differences in professional identity related to gender, religion, marital status, and age, while no significant disparities were observed in terms of education level.

In conclusion, research suggests that demographics indeed influence an individual's professional identity. Personal experiences and characteristics may impact elements like self-efficacy, self-esteem, knowledge, values, commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction within the professional context.

### **Teachers' Professional Identity**

Teachers' professional identity has been a central focus of research within the field of education. This section explores the multifaceted nature of professional identity among educators, touching on its dynamic development and the various factors that influence it.

The complexity of teachers' professional identity is highlighted by the fact that it is constantly evolving through social interactions. Social contexts have a profound impact on teachers' actions and reasoning, making their identities subject to change. The interplay between personal decisions and environmental factors further underscores the malleable nature of professional identity.

Day and Kington (2008) assert that a teacher's professional identity is not confined to a single role but encompasses various dimensions, including professional, social, and personal identities. These identities are influenced by a myriad of factors, including the educational context, social interactions, emotional contexts, personal characteristics, and perceptions.

The concept of self and self-concept plays a crucial role in the formation of teachers' professional identity. Teachers' understanding of themselves within a professional context, such as the classroom, is integral to the development of their professional identity. The self is dynamic, characterized by real self, external self, and ideal self, each influenced by ongoing interactions and experiences.

## **Psaroudaki, Theofania**

Research by Van Lankveld et al. (2017) underscores the role of the work environment, interactions with students, and personal development in shaping teachers' professional identity. The study found that teachers' experiences in the work context, particularly the ability to adapt and cope, influence the construction of their professional identity.

Framed within social identity theory, Beijaard et al. (2004) propose that teachers' professional identity is an integral part of their social identity, shaped by identification with the teaching profession. These researchers identify three identity components in teachers: self-identification (relating to how teachers perceive themselves in the context of their profession), organizational identification (related to the school), and identification with the teacher's role.

Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) examine the complexity of teacher professional identity by integrating the experiences of teachers with disabilities. They assert that teachers' professional identities are strongly shaped by their beliefs about inclusion, indicating that personal values and beliefs can have a profound influence.

### **Job Satisfaction and Professional Identity**

Research has consistently shown that job satisfaction and professional identity are intertwined. Job satisfaction can be both an outcome and a predictor of professional identity. Individuals with strong professional identities tend to experience higher job satisfaction, while job satisfaction can also shape and reinforce professional identity.

Hoigaard et al. (2012) conducted a study among teachers to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and professional identity. Their research revealed a positive association, indicating that higher job satisfaction was linked to stronger professional identity among teachers.

In the healthcare field, Sabanciogullari & Dogan (2015) explored the relationship between professional identity and job satisfaction among nurses. The study found that nurses who reported higher professional identity also experienced higher job satisfaction, suggesting a positive correlation.

Zhang et al. (2016) conducted a study among university faculty members and candidates to examine the connection between professional identity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Their findings indicated that a strong professional identity was positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

### **Conclusion:**

## EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN EDUCATION

The exploration of professional identity in the realm of education has unearthed its dynamic and adaptable nature, closely intertwined with personal experiences and external influences. It encapsulates the essential philosophies of Mead and Erikson, the impact of demographics on educators' professional identities, and the crucial interplay with job satisfaction.

Professional identity emerges as a dynamic construct molded by a multitude of factors. Demographic elements, including age, gender, years of service, and education level, act as influential forces, shaping dimensions like self-efficacy and commitment. This holistic perspective illuminates the adaptable character of professional identity and underscores its responsiveness to individual circumstances and experiences.

Within the educational domain, teachers' professional identity exemplifies this dynamism. It reflects the ongoing interplay between social interactions, evolving self-concepts, and personal development. Educators' professional identities are multifaceted, influenced by the educational context, social interactions, and emotional factors, transcending a singular role.

Furthermore, the profound connection between job satisfaction and professional identity has been firmly established. The symbiotic relationship between these constructs signifies that job satisfaction both shapes and is shaped by one's professional identity. This mutual influence holds significant potential for elevating educators' professional lives and, in turn, enhancing educational practices for the benefit of students and the broader educational community. This comprehensive review lays the groundwork for future exploration, encouraging educators and researchers to dive deeper into methodologies and strategies that nurture professional identity, fostering more fulfilled and impactful educational experiences.

### **Summary**

This section of the article has provided a comprehensive overview of professional identity, including its diverse definitions and dimensions. Professional identity is a dynamic construct that emerges from an interplay of personal and environmental factors. It is strongly influenced by demographics, such as age, gender, and years of service, which can affect dimensions like self-efficacy, commitment, and motivation. Furthermore, teachers' professional identity is characterized by its multifaceted nature, with social interactions, self-concept, and personal development playing pivotal roles. Lastly, the strong connection between job satisfaction and professional identity has been established, indicating a reciprocal relationship.

The article will proceed to discuss the methodologies used in researching professional identity and its implications for educational practices. Additionally, it will explore strategies for fostering and nurturing professional identity among educators and professionals in various fields.

## **References**

- Akkerman, S. F., & Meijer, P. C. (2011). A dialogical approach to conceptualizing teacher identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(2), 308-319.
- Ball, R. (1972). Changes in accounting techniques and stock prices. *Journal of Accounting Research*, 1-38.
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37(2), 122-147.
- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(2), 107-128.
- Best, S., & Williams, S. (2018). Professional identity in interprofessional teams: findings from a scoping review. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 33(2), 1– 12.
- Day, C., & Kington, A. (2008). Identity, well-being in the non-formal contexts of teaching. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 16(1), 7– 23.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis*. UK: Norton & Company.
- Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. In: *British Educational Research Journal*. 2011; Vol. 37(5), 813-828.
- Hoigaard, R., Giske, R., & Sundsli, K. (2012). Newly qualified teachers' work engagement and teacher efficacy influences on job satisfaction, burnout, and the intention to quit. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(3), 347– 357.
- Jarvis-Selinger, S., Pratt, D. D., & Regehr, G. (2012). Competency is not enough: integrating identity formation into the medical education discourse. *Academic Medicine*, 87(9), 1185–1190.
- Ji, Y. H. (2010). Pre-service and beginning teachers' professional identity and its relation to dropping out of the profession. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(8), 1530–1543.
- Lasky, S. (2005). A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(8), 899–916.
- Lee, H.J. (2017). How emotional intelligence relates to job satisfaction and burnout in public service jobs. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 0(0), 1-17.
- Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, V., Tavakoli, M., & Hamman, D. (2016). Understanding what is possible across a career: Professional identity development beyond transition to teaching. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 17(4), 581–597.

## EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN EDUCATION

- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pennington, M. C., & Richards, J. C. (2016). Teacher Identity in Language Teaching: Integrating Personal, Contextual, and Professional Factors. *RELC Journal*, 47(1), 1- 19.
- Reid, A., Dahlgren, M. A., Dahlgren, L. O., & Petocz, P. (2011). *From expert student to novice professional*. London: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Sabanciogullari, S., & Dogan, S. (2015). Relationship between job satisfaction, professional identity and intention to leave the profession among nurses in Turkey. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 23(8), 1076–1085.
- Schepens, A., Aelterman, A., & Vlerick, P. (2009). Student teachers' professional identity formation: between being born as a teacher and becoming one. *Educational Studies*, 35(4), 361–378.
- Tsolakidis, I. (2018). Investigation of the professional identity, professional development, and training of primary and secondary teachers. Doctoral Thesis. Thessaly: University of Thessaly (UTH).
- Turner, A., & Knight, J. (2015). A debate on the professional identity of occupational therapists. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 78(11), 664- 673.
- Van Lankveld, T., Schoonenboom, J., Volman, M., Croiset, G., & Beishuizen, J. (2017). Developing a teacher identity in the university context: A systematic review of the literature. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 36(2), 325–342.
- Vieira, A., Carrieri, A., Monteiro, P., & Roquete, F. (2017). Gender Differences and Professional Identities in Health and Engineering. *BAR - Brazilian Administration Review*, 14(1), 1-21.
- Woo, H., Lu, J., Harris, C., & Cauley, B. (2017). Professional Identity Development in Counseling Professionals. *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation*, 8(1), 15– 30.
- Zhang, Y., Hawk, S. T., Zhang, X., & Zhao, H. (2016). Chinese pre-service teachers' professional identity links with education program performance: The roles of task value belief and learning motivations. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7(573), 1–12.