Online Teacher Identity Development: What May We be Missing?

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Outline

• Review of literature on teacher identity and online teacher identity
• Context of the study and participants
• Data sources and theoretical framework
• Overview of the course
• Gaps identified by my study
• Factors influencing online teachers’ identity development
• Key take-aways
Questions

1. Do you actively think about/reflect on your teacher identity?
2. Did you ever undertake any training/took courses for teaching online?
3. Did the training programs discuss the topic of identity/teacher identity/online teacher identity in those trainings?
4. What kind of online teacher are you or would you like to be?
What does the literature say?

• The literature on teacher identity suggests that supporting identity development also supports teachers’ self-efficacy and competence (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000).

• Johnson, Ehrlich, Watts-Taffe and Williams (2014) argued that exploring online teacher identity “allows for a greater understanding of teachers’ relationships to the modality” (p. 43).

• Trainings focus more on technology (Comas-Quinn, 2011)
Why this study?

- Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) argue- “process of envisioning the self as a professional” is very critical in the development of a teacher identity (p. 762).
- Not enough literature available on teacher identity development relative to “how identity develops and how teacher educators might influence this development” (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011, p. 768).
- Taylor (2017) suggests - there is not enough literature on how teachers’ identity construction could be supported by teacher educators.
- Miles and Mikulec (2008) contend - there are few studies on factors that impact teacher training programs with regard to “identity, power, and professional satisfaction and growth” (n. p.).
## Context of the study and participants

**Table 1- Participants’ backgrounds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Teacher Training</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ren</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupin</td>
<td>Human Development</td>
<td>Taught some HE courses</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulip</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Some in informal settings</td>
<td>TESOL program</td>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peony</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>TESOL program</td>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurel</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>TESOL program</td>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>Special ed.</td>
<td>&gt;20 years in K-12</td>
<td>K-12 teacher prep.</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilac</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>&gt;20 years in K-12</td>
<td>K-12 teacher prep.</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data
• course artifacts, students’ online work, individual interviews – 2 each, individual cases of the participants, analytical memos, a cross-case analysis

Theoretical framework:
Identity theory as proposed by Gee (2000-2001) and explained and used by Luehmann (2007).
- The study focused on identifying the kind of online teacher the participants aspired to be and how that concept was influenced by specific experiences in the course.
The course

• Was informed by Gee’s (2000-2001) Identity theory as explained by Luehmann (2007)

• Gee’s concept of “participation” and “recognition”

• Aimed to prepare a certain kind of online teachers – online teachers who would be committed and able to –

• Experiences as online learners and experiences as online teachers
The gaps identified by my study

• looking at online teacher identity in isolation instead of as an integral part of teacher identity;
The gaps identified by my study (cont’d)

• ignoring the influence of disciplinary identities/perspectives
The gaps identified by my study (cont’d)

• studying online teacher identity outside the context of purposeful interventions.
The gaps identified by my study (cont’d)

Purposeful intervention:
Carefully designed scaffolded experiences as online learners and online teachers
Factors influencing online teacher identity development
Factors influencing online teacher identity development

Internal Factors

a) Teachers’ educational goals/aims may affect their approach to online teaching

- access to education
- equity
Factors influencing online teacher identity development

b) Teachers’ beliefs about how people learn best may affect their approach to online teaching

- relationship with students
- collaborative learning
Factors influencing online teacher identity development

c) Teachers’ professional values may affect their approach to online teaching

• collaboration with colleagues
• life-long learning
• community of practice
Factors influencing online teacher identity development

d) Teachers’ existing sub-identities may affect their approach to online teaching

- field specific identity
- nationality
- identity as face-to-face teachers
Factors influencing online teacher identity development

External Factors

e) Certain learning experiences may affect the development of an online teacher identity

• readings
• experiences as learners
• experiences as teachers
• reflections
f) Certain **professional experiences** may affect the development of an online teacher identity
Factors influencing online teacher identity development

g) Interactions within a community of practice may affect the development of an online teacher identity
h) *Perceptions in the field* may affect the development of an online teacher identity

- negativity and stigma in the field
Key take-aways

- It is important to study online teacher identity - what kind of online teacher you aspire to be will affect your instructional decisions

- Interventions through course work or teacher training can positively impact identity development

- Teaching online and face-to-face are complementary to each other

- Several external and internal factors impact online teachers’ identity development
“Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” – Parker Palmer

For supporting evidence, please see:

Hafsa, S.F. (2019). *Investigating Teachers’ Identity Development in a Hybrid Course to Prepare Online Teachers.* (available via ProQuest)

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