Proceedings of ICILLP 2025 Symposium: Psychological Perspectives on Teacher-Student Relationships in Educational Contexts
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.NS26762

A Review of Research on the Mechanisms Influencing Pre-Service Teachers' Professional Identity: An Integrative Perspective on Educational Internships, Field Interactions, and Perceptions of Efficacy

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Abstract. Pre-service teachers, as the pipeline for the teaching profession, exhibit a level of professional identity that directly impacts both their career stability and educational quality. A prevalent dichotomy exists among current pre-service teachers: they demonstrate high intrinsic value recognition towards the profession yet low recognition of its extrinsic conditions. Existing research on pre-service teachers' professional identity predominantly focuses on isolated influencing factors, lacking systematic integration. This study employs a literature review methodology to systematically synthesize existing research. It integrates and analyzes the dual effects of teaching practicum, the conflict and reconciliation within field interactions, the mediating role of efficacy perception, and the chained pathways connecting these three elements. The findings reveal that: Teaching practicum exerts dual-directional effects on professional identity through the "quality-efficacy" pathway, with its impact moderated by the quality of field interactions; The core of field interactions lies in the conversion of theoretical and practical capital. While conflict may undermine identity, reconciliation through mechanisms like dual-mentorship or reflective practice can foster its development; Efficacy perception serves as the crucial mediator connecting external practice with internal identity formation. It amplifies positive influences while buffering against negative impacts. Collectively, these three components constitute an integrated chain underlying the construction of pre-service teachers' professional identity.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, educational internships, field interactions, perceived efficacy

1. Introduction

Pre-service teachers refer to teacher trainees or masters of education who are still in the teacher training stage and have not formally joined the profession. Through systematic theoretical learning and educational practice, they will slowly build up their knowledge, ability and professional inclination towards the teaching profession, and are a key group in the transition from "students" to "teachers". As a reserve force in the teaching force, pre-service teachers' professional identity -- that

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DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.NS26762

is, the synthesis of their knowledge, emotion and long-term commitment to the teaching profession - is the internal driving force of their professional development, which directly affects their willingness to teach, their degree of commitment to teaching and their long-term career stability. commitment and long-term career stability [1,2]. Pre-service teachers with a high level of professional identity are more likely to take the initiative to improve their teaching ability and have a significantly lower risk of leaving the profession; on the contrary, a low level of professional identity may cause them to leave the field of education soon after joining the profession [3]. Existing research reveals that pre-service teachers' professional identity is clearly "split": they have a high degree of agreement with internal values such as promoting students' growth, but a low degree of agreement with external conditions such as salary and social status, and an overall attitude of "staying away from the field" [4]. This kind of contradiction is universal, for example, preschool pre-service teachers emphasize the value of "integration of preservation and teaching" but are dissatisfied with the treatment [4]; international Chinese language education pre-service teachers have a stronger sense of value due to the role of "cultural dissemination", but are restricted by the overseas environment, which leads to the weak stability of their identity [5,6].

Although professional identity is very important to the development of pre-service teachers, most of the existing studies only focus on a single influencing factor, such as the quality of educational practice or self-efficacy, and lack the systematic integration of multi-factors interaction mechanisms, which makes it difficult to reveal how the three factors of "educational practice, field interaction, and efficacy" work together to influence the dynamic process of professional identity. It is difficult to fully reveal how the three factors of "educational internship-field interaction-perceived efficacy" work together to influence the dynamic process of professional identity. Therefore, this paper takes these three factors as the core chain, and organizes the specific mechanisms by which they work together on the professional identity of pre-service teachers, and constructs an integrated analytical framework to provide a more systematic perspective for understanding the formation and development of pre-service teachers' professional identity.

2. Core concepts and current characteristics of pre-service teachers' professional identity

2.1. Core concept definition

The professional identity of pre-service teachers is the comprehensive cognition, emotional tendency and behavioral tendency towards the teaching profession formed by teacher trainees or masters of education in the process of training to become teachers, and the core contains three dimensions: professional awareness, professional emotion and professional will. This identity is not fixed, but has a dynamic nature, and will be constantly reconstructed with the richness of educational practice experiences [2,7].

Educational internship is a key link for teacher training colleges to organize pre-service teachers to enter primary and secondary schools or kindergartens to participate in teaching practice, and its quality is determined by three elements together: the rationality of the internship organization, the appropriateness of the internship content, and the quality of guidance. Together, these elements will shape the practice experience of pre-service teachers and directly affect their cognition and emotions of the teaching profession [8,9].

Field interaction is based on Bourdieu's field theory -- the theory that society is composed of a number of relatively independent "fields", the theoretical foundation of each field is a network of relationships full of competition for capital, participants will be Theoretical foundation Each field is a network of relationships filled with competition for capital, and participants compete for capital

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such as knowledge and experience to gain a position within the field [10]. For pre-service teachers, field interaction refers to their interaction between the "academic field of higher education" and the "field of internship practice": the field of higher education takes theoretical knowledge and academic norms as the core capital, and the field of internship practice takes teaching experience and classroom management skills as the core capital. The interaction between the two may be characterized by the tension between theory and practice, or by the fusion of the two, the quality of which depends on the efficiency of the transformation of theoretical knowledge into practical competence [4,11]. Perceived efficacy, also known as teaching self-efficacy, refers to pre-service teachers' subjective judgment of their ability to successfully complete teaching tasks (e.g., classroom moderation, teacher-student interaction, and activity design). As a key mediator connecting external practice and internal identity, it plays a central role in the process of educational practicums and field interactions affecting professional identity [1,12].

2.2. Current characteristics of professional identity

Existing research shows that pre-service teachers' professional identity as a whole is at a moderately high level, but the development of the internal dimensions is uneven. Among them, the dimension of career awareness has the highest score, which indicates that most pre-service teachers have a clear understanding of the value and role of the teaching profession through teacher education, and generally recognize the significance of teachers in guiding the growth of their students; the dimension of career expectations is the second highest, reflecting that they still have certain visions of their career development; the dimension of career willingness has the lowest score, which suggests that the actual choice of a long-term career in teaching is relatively weak in terms of determination, and that quite a few people will hesitate because of doubts about their own abilities or concerns about external conditions [7,8].

This identity characteristic shows significant differences among different groups. From the perspective of disciplines, pre-service teachers in the field of pre-school education are more concerned about the practical significance of "integrating preservation and teaching", and have a strong sense of the direct impact on the development of young children, but they are generally dissatisfied with the salary and social status of their profession; while the role of pre-service teachers in international Chinese language education is enhanced by the role of "cultural communicators" [8]. The pre-service teachers of international Chinese language education, on the other hand, have an enhanced sense of professional value due to their role as "cultural communicators", but they are constrained by the cultural conflict and loneliness in the overseas working environment, and the stability of their professional identity is relatively weak [4-6]. From the perspective of practical experience, pre-service teachers with educational internship experience have significantly higher career intention than those without internship experience, especially after accumulating practical experience in classroom management and teacher-student interaction during the internship, their confidence in their ability to be competent in the teaching profession will be enhanced, which in turn strengthens their identity [7,13].

3. Influencing mechanisms of pre-service teachers' professional identity: a multi-factor integration analysis

In this part, we will systematically analyze how these three factors interact with each other to shape the internal logic of pre-service teachers' professional identity from the three dimensions of the dual

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role of educational internships, the dynamic tensions of field interactions, and the mediating connection of the perception of efficacy.

3.1. Dual effects of educational internships: as a "practice field" for identity construction

Educational internships are a key bridge for pre-service teachers to move from theory to practice, and their impact on professional identity is two-fold. On the one hand, quality internships directly strengthen identity, which is centered on reasonable arrangement, comprehensive content and effective guidance, and enable pre-service teachers to experience "teaching success" in practice, and this positive experience will deepen their emotional identification with the teaching profession. Research shows that publicly-funded teacher education students who participated in 8-week full internships had significantly higher levels of professional identity than those who participated in 4-week observation internships, because the former had more opportunities for theoretical translation and targeted guidance [8].

On the other hand, internship efficacy played a key mediating role. The classroom control and teacher-student interaction skills accumulated during the internship will help pre-service teachers build up their confidence that "I can teach well", which in turn strengthens their determination to engage in teaching in the long term. For example, after successfully designing thematic teaching activities, pre-service teachers' teaching efficacy increased by 15% on average, and their "willingness to engage in long-term teaching" scores also increased by nearly 10% [9].

However, educational internships may inhibit identification through "role stress", which arises from three aspects: disconnection between theory and practice, excessive workload, and conflicting mentoring philosophies. About 60% of pre-service teachers experienced a decline in identity in the middle of their internship due to such pressures [13].

However, the negative effects can be mitigated through moderation: the dual-mentorship system reduces conceptual conflicts through regular communication between the university and the internship supervisor, and the phased internship reduces "sudden onboarding" anxiety, thus reducing the impact of stress on identity [13,14].

3.2. The tension of field interaction: the process of "conflict-reconciliation" of identity construction

Pre-service teachers are in the "academic field of higher education" and the "field of internship practice" at the same time, and the interaction between the two fields has a complex impact on their professional identity. The interaction between the two fields has a complex impact on professional identity. The conflict between the two fields is reflected in two aspects: first, the difference in capital, the university takes theoretical knowledge and academic norms as the core capital, while the internship field takes teaching experience and management skills as the core capital, which is difficult to be directly transformed; second, the difference in habitus, the academic habitus emphasizing theoretical reflection and the practice habitus focusing on rapid problem solving in the internship field. Secondly, the difference in habits, the "academic habits" of universities emphasizing theoretical reflection and the "practice habits" of internship fields focusing on rapid problem solving, there is a conflict of behavioral logic, which often makes pre-service teachers feel confused. The impact of conflict is twofold: intense and unresolved conflict can trigger self-doubt and reduce the sense of efficacy and identity; moderate conflict can stimulate reflection and promote pre-service teachers to explore the combination of theory and practice, and to form a deeper professional cognition [4,11].

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Field reconciliation can be realized through two paths: at the institutional level, the dual tutoring system is an effective mechanism - university tutors explain the theoretical logic, internship tutors guide the practical transformation, and capital complementation is realized through joint lesson planning. The "theory-practice fit" of pre-service teachers adopting this model is 40% higher than that of the traditional model, and their sense of efficacy is significantly enhanced [14]. At the individual level, reflective practice is a key strategy, and pre-service teachers can turn conflicts into learning opportunities by writing internship journals and conducting action research, for example, exploring the strategy of "structured inspiration" to balance the needs of theory and practice, and strengthening professional identity [11]. For example, exploring the strategy of "structured inspiration" to balance the needs of theory and practice, and strengthening professional identity [11,15].

3.3. The mediating role of perceived efficacy: the "core link" connecting external factors and internal identity

Perceived efficacy is the core mediator connecting educational internships, field interactions and professional identity, and its formation and mechanism of action can be analyzed from two aspects.

The formation of perceived efficacy is influenced by two types of factors: first, the direct experience of the educational internship, in which success reinforces the confidence that "I can teach well"; failure can also be transformed into an opportunity to enhance the sense of efficacy if it is provided by the mentor's targeted guidance; and persistent failure and a lack of guidance will weaken the sense of efficacy [1,9]. The second is the indirect effect of the quality of field interactions. Field integration (e.g., successful application of theories to practice) increases confidence because "theories are useful"; after conflict reconciliation (e.g., finding a suitable method through reflection), efficacy is increased because "I can solve the conflict"; and persistent conflict is reduced by self-denial if the conflict remains unresolved [1,9]. If the conflict remains unresolved, the sense of efficacy will be weakened by self-denial [11,16].

The effect of efficacy on professional identity is reflected in two aspects: first, the direct positive effect, high self-efficacy will strengthen the cognition that "the teaching profession is suitable for me", and for every one-point increase in efficacy, the average increase in professional identity scores is 0.6-0.7 points [1,8]; second, the buffer of negative effects, in the face of the stress of internship, high efficacy tends to attribute the "possible" to the "possible", and the "possible" to the "possible", which is the most important factor. Secondly, it is to buffer the negative effect, when facing the pressure of internship, those with high sense of efficacy are more inclined to attribute to the "ability to improve" rather than denying themselves or their careers, and under the pressure of "theory-practice disconnection", their career identity scores are more than 20% higher than that of those with low sense of efficacy [13,16].

3.4. Integrated modeling

Educational internship, field interaction and perceived efficacy affect professional identity through a "chain path": the quality of educational internship determines the quality of field interaction, and field interaction ultimately affects identity by shaping the sense of efficacy. Field interaction is the key moderator of "internship→perception of efficacy", and perception of efficacy is the core mediator of "field interaction→identity" [9,11].

The characteristics of different stages of internship vary: the internship experience dominates the sense of efficacy in the early stage, the field conflict becomes the core influencing factor in the

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middle stage, and the sense of efficacy stabilizes and determines the final state of identity in the late stage. The three stages of identity construction are synergistic: the internship provides the foundation, the field determines the efficiency of transformation, and the efficacy carries the outcome [9,11].

4. Conclusion

This study focuses on the influence mechanism of pre-service teachers' professional identity, and systematically explores how educational internships, field interactions and perceived efficacy synergize in the dynamic process of professional identity. From a comprehensive analysis, it can be seen that educational internships, as the core practice scenario, have a two-way impact on professional identity through the "quality-efficacy" pathway: high-quality internships (e.g., well-arranged and effective guidance) can increase the sense of efficacy and thus strengthen identity; while internships full of role pressure or conflict can reduce the sense of efficacy and inhibit identity. The strength of this effect is moderated by the quality of field interactions. The core of field interaction lies in "capital transformation". Conflicts between the academic field of higher education and the field of internship practice may weaken identity, but after reconciliation through dual tutorships and reflective practice, they can facilitate the transformation of theory into practice, laying the foundation for the enhancement of sense of efficacy and the strengthening of identity. Perceived efficacy, on the other hand, is the core mediator connecting external practice and internal identity, which will both amplify the facilitating effect of positive experiences on identity and buffer the impact of negative factors, ultimately affecting pre-service teachers' acceptance of the teaching profession.

There is still room for improvement in this study. Although it integrates relevant studies from different disciplines, it does not pay enough attention to pre-service teachers with special training modes, and fails to fully analyze the influence of "training path specificity" on the logic of the three factors, resulting in the generalizability of the conclusions that need to be further verified. As a review study, it mainly relies on the cross-sectional data of existing literature and lacks an original longitudinal tracking design, which is unable to visually present the dynamic association of educational internship, field interaction and sense of efficacy in the three phases of pre-internship, mid-internship and post-internship, and it is not accurate enough in grasping the specific weights of the factors at the key turning points of identity construction. Future research can be deepened in three ways: first, to adopt a longitudinal tracking design to measure the dynamic changes of the three factors and professional identity in the whole cycle of internship in stages, so as to clarify the stage-by-stage weights of each factor; second, to strengthen cross-group comparisons, focusing on pre-service teachers of different disciplines and training modes, to reveal the commonalities and differences of their identity mechanisms, so as to provide basis for the individualized cultivation program; third, to verify the actual effects of the dual-mentorship system, reflection training and other strategies by means of controlled experiments and other empirical methods, so as to form the optimized program of teacher education that can be promoted.

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