

**ECQEMC 2021**

**The Fourth Annual International Symposium “Education and City: Quality Education for Modern Cities”**

**PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF NOVICE TEACHERS: ANALYSIS  
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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**Abstract**

The article provides an analysis of international experience in studying the professional identity of novice teachers in the context of changing ideas about the role of a pedagogue in the educational process. The purpose of this review was to identify the main areas of research on the formation of the professional identity of teachers with less than three years of experience. It provides a comprehensive definition of "professional identity", and explores some of the most common approaches. Within the framework of the theoretical review, the interrelation of pedagogues' subjectivity and professional identity is revealed using a dialogical approach, and the peculiarities of its formation among senior and junior students and the role of mentoring in this process are studied. The issue of the dynamism of professional identity throughout the working life of a pedagogue is considered, and how it is influenced by the socio-group context of changes in the ideas about the role of a pedagogue in the educational process. Particular emphasis is made on the fact that the formed positive professional identity of a pedagogue is important for all participants in the educational process, it is also an important condition for protection against professional burnout. Thus, the importance of further and detailed study of professional identity and the prospects of wide practical application and implementation of the obtained knowledge are emphasized.

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*Keywords:* Professional identity, professional burnout, precarization, subjectivity



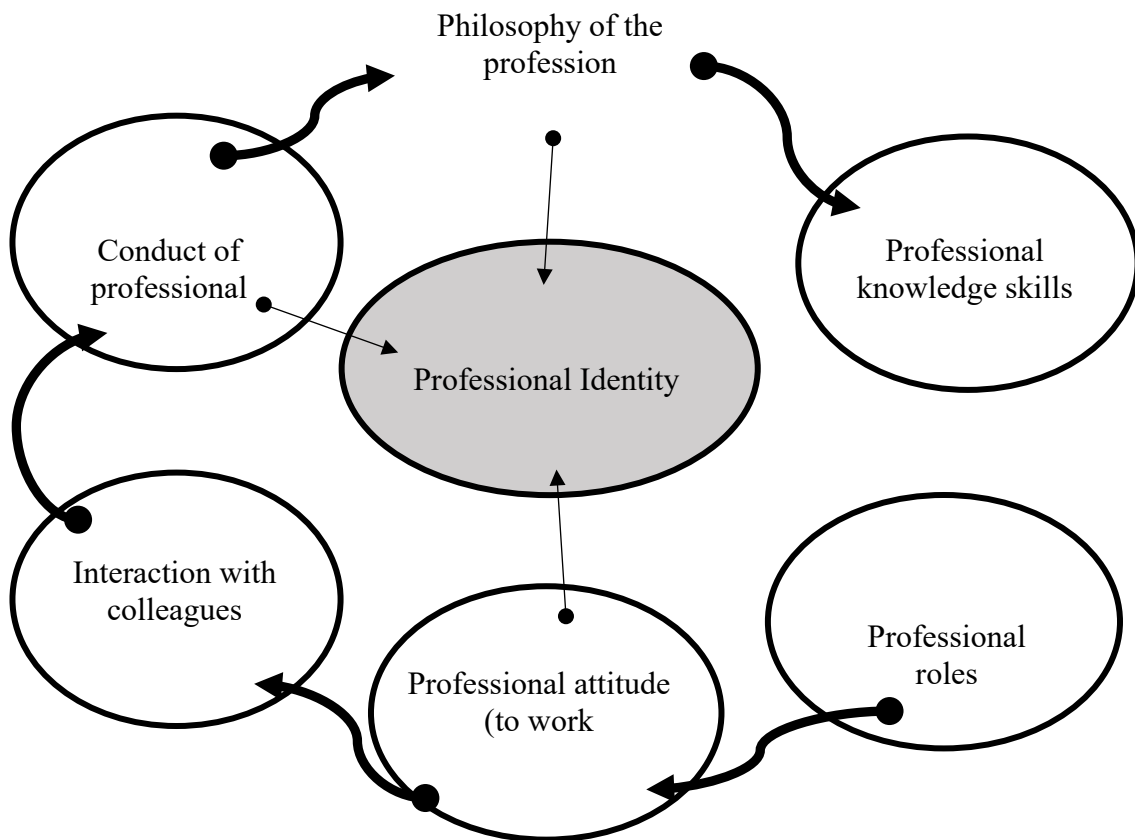
## 1. Introduction

There are three main points of view on how to properly interpret the term "professional identity", as there is no generally accepted term at the moment (Bugaychuk, 2013):

1. Emotional connection and belonging to a certain professional group
2. Acceptance of own self-actualization and that professional identity is a part of personal identity
3. Recognition of professional identity as a complex characteristic that combines both personal and professional aspects.

We have formulated and propose to use in further discussion a simple definition: professional identity is a person's self-awareness as a professional and member of a professional group, the formation of an emotional attitude toward it, as well as personal identification with his/her work.

The international study of professional identity of a pedagogue, published in the "Humanitarian" journal by a group of authors: Berberyan et al. (2019) gives a 6-component structure of professional identity (see Figure1).



**Figure 1.** Structure of professional identity

1. Philosophy of profession: the core of professional identity. These are values, goals, beliefs, professional ethics, and even the most common general perceptions associated with the profession.
2. Professional knowledge and skills: the unique knowledge and skills inherent in each pedagogue.

3. Performance of the professional role: performance of the basic tasks assigned to the individual as a professional by society.

4. Professional attitude towards work: high-quality and productive work.

5. Interaction with colleagues: developed communication skills.

6. Behavior of professional representation: active interaction with society, e.g., pedagogical education or pedagogical assistance.

Klimenko and Posukhova (2018) compiled a list of empirical indicators used to study teachers' professional identity based on its typological attributes (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Typological attributes of professional identity

	Identity			
	Positive	Pseudo-positive	Diffusion	Crisis
Occupational prestige	Mid or High	Mid or High	Mid	Low
Place of professional identity in the general structure of identification	Priority places at the We-identity level	Mid or Low	Low	Low
Labor motivation	High, focus on professional efficiency and development	Mid, focus on rituals, conjuncture	Mid or Low	Low
Job satisfaction	High	Mid	Mid or Low	Low
Professional values	Positive attitude	Mid or Low Significance	Indifference or Low Interest	High or Low Significance
Corporate identity	High-level loyalty, paternalism	Mid-level loyalty, ritualism	Low-level loyalty	No loyalty
Career orientations	Professional development and career	Career	Uncertainty, temporary job	Career change

## 2. Problem Statement

At the moment, there is no commitment on the formation of professional identity in the pedagogical community. Despite numerous studies proving the importance of this process, professional identity is still formed randomly and depends too much on circumstances. A review of the literature will give the opportunity to bring together the most significant points from the studies and accentuate the need for further research and implementation in practice.

## 3. Research Questions

1. At what age does professional identity begin to form?
2. Is professional identity formed and transformed throughout working life or is it stable from a certain point in time?
3. What role does subjectivity play in the formation of professional identity?

4. What role does the socio-group context play in the formation and development of professional identity?

5. How are professional identity and emotional burnout connected?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the peculiarities of the formation of professional identity of novice teachers in the context of changing ideas about the role of a pedagogue in the educational process, to indicate the significance of the problem, the main directions of its study and further research, as well as to accentuate the basic terminology.

#### **5. Research Methods**

Descriptive analysis of foreign and domestic articles covering a variety of features of professional identity, classification of the main approaches to the research, systematization of the obtained information, are defined as the main methods of research.

#### **6. Findings**

Let us consider in detail the main approaches to the study of professional identity

##### **6.1. The age of professional identity formation**

In general, the issue of studying professional identity in students is debatable, since in the early years it is not labor, but learning activities that prevail. This is confirmed by some studies, one of them, for example, is described in the article "Professional identity of HEE students" by Morozova (2014). Five-year students' professional identity is expectedly more clearly expressed, and the level of acceptance of their future profession is higher. So we can say that professional identity is formed as a result of a deeper study of the subject and different specializations traditionally studied in the last years of study, which brings education closer to the reality of work.

The same is evidenced by the research of Karaulov (2021). It was found that professional motivation and quality of student learning are in correlation relationship, and professional identity and quality of student learning find statistically significant correlation only between unformed, imposed professional identity and satisfactory quality of learning, lack of correlation relationship is observed between A level students and their professional identity. There is a direct correlation between professional self-determination and professional expectations of graduates: the higher the level of professional motivation and professional identity of a student, the more likely he/she will work in his/her specialty. Currently, such graduates are about one third of the total number.

The article on the research and development of professional identity (Martínez de la Hidalga & Villardón, 2019) suggests that students' professional identity is not genuine, but based on romantic ideas about the profession from books, movies, fantasies or on the protest: not to become like a teacher from their own negative experiences. Emotional coloring of the decision to become a pedagogue is very

important because this mindset will quite strongly influence the learning process at first (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2012).

The article "From ugly duckling to swan: stories of novice teachers", (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Dvir, 2014) is very interesting. The analysis of 3 novice teacher stories reflects three aspects of building professional identity: the conflict between personal and socio-public perceptions of the role of a teacher; the tension between biographical experience and perceptions of teaching; and the gap between fantasy and professional reality. According to the author, writing and publishing professional narratives can contribute to an understanding of the common components of teacher identity and what it means to be a novice teacher. Evidence for the effectiveness and efficiency of narratives can also be found in the article "Finding myself as a teacher: Exploring the shaping of teacher identities through student teachers narratives" (Anspal et al., 2012)

## **6.2. The dynamism of professional identity**

Most agree that identity is a continuous process and therefore is dynamic rather than stable. Teachers' identities can change throughout their working lives, but positive identities are more resilient to external circumstances.

The article "New teachers' identity shifts at the boundary of teacher education and initial practice" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011) suggests that when novice teachers only getting started to work, they experience a certain identity shift. Throughout their pedagogical education, they have formed their identity based on their previous school experiences, the ideas and approaches promoted by their pedagogical education programs, and the ideal of the teachers they hope to become. New learning situations introduce them to the thinking of experienced teachers and to the needs of their first cohorts of students, challenging established notions of what they are as teachers. A teacher's experience can be an experience not only of active identity construction, but also of imposed identity, stemming from the social or cultural concepts of more experienced familiar colleagues.

The experience of new teachers living in this boundary space of the first months of teaching practice could be understood as a search for free will, a strong presence in the learning context. The development of a strong identity is related to the emergence of free will as a way of externalizing identity, as an external expression of one's identity and influencing the ongoing formation of identity (Schaap et al., 2021). It is very important at this point to get into the right environment that develops the potential of novice teachers, so that the first years of practice are years of learning, not of overcoming.

In the Netherlands there has been an attempt to assess the difficulties that young elementary school teachers experience in their first years and to create a special assessment tool, the quantitative Professional Identity Scale (PITS). Its first tests were very successful and made it possible to clearly see the degree of tension and stress of teachers at the beginning of their professional journey (Hanna et al., 2019).

Part of this situation could be facilitated by a mentoring system. The article "Mentoring styles and novice teachers' well-being: The role of basic need satisfaction" (Burger et al., 2021) suggests that constructively oriented mentoring does help young professionals cope with reality and emerging pressures. The mentoring system can also be beneficial to the mentors themselves, as it gives more

meaning to their work and strengthens their identity. Mentoring of young pedagogues can partly act as psychological support for novice professionals and help them cope with a reality that they may not have expected to face.

### **6.3. The Role of Subjectivity in the Formation of Professional Identity**

The formed or unformed subjective position largely determines the students' attitude towards their professional and class activities. The subjective position of a student's personality is a combination of different components and features of the ways of interaction between them (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011).

The structure of subjective includes motivational-value-based, attitudinal and regulatory-activity-based blocks; motivational-activity-based is considered to be the leading one. Of particular interest is the discussion of the dialogic perspective of professional identity based on Hubert Hermans' concept of the dialogic structure of the self (Zhu et al., 2020).

This approach conceptualizes teacher identity as both unitary and multiple, both continuous and discontinuous, and both individual and social one. Based on dialogic self theory, professional identity consists of multiple self-positions that provide different interpretations of each situation, so that identity is immersed in a continuous process of construction and reconstruction. These different self-positions may be in conflict, but here we can apply the principle of coherence, which consists in the assertion that everything existing is in relationship.

The social nature of identity does not discard individuality or personal autonomy, which allow a person to bring together in dialogue different self-positions subject to different social influences. It is assumed that social identity has a dialectical relationship with personal identity as interrelated concepts that reveal different dimensions and levels of personality.

Identity can be said to be formed through a dual dialogue: the dialogue of the individual with himself, between the teacher he/she was and the teacher he/she wants to become; and the relationship between ideals and contextual conditions. Thus, the construction of professional identity takes place in a continuous dynamic process of negotiation with oneself and with the context, between desires, limitations, and possibilities.

Continuing the topic of the dialogic approach, it is interesting to examine the work "A dialogic approach to conceptualizing teacher identity" (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). They note a growing interest in the study of teacher professional identity, and connect it to an awareness of the importance of emotion, passion, and courage in teaching. This view goes beyond the usual focus on teachers' acquisition of "assets," such as knowledge, competencies, or beliefs, as the basis for professional development. The acquisition of "assets" emphasizes the importance of desired learning outcomes in terms of "what teachers should be learning."

Another limitation of this approach to "assets" is that it perpetuates a discourse about the teacher, that is, the teacher as an object that we look at from above or from the outside. Consequently, this approach does not allow us to understand how teachers themselves make sense of their teaching practice. Studies that include an explicit focus on teacher personality (Hong et al., 2017) show a more holistic interest in what it means to be a teacher. In such studies, professional development is understood to

include questions such as "who am I as a teacher?" and "who do I want to become?" Taking such issues into account, the discourse shifts toward the teacher's perspective, in which the teacher as agent becomes the main starting point in understanding and fostering professional development.

The formed subjective position is important for consciously being in the profession. In 2016, Lebedeva and Zavodchikov (2018) conducted a study of students with an unformed subjective position. It is established that such students find it difficult to build educational and professional plans, they have low positive motivation, no desire to build further plans both in professional (educational) and personal plans. Students list the main reasons that prevent them from making and implementing professional and personal plans, among them are vague career prospects, unstable economy, lack of clearly prescribed and defined functions of a pedagogue, lack of regulated standards, not too high occupational prestige. More than half of the respondents were unable to be specific about their career plans, remaining within the confines of uncertainty and probability. Many (more than 60%) of the students plan to change their profession after graduation, and 25% would like to change the direction of their work.

#### **6.4. The role of socio-group context in the formation of professional identity**

The social context influences the construction of identity as part of it. The influence of social factors on identity occurs when people internalize the voices and values of the group to which they belong (e.g., as a teacher, elementary school teacher, high school teacher, or teacher-professional), so that their interpretation of reality is strongly influenced by significant persons from the reference group. But in addition, the social influence on identity is also determined by what might be called "negative self-definition": that is, proceed from what the individual is not.

If we approach the social question in the context of the country, it is important to mention the phenomenon of precarious work, described in detail in the article by Klimenko and Posukhova " School Teachers' Professional Identity in the context of the Precariatization of Social and Labor Relations in Large Russian Cities" (2018). The phenomenon of the precarization of labor consists in the deformation of labor relations, expressed in the emergence of numerous groups of workers with infringed social and labor rights and vulnerable, unreliable social position. According to the authors, it is precarization that leads to the destruction of professional values and erosion of positive professional identity of pedagogues, while it is the professional identity that is "an integral component of the self-image of the individual, which provides the experience of belonging, finding one's place in society, gives meaning to labor activity, which counteracts deprofessionalization and burnout". They conducted a study and found out that most pedagogues have not pragmatic (e.g. monetary), but socially oriented labor motivation (role of service to society, fulfillment of important social mission), although in large cities this ratio changes. This is particularly clear in the difference between Finnish and Brazilian students (Ruohotie-Lyhty et al., 2021). In Finland, the teaching profession is clearly prestigious and students are confident in their choice and future, receive decent pay, and have the courage to make professional and personal plans. By the time they graduate they already have a very positive professional identity. The situation is diametrically opposite in Brazil, where students understand almost immediately that their path will be very difficult and not so well paid, so they are attracted to the profession not by the material motive, but by the social one (desire to help others, to do something important for society).

The social context of learning to teach can evoke both positive and negative emotions. Emotions are usually classified as "positive" in situations that involve pleasure or arise when one is moving toward a goal (e.g., happiness, satisfaction). Negative emotions, such as frustration and anger, arise from sources related to goal inadequacy, such as student misbehavior, rule violations, or non-cooperation of coworkers. It has been noted that the negative emotion that occurs most often in the experience of students-teachers is anxiety. The constantly changing educational context also causes discomfort and increases anxiety.

A similar situation is occurring in the United States and is described in the article "Teacher identity and agency in an era of accountability" (Buchanan, 2015). Because of teachers' rapidly changing position in society and changing roles, even long-serving teachers face a transformation of their professional identity because it was formed in a very different environment. They can no longer act the way they are used to, and their individual, characteristic ways of working no longer produce the expected results. And at the same time, they cannot rebuild or change their identity on their own, because it is based on their past experiences and the now non-existent social context. Therefore, it is necessary to form professional communities and help teachers quickly incorporate all the changes into their work so that the process is smooth and gradual. Approximately the same situation can occur for students-pedagogues if the HEE emphasizes traditional teaching methods and minimal hours of practice in real-world educational settings.

#### **6.5. Connection between professional identity and emotional burnout**

Professional burnout is closely connected with professional identity development. The more formed the professional identity, the less likely burnout is to occur (Li, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Revisiting the previously described 6-component structure of professional identity, it becomes clear that all its elements in their negative meaning are the cause of burnout (Ruoxuan et al., 2021). For example, communication with colleagues is an important condition for the formation of professional identity, but if this communication is toxic, it is already one of the most common causes of burnout, and the behavior of professional representation may not be the healthiest organizational culture. Accordingly, if the conditions for the formation of a healthy positive professional identity are not met, it is likely that the process of emotional burnout will begin. It can be said that a formed professional identity is the key to finding a person at work and maintaining its professionalism (Capone et al., 2019).

There was a study on the introduction of special online programs aimed at reducing stress and preventing burnout in teachers (Ansley et al., 2021), and many noted that their use was most effective when combined with the opportunity to discuss them with colleagues, that is, with their teaching community. Feeling part of the teaching community is an important part of professional identity.

In Italy they analyzed 609 school teachers and found that there is a direct correlation between school socio-cultural climate, organizational beliefs and emotional burnout, which is also a link with the 6th component of professional identity structure. All figures and tables should be referred in the text and numbered in the order in which they are mentioned.



## 7. Conclusion

Having studied many articles devoted to pedagogues' professional identity, we can confidently speak about the importance and relevance of this topic. Professional identity is central to the teaching profession because it provides the basis for understanding one's own work and place in society. Researchers from all countries agree in trying to develop and implement generally accepted terms and definitions of professional identity that are currently lacking. Surprisingly, the situation of pedagogues in different countries is very similar - expressed precarization, a decline in the occupational prestige, and an overwhelming bureaucratic burden.

The dialogic approach to the conceptualization of the teacher's personality allows us to look at the pedagogue not just as an object, but as an individual with his/her own characteristics and personal sense of himself/herself as a teacher, as a professional.

As a result of long-term research and work with students, it has been found that professional identity develops as students learn, and is much more clearly expressed in senior students than in freshmen. Novice pedagogues have a peculiar shift in professional identity in the first years of practice, as their initial identity is false and romanticized, and due to the small number of practical sessions during training they are not very prepared for the reality of what happens in educational institutions. The mentoring system could play an important role in this period, but there is a lack of communication of all kinds of mentors (teachers, professionals) with graduates and students starting their professional path, which slows down the formation of their professional identity.

At the moment teaching activities are transprofessional and this generates uncertainty and anxiety in the novice professionals, as they do not know what to expect, and this, of course, is also reflected in the professional identity.

The study of professional identity has enormous potential and wide horizons of practical application, which makes further research not just important, but necessary.

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