

Annotated bibliography on teacher identity
Prepared by Syeda Hafsa

Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., Vermunt, J. D. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20(2)*, 107–128.

In their review of literature of the research on teachers' professional identity Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) categorized these research studies as three types: 1) studies focusing on teachers' "professional identity formation," 2) studies focusing on the "identification of characteristics of teachers' professional identity" and 3) studies representing professional identity by "teachers' stories" (p. 107). The authors mainly used 22 articles they found from a web search and some additional ones they found from those articles and other sources. Then they analyzed the articles "with regard to their (1) purpose, (2) definition of professional identity, (3) concepts related to this definition, (4) methodology, and (5) major findings" (p. 109). The authors found that most of the reviewed literature concentrated on "understanding and describing teachers' perceptions of aspects of their professional identity in general or perceptions that are related to specific issues of their profession and that can enrich the debate on these issues" (p. 116). They reported that "a shared sense or perception of professional identity is hard to identify in the studies" (p. 119). Their findings also revealed that the majority of the research on professional identity formation of teachers "demonstrated or reconstructed ways in which teachers build their personal practical knowledge from experiences in practice" (p. 123) which supports Gee's (2000-2001) position about the critical role of "participation" in a teacher's identity development.

Based on the studies they reviewed, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) identified four features of teachers' professional identity: a) "professional identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences" (Kirby, 1991, as cited in Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004, p. 122), b) "professional identity implies both person and context," c) "a teacher's professional identity consists of subidentities that more or less harmonize," and d) "agency is an important element of professional identity, meaning that teachers have to be active in the process of professional development" (Coldron & Smith, 1999, as cited in Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004, p. 122). They suggested that these features could be used as a framework to conduct research on teachers' professional identity. They contended that "professional identity is not something teachers have, but something they use in order to make sense of themselves as teachers" (p. 123).

Timošćuk, I., & Ugaste, A. (2010). Student teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26(8)*, 1563-1570. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.008>

Based on Wenger's (1998) concept of learning, Timošćuk and Ugaste (2010) conducted a qualitative study of 45 student teachers using semi-structured individual and focus-group interviews to explore how teachers perceive themselves and "describe their professional identity" (p. 1565). They grounded their study on Wenger's social concept of learning, where identity is "defined through learning, experiencing, doing, and belonging" (p. 1568). They contended that Wenger looked at learning as becoming someone – "an understanding of how learning, in the context of the community, affects and moulds [*sic*] us" (p. 1568). The participants of their study reported that their professional development was influenced primarily by the interactions and cooperation with their students and supervising teachers. There were very few instances shared by the participants when they felt they belonged to the teachers' community. The participants

also reported that they valued the support from the school, but seemed not to experience it much. The authors concluded that student teachers' identity is "described by experiencing, that it is strongly related to emotions and, in the majority cases, is linked to personal social context" (p. 1569).

Irwin, B., & Hramiak, A. (2010). A discourse analysis of trainee teacher identity in online discussion forums. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education, 19*(3), 361-377. doi:10.1080/1475939X.2010.513767

Analyzing the discourse of discussion board posts, Irwin and Hramiak (2010) explored pre-service teachers' "expressions of identity as both university student and a developing professional teacher" as well as the role played by the mentoring university professor in the process of transforming their identity (p. 2). Findings from this study, which used discourse analysis to examine how university mentors shaped preservice teachers' identities through online discussions, showed that the student teachers established themselves as a "distinct group from the teacher community, defining boundaries in their text" with language like "we" to define themselves and "they" and "them" to define people outside their pre-service group (Irwin & Hramiak, 2010, p. 6). They also used certain terms "to differentiate" themselves in a way to define their own group – for example, "real teachers" referred to those who are already teaching (p. 7). The participants developed a community culture supporting each other, requesting help, sharing experiences, and uplifting their spirit through humor. The author contended that the way the university mentor "refers to the trainees reveal the way she sees them, and this subconsciously affects the way they see themselves" (p. 12).

Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 22*(2), 219-232. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.09.002

Flores and Day (2006) investigated "the ways in which the identities of a cohort of new teachers were shaped and reshaped over the first 2 years of teaching" (p. 219). They explored the participants' "beliefs," "values" and "learning experiences" and "their views of the challenges of teaching, learning and being an effective teacher in different school settings" (p. 219). Fourteen participants were interviewed for one and a half hours each. They also kept a "case record" of the participants for two years, which were analyzed, too. The findings suggested that the identities of the participants had been "strongly personally embedded at the beginning of their teaching careers, but destabilized by the negative school contexts and cultures in which they worked" (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 230). Moreover, the "meanings, values, images and ideals of what it meant to be a teacher with which they entered teaching were challenged and, for many, teaching became more routine, more rule governed and less creative" (p. 230). How the new teachers perceived their school culture and its leadership played an important role "in (re)shaping teachers' understanding of teaching, in facilitating or hindering their professional learning and development, and in (re)constructing their professional identities" (p. 230).

Thomas, L., & Beauchamp, C. (2011). Understanding new teachers' professional identities through metaphor. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(4), 762-769. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.12.007

Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) examined how 45 new teachers from two universities in Canada "describe their professional identities through the metaphors they choose to represent

their teaching selves” and compared the metaphors that they used while they were participating in the teacher education program and during the first year of their teaching. The participants in the study generated their own metaphors in two interviews. The authors investigated whether offering opportunities to use metaphors to discuss identities was useful to understand the complex subject of identity. Findings of the first interview showed that the metaphors “focused on supporting future students, nurturing, protecting and helping them find their way,” whereas, in the second interview the participants emphasized more themselves and their own classroom experiences, with emphases on being “challenged, facing changing and unpredictable situations, and focused on survival” (p. 765). The authors identified patterns in the metaphors used by the teachers and categorized them in five themes: “supporting the student,” “often changing,” “transformed from the beginning of the teacher education program,” “flexible or being moulded [*sic*] by others,” and “uncertain” (p. 765). Findings also suggested that though the participants attended the program for a considerable amount of time, and they were involved in the practice of teaching for many weeks, they lacked a “strong and positive feeling about their professional selves” (p. 767). These metaphors could have implications for teacher educators as well as researchers. This study helped us to recognize that because “the development of a professional identity does not automatically come with experience, and that some form of deliberate action is necessary to ensure that new teachers begin their careers with the appropriate tools to negotiate” their identities and survive their first year (p. 767).

Beijaard, D., Verloop, N. Vermunt, J. D. (2000). Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: an exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 16(7), 749-764.

In this exploratory study, Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000) examined the perceptions of professional identity of 80 experienced secondary school teachers in Netherlands using a four-part questionnaire. They operationalized what teachers’ professional identity should mean and what factors might influence that identity by describing teachers’ professional identity “in terms of the teacher as a subject matter expert, the teacher as a pedagogical expert, and the teacher as a didactical expert” (p. 750). They argued that the recent shift in education, which emphasized learning more than teaching, had caused a shift in teachers’ roles affecting the teachers’ understanding of their professional identity. Findings of the study showed that most of the teachers in the study “saw themselves as a combination of subject matter experts, didactical experts and pedagogical experts” (p. 762). Also, 31% participants reported that their “current perceptions of their professional identity did not differ from their prior perceptions of this identity;” however, the researchers noticed significant differences in their previous and current conceptions (p. 762). There was a shift in their perceptions of professional identity; many of the teachers “shifted specifically from subject matter expertise to didactical and pedagogical expertise during their careers” and different subject teachers experienced different levels of development (p. 762).

SØreide, G. E. (2006). Narrative construction of teacher identity: Positioning and negotiation. *Teachers and Teaching*, 12(5), 527-547. doi:10.1080/13540600600832247

Soreide (2006) explored “how different teacher identities were constructed within the teachers’ narratives about their job” using interviews among five elementary school teachers from Norway (p. 528). She reported that her participants referred to several “subject positions” to explain how they understand themselves, three of which were more noticeable: a) a person who

was “concerned with the child/pupil’s well-being and development,” b) someone who focused on cooperating with their students, co-workers and parents, c) someone who cared about the “social climate” in class (p. 532). Soreide also mentioned seven other subject positions that the teachers used to describe themselves, with emphases on teachers’ knowledge, their ethics of care and dedication to students’ development and positive changes in their field, their separation of public and private life, and demanding nature of teaching. Then the author explained how these narrative subject positions were used to construct teachers’ identities through “distancing, opposition and/or rejection of the available subject positions,” which she called “negative positioning,” and through “identification with and recognition of the available subject positions,” which she calls “positive positioning” (p. 534). Some of the teacher narratives in her study described what the teachers wanted to be or do and what they did not want to be or do, with clear allusions to how these teachers wanted to be “perceived as teachers” (p. 535). For example, one of the participants identified herself as a “child-centred [*sic*], learning-centred [*sic*] and responsibility-centred [*sic*]” teacher, while others stated that they would like people to perceive them as other types of teachers. Soreide also reported that the participants constructed multiple teacher identities concurrently: “the caring and kind teacher; the creative and innovative teacher; the professional teacher; the typical teacher” (p. 536). None of these identities should be taken as “ready-made” or “sharply defined;” rather, they should be understood as “flexible” (p. 536). Some of the subject positions were dichotomous, the author posited. She also contended that the participants seemed to negotiate between their identities “to construct identities that feel comfortable and unique” (p. 543).

Han, I. (2017). Conceptualisation of English teachers’ professional identity and comprehension of its dynamics. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(5), 549-569. doi:10.1080/13540602.2016.1206525

Han’s (2017) study aimed at conceptualizing professional identity “based on the socio-psychological understanding of identity” and examined what constituted professional identity and what the dynamics of professional identity were (p. 550). He investigated how “Korean teachers respond to their curriculum and related ELT [English language teaching] policies” which revealed their various identities contributing to their professional identity (p. 558). He adopted qualitative methods using a narrative approach in his study of five Korean English language teachers from different state high schools. The narratives from the participants of Han’s study showed that they had several identities that constituted their professional identity: “national identity,” “English teacher identity,” “teacher identity,” “learner identity,” “public teacher identity,” “gender identity,” and “person identity.” He argued that “each identity is not totally subordinated to professional identity,” as these could work as distinct identity or as “part of other identities” (p. 562). These identities might manifest themselves differently in various contexts and might overlap as well. There might be conflicts of identities, which might be negotiated. The author maintained that because of different requirements of the ELT policy, the environments, and education department, the Korean English teachers’ professional identity experiences conflicted and so did their negotiations.

O’Connor, K. E. (2008). “You choose to care”: Teachers, emotions and professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(1), 117-126. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.11.008

Using two in-depth semi-structured interviews, O'Connor (2008) studied how three Australian secondary school teachers “constructed and maintained a sense of professional identity which cohered with their philosophical or humanistic beliefs about the teaching role” (p. 118). The results of the study showed three types of care that the participants demonstrated: a) “caring as performative,” which indicated “behaviour [*sic*] geared towards motivating students in order to reach pedagogical goals;” b) “caring as professional,” which indicated “the management and maintenance of appropriate relationships with students in order to maintain a professional role;” and, c) “caring as philosophical/humanistic,” which indicated “making the personal decision to care in adherence with a personal and individual philosophy or code of ethics” (p. 121). The teachers reported to have found meaning in their conscious choice of being caring to their students. One of the participants resisted the “service provider” label given by the private school where she taught. This teacher also mentioned that her “meaningful relationships” with her students were the reason for her to continue teaching; however, she also recognized that emotional engagement could be “exhausting” (p. 124). She viewed her “professional identity as being pervasive and as involving a process of *becoming* as opposed to merely *being*” (p. 125, emphasis in the original). The author concluded that the participants in their research “used their identities to guide and shape their professional and emotional decisions” (p. 125) and they used these identities to justify their caring attitude in their professional activities.

Luehmann, A. L., & Tinelli, L. (2008). Teacher professional identity development with social networking technologies: Learning reform through blogging. *Educational Media International*, 45(4), 323-333. doi:10.1080/09523980802573263

Luehmann and Tinelli (2008) examined how blogging provided a space for 15 school teachers enrolled in a graduate seminar at a US university to interact with each other, and thus helped support their identity development as reform-minded science teachers. They defined the term identity using Gee's (2001) definition: “being recognized by self or others as a reform-minded science teacher” (p. 324). They identified “participation” and “recognition” from the 395 posts and 551 comments made by the teachers in the blogs and analyzed those to see how blogging helped support their new identity development as reform-minded science teachers. They categorized evidence of participation and recognition under three broad categories: a) “cognitive work,” when “participants displayed and discussed understanding of pedagogy, students, or other issues related to the field of teaching;” b) “affective work,” when the participants shared emotions or advocated for something; and c) “social work,” when they shared resources, mentored and encouraged each other (p. 329). The authors presented details of how the participants shared emotions, wrestled with dilemmas in the process of becoming reform-minded teachers, offered advice and information to each other to cope with the dilemmas, shared resources, discussed their experiments, provided encouragements, and mentored each other. They valued the support provided by the community through the blogs. Luehmann and Tinelli concluded that the blog connected the participants to other “like-minded” colleagues and offered them a platform to participate in the discourse and engage in “meaningful discussions” contributing to their learning as well as to their professional identity development as reform minded science teachers (p. 331).

Taylor, L. A. (2017). How teachers become teacher researchers: Narrative as a tool for teacher identity construction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 61, 16-25. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.09.008>

In a recent study, Taylor (2017) used narrative as a tool to investigate the identity construction of six teacher-researchers in a graduate program, examining how the process of becoming a teacher-researcher was supported by interactions with their instructor. She drew on case study discourse analysis methods and used a socio-cultural view of identity, which posits that the development of new practices requires construction of new identities. Findings from her study showed that the instructor “used language to both construct the identity of teacher researcher and to position her students as teacher researchers” via different strategies like personal narratives (p. 19). But Taylor also clarified that how the participants understood themselves within their experiences also helped them construct a new identity. The author described how the instructor helped the teachers construct teacher-researcher identities and positioned them as teacher-researchers. The instructor did not overtly discuss issues related to teacher identity or teacher-researcher identity, but she used language carefully to help them construct their identities. For example, she used the pronoun “we” deliberately to indicate that the teachers are also teacher-researchers. The participants later were involved in a study which further reinforced that identity; however, the construction of identity as mentioned by Taylor was not “linear.” At some points, participants would differentiate themselves as non-researchers, going back to their older identities as teachers only, claiming that the instructor was the researcher, not them, because she had published.

Pillen, M., Beijaard, D., & den Brok, P. (2013). Professional identity tensions of beginning teachers. *Teachers and Teaching*, 19(6), 660-678. doi:10.1080/13540602.2013.827455

Using semi-structured interviews, Pillen, Beijaard, and den Brok (2013) studied the professional identity tensions 24 beginning teachers experienced in the Netherlands. They posited that professional identity conflicts might cause tensions among teachers resulting in serious consequences, which in turn might lead them to leave teacher education programs or the profession. They defined identity tensions as “internal struggles between the teacher as a person and the teacher as a professional regarding an undesirable situation” (p. 662). They categorized 13 professional identity tensions experienced by beginning teachers based on a review of literature:

- Feeling like a student versus being expected to act like an adult teacher
- Wanting to care for students versus being expected to be tough
- Feeling incompetent of knowledge versus being expected to be an expert
- Wanting to invest time in practicing [*sic*] teaching versus feeling pressured to invest time in other tasks that are part of the teaching profession
- Feeling treated like a student versus wanting to take responsibility as a teacher
- Feeling like a peer versus wanting to take responsibility as a teacher
- Wanting to respect students’ integrity versus feeling the need to work against this integrity
- Wanting to treat pupils as persons as a whole versus feeling the need to treat them as learners (or vice versa)
- Experiencing difficulties in maintaining an emotional distance
- Experiencing conflicts between one’s own and others’ orientations regarding learning to teach
- Being exposed to contradictory institutional attitudes
- Feeling dependent on a mentor (colleague/supervisor) versus wanting to go one’s own way in teaching

- Wanting to invest in a private life versus feeling pressured to spend time and energy on work (Pillen, Beijaard & den Brok, 2013, p. 88).

Pillen, Beijaard, and den Brok (2013) described professional identity tensions experienced by their participants as consisting of three themes: “the change in role from student to teacher,” “conflicts between desired and actual support given to students,” and “conflicting conceptions of learning to teach” (Pillen, Beijaard & den Brok, 2013, p. 90). Then they compared the experiences of tension shared by the participants with the 13 categories from the literature, and reported that 36 experiences fit with those categories, while the other 23 fit with the three themes they had identified. The participants reported to experience these tensions, some of which were quite serious, on a regular basis. These tensions were accompanied by “feelings of helplessness, frustration or anger” (p. 674). But these tensions had some positive outcomes as well; the participants reported to have learned from their experiences with them. They felt “stronger as teachers,” and were more equipped to handle certain situations. The authors concluded that professional identity tensions were “very common,” and therefore, measures should be taken to transform these into positive experiences.

Ruohotie-Lyhty, M. (2013). Struggling for a professional identity: Two newly qualified language teachers' identity narratives during the first years at work. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 30*, 120-129. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.11.002>

Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) used a qualitative narrative study approach to explore how the two participants in her study “use their identity, their self-stories” to interpret their experiences and “in which ways does their identity develop through the process of making sense of their experiences” (p. 122). The findings from the reflective essays and interviews showed that one participant, Taina, experienced difficulty in the beginning in the profession and “doubted her ability” to be a teacher, while the other participant, Suvi, had an easier beginning. Both of the participants perceived their work and their positions differently before they entered the profession. Taina had a strong self-conception as a subject teacher. But her narratives after entering the profession changed to “disappointment, shock, guilt, and betrayal” (p. 125). She wanted to teach innovatively but failed, which caused disappointment for her. She stated that the teacher education program gave her a “false picture of school reality” (p. 125). In her second-year narrative, she reported that the level of her students and the school was poor, and there were not enough resources available, which contributed to her poor performance. As a result, she became alienated from the teacher community and her students. In the fourth year, her teaching ideals continued to remain far from her professional reality. In contrast, Suvi had several similar challenges but she reflected upon herself as an educator, she was not shocked, and maintained a positive tone. She involved herself deeply with the teacher community in her second and third years. She developed a strong identity as a language teacher and developed strong pedagogic approaches. In her fourth year she was confident and believed that the previous years were significant for her professional development.

Before entering the profession, Taina had a strong sense of herself as a teacher of the languages she taught, whereas Suvi understood herself as a teacher who focused more on “education and interaction.” The author argued that Taina’s previous “subject teacher” identity contradicted with her “school realities” (p. 126), and that she was not ready to “abandon her initial identity” (p. 126). The author concluded that her professional identity development was “partly hindered because of her inability to accept the current situation” (p. 126). She developed two identities: “ideal and forced identity that are in constant conflict,” which led her to adopt a

“victimic stance” that ultimately limited her “agency as a teacher” (p. 127). By contrast, Suvi’s preliminary teacher identity developed before starting the profession and made the beginning of her career easier, since it aligned with the school realities. This helped her to have “purposeful agency” and “continuing professional identity development” (p. 127). Based on these findings, the author argued that “pre-service teacher education is an important phase in constructing teacher identity,” therefore, teachers should be supported to develop their identities in these programs.