

A Study of The Identity Process of Novice Teachers and Their Professional Adaptation

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to explore the identity process of novice teachers at the beginning of their careers and their professional adaptation, and to analyse the challenges they face and their strategies for solving them. The study begins by reviewing the theoretical foundations of identity and highlights the complexity of novice teachers' identity processes in the early stages of their careers. Then, it examined the major challenges faced by novice teachers in their professional adaptation, including teaching management, workload and emotional adjustment, and explored the interaction between identity and professional adaptability. It was found that teacher education and practice, social support, and personal factors had significant effects on novice teachers' career adjustment and identity. Specifically, high-quality teacher training and practice, effective campus support systems, and positive personal reflection and career development planning can significantly enhance novice teachers' career adjustment and identity. The study concludes with strategies for optimising teacher training and continuing education, building campus support systems and promoting novice teachers' self-reflection, and points to directions for future research, including an in-depth exploration of novice teachers' adaptability in different educational settings, the effectiveness of support mechanisms and the impact of technology on teaching and learning. The findings provide useful guidance for educational practice and lay the foundation for further research.

Keywords: novice teachers, identity, professional adaptation, teacher training.

1. Introduction

In the field of education, novice teachers often face a number of challenges at the beginning of their careers that not only affect their teaching effectiveness, but also have a direct bearing on their career satisfaction and development potential. Identity, as a key factor in career development, has a significant impact on novice teachers' professional adjustment. Identity involves not only an individual's understanding and acceptance of the role of a teacher, but also the process of interacting with students, colleagues, and the educational environment. Research has shown that the identity process of novice teachers is a dynamic and complex process, which may be influenced by a variety of factors such as personal background, education and training, as well as the work environment. The purpose of this paper is to explore how novice teachers form and adjust their identities in the early stages of their careers and how this process affects their professional adaptability. By combining relevant theories and analysing practical challenges, it is hoped to reveal the main problems of novice teachers in terms of identity and career adaptability, and to propose effective optimisation strategies. This study not only provides theoretical support for teacher education and professional development, but also provides useful references for the construction of teacher training and support systems in practice.

2. Theoretical foundations of identity

2.1. The concept of identity and its theoretical model

Identity is a self-concept formed by individuals in social and professional roles, which reflects their perception and acceptance of their own roles. Identity theory proposed by Erik Erikson suggests that individuals gradually establish a stable identity through self-exploration and social interaction at different stages of life. The theory emphasises that identity formation is a gradual process in which

social support and role experience play a crucial role. In the field of education, Social Identity Theory (SIT) further expands the understanding of identity, pointing out that an individual's identity does not only depend on self-concept, but is also influenced by the sense of belonging to a group and social identity. In addition, Teacher Identity Theory (TIT) focuses on identity in the educational profession, arguing that teachers' identity processes are influenced by a combination of their educational philosophies, teaching practices, and professional role expectations^[1]. These theoretical models provide a powerful framework for analysing the identity processes of novice teachers and help to understand how they construct and adjust their self-identity and cope with professional challenges in the teaching and learning environment.

2.2. Stages of Identity of Novice Teachers

The identity process of novice teachers typically goes through multiple stages, each with its own unique challenges and developmental characteristics. In the initial stage, novice teachers face role adaptation dilemmas; they often need to transition from the role of a student to that of a teacher, a shift that can bring about identity confusion and discomfort^[2]. At this stage, teachers usually feel teaching pressure and role uncertainty, and lack a clear understanding of their own teacher identity. Over time, novice teachers enter an intermediate stage where they begin to gradually adapt to the teaching environment and develop a preliminary teacher self-concept. At this stage, teachers gradually accumulate experience and begin to explore and establish their own teaching styles and educational philosophies. In the maturity stage, novice teachers' identities become more stable and clear. They are able to effectively integrate their teaching practices with their personal values, form a stable professional self-image, and develop a deeper understanding of and adaptation to their professional roles and career development. Teachers at this stage typically have greater professional confidence and adaptability, but may still face the need for continued development and adjustment. Understanding these stages can help provide novice teachers with targeted support and training to facilitate healthy professional growth and identity development.

3. Professional adaptation of novice teachers

3.1. Definition and meaning of occupational adaptation

Occupational adaptability refers to an individual's ability to effectively adjust his or her behaviour and psychological state to maintain and enhance occupational performance in the face of changes in the occupational environment and job requirements. It includes not only the ability to adapt to work tasks, but also involves emotional regulation, interpersonal interaction and flexible adjustment of occupational roles. Occupational adaptability covers a number of dimensions: task adaptability requires individuals to be able to quickly acquire new skills and knowledge to cope with the challenges of the job; emotional adaptability refers to the ability to maintain a positive mindset and emotional stability in the face of work pressure and uncertainty; interpersonal adaptability emphasises the ability to establish effective communication and co-operative relationships in interactions with colleagues, supervisors and students. Professional adaptability is particularly important for novice teachers as they need to adapt quickly to the teaching environment, manage the classroom and cope with various challenges. A high level of professional adaptability not only contributes to improved teaching effectiveness, but also enhances teachers' career satisfaction and prospects for career advancement. Understanding what constitutes professional adjustment can help provide effective support for novice teachers to better integrate and succeed in their teaching roles.

3.2. Adaptation challenges for novice teachers

Novice teachers face a number of adjustment challenges in the early stages of their careers, which are related to various aspects of teaching, management and personal psychology. Firstly, teaching challenges mainly include classroom management, curriculum design and the application of teaching methods. Novice teachers often need to acquire effective classroom control skills and flexible

teaching strategies within a short period of time in order to meet the needs of different students. Secondly, the increase in workload is also a notable challenge. Novice teachers often need to find a balance between heavy teaching duties and administrative matters, which may lead to work stress and burnout. Third, personal psychological adjustment is also a significant issue^[3]. Novice teachers may feel frustrated by the gap between role expectations and actual performance, affecting self-confidence and career satisfaction. In addition, interactions with students, parents, and colleagues may become challenging, especially in dealing with conflicts and building co-operative relationships. Responding effectively to these challenges requires novice teachers to have a high level of adaptability and support systems. Through training, mentoring and a positive work environment, novice teachers can gradually overcome these challenges, improve their career adaptability and achieve success in their professional development.

3.3. Interaction between identity and occupational adaptability

There is a close interaction between identity and professional adaptability, and the identity of novice teachers directly affects their professional adaptability. Stability and clarity of identity help teachers better understand and accept their professional roles, thus enhancing their ability to cope with professional challenges. A good identity can enhance teachers' self-confidence and make them more comfortable in facing difficulties in teaching and management. Teachers' strong sense of identity with their roles can motivate them to be more actively engaged in their work and to effectively adjust their work strategies to adapt to the changing environment. The process of identity also influences teachers' adaptation to their professional roles. A clear professional identity helps teachers to maintain psychological stability and take effective coping measures when facing work pressure, thus reducing the risk of burnout. In turn, good career adaptability also promotes the formation of identity, as successfully coping with career challenges enhances teachers' sense of identity and satisfaction with their professional roles. In conclusion, the interaction between identity and career adaptability is crucial to the career development of novice teachers, and while promoting their identity, it helps to enhance their career adaptability and achieve long-term career development.

4. Factors affecting the identity and adaptation of novice teachers

4.1. Impact of teacher education and practice

Teacher education and practice have a profound impact on the identity and professional adjustment of novice teachers. The quality of teacher education has a direct impact on novice teachers' professional preparedness and self-efficacy. High-quality teacher training programmes not only provide the necessary educational theories and teaching skills, but also help novice teachers to develop clear professional role perceptions and coping strategies. Practical aspects of teacher education, especially internship experiences, enable novice teachers to apply what they have learnt in real teaching environments and gain hands-on experience, which is crucial for them to understand and adapt to their professional roles^[4]. Ongoing support and feedback from teachers in practice also positively affects professional adjustment. During practice, support from mentors and colleagues, effective feedback mechanisms, and timely advice on adjustments can help novice teachers to continuously optimise their teaching strategies and adjust their classroom management practices, thereby enhancing their professional adaptability. The effective combination of teacher education and practice not only helps novice teachers build up their self-confidence at the beginning of their career, but also lays a solid foundation for their subsequent professional development. Through systematic teacher training and practice support, novice teachers are better able to cope with professional challenges, achieve smooth role transition and sustained professional growth.

4.2. Social support and professional identity

Social support plays a key role in the formation of the professional identity of novice teachers. Teachers' social support comes mainly from school leaders, colleagues, students and their parents.

Support from school leaders can provide clear role expectations and career development guidance, which can help novice teachers establish a stable professional identity. Recognition and encouragement from leaders can boost teachers' self-confidence and make them more motivated to do their work. Support from colleagues is equally important. Experienced colleagues were able to help novice teachers overcome initial challenges, provide practical advice and alleviate professional stress through daily interactions, pedagogical collaboration and experience sharing. Such support not only facilitated the professional growth of novice teachers, but also enhanced their sense of identity with their professional roles. Positive feedback and support from students and their parents helped novice teachers to recognise the value of their own teaching and enhance their professional satisfaction and self-efficacy. The good functioning of the social support system not only helped novice teachers to adapt smoothly to the new environment, but also promoted their identification with their teaching roles and professional commitment. By building and maintaining a strong support network, novice teachers are able to establish a positive professional identity at the beginning of their career and achieve sustained professional development in the long term.



Figure 1 Social support and professional identity

4.3. Individual factors and personality traits

Individual factors and personality traits have a significant impact on the identity and professional adjustment of novice teachers. Individual personality traits such as extroversion, adaptability and emotional stability directly affect their performance in the professional environment. Teachers who are more extroverted are usually more likely to establish good teacher-student relationships and collegial interactions, thus facilitating their professional adjustment and identity formation. Adaptable teachers are able to adjust their behaviours and teaching methods quickly and respond positively to changes and challenges at work, while emotional stability helps to maintain psychological well-being in the face of stress and frustration. Personal backgrounds such as educational experiences, family support and career aspirations also have an impact on novice teachers' career adaptability. Teachers with rich educational background and family support are usually able to face teaching tasks with more confidence and develop a positive professional identity^[5]. Individuals' professional expectations and goals also influence their perceptions of their professional roles and the adaptation process. Taken together, individual factors and personality traits play an important role in shaping novice teachers' professional identities and improving their professional adaptability. By focusing on individual differences and providing targeted support, novice teachers are better able to adapt to new environments and develop a professional identity that is in line with their own characteristics.

5. Strategies to optimise the identity and professional adaptation of novice teachers

5.1. Optimisation of teacher training and continuing education

The optimisation of teacher training and continuing education is an important way to improve the professional adaptation and identity of novice teachers. The content of training should be more closely aligned with actual teaching needs, and targeted training programmes should be provided in the light of specific problems and challenges in teaching practice. For example, the training may cover classroom management, effective teaching strategies and psychological adjustment skills to help novice teachers solve common problems in practice. The forms of training should also be diversified. Apart from traditional lectures and theoretical learning, practical sessions, such as teaching simulations, peer observation and case studies, should be added to enhance the effectiveness of the training. For continuing education, teachers should be encouraged to participate in industry exchanges and professional development activities to promote knowledge updating and skills enhancement, while providing corresponding career development paths and promotion opportunities. Supporting teachers' participation in research projects and academic activities also contributes to their professional growth and identity formation. Optimising teacher training and continuing education not only improves the teaching ability and professional adaptability of novice teachers, but also enhances their professional self-confidence and sense of identity, laying a solid foundation for their long-term career development. Through systematic and practice-oriented training and education, novice teachers can better adapt to the teaching environment and achieve their professional goals.

5.2. Construction of campus support systems

The development of campus support systems is critical to the professional adjustment and identity of novice teachers. Establishing a systematic mentoring and support mechanism is key. This includes equipping novice teachers with experienced mentors who provide regular teaching guidance and feedback. The mentorship system not only helps novice teachers gain valuable experience in actual teaching, but also provides them with a stable source of support and enhances their professional confidence. Colleague support and teamwork on campus are also important components. Encouraging teamwork and experience sharing can help novice teachers integrate into the work environment and reduce feelings of isolation, as well as gain practical advice and solutions. Establishing an effective psychological support system and providing psychological counselling and stress management training can help novice teachers cope with occupational stress and maintain their mental health. Schools should organise regular training and exchange activities to promote communication and mutual support among teachers and create a positive and supportive working atmosphere. Through the implementation of these measures, the campus support system can provide all-round support to novice teachers, helping them to better adapt to the teaching environment and enhance their sense of professional identity, thereby improving their overall teaching quality and career satisfaction.

5.3. Self-reflection and professional development planning for novice teachers

Self-reflection and professional development planning for novice teachers is an important part of achieving professional growth and identity. Self-reflection helps teachers systematically assess their own teaching practice and professional performance, and promotes continuous improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses. With regular self-reflection, teachers are able to gain a clearer understanding of their teaching style, classroom management strategies and the effectiveness of their interactions with students, so that they can continuously optimise their teaching methods and improve the quality of their teaching. In addition, a clear career development plan is essential. Teachers should set short-term and long-term development goals, such as further professional training, qualifications or educational research projects, according to their own career goals and interests. A practical career development plan can provide teachers with a sense of direction and motivation, and help them make steady progress on their career path. At the same time, schools should encourage and support teachers

in their career planning and assist them in achieving their career goals through the provision of career counselling services and development resources. Through self-reflection and career development planning, novice teachers can not only enhance their competence, but also strengthen their sense of identity with their professional roles and promote their long-term career development and satisfaction.



Figure 2 Self-reflection and professional development planning for novice teachers

6. Conclusion and outlook

6.1. Summary of the study

This study explored the identity process of novice teachers in the early stages of their careers and their career adaptability, revealing the complex interaction between identity and career adaptability. It was found that the main challenges faced by novice teachers in the process of professional adaptation include role adaptation, workload and emotional management, which directly affect their identity formation and professional adaptability. By analysing the impact of teacher education and practice, the role of social support systems, and the role of personal factors, we understand that systematic teacher training, effective campus support and self-reflection are key factors in enhancing novice teachers' career adaptation and identity. Teacher education should be tailored to meet actual needs and provide targeted training, while campus support systems need to establish comprehensive guidance and psychological support mechanisms. Personal factors such as personality traits and background experiences also have a significant impact on career adaptability ^[6]. Therefore, to facilitate the career development of novice teachers, schools and educational institutions should adopt comprehensive measures to optimise training and support systems, while encouraging teachers to engage in self-reflection and career planning. The findings provide useful references for educational practice and point to the direction of future related research, especially in further exploring teachers' career development and support strategies.

6.2. Directions for future research

Future research could further explore the professional adaptation and identity of novice teachers from multiple perspectives. Research could focus on the professional adaptability of novice teachers in different educational environments and cultural contexts, comparing the adaptation process of teachers in different regions or countries, and revealing the impact of culture and systems on teachers' identity. In addition, the effectiveness of specific support mechanisms, such as the specific impact of different types of mentorship, campus support systems and counselling on novice teachers, could be examined in depth to determine which strategies are most effective. The impact of personal factors and personality traits on career adjustment deserves further exploration, including how personality traits, psychological qualities, and career motivation are related to teachers' adjustment process and career satisfaction. Research should also focus on the impact of the introduction of new technologies and teaching tools on the career adjustment of novice teachers, and assess how technological support has changed teachers' teaching styles and career paths. Long-term follow-up studies are recommended to observe the long-term trends of novice teachers' career development and the

evolution of their identity, in order to provide policy makers and educators with more in-depth empirical evidence. These research directions will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the career adaptation process of novice teachers and provide valuable references for improving teacher training and support strategies.

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