Fostering Inclusive Teaching Practices: The Crucial Role of Social Philosophy in Developing Professional Identity

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Overview

Abstract

The Crucial Role of Social Philosophy in Developing Professional Identity

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that social philosophy is key for teachers. It helps them create inclusive classrooms and develop a strong professional identity. By reflecting on social justice and cultural perspectives, teachers can refine their practices and make ethical decisions. This article also explores how social philosophy can prepare future teachers by examining how social factors shape their identity. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of a strong professional identity for teachers and highlights the role of social philosophy in teacher education programs.

INTRODUCTION

Effective teachers do more than impart knowledge; they shape students' lives and influence society. This complex role requires a deep understanding of the principles that guide education and the development of a strong professional identity. This paper argues that social philosophy is key to achieving both.

Social philosophy provides a framework for teachers to navigate the ethical complexities of education. By emphasizing justice, equality, and cultural responsiveness, it helps teachers create inclusive classrooms. Understanding the social and historical context of education allows teachers to see the bigger picture and their role in achieving societal goals. It is also intertwined with professional identity. As teachers grapple with philosophical questions about social justice and diverse perspectives, they reflect on their own values and teaching methods. This reflection refines their professional identity and ensures their practices are inclusive. Furtheremore social philosophy equips teachers with the tools to critically examine and adapt their methods. By understanding cultural diversity, teachers can foster classrooms where every student feels valued. Furthermore, social philosophy guides teachers through ethical dilemmas. By grounding decisions in philosophical principals, teachers make informed choices that solidify their identity as ethical practitioners.

Exploring the Foundations of Human Interaction

Humans need each other for everything – from staying alive to growing and thriving. Social philosophy explores the fundamental rules that guide our interactions in society, trying to understand the true meaning of how we live together. As soon as a person is born, they start living in society, where constant interactions shape who they become. Society, described as a group of individuals with a shared purpose, serves as the nurturing ground for one's character. Social philosophy delves into the philosophy of human relations within this societal framework. It views society as a dynamic organization of purposeful individuals, with man at its core, and explores the principles that underlie social solidarity.

Mackenzie (1917), asserts that social philosophy seeks to explain the nature of society through the lens of social solidarity, emphasizing the importance of understanding the united forces that connect individuals together. While Blackmar (1905) highlights the connection between social philosophy and the general facts of society, making overarching observations about societal nature.

Moreover, Bertrand Russell (1958), takes a broader perspective, stating that social philosophy seeks conditions conducive to directing all constructive tendencies of humanity, such as love and sympathy, within aspects like social marriage and education. The ultimate goal is to provide maximum opportunities for creating individuals capable of safeguarding the world from future catastrophes.

As an educator, I would like to take a closer look at social philosophy in the aspect of education and the aspect of professional identity formation as a socialization process of future teachers.

Perspectives on Identity Formation through Socialization
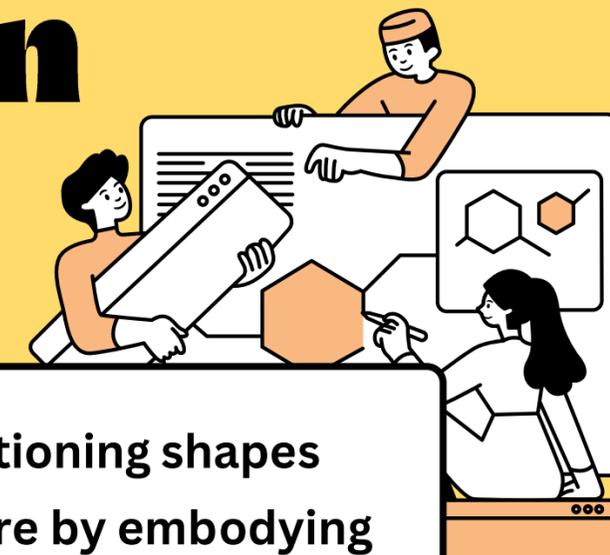
Identity is a multifaceted concept influenced by socialization processes, wherein an individual's community positioning shapes perceptions of themselves. Professional identity formation, therefore, involves assimilating into professional culture by embodying exemplary practices. It's a continuous process within specific contexts. The Communities of Practice model by Lave and Wenger illustrates how novices evolve from peripheral to full engagement through social interaction. Mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire are pivotal components of this model.

Professional identity encompasses self-perception, beliefs, and belonging to a profession. Definitions of professionalism vary, but generally, being professional entails expertise, education, and conduct reflecting high standards. Scholars like Erikson, Ibarra, and Pratt & Rafaeli have elucidated professional identity's dynamic nature, integrating professional roles, values, and norms into self-concept. Gardner and Shulman described six professional characteristics, emphasizing commitment, specialized knowledge, skills, integrity, knowledge expansion, and professional community involvement.

Professional identity evolves over time through internalizing norms, values, and adopting roles, and is not static but dynamic and influenced by experience. This construct, comprising cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, reflects individuals' understanding of themselves within their profession and evolves through reflection and alignment with professional ideals. Theoretical perspectives underscore individual experiences, social contexts, and professional norms' roles, emphasizing its dynamic and nuanced nature. Professional identity profoundly impacts behavior, decision-making, and engagement within professional communities, thus warranting ongoing reflection and development.
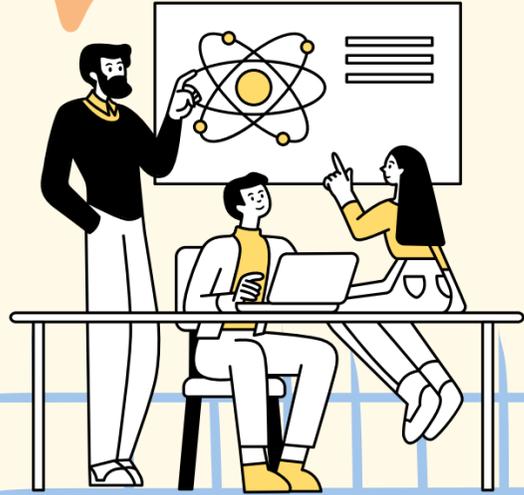
Professional identity development

Professional identity development involves integrating professional norms, values, roles, and self-concept, a process shaped by various theoretical perspectives. Social identity theory emphasizes social groups' influence on identity, highlighting professional group affiliation's role in identity formation. Professional socialization theory focuses on formal and informal learning experiences and social interactions' influence on identity development. Communities of practice theory underscores collective learning within professional communities, emphasizing participation's role in shaping identity. These theories collectively highlight social factors' significance, including group membership, socialization experiences, and collective learning, in professional identity formation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Beijaard et al., 2004; Wenger, 1998).

Personal and social professional identities, as defined by Beijaard et al. (2004), reflect individuals' personal values and professional community expectations. These identities are interrelated, influencing each other and shaping individuals' interactions and beliefs within professional contexts. Wenger's (1998) theory further explores identity formation, highlighting learning's role through meaning, practice, community, and identity itself. Wenger emphasizes identity's social construction and negotiation, shaped by interactions and experiences.

Professional identity development is crucial for teachers, impacting job satisfaction, commitment, and effectiveness (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Teacher education programs play a vital role in fostering positive and reflective professional identities through self-reflection, collaborative learning, and engagement with educational discourse (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). Well-developed professional identities lead to resilient, adaptable practitioners with improved instructional practices and student outcomes (Goddard et al., 2004). Additionally, strong professional identities contribute to supportive professional communities, enabling collaboration and continuous professional development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Professional Identity Development of Preservice Teachers

Professional identity development among preservice teachers is crucial for their future roles as educators. This process involves shaping beliefs, values, attitudes, and roles within the teaching profession. Kelchtermans (2009) notes that this development is ongoing, starting in preservice teacher education programs and continuing throughout a teacher's career. OECD Education Working Papers (No. 267) emphasize the importance of professional identity for preservice teachers, providing clarity, commitment, and motivation, guiding their preparation, enhancing resilience, and supporting networking.

Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) propose a model outlining stages of professional identity development:
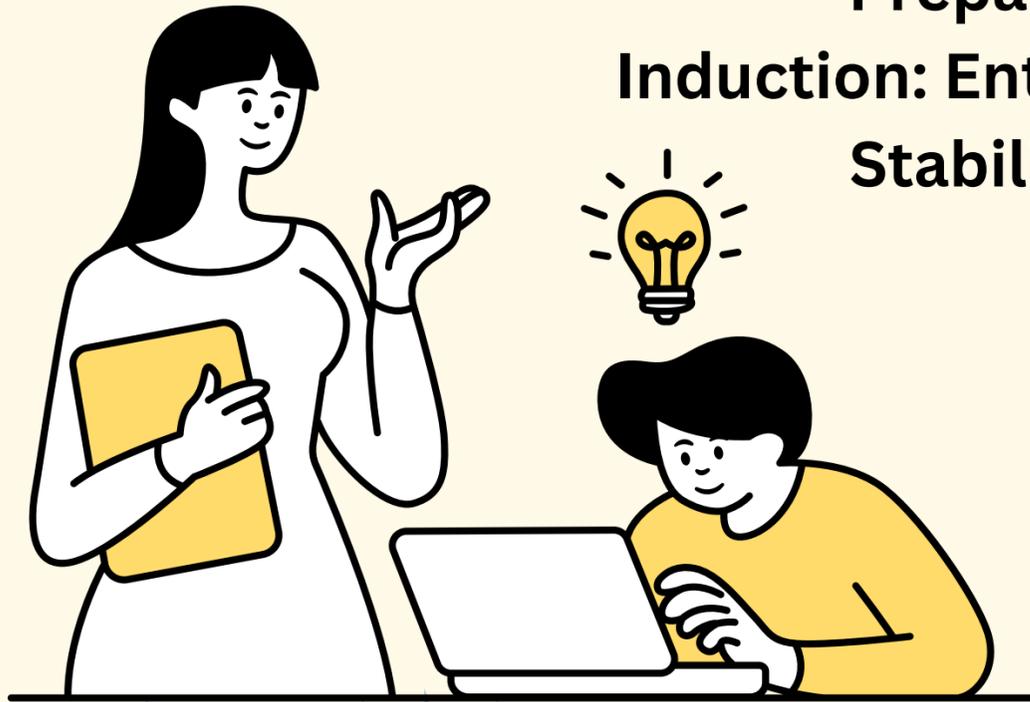
Exploration: Considering or entering the teaching profession.
Predisposition: Forming initial beliefs and attitudes.
Preparation: Engaging in formal teacher education.
Induction: Entering the teaching profession as beginning teachers.
Stabilization: Gaining competence and confidence.

This model illustrates the dynamic and nonlinear nature of professional identity development. Teacher education programs play a crucial role in this development through reflective practices, mentoring, and targeted professional development (Chong, S., Choy.D, & Wong., F.L, 2008). Further research is needed to understand preservice teachers' identity formation challenges and enhance teacher education programs accordingly (Beijaard D., Meijerp.P.C., & Verloop, N,. 2004). By prioritizing professional identity development, these programs can better prepare preservice teachers for successful and fulfilling careers in education.

Role of Pedagogical Guidance in Professional Identity Development: A Cross-Cultural Perspective in Israeli Teacher Education through the Lens of Social Philosophy

Professional identity development is crucial in teacher education, prompting research into pedagogical guidance models' impact on preservice teachers' self-efficacy and identity. While some studies identify general factors linked to positive professional identity, further research is needed to pinpoint specific pedagogical practices (Beijaard et al., 2004). Neglecting identity in Israeli teacher education, as Danielewicz (2001) suggests, can create a rift between personal and professional roles. Addressing this gap requires understanding pedagogical instructors' roles in identity development, especially in Israel's PDS and academy-class models. By exploring preservice teachers' perceptions and the long-term effects of instructors' involvement, this research aims to enhance guidance for resilient, reflective educators. Social philosophy provides a theoretical lens for understanding identity's societal and cultural dimensions, advocating for inclusive, reflective learning environments (Zeichner, 2010). This approach aligns with efforts to improve teacher education practices, emphasizing the importance of nurturing preservice teachers' professional identities to reduce attrition rates.

Conclusion

The Ripple Effect of Social Philosophy in Education

The impact of social philosophy extends beyond individual educators. By fostering a generation of teachers grounded in social justice and cultural responsiveness, we contribute to a more equitable and inclusive educational system. This, in turn, has the potential to ripple outwards, shaping a more just and informed citizenry.

Furthermore, the application of social philosophy in teacher education programs offers a valuable tool for nurturing preservice teachers in the Israeli context, where identity development has been an under-addressed issue. By incorporating reflective practices, self-efficacy opportunities, and a cross-cultural lens, we can bridge the gap between personal and professional roles, empowering future educators to become resilient, reflective, and impactful changemakers.

Finally, social philosophy transcends theory. It serves as a practical guide for cultivating a more inclusive and socially responsible educational approach, ultimately preparing teachers to navigate the complexities of the contemporary world and empower future generations

Thank you