

Original Paper

A Critical Period in Becoming a Teacher: How Novice Teachers Develop Their Professional Identity

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Abstract

It is important to understand how teachers develop their professional identity because teacher educators and supervisors can take necessary steps to ensure novice teachers are provided necessary opportunities to cultivate their identity. This article examines research on professional identity development and explains how teachers develop their professional identity and why it is important for mentors to aid in the development process. This article draws on previous research to both define professional identity and explore the many aspects that lead to identity development in novice teachers. Findings suggest that although any experience can contribute to professional identity development, key factors have a major impact on how teachers develop their identity and the role identity development plays in pedagogical thinking. Understanding how professional identity develops can help teacher educators, supervisors, and mentors make available opportunities to build agency among novice educators, helping them to grow into reflective teachers.

Keywords

professional development, professional identity, teacher education, teacher reflection

1. Introduction

Identity studies have been conducted in psychology, sociology, and anthropology for many decades. Although some of the studies discussed in the following pages pull from psychological frameworks and apply findings to educational contexts, the majority of the studies hold to a sociological perspective that contribute to a deeper understanding of teacher professional identity (PI). From a review of the literature regarding PI and how new teachers develop their PI, several themes emerged, contributing to the following discussion about how PI is shaped and why PI is an important area of focus for both teacher educators and novice teachers.

Before discussing how teachers develop their PI and why PI is an important component to the success and effectiveness of a teacher, it is important to define identity. Scholars suggest that in educational research, there are two distinct forms of identity: personal identity and professional identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Hsieh, 2016; Noonan, 2018). This does not mean, however, that the two types of identity are separate; in fact, personal and professional identities draw from each other and build off of one another to work together to inform a teacher's reactions and actions in a given context (Hsieh, 2016). Jupp, Berry, and Lensmire (2016) cite Berry (2012) when explaining the interaction between a teacher's identities: "Identities are intertwined and interconnected, functioning simultaneously' along multiple dimensions" (p. 1154). Because a teacher's identity contains multiple perspectives that work together to inform and interpret experiences, Carter (2008) uses the term "multiplicity" of identity to indicate many parts working together as one to perform a task.

Identity is synchronized and compound (Beijaard et al., 2004), meaning that several aspects of a teacher's identity work together at the same time. These aspects can take the form of past personal experiences, educational experiences, religious beliefs, and teaching experiences (Alsup, 2006). Arvaja (2016) adds to the idea of multiple identities interacting at the same time by suggesting that identities are also "social as well as unitary, continuous and individual" (p. 393). Though somewhat dated, Beijaard et al. (2004) provide a sound, comprehensive examination of 22 studies about teacher identity ranging from 1988 to 2000. They found that of the 19 studies that attempted to define PI for teachers, "Most of the researchers saw professional identity as an ongoing process of integration of the 'personal' and the 'professional' sides of becoming and being a teacher" (p. 113), suggesting that identity is multi-faceted and constantly evolving. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop went on to state, "Professional self-image is balanced with a variety of roles teachers feel that they have to play" (p. 113), meaning that because teachers wear so many hats and interact with a diverse group of individuals, their PI often adapts to the situation and people within that situation.

Building off Janet Alsup's (2006) expression that identity is made up of past, present, and future experiences, Beijaard et al. (2004) add that identity is also made up of many subidentities that work together in harmony. Subidentities consist of what Akkerman and Meijer (2011) call "multiple I-positions" (p. 311); a part of Dialogical Self Theory rooted in Bakhtin's (1981) studies of philosophy of self. I-positions are differing perspectives within one's own identity that bring their own view to a given situation. These multiple viewpoints then enter into a dialogue with one another to shape a teacher's PI. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) consider the various definitions of identity, including multiple I-positions, and cite Sachs (2005) when defining teacher PI:

Teacher professional identity then stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of "how to be", "how to act" and "how to understand" their work and their place in society. Importantly, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience (p. 15).

Because a teacher's PI affects every aspect of their teaching and interpretation of their environment, Avidov-Ungar and Forkosh-Baruch (2018) suggest that PI is "composed of the set of expectations developed by the individual regarding themselves and their abilities, based on their experiences and personal background, as well as on others' expectations; all of which guide their behavior" (p. 184). This indicates that identity is not something that a person initiates alone—dialogue with oneself and others also play an important role in identity development.

The intent of this article is not to advance a single definition of identity, but it is important nonetheless to recognize certain themes that have emerged from the various definitions of identity: identity development is ongoing; it is multifaceted but simultaneous; it is a culmination of all past, present, and future experiences; and it is made up of subidentities that work in harmony with one another in order to make sense of and act within given contexts.

With a definition of identity in tow, it is fitting to discuss how teachers develop their identity and what it means to develop a PI. Research suggests that PI can be developed in many different ways, depending on the theory and methods applied to an identity study, but the one thing that every study referenced in this article has in common is that a teacher's personal and professional experiences contribute to their PI. Therefore, having a better understanding of how novice teachers develop their PI can improve how teacher educators and mentor teachers approach preservice and novice teachers' development in various facets of their progress towards becoming an effective educator.

2. Results

2.1 Professional Identity Development

A teacher's PI is constantly evolving, contingent upon a variety of factors, including experiences, the environment, interactions with people, and the context of a given scenario (Noonan, 2018). Through different contexts, teachers develop their PI (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016), which can have an impact on different aspects of their career, such as instruction, interactions with students, and teaching philosophy. This section breaks identity development into several categories to narrow the many facets in which identity develops and affects a teacher's practice. Because identity is multi-faceted, and many different factors impact one's PI (Assen, Koops, Meijers, Otting, & Poell, 2018), this section is broken into several different categories, all of which contribute a unique perspective on identity development. Additionally, the various studies reviewed for this article fit into their respective categories and offer further evidence of the singular, yet compound nature of PI.

Although identity can be broken into two main categories: personal and professional, much of the research discussed in this article focuses on professional experiences and how those experiences shape PI. Even though any variety of experiences affect PI, educational researchers focus on eight key factors, which are broken into themes and discussed separately in the following sections.

2.1.1 Experience-Based

A teacher's identity can be shaped by their experiences. These experiences can include both personal

and professional contexts, but Alsup (2009) suggests that “daily experience is how identities are translated into real-world action, and such action affects the lives of others, namely students” (p. 78). Noonan (2018) takes Alsup’s (2009) assertion a step further; Noonan argues that teachers’ PI not only emerges from their experiences, but “teachers’ identity can contribute to the way they interpret experiences” (p. 2). For example, if a teacher has had negative experiences with education reform, then when a new strategy is recommended to them, they are more likely to have an aversion to that new strategy. This idea is examined in more detail later in the “Political” section of this paper.

In addition to experiences shaping PI and a teacher’s view of others and their profession, experiences also impact the way a teacher views themselves. In their study of 15 preservice teachers, Sallı and Osam (2018) found that preservice teachers’ experiences within the school and their conversations with teachers and students “influenced their perceptions of themselves as future teachers” (p. 2). Similarly, in their study of 50 preservice teachers, Woods, Barksdale, Triplett, and Potts (2014) focused on how preservice teachers view themselves both before and during student teaching. Woods, Barksdale, Triplett, and Potts analyzed preservice teachers’ drawings of their teacher-selves to craft conclusions about how preservice teachers’ identity impacts their outlook and pedagogy. The researchers found that preservice teachers were uncertain and insecure and did not differentiate student genders, indicating a lack of “acute attentiveness to difference” (p. 120); the preservice teachers did not acknowledge diversity among their students: “Thus, looking across the drawings and writings, only 17 of the preservice teacher participants drew and/or wrote about diversity in the student population within their images of themselves as teachers” (p. 122); however, in follow-up interviews, participants expressed an interest in learning about who they wanted to become as teachers. Through a discussion of their drawings, the preservice teachers developed their pedagogical ideas or principles, and expressed concern that they would not be able to reach their students, make connections with students, or make curriculum relevant to their students. Acknowledging their lack of experience with diversity and how that may affect their PI and ultimately their interactions with students is a real concern for novice teachers who may need to seek out experiences in order to fill what can be described as an empty or underdeveloped portion of their PI.

One way preservice teachers attempt to fill the void or develop sections of their PI is by seeking out relevant experiences. Beijaard et al. (2004) suggest that “identity formation is a process of practical knowledge-building characterized by an ongoing integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant to teaching” (p. 123). What Beijaard et al. (2004) are describing is novice teachers intentionally pursuing experiences of quality teaching that is relevant to their own sense of effective instruction. Connolly et al. (2018) observed education students defining their identity through their credibility and therefore seeking out additional degrees. Building credibility is another approach to seeking out relevant experiences, by taking higher education courses to learn more about teaching or a specific content area that can later be added to a teacher’s PI and used to inform instruction. Arvaja (2016) maintains that teachers’ identity takes on the idea that others push on them. For example, if a

mentor tells a preservice teacher they will never be an effective teacher, then the preservice teacher has a tendency to believe that they are inadequate, causing them to either seek out more experiences in order to meet expectations or leave the field entirely. The importance of quality mentors and quality experiences are pivotal in the development of novice and preservice teachers' PI.

2.2 Amount of Teaching Experience

In some ways related to the previous section, the amount of experience a teacher has within their discipline has a definitive impact on the development of their identity. Research suggests that a teacher's PI development is ongoing (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016); it is constantly evolving, renegotiating experiences, and entering into new dialogues. Therefore, veteran teachers (teachers who have taught three or more years) are in a unique position to mentor and provide new and preservice teachers with relevant experiences and dialogue in order to build and develop the new and preservice teachers' PI. Through her qualitative study of nine practicing teachers, Colliander (2018) explains that experienced, or veteran teachers, (as opposed to novice or preservice teachers) focus more attention on building relationships with learners as opposed to focusing on pedagogical methods and strategies. This finding speaks directly to a teacher's PI and that the amount of relevant teaching experience a teacher has shapes their PI, better positioning them to focus their skills on different aspects of being a teacher. Inexperienced teachers, on the other hand, focus more on the subject and teaching methods (Andersson, Köpsén, Larson, & Milana, 2013); this is because they lack the appropriate experiences to develop their PI. These findings further push the idea that new and preservice teachers can benefit from experienced mentors, and that mentors can have a significant impact on the development of new and preservice teachers' PI.

2.2.1 Veteran Teachers

Veteran teachers have a lot to offer new teachers in terms of PI. Janet Alsup (2006) states, "School teachers constantly translate philosophies and beliefs into action in their classrooms" (p. 125). Creating action through internal negotiation of multiple I-positions is something that new and preservice teachers need to develop (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). New teachers, according to Flores and Day (2006), need to observe quality veteran teachers applying their PI through practical means, like instructional strategies and approaches to student engagement. Veteran teachers can act as mentors for new teachers, and this relationship can have important ramifications on the development of a new teacher's PI. In their survey of 60 students and mentor teachers, Connolly, Hadfield, Barnes, and Snook (2018) point out that mentors help new teachers work through professional difficulties, building the new teacher's confidence and in turn having a positive impact on their PI, which enables new teachers to be willing to take more risks, such as trying new technologies or new teaching strategies or even developing a stronger rapport with colleagues and students.

Even though new teachers might be hesitant to take risks or seek out new experiences that can shape their PI, mentors can play an important role in facilitating the development of a new teacher's PI (Avalos, 2011; Connolly et al., 2018; Ginnis, Pestell, Mason, & Ipsos, 2018). Friesen and Besley (2013)

maintain there is little substitute for quality experiences in regard to shaping PI. In fact, in their study of 109 education students Friesen and Besley found that “higher levels of identification and self-categorization as a teacher in first year student teachers was characterized by students with greater development of personal identity, [and] greater assimilation of a student identity” (p. 28). Through experience, new teachers form a stronger PI, which can lead to a more cohesive identity overall where all subidentities work together harmoniously, enabling preservice and novice teachers to focus on other areas of their practice, like student autonomy.

2.2.2 Preservice and Novice Teachers

It is important to note that new teachers are not forming their identity from scratch (Colliander, 2018); in fact, they are transforming an existing PI that may lack certain experiences or be wanting of key areas of pedagogical or theoretical knowledge. New teachers construct their PI differently from the way veteran teachers shape their PI. Pulling from 20 preservice teacher narratives, Huu Nghia and Tai (2017) assert that student teaching is where preservice teachers begin to understand pedagogy, discard stereotypes, broaden career prospects, link their teaching program to actual teaching, and learn about certain realities of the profession. Flores and Day (2006) discuss the same area of new teacher PI by suggesting “...they [new teachers] became more aware of the nature of their job and their new role at school which, in most cases, conflicted with their view as student teachers” (p. 228). Through experience, new teachers begin to make sense of their prior experiences as students and apply relevant experiences to their developing PI. Only through relevant experience, observation, and reflection can preservice and new teachers cultivate the necessary perspectives to internally negotiate teaching philosophies and applications.

Flores and Day (2006) found that preservice teachers who identify as having intrinsic motivation for entering the profession are much more likely to adapt to the challenges posed to new teachers within the first few years of teaching, leading to a positive outlook on the profession and a PI that expresses optimism and excitement to face new challenges. Likewise, McLennan, McIlveen, and Perera (2017) use Social Cognitive Career Theory to assert that, “Those with greater optimistic outcome expectations are expected to make relatively greater progress toward goals and satisfaction” (p. 177), suggesting that preservice and new teachers who maintain a positive outlook throughout their practicum and first year of teaching are more likely to develop positive traits in relation to their PI. Through their study, Connolly et al. (2018) claimed that networking built new teachers’ confidence and allowed them to take educational risks (Ex. trying new methods or using new technologies). Seeking out new experiences and building constructive relationships with mentors can have a positive impact on the development of a new/preservice teacher’s PI.

2.3 *Personal vs. Professional*

Although personal identity and professional identity work in conjunction with one another, they are still developed through separate experiences and later used to inform decisions and actions. In 18 of 23 cases in his study, James Noonan (2018) found that there was an “alignment between participants’

beliefs and their professional learning experiences” (p. 4), meaning that teachers’ beliefs and identity impact the way they interpret experiences. This also shows a connection between a person’s values and their behavior and vice-versa. Noonan (2018) goes on to cite Mockler (2011) when distinguishing between the personal and professional realms by explaining the personal domain is related to “aspects of [teachers’] personal lives, framed by class, race and gender that exist outside of the professional realm” (p. 2). Noonan also suggests that teachers make meaning of professional experiences through the “prism” of their personal experiences.

Working from the Dialogical Self Theory, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) describe identity development “as an ongoing process of negotiating and interrelating multiple I-positions in such a way that a more or less coherent and consistent sense of self is maintained throughout various participations and self-investments in one’s (working) life” (p. 315). Again, the teacher’s PI is filtered through personal experiences, meaning that a teacher’s personal histories play a significant role in teaching and learning (Arvaja, 2016). Yazici (2017) adds to the idea that personal experiences shape one’s identity by suggesting those experiences help with interpretation and categorization of professional experiences.

In a case study of 314 preservice teachers in Turkey, Yazici (2017) explains how preservice teachers view different aspects of their identity. Some of the findings show that females had the strongest attitude towards gender identity while males had the strongest attitude toward political identity. Yazici concludes that certain factors play a significant role on how an individual identifies himself or herself, such as their gender, their religious beliefs, and their ethnicity. In her narrative piece about identity formation, Espinoza (2015) battles with the idea of her own identity and how it can be separated from the lives of her students. She no longer thought of herself as a teacher; she instead conjoined the idea of teaching with becoming invested in the lives of her students. Espinoza’s account provides another example of how personal experiences are used to inform professional experiences because Espinoza’s personal and professional identities entered into a dialogue with one another in order to make sense of and interpret the needs of her students.

2.4 Dialogue

Janet Alsop (2006) suggests that identity is ever changing, and it changes through discourse and life experiences. This forming and reforming of identity (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016) is what Sachs (2016) calls *hybrid* identities. Multiple I-positions in constant discourse with one another is where identity formation takes shape. Dialogue is key to identity development because not only do teachers enter into dialogue with colleagues and students, but they also carry on an internal dialogue among their subidentities. Jiménez (2013) pulls from Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of identity development by indicating that people learn by “engaging in talk with people around us—by doing so we clarify our own understanding and influence each other’s understanding” (Jiménez, 2013, p. 72). However, the language one uses both dictates and reveals certain social positions (Holland, Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998), which can impact the type of dialogue one has with others. Gaining a better grasp on educational terms is one way new and preservice teachers begin to enhance their internal

dialogue—using and understanding certain forms of jargon also allows new and preservice teachers to enter into more meaningful dialogue with other teachers, which can contribute to their PI development. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) state, “Not only can communities offer opportunities to participants in developing new I-positions by appropriating the communities’ discourse as their own, the alternative I-positions of participants can also add to the developmental potential of communities” (p. 315). The discourse among members of a community contributes to teachers’ identity development, as Assen et al. (2018) found in their study of teachers using project-based learning approaches to improve instruction. Through discussion, Assen et al. found that “individuals make meaning by explaining their experiences to others and with that to themselves” (p. 131). A person’s internal narrative and the quality of dialogue with others shapes PI and the way one interacts with others in their community (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). This means that the more professional experiences and professional conversations new and preservice teachers have, the more their PI develops toward shaping their beliefs and actions.

2.5 Social Endeavor

Identity development does not happen in isolation, especially for teachers who are surrounded by a variety of personalities with varying degrees of experience and knowledge. Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016) state, “Identity-agency is enriched by being a member of a specific group” (p. 325). In their study, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) examined teachers within a social community and found that “when participating in a community, one is not only a participant of that group, but also culturally and historically informed with positions related to others and other groups. The multiplicity of a person is ‘held together’ in a unitary self” (p. 315). In a case study of a single educator, Maarit Arvaja (2016) reviewed the relationship between the self and others within a social environment (a university). The researcher studied the participant’s journey to realizing how their personal experiences contribute to their PI and overall outlook on their job and belief system. She discovered an individual has multiple voices as part of their identity, and those voices can agree or conflict, but between those spaces, what Alsop (2006) calls the “borderland,” is where true identity development takes place.

From a Sociocultural perspective, Brown and Heck (2018) applied Relational Agency, which is defined as “the capacity to work with others in a manner that looks for multiple solutions to a problem by bringing to bear the sense-making of others and the resources that they draw upon” (p. 51), to observations of three teachers in an alternative school setting. Brown and Heck discovered that a teacher’s PI shapes how they view an environment and the people within it—they also found that identity shapes a teacher’s values and beliefs. These findings are relevant when discussing the impact of community on a teacher’s identity because teachers act within a diverse community of colleagues and learners—both of which require teachers to “take on multiple identities” (Brown & Heck, 2018, p. 56).

Working with a relatively large population of 109 education students, Friesen and Besley (2013) approached teacher PI from a psychological perspective, using Erikson’s (1950) Theory of Identity Development. Erik Erikson held that the majority of identity development takes place during the

adolescence stage, where one searches for self and experiments with different identities (Waterman, 1982). Friesen and Besley (2013) also applied Self-Categorization Theory to their research, which poses that people have a personal and a group identity. Friesen and Besley found that teachers can have multiple social identities depending on how they categorize themselves. For example, a student teacher could identify herself as having several group identities such as a student, teacher, parent, social committee member, part-time staff member, and member of an ethnic group. Each type of identity comes to the forefront at different times for different reasons. These multiple identities then work together to make sense of specific contexts.

In their study of 15 preservice teachers, Salli and Osam (2018) found that preservice teachers begin to develop their PI through professional discourse with other preservice teachers and through feedback that they receive from mentor teachers. Salli and Osam claim that preservice teachers are easily influenced by the thoughts and words of others in the field. The preservice teachers in the study perceived their peers as teachers instead of seeing them as fellow students. Salli and Osam found that, “preservice language teachers tend to leave their student identities during the practicum period to construct their teacher identities” (p. 2).

2.6 Political

At some point in their career many teachers face a dilemma regarding curriculum reform, professional development requirements, or mandatory teaching strategies. Noonan (2018) cites Mockler (2011) regarding the makeup of a teacher’s PI. Mockler indicates that professional identity is the culmination of three domains: personal, professional, and political. In regards to education, the political aspect refers to things like school administrative requirements that may be contrary to a teacher’s beliefs, causing a conflict between their personal and professional identity. The political aspect of PI also refers to curricular reforms that can have a similar effect on a teacher’s identity development.

Some teachers experience more identity conflict due to political issues than others. For example, Yazici (2017) found that preservice history teachers’ “political identities were the most significant variable in determination of their attitudes towards identity differences” (p. 20). In their mixed methods study of students and mentors, Connolly et al. (2018) focused on teacher identity development in the space of neo-liberal reform movements, suggesting that teachers in this type of environment are limited in pedagogical freedoms, hence affecting their PI. However, Connolly, et al. found that networking with other new teachers and with mentors built new teachers’ PI, allowing those teachers to take academic risks in the form of trying new methods and strategies. Because some teachers’ PI is more affected by political movements than others, teachers in certain subject areas can experience differences in their PI development.

2.7 Subject Specific

Depending on how a teacher identifies with their subject area and their teaching persona, their PI can offer alternating views of education. Noonan’s (2018) research focuses on how educators view professional development from their own unique PI. Noonan asserted that teacher identities can be

broken into three categories: Who, what, and whom. These categories take into consideration a teacher's background and experiences and combines that with their current beliefs to produce a PI with specific affinities for things like content, community, or pedagogy. Noonan found that:

Teachers who identified closely with their subject matter content may have an affinity for content-focused learning experiences (the what). Similarly, teachers who identified closely with pedagogical expertise may have an affinity for models of what they consider exemplary teaching (the who). And finally, teachers who identified closely as members of a professional community of practice may have an affinity for interdependent exchanges of expertise (the whom) (p. 4).

Examining how teachers' preferred subject area can shape PI can benefit multiple stakeholders in education, including the teacher, mentors, administrators, and teacher educators. Chung-Parsons and Bailey (2019) approached science teacher identity from a Figured Worlds framework and found that science teachers kept their *science identity* separate from their *science teacher identity*. They also discovered that "participants view their teacher identity as dominant, and draw upon their science identity's cultural tools in only two teaching contexts—teaching science content and analyzing student work to facilitate learning" (p. 39). Avraamidou (2016) collected narrative and interview data from two preservice science teachers over a period of four years. Using Wenger's Social Theory of Learning, which suggests that learning changes a person's identity and "creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities" (p. 44), Avraamidou found that past experiences have a major impact on teacher identity. Avraamidou goes on to warn that negative educational experiences can also shape a novice teacher's identity. For example, one study participant had a negative elementary school experience, but a positive university experience, which impacted their affinity for teaching advanced subject matter and older students. This aspect of PI is interesting because it demonstrates the singularity and multiplicity of identity working through both personal and professional sections of a teacher's identity.

2.8 Context Specific

Context, in regard to PI development, can mean the environment in which a teacher works, the population of students, or materials used to instruct. The context in which a teacher finds themselves can have an effect on the development of their PI (Beijaard et al., 2004). Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016) claim that PI is context-dependent and "cannot be understood without taking into account...where it takes place and the role of an individual in making sense of this environment" (p. 319). The context of identity development can lead to different outlooks. For example, in their qualitative study of three teachers, Brown and Heck (2018) observed each teacher exhibit a different outlook on their role in the school. One teacher pressed for students to have better social skills, another valued traditional teaching methods, and the other held to a "tough love" approach to teaching. Colliander (2018) would say that those teachers are making "use of their prior identity, formed in both professional and personal spheres, by situating old abilities and experiences in the new landscape" (p. 174). Even within the same context, different teachers use different I-positions to interpret experiences

and then those I-positions further shape the teacher's PI. Specific contexts are discussed below because each context plays a unique role in teacher PI development.

2.8.1 Using Technology

Change in technology leads to changes in teachers' perceptions of teaching--teachers must seek out training to gain appropriate knowledge to keep up with advancing educational technologies. Just like with identity conflicts regarding curricular reform (Yazici, 2017), in many cases teachers are aware that technology can benefit students, but the teacher lacks experience and exposure with the technology, causing them to alter their PI or develop a conflict between subidentities that want to remain traditional but still do what is best for students (Alsup, 2006; Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Reeves, 2018). To develop a more effective PI regarding understanding and using technology, teachers need to have relevant experiences in order to engage with technology and incorporate experiences into an internal dialogue where they can negotiate the purpose and application of technology.

Teacher educators require support in the face of changing pedagogies and new technologies because these changes have a strong influence on preservice teachers (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018). In a later section, I discuss the role of teacher educators in the development of preservice teacher PI, but Avidov-Ungar and Forkosh-Baruch's assertion is relevant in this section because within the context of new technologies, preservice teachers must rely on mentors, who in many cases are other teachers or teacher educators, to provide them with necessary knowledge to shape their PI. When new technology is introduced, teachers must rely on their previous experiences with similar technologies or similar applications to make the use of said technology effective. For example, Shelley, Murphy, and White (2013) discuss the impact of moving a course from face-to-face to online. Teachers struggled with the transition because they lacked experience with the new platform and required new teaching methods. This resulted in an identity conflict but pushed teachers to seek out experiences to develop that part of their PI and use it to form new instructional strategies and a revised outlook on course concepts and desired outcomes.

2.8.2 Working with Unfamiliar Populations

According to Jiménez (2013), teachers who are aware of their own identity can better prepare themselves to work with and understand people who are different from themselves. Teachers may feel anxiety when working with a group of students with which they are unfamiliar (Nieto, 2002). Colliander's (2018) study focuses on Swedish teachers teaching language acquisition to adult students, something with which many of them had little experience. The study emphasizes how PI is formed within this new context and environment. In Colliander's study, experienced teachers were placed in a new context to teach foreign material, essentially making them novice teachers in the sense of their limited content knowledge and skills for teaching that new content. Because the teachers, though veteran educators by amount of years in the classroom, were not familiar with the new content, they sought out experienced teachers in order to gain necessary experiences to shape their PI in order to better relate to and teach their learners.

In a multicultural literacy class for preservice teachers, Jiménez (2013) tried to get early education students to recognize their place within their own constructed community by having them take part in the Human Bean Test where students selected colored beans to place in a bag to represent the people they surround themselves with. Most students found that they surround themselves with people who look and think like them. This revealed that it is challenging for a white student to understand characters in a text who are not white and to call into question how that teacher might help students understand those types of characters. Jiménez found that “[the] students challenged themselves and each other to better understand their own identities and communities in order to inform their future instruction. Some students were able to connect the activity to their own reading and begin to enact a new awareness and appreciation of diversity,” when reading about characters from different cultures (p. 68). Jiménez’s study relates in many ways to Arvaja’s (2016) findings that people rely on what they know of certain cultures to position themselves according to a situation. If the only thing a teacher knows of black students is stereotypical, then the teacher will alter their approach to meet that idea—the teacher’s internal dialogue about that student is part of their dialogical identity. Therefore, it is important to provide all teachers with opportunities to interact with and learn from students and colleagues of different cultures.

2.9 Impact of Understanding Professional Identity

Through his grounded study of four EL teachers, Reeves (2018) found that “teacher identity work is not merely a bounded psychological phenomenon; it is the negotiated expression of teachers’ values, their investments, and their beliefs enacted within layers of context that work to validate, reshape, stunt, or nullify those values, investments and beliefs” (p. 101). By developing a better understanding of how PI is developed among veteran, novice, and preservice teachers, one can then examine how PI influences a teacher’s philosophies, instruction, and views on education (Hsieh, 2016; Noonan, 2018). Janet Alsup (2006) found that education students who were better able to discuss their different identities, or subidentities, began to combine their personal and professional identities in order to make more informed teaching decisions. The ability for a teacher to make their own choices is what many researchers refer to as *agency* (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Brown & Heck, 2018; Reeves, 2018; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016).

2.10 Agency

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) claim that “a heightened awareness of one’s identity may lead to a strong sense of agency” (p. 183). Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016) agree with Beauchamp and Thomas, suggesting that an increased awareness of PI is a valuable resource for teachers because it creates a strong sense of agency. Preservice teachers and new teachers can improve their sense of agency through participation in an educational community and by gaining more teaching experiences (Beijaard et al., 2004; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). In a two-year study of 14 new teachers, Flores and Day (2006) found that teachers who enter the profession for intrinsic reasons tend to be more immune to negative teaching experiences. For example, a teacher may encounter several behavioral

issues with students or the teacher may have a scripted curriculum pushed on them. Flores and Day suggest that those teachers who remain positive and optimistic about teaching also maintain a proactive teaching identity. Within the same study, Flores and Day conclude that, depending on student behavior, teachers change their teaching style (Ex. from a constructivist, student-centered view to using teacher-centered instruction). This addresses the teachers' agency and ability to make pedagogical decisions based on the given educational environment. Just like the dialogical exchanges between a person's subidentities, agency affects identity and vice-versa (Rappel, 2015).

Colliander (2018) discovered that new teachers try to fill their teaching and knowledge "deficiencies" by seeking out knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978)—this also contributes to new teachers' sense of agency. By actively pursuing experiences, teachers are actively engaging in internal dialogue to assess where gaps may exist within their own PI. Filling those gaps with relevant experiences contributes to the development of a teacher's PI and their sense of agency.

2.11 Teacher Education Programs

Gaining a better understanding of how new and preservice teachers develop PI can have an important impact on teacher education programs. Alsup (2006) makes the claim that teacher educators need to help preservice teachers understand their own PI. Looking at teacher identities early on can help education programs provide preservice teachers with more focused help on developing their own curriculum and teaching styles (Avraamidou, 2016). Researchers suggest that career adaptability is important in developing a teacher's professional identity, so education programs should attempt to build education students' and preservice teachers' self-efficacy before they begin student teaching (McLennan et al., 2017). Because many teacher education programs attempt to combine theory and practice, Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016) claim that those two factors have the greatest impact on teachers' PI, meaning that many teacher education programs already have the formula for helping preservice teachers develop their PI, those programs only need to provide preservice teachers with opportunities to construct and interact with their subidentities (Jiménez, 2013). Afterwards, preservice teachers can enter into various dialogues with each other, teacher educators, and themselves (through reflection) in order to shape their PI. Beauchamp & Thomas (2009) cite Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, and Fry (2004) suggesting that teacher education programs "[emphasize] the importance of placing students in teaching contexts that provoke tensions to challenge their identities, and thus allow for questioning of themselves and their beliefs" (p. 185). Through their study, Flores and Day (2006) corroborate the idea that teacher education should place more focus on providing preservice teachers with opportunities to experience and then reflect on those experiences in order to contribute to the development of their PI.

2.12 Identity and Diversity in Classrooms

Another result of understanding how teachers develop their PI is by gaining a better grasp on what it means to teach in a diverse classroom. Public school classrooms are becoming more diverse, so it is important for teachers to develop their identities and acknowledge the identities of their students

(Woods et al., 2014). Offering education students and preservice teachers more experiences with diverse groups of students helps them to internalize diversity training they may have received in their education program and use that information to develop that aspect of their PI (Woods et al., 2014). Immersing preservice teachers within the community of students they will teach also helps them to shape their PI and advocate for their students (Joseph & Evans, 2018). Because identity is not solely formed in isolation, “individual identity is linked to group identity [...] everyone has a racial and ethnic dimension to their identity, whether or not they are aware of it” (Lindsey, 2004, p. 9). Freire (2005) felt that understanding one’s own cultural identity was a necessary foundation for understanding students’ cultural identities. Therefore, it would benefit preservice teachers to have the opportunity to explore their own cultural identities, which can impact how they approach students who are culturally diverse and different from themselves (Woods et al., 2014).

In addition to studying one’s culture and how it contributes to identity development, it is also important for a teacher to examine their role within society and how that impacts their own experiences and their interpretations of those experiences. From her study, Roslyn Appleby (2016) identified the state of privilege certain members of a group enjoy based on their gender and race. She focused specifically on white male English teachers in Japan and how those men were doted on by Japanese women, both students and other instructors. This built the men’s confidence in their craft, regardless of how effective their teaching was, and it shaped their PI. Jiménez, (2013) came to a similar conclusion in her study with preservice teachers, noting that many of the participants in her study were not aware of how their place of privilege impacted others and impacted their own PI. Considering the cultural context of a teaching placement can force a teacher to pull from past experiences, which is why it is so important for preservice teachers to attain the necessary experiences in order to effectively shape their PI.

3. Discussion

Based on the definition of teacher professional identity and the reviewed studies, teachers’ PI is shaped in many different ways, all of which have an impact on their instruction, relationships with students and other stakeholders, and outlook on education as a profession. Gaining rich and diverse experiences in all facets of teaching and learning can benefit teachers’ PI by informing their multiple I-positions, or subidentities, in order for those individual identities to work in coordination with one another to form a balanced PI.

Teacher educators and mentor teachers need to be intentional with the types of experiences they provide preservice and novice teachers. A teacher’s PI is important because it impacts their willingness to try new teaching strategies (Hsieh, 2016), their ability to handle a variety of students, and the type of learning environment they create. All these things impact student learning and student engagement. If a novice teacher enters a progressive classroom with traditional teaching methods in tow, there is a strong possibility that the novice teacher will not be as successful as a novice teacher whose PI is defined through more liberal teaching practices and a willingness to engage students in the learning process as

opposed to a love of their content but with little interest in student achievement (Alsup, 2006). Therefore, it is important to explore the development of PI in preservice teachers in order to provide them with an array of necessary experiences that promote reflection and dialogue, both internal and external. Only through the development of PI can a preservice or novice teacher grow within their own philosophies and pedagogies to affect the progress of their students and become the impactful teacher they initially set out to be.

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