REVISTA ESPACIOS

Peculiarities of Professional Identity in Teachers

Peculiaridades de la identidad profesional en docentes

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Contents

ABSTRACT:

This study considers features of professional identity of future teachers as well as analyzes its structural characteristics using self-description technique of "Who am I?" by M. Kuhn and T. McPartland. The article reveals general and specific features in professional identity characteristics of future teachers. According to conducted survey, professional orientation of future teachers was noted in senior years' students. The professional identity of future teachers is dominated by an image of himself/herself as a competent teacher; many students manifested primarily personal identity, and then social identity. This situation can be considered as favorable prerequisite for development and self-development of pedagogical competence of future teachers. It was established that professional identity of future teachers, as the psychological mechanism for development of pedagogical competence, had the individualized motivational determination.
Keywords: identity, professional identity, teacher, self-identity

RESUMEN:

Este estudio considera las características de la identidad profesional de los futuros profesores, así como analiza sus características estructurales usando la técnica de autodescripción de "¿Quién soy?" por M. Kuhn y T. McPartland. El artículo revela características generales y específicas en las características de identidad profesional de futuros docentes. Según la encuesta realizada, se observó la orientación profesional de los futuros profesores en los estudiantes de último año. La identidad profesional de los futuros maestros está dominada por una imagen de sí mismo como un maestro competente; muchos estudiantes manifestaron principalmente identidad personal, y luego identidad social. Esta situación puede considerarse un prerrequisito favorable para el desarrollo y el autodesarrollo de la competencia pedagógica de los futuros docentes. Se estableció que la identidad profesional de los futuros profesores, como mecanismo psicológico para el desarrollo de la competencia pedagógica, tenía una determinación motivacional individualizada.
Palabras clave: identidad, identidad profesional, docente, identidad propia

1. Introduction

Fundamental changes in the social system, all spheres of social life, socio-economic, political and spiritual changes in the Kazakh society, and as a consequence, the special requirements for the pedagogical competence of teachers determine the relevance of the present study on features of professional identity of future teachers.

However, the issues related to professional identity of future teachers of Kazakh ethnicity remain little researched. The content and development lines of professional identity of future teachers of Kazakh ethnicity are insufficiently developed in the national psychological science.

Professional identity can be considered through the study of the relationship of self-identity of future teachers. The high degree of conformity of self-identity of future teachers is considered as an important indicator of professional identity. We also define the professional identity of future teachers as a psychological mechanism for the development of pedagogical competence.

1.1. Research Objective

The purpose of our research is to study the psychological peculiarities, content, and development focus of professional identity of future teachers as a mechanism for the development of pedagogical competence.

2. Literature Review

Identity is understood as a person's perception of his self-identity and integrity in time and space, symbolically expressed in the answer to the question "Who am I?" A person can identify his traits and compare them with the traits of other people. Besides, he chooses goals, values, and needs, i.e. sets the content of identity, while society adjusts the rules and laws of his existence. "I" is a part of the identity, which reflects the uniqueness, and individuality of human reactions to the social situation and is self-determination.

The problems of identity are studied mainly within the framework of foreign psychological approaches and trends. The study of identity goes back to the works performed at Harvard University by William James, who developed the concept of comprehension by personality of his self-identity, his boundaries, and place in the world (James, 1892). James has shown that a person thinks about himself from two perspectives, namely from the personal perspective, where self-identity is created, and from the social perspective, where the diversity of the social "I" of the individual is formed. The wide dissemination of the term "identity" and its introduction into scientific use is associated with names of S. Freud and E. Erikson. Erikson defines "identity" as an essential characteristic of the integrity of personality, as the integration of human's experiences of his identity with certain social groups (Erikson, 1959).

From the standpoint of the psychoanalytic approach, identity as a complex structure involves both similarity with others, and the difference from the others (Freud, 1901, 1905, 1921; Jung, 1969; Fromm, 1964; Marcia, 1975; Waterman, 1982; 1985). The structure of identity is formed in the course of accepting by human of certain life decisions (Marcia, 1980).

The study of identity in the tradition of symbolic interactionism is associated with the works of the Chicago school, namely G.H. Mead, Ch.H. Cooley, J.M. Baldwin, et al. Thus, Cooley has introduced the notion of "I-Concept", which is the closest possible to identity, as a person's idea of himself which is a subjective reflection of the opinions of others. In symbolic interactionism, the main attention is paid to the study of how others perceive a person ("I – how others see me"), how he sees himself ("I – how I see myself"), and how these two processes associate with each other ("I – as a conscious subject and as an object"). By constructing own identity, person largely focuses on the information about himself perceived from others (Cooley, 1962), as well as is influenced by social norms and rules of conduct (Mead, 1976). By manipulating the presented identity, the individual thereby seeks to manage the impression about himself that allows for an analogy between social relations and theatrical performance (Goffman, 1963; Fogelson, 1982). In order to successfully maintain personal identity, an individual must have traits, such as ability to role distancing,

empathy, tolerance for contradictions, and successful self-presentation (Krappman, 1969). In the course of social interaction, a person not only strives to meet the expectations of the partner in terms of social normative behavior, but also gets the opportunity to express his individuality, which is achieved through the balance of identity (Habermas.1979).

The study of identity was conducted under the strong influence of the cognitive approach in the late 50's and early 60's. Adherents of cognitive-oriented approach understand identity as a specific cognitive system governing human behavior and including two levels: personal and social. The theory of social identity (Ralph H. Turner, 1994; Tajfel, et al. 1971, 1982) became widespread in Western psychology as well as the idea of G. Breakwell on the close relationship between personal and social identity, which are understood as different points in the course of identity development rather than sides or separate aspects of single identity (Breakwell.1986).

Within the framework of cognitive direction, it is necessary to identify a narrative approach to the study of "I" and identity, which became widespread in the 1990's (G.M. Breakwell, W. Doise, M. Jarumovicz, M. Sinnirella, R. Preez, et al.). Narrative psychology draws an analogy between human's understanding of the text and understanding of himself, believing that the meaning of human behavior is expressed mainly in the narrative, rather than in logic formulas and laws. According to J. Bruner, narrative is a form and way of understanding life events, structuring personal perception of reality, obtaining new knowledge about the world around and himself personally (Bruner, 1987). According to McAdams, the most important function of identity is the function of integration which allows combining deliberately different aspects of "I" with each other and in time into a single personal life story (McAdams, 1993).

In the framework of behaviorism, personal level of analysis of intergroup interaction was minimized. The adherent of this direction M. Sherif used the concept of identity to determine group affiliation. He believed that intergroup behavior as a psychological phenomenon arose when individuals belonging to one group interacted with another group or its members.

In the early 70's, the creator of structural anthropology C. Levi-Strauss confirmed the assumption of Erikson, noting that the identity crisis would become a new trouble of the century, and would attract the attention of many scientists. A cross–cultural study of identity was conducted in the framework of this area.

Humanistic psychology offers an understanding of identity through the prism of motivational needs of the personality. Maslow A. has identified integrity as a trend towards identity, unity, order, organization and integration, as well as uniqueness as the most important human meta needs (Maslow, 1997). The identity is formed in consequence of interaction with the environment and other people. In fact, this identity was designated by K.R. Rogers as selfhood, the structure of which represents an organized form of self-perception, penetrating into the consciousness sphere (Rogers, 1995).

In modern psychology, the line of studying identity in the context of social interactions is acquiring further development. Thus, the approach of K.J. Gergen has become widespread. Gergen views identity from the standpoint of social constructionism as the product of our social relations with other people (Gergen, 2003), and as attention in the real social context in which individuals interact.

In activity-based psychology, the concept of identity has been developed traditionally in the framework of studies of self-actualization and personal self-conception. Moreover, identity was considered as one of the aspects of "I" (V.S. Ageev, B.G. Ananiev, L.I. Bozhovich, L.S. Vygotsky, I.S. Kon, A.N. Leontiev, M.I. Lisina, V.S. Merlin, V.S. Mukhina, L.D. Oleinik, S.L. Rubinstein, H.T. Sheryazdanova, et al.).

Thus, identity is studied both as a feeling and as a sum of knowledge about oneself, as well as a behavioral unity. Consequently, we define identity as a complex integrative psychological mechanism which affects the personal and professional development of a human.

Professional identity occupies a special place in the structure of social identity. With regard to professional identity as an independent social phenomenon, it should be noted that its

definition options are quite different (E.P. Yermolayeva, E.A. Petrash, A.V. Akopian, E.I. Zhukova, L.B. Schneider, et al.). The professional identity development implies a constant focus on professional growth, flexibility in goal-setting and decision-making. Professional identity can be defined as a stable coordination of individual traits, conditions and content of the profession, ensuring the achievement of a certain level of professionalism at a particular stage, the possibility of further professional growth, as well as the transfer of the acquired skills into the changed conditions of activity. The analysis of the works dealing with the study of professional identity (P.L. Berger, T. Luckmann, D.E. Super) made it possible revealing that identity was reflected in the professional "self-image".

Kazakhstan's teaching community, as one of the mass and socially important professions, is the subject of research of the past and the present. However, the professional identity of future teachers is considered in just a few psychological and pedagogical publications. Moreover, currently the comprehension of professional identity as a psychological mechanism that ensures the development of pedagogical competence in the national science is practically absent.

Theoretical analysis of the literature allowed us to formulate the hypothesis of the study: the structure of self-identity concepts of future teachers includes professional identity as a psychological mechanism for the development of their pedagogical competence.

3. Research Model

The study was conducted in 2015-2017 on the basis of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. The testees were the 1st to 4th year students of pedagogical specialties in the total number of 200 people. The average age of the students was 19.9 years (Table 1).

Table 1
General characteristic of the testees

	1st year students	2nd year students	3rd year students	4th year students	Total
Number of future teachers	62	54	46	38	200

Among them were 29 boys and 171 girls. Note that the groups were uneven in number of boys and girls. Such gender distribution is quite typical for pedagogical specialties in the Republic. Therefore, we did not distinguish gender peculiarities of professional identity when processing obtained data. The gender traits will be studied in the future specially based on large statistical samples.

The study was conducted in the form of group testing. The number of respondents in the group was 6-12 people.

We used the self-description methodology of "Who am I?" by M. Kuhn and T. McPartland (Kuhn, McPartland, 1984). The theoretical basis is Kuhn's conception. According to the basic postulates of this conception, the essence of the personality can be determined through the answers to the question: "Who am I?" addressed to himself. We use this technique to identify professional identity affecting the development of pedagogical competence of future teachers.

It is important to note the fact that at the moment there is no psychodiagnostic tool specifically aimed at measuring professional identity. The study of professional identity is possible only through its components: a) cognitive (professional knowledge and professional beliefs, awareness of the professional "self-image"); b) emotional (emotional-value attitudes to professional beliefs and knowledge, to himself as a "teacher"); and c) behavioral (style of interaction in professional environment).

Comparative analysis by groups was carried out according to the criterion φ^* of Fisher's angle-transformation. The statistical software package SPSS 17.0 was used for data processing.

4. Data Analysis

In total 3904 answers were received to the question "Who am I?" On average each respondent gave 19-20 answers. Future teachers' answers to the question "Who am I?" are classified into gender, social, age, ethnicity, personal, family, professional, intellectual, objective and subjective categories (Table 2).

Table 2
Percentage indicators of expressions by identity categories

Parameters	1st year students	2nd year students	3rd year students	4th year students
Gender	10.2	14.4	10.4	5.1
Social	12.8	14.8	15.3	16.0
Age-related	-	0.2	-	-
Referring oneself to a certain ethnicity	12.8	10.7	11.1	10.5
Personal	19.6	19.6	17.8	18.4
Family	33.4	27.9	25.6	26.8
Professional	10.0	14.5	16.1	19.6
Intellectual	5.1	-	3.7	3.3
Subjective	76	67	70	74
Objective	24	33	30	26

At the same time, we noted the tendency of respondents to use initially objective categories (student, girl, Kazakh ethnicity, etc.), only then students turned to subjective traits (kind person, dutiful student, proud girl, etc.). Subjective traits, as seen in Table 2, dominate in terms of their quantity.

Pair comparison (1st and 2nd year of study; 1st and 3rd year; 1st and 4th year; 2nd and 3rd year, etc.) of professional identity of future teachers has shown that empirical values have always been higher than critical values at $p < 0.01$. This proves the hypothesis that the structure of self-concepts of future teachers includes professional identity as a psychological mechanism for their pedagogical competence development.

5. Discussion

The number of statements indirectly indicates a high level of self-reflection of future teachers of Kazakh ethnicity. At the same time, an analysis of the responses has shown that many respondents overestimated their self-esteem (54.5%). At that, understated self-esteem was not found in any of them. This indicates that future teachers have a high degree of confidence in themselves and their future.

Describing themselves, all respondents (100%) directly pointed to the warm relationships, mutual assistance, and mutual support in relations with their relatives, family, and friends. Thus, the answers to the question "Who am I?" often included statements like "caring

daughter", "father's pride", "support for younger brothers and sisters", etc. Also, all the respondents were predicting their close relationships with parents and relatives in future, indicating that in the future they would take care of parents, brothers and sisters, would support them, meet their expectations and provide them affluent comfortable old age. This is most likely due to the fact that 85.5% of respondents were women. As is well known, from ancient times in Kazakhstan the woman represents the preserver of the hearth, and her main function is raising children and caring for the family (I am a mother, daughter, sister).

In addition, many students clearly expressed personal identity (I am a beloved daughter, value for their loved ones, beautiful, etc.). Future teachers identify themselves as a personality; they realize and accept the features of the manifestation of their "I" in thoughts, feelings, actions, and behavior. In the structure of future teachers, social identity is less represented than personal identity.

Also, future teachers in the self-description distinguish their gender specifics. According to our opinion, this is due to socialization in the Kazakh family, where upbringing and education is clearly differentiated with regard to gender features.

Among the options that were reflected only in the responses of the 2nd year students, we could note age-related attributes (I'm young, I'm eldest daughter, I'm adult, etc.).

Also, all respondents perceive themselves as citizens of Kazakhstan, Kazakhs by ethnicity, and many of them (64.5%) indicate their ancestry.

It is important to note that many types of identity occupy a significant place in the identity structure of future teachers, though we are particularly interested in the representation of professional identity. The obtained data indicate that all the respondents (100%) from the 1st year of study identify themselves as teachers. In addition, these studies show a general trend of the age dynamics in the content of professional identity of future teachers. The study shows a clear expression of professional identity of future teachers of senior years of study. Also, the professional identity of future teachers is focused on the future and expresses positive attitude to pedagogical work (I am a good teacher of literature; I am a future respected teacher, I'm a child-loving teacher etc.). In addition, students at senior years of study represented themselves as successful teachers more often. Most of the answers have demonstrative character (I am talented, erudite, intelligent, etc.). This suggests that confidence of the future teachers in themselves and their future increases at senior years of study. The answers of future teachers are not static in nature, they all are dynamic. Therefore, we assume that such dynamic representation is a favorable prerequisite for the development and self-development of pedagogical competence of future teachers. It has been revealed that the professional identity undergoes the certain changes at transition of students to the next year of study: at the senior years the professional identification of future teachers as authoritative personalities weakens; at the senior years of study the future teachers clearly express their desire to strengthen professionally important qualities; future teachers seek to identify themselves with the standards of professionally attractive images of personalities capable of cooperation, generosity, and altruism.

The number of choices in answers according to parameters, such as personal, social, and ethnic aspects do not have statistically significant difference. Comparison of categories in the structure of identities by years of study has shown not only similarity, but also some differences in the frequency of individual traits of identity (gender, and professional identities).

6. Conclusion

1. The content of the professional identity of future teachers is formed at the stage of study at the university starting from the 1st year. The empirical study has shown the age dynamics in the content of professional identity of future teachers.

2. Future teachers are confident in the ability to manage their lives and achieve the set goals, as well as meaningfulness of their future work.

3. The structure of professional identity of future teachers reflects the demonstrativeness of

personality attributes. Future teachers of Kazakh ethnicity manifested positive professional identity at all stages of training.

4. The professional identity in senior years of study is most pronounced in terms of its content: at the senior years the professional identification of future teachers as authoritative personalities weakens; at the senior years the future teachers clearly express the desire to strengthen professionally important qualities; future teachers seek to identify themselves with the standards of professionally attractive images of personalities capable of cooperation, generosity, and altruism.

5. Gender differences characterize the professional identity of future teachers more vividly, emphasizing personal orientation and socialization of students in the Kazakh society.

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