

NOVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: The rapid advancement of economic and cultural globalization, particularly catalyzed by initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, underscores the pivotal role of university English education for non-English majors in enhancing the quality of higher education and fostering globally competent individuals within academic institutions. Within this framework, university English instructors serve as primary agents in implementing English curricula and educational frameworks. Consequently, the effectiveness of these curricula and systems hinges largely on the competence and dedication of these instructors. Thus, enhancing university English teachers' sense of belonging, professional esteem, and the efficacy of their pedagogical practices emerges as a critical challenge.

Scholarly inquiries have explored various factors influencing the development of teachers' professional identity, as well as the distinctions and commonalities among different categories of educators in this regard. However, there remains a dearth of research specifically examining the essence and developmental trajectories of novice university English teachers' professional identity.

Teachers' professional identity evolves through ongoing engagement and interaction with fellow members within both personal and professional communities, fostering a continuous process of learning. This study delves into the nuances of novice university English teachers' professional identity development, emphasizing the significance of communal learning and reflective teaching practices in facilitating their growth. Furthermore, the researcher proposes constructive pathways for development that encompass objective standards, individual growth, practical experience, and emotional fulfillment. These insights aim to offer valuable guidance to scholars and practitioners seeking to enrich the professional identity development of novice university English teachers.

KEYWORDS: Novice University English Teachers, Teachers' Professional Identity, Development, Community, Identity

I. Introduction

The swift evolution of society and changes in education have made traditional teaching methods and educational models insufficient for meeting the needs of modern education. Nowadays, education not only aims to pass on knowledge and improve learners' thinking skills but also seeks to promote a well-rounded grasp of effective communication through meaningful interaction (Liu & Xu, 2011; Norton & De Costa, 2018).

In the field of Foreign Language Education, which involves teachers, students, foreign languages, and the teaching environment, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of educational reforms. They are key figures within any educational system (Derakhshan et al., 2020). Currently, there's a significant overhaul of University English Education in China, with university English instructors at the forefront of these changes. The success and quality of these reforms largely depend on the capabilities of the teachers involved. Therefore, the key to improving education lies in continuously enhancing the quality of teaching. With China's expansion plans for universities, there's a considerable influx of new university English instructors joining the profession each year.

Certainly, here's a paraphrased version:

Identity plays a crucial role in achieving the overarching goals of educational systems, with teachers' professional identity serving as a valuable framework for understanding the intricacies of teaching (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Coldron and Smith (1999) suggest that professional identity isn't simply possessed but actively utilized by teachers to comprehend their roles. In China, where English courses are mandatory in universities, novice university English teachers significantly impact the quality of education due to the broad scope and extensive teaching hours of the subject. Their development of professional identity is pivotal for their future careers and influences the quality of English teaching in universities. Similarly, in Vietnam, attention should be directed towards understanding the professional identity development of novice university English teachers, as it shapes their roles and subjective perceptions within the educational context. Exploring this development provides insights into teachers' actions within the diverse societal, cultural, and institutional frameworks that shape their work environment (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Therefore, understanding and promoting the professional identity development of novice university English teachers is essential for enhancing the quality of English education. This research aims to delve into the essence of this development and propose strategies for its enhancement.

II. Literature Review

2.1. Identity

The concept of "identity," defined as our perception of ourselves and others, traces its roots back to the Latin word "idem" (Danielewicz, 2001). Traditionally, identity was viewed as a matter of individual evolution within society over time. Some scholars saw identity as a singular, stable, and cohesive trait, while contemporary perspectives, such as constructivism, depict it as a fluid, interactive, and evolving process shaped by individual experiences (Liu, 2012). Identity is thus recognized as a dynamic, intricate, and multi-dimensional phenomenon subject to the passage of time and the forces of change.

2.2. Teachers' Professional Identity

Teacher identity shares similar characteristics with general identity but encompasses unique professional qualities. It is a complex concept influenced by various disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, and psychology. Varghese et al. (2005) define teacher identity as a contextual construction process that evolves continuously through language and discourse, characterized by sustainability and negotiation. Richards (2008) emphasizes that teacher identity involves the integration of societal and cultural factors into teaching, with teacher development serving as a means of reconstructing this identity. This study does not differentiate between teacher identity and professional identity.

Professional identity is a multifaceted concept utilized differently across teacher education programs (Lutovac, 2020). Marcia (2002) defines professional identity as the alignment of personal skills and values with active employment, leading to a sense of commitment to one's profession. He highlights the importance of individual skills, abilities, and professional interests in constructing this identity. Once established, a deep and reciprocal relationship with the environment is formed, fostering a sense of belonging and unity within the profession and providing psychological fulfillment. Teachers shape their identity through ongoing negotiation, discussion, and reflection encompassing both personal and professional aspects of their lives (Tsui, 2007).

Teachers' professional identity encompasses how they define their roles and themselves within their profession (Lasky, 2005), reflecting their understanding of what constitutes effective teaching (Qoyyimah et al., 2023). This identity formation is an ongoing process where personal selves merge with the professional roles of teaching, integrating existing knowledge and beliefs while also incorporating new experiences and interpretations. Moreover, professional identity is shaped by both individual and contextual factors, indicating that it is not entirely unique to each teacher. The formation and evolution of teachers' professional identity are viewed as dynamic and lifelong processes that continue indefinitely. Individual events and past experiences are significant influences on teachers' professional identity (Cheng, 2021), while the teacher education program also plays a crucial role in shaping it (Lutovac, 2020).

2.3. English Teachers' Professional Identity

In the Vietnamese education system, particularly regarding foreign languages, English typically takes precedence, making the study of English teachers' identity equally important as that of language teachers overall. Nguyen (2016) argues that teachers' identity is not inherent but rather shaped by their interaction and integration within the social and cultural contexts they operate in. Barkhuizen (2017) defines language teacher identity as multifaceted, encompassing cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical aspects, both internally within the teacher and externally within the broader social, material, and technological spheres. According to Liu and Hu (2020), the identity of university English teachers is significantly influenced by curriculum reform initiatives.

This study considers English teachers' identity as the amalgamation of their personal and professional aspirations within the school environment and during interactions with the community, which may evolve alongside their beliefs, goals, attitudes, and emotions. The term "identity" has gained prominence within English language learning and teaching communities since the early 21st century. Channan (2020) employs qualitative research methods to investigate how English teachers in a Vietnamese school adapt to the new curriculum reforms and develop their teacher identity, finding that teachers tend to shape their identity by teaching in ways that resonate with their preferences.

Babanoğlu and Yardımcı (2017) examine the perspectives of English teachers in both private and public schools, discovering a positive attitude towards professional development issues among teachers. From the standpoint of language teachers' roles, teacher identity acts as a scaffold for the development of their professional perspectives, reflecting how they perceive themselves and how others perceive them. Mannes (2020) explores EFL teachers' views on their professional identity through interviews, finding a consensus among teachers that teaching is not merely imparting knowledge but also involves cognitive and emotional skills, emphasizing the educative aspect of their profession (Tosuncuoğlu, 2019).

Liu and Hu (2020) offer insights into the roots of identity crises among university English teachers within the context of new curriculum reforms and propose solutions. They attribute the crisis to inconsistent social expectations, de-professionalization, and the impact of curriculum changes on teachers' existing knowledge structures. This crisis is characterized by an identity dilemma, involving a loss of self-identity due to threats to ontological security. Meanwhile, Vanegas et al. (2021) analyze the role of social psychological factors in shaping professional identity crises among teachers at a private university in Colombia. Similarly, Xie and Dong (2020) investigate the evolution of identity among three experienced Chinese English teachers at a higher vocational university, revealing the interplay between the trajectory of identity evolution and factors contributing to identity crises.

Regarding influencing factors on English teachers' identity, scholars offer diverse perspectives. Kavrayıcı (2020) explores factors influencing teacher identity development, emphasizing personal characteristics and teaching practices as significant influences, while downplaying the impact of the social environment. However, this perspective may overlook macro and micro-level factors. On the other hand, Babanoğlu and Yardımcı (2017) suggest that gender does influence teachers' professional development consciousness, particularly benefiting female English teachers, whereas age is not a determining factor in their cognitive processes. Additionally, studies indicate that teacher identity correlates with variables such as motivations for career choice, professional beliefs, sense of professional belonging, and contributions to the profession (Lasky, 2005; Thomson & Palermo, 2014).

2.4. Novice University English Teachers

In educational contexts, a "novice teacher" typically refers to a newly licensed professional educator with fewer than five years of teaching experience (Perrone et al., 2019; Räsänen et al., 2020). McDonald (1982) defines a novice teacher as someone who has completed all pre-service courses, including teaching practices during the internship stage, has obtained an interim teaching certificate, and has been hired by a school. Novice teachers share responsibilities with experienced colleagues and typically begin their official teaching career at a specific school. This definition succinctly outlines the eligibility, tenure, and responsibilities of novice teachers, making it widely used in research both domestically and internationally.

In the context of this study, novice university English teachers are those who have been teaching university-level English for one to three years and may still be unfamiliar with the intricacies of the profession. As novice university English teachers, they must quickly adapt to the teaching and learning environment, establish relationships with students and colleagues, and learn to navigate complex teaching issues. Their cognition, personality, work motivation, professional mindset, and the university's context all influence their development of professional identity.

Research on novice teachers often focuses on the development of professional identity within relationships to assess progress and examine its impact on professional growth in this new role (Cattley, 2007; Urzua & Vasquez, 2008). Hamman et al. (2010) explore the formation and development of professional identity among novice university English teachers using the possible selves theory. Liao (2010) compares changes before and after teachers' employment, offering strategies to overcome difficulties in developing professional identity. Li and Zhang (2016) analyze the professional identity level of a new male preschool teacher through in-depth interviews, providing suggestions for improving professional identity from personal and social perspectives.

Research on language teachers with unique cultural identities (Park, 2012) suggests that ESL teachers may face questioning from both students and society regarding their credibility as English instructors because they are not

native speakers. However, Chen (2008) highlights that Chinese EFL teachers have certain teaching advantages over native English-speaking teachers as they can anticipate and address students' challenges effectively. Clarke (2008) emphasizes the impact of English as a global language on shaping the identity of language teachers. Novice English teachers tend to adopt student-centered approaches and modern teaching methods, while experienced teachers often lean towards teacher-centered approaches and traditional teaching methods in the classroom.

III. The Connotation of Novice University English Teachers' Professional Identity Development

The construction and growth of teachers' professional identity require both individual and collective efforts. Firstly, fostering teachers' professional identity through learning, particularly within a community setting, significantly impacts their development. Secondly, teachers should harness the positive influence of various factors in their teaching practice, seeking assistance from community members, attending seminars, lectures, and demonstration classes to address teaching and academic challenges. Lastly, novice university English teachers must engage in continual reflection through participation and discussion, focusing on the specific aspects of their courses, thereby advancing their professional identity development and ultimately enhancing the quality of education and personal growth.

3.1. Community

Indeed, humans are deeply intertwined with social relations, and the world operates as a system where experiences are continually objectified under logical relations, fostering both creativity and compassion within communities (Guo, 2017). Community, grounded in familial, geographical, and friendship ties, thrives on cooperation and solidarity. More than just the sum of individual components like race, faith, family, and friendship, "community" embodies collective identity and fulfills fundamental human needs.

For novice teachers, communities of practice offer invaluable support. Liu (2011) defines these communities as groups of individuals sharing common goals and interests. Novices gradually transition from periphery to center through active participation in community activities. Novice university English teachers, for instance, can benefit by joining seminars, observing expert teachers' classes, preparing their own lessons, and seeking feedback from experienced colleagues. Through continuous engagement, they experience professional growth.

Within learning communities, learners actively participate in authentic practices. Liao (2017) describes learning communities as organizations working towards a shared vision, providing a space for reflection, exploration, discussion, and sharing to foster learning and improvement. In such communities, learning takes precedence, with all members contributing to decision-making processes.

Conversations on topics of interest drive education forward. Participants engage in discussions, negotiation, meaning-making, knowledge updating, and learning through written and spoken language. Teachers play a pivotal role in educational and socio-cultural communities. Gu (2017) defines teachers' learning communities as collaborative groups within schools aimed at enhancing research quality and professional development. These communities serve as platforms for practice, negotiation, reflection, learning, and growth. Novice teachers, facing various challenges in teaching and research, benefit greatly from such communities, which help establish common values, understanding, and opportunities for construction, communication, and development.

To truly be oneself, one must belong to a community, which serves as a vital source of collective identification. Within the safe space of a "trust circle," teachers can explore their true individual selves (Guo, 2017). This concept of a "trust circle" is essential for constructing a learning community. Through communication and negotiation within this circle, teachers enhance their individual selves while strengthening the unity of the community, thereby promoting overall professional identity development. When individual selves merge with others, community integration occurs, and collective self-realization is achieved.

In many ways, a teachers' learning community acts as a reliable "scaffolding" for professional development. Through meaningful negotiation and participation, teachers blend theory with practice, bridging the gap between individual and collective identity realization. As the relationship between individuals and society is reciprocal, the transformation of learners leads to changes within the communities they belong to and the activities they engage in. Consequently, shifts in a teacher's self-identity inevitably impact the collective identity of the community.

3.2. Reflection

Reflection is indeed a crucial process in teachers' learning and professional development. Throughout all stages of a teacher's career, reflection and renewal serve as mechanisms for facilitating growth, requiring collaboration among teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and researchers (Steffy, 2000). All community members, including teachers, students, and administrators, should participate in the "reflection-renewal-growth" process.

From the perspective of teachers, reflection entails revising and enhancing existing knowledge related to teaching and professional development issues, serving as a process of knowledge refinement and confrontation. As an integral aspect of a teachers' professional learning community, continuous practice, reflection, re-practice, and re-reflection are essential for professional development and strengthening professional identity. Through this iterative process, teachers enhance their teaching effectiveness, refine their pedagogical approaches, and contribute to their ongoing growth as educators.

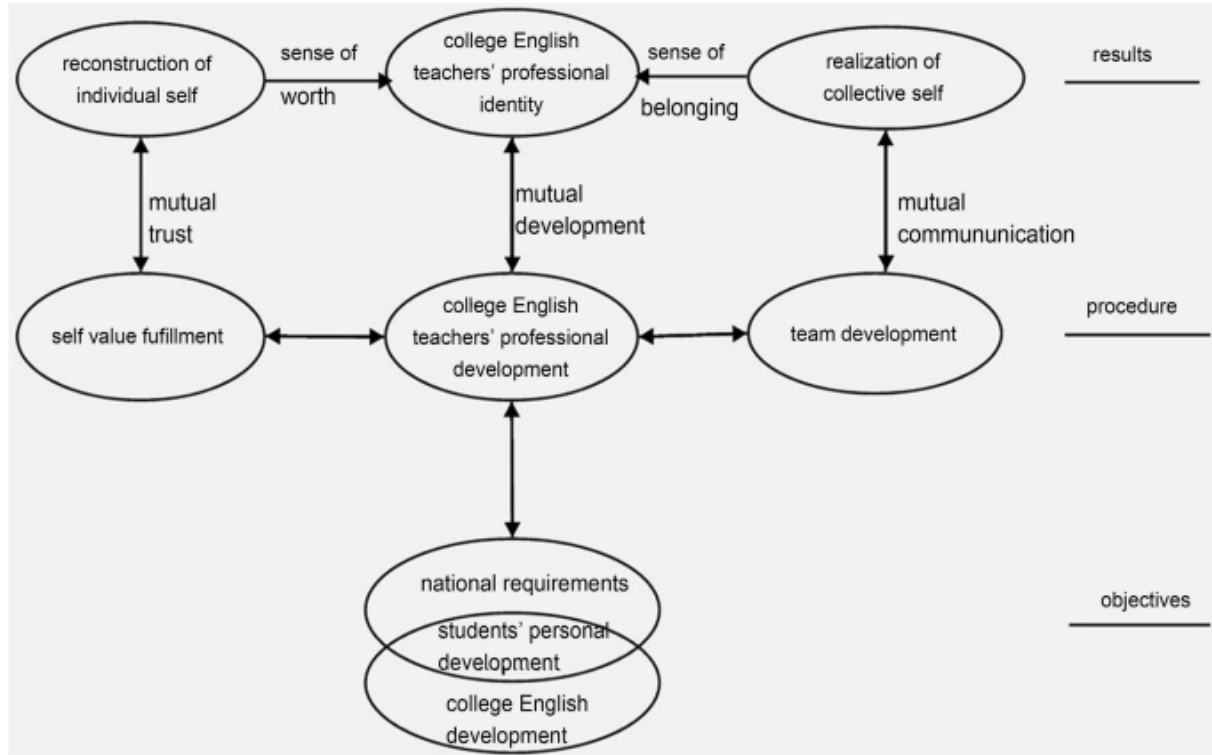


Figure 1. The relationship between community and teachers' professional identity development.

Reflection serves as a powerful tool for teachers to transcend impulsive and conventional activities in their teaching practices. When teachers encounter challenges, reflection allows them to address these issues through renewed practice. Typically, reflection begins with a specific teaching or research puzzle. As teachers conceptualize the problem, they construct meanings and assimilate knowledge through negotiation with community members, guiding further practice. This cyclical process lacks clear starting and ending points, reflecting its dual nature as both a goal and a means for teachers.

The researcher asserts that teachers' learning occurs within a specific context, and the process of reflection is essential for knowledge assimilation and professional identity development. Teachers' professional identity construction results from the continuous and interactive effects of their experiences, necessitating ongoing learning within a professional learning community. In this conducive learning environment, university English teachers can clarify learning goals and issues, deepen their understanding of content, enhance self-reflection skills, actively participate in learning, and make objective evaluations. This enables them to reflect on learning objectives, evolve into reflective practitioners, and improve their professional identity.

For novice teachers, reflective teaching facilitates the integration of theory and practice. During the university English teaching process, novice teachers enrich reflective content by examining both teaching content and external factors affecting outcomes. Diversifying reflective approaches is crucial for novice university English teachers. Reflective teaching diaries allow for in-depth analysis of classroom problems and offer solutions, fostering reflective behavior and enhancing reflection levels. Action research fosters self-assessment and teaching ability development, while collective reflection with experienced teachers enhances the integration of opinions and insights. Novice university English teachers should also integrate reflection with practice, as reflective teaching serves as a bridge between theory and practice, guiding novice teachers to recognize, identify, and solve problems effectively.

IV. The Construction Paths of Novice University English Teachers' Professional Identity Development

Novice university English teachers share the common attributes of newly appointed educators, including an initial sense of excitement followed by subsequent feelings of confusion.

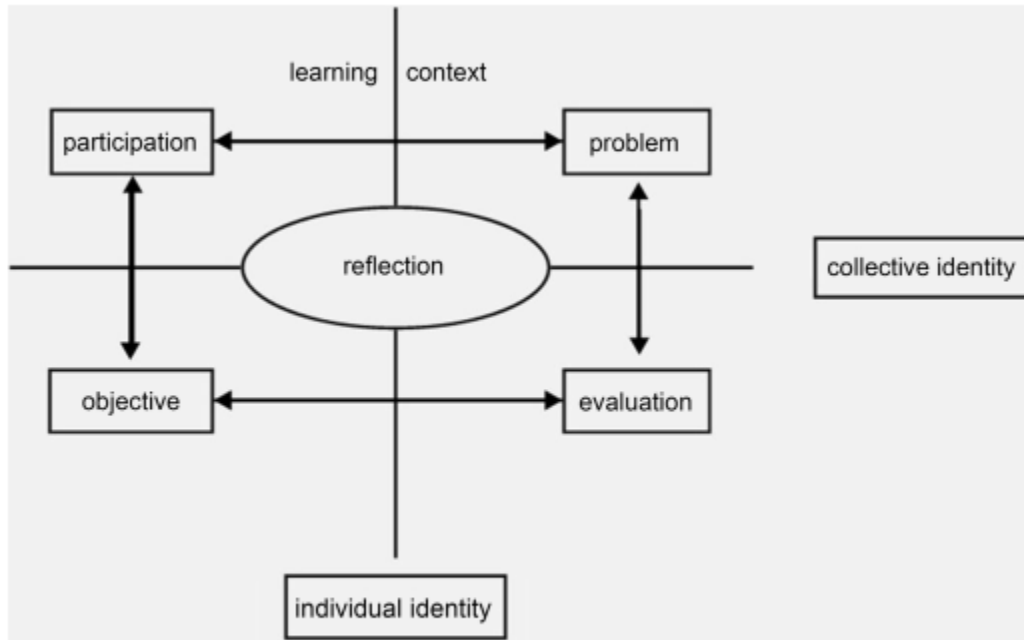


Figure 2. The relationship between reflection and teachers' professional identity development.

The establishment of teachers' professional identity primarily occurs through their ongoing learning process. Learning is not an isolated endeavor but a dynamic one where individuals comprehend the significance of learning through various activities. Teachers' effective professional development within a community is further facilitated by continuous reflection during teaching practices. University English teachers actively engage in teaching and research, leveraging their knowledge base, continually reflecting on their teaching and research experiences, and fostering knowledge sharing and professional practice to enhance their professional identity development.

Drawing from the concepts of community and reflection, the pathways to the development of novice university English teachers' professional identity can be explored from four dimensions: objective identity, individual identity, practice identity, and emotional identity. Advancing objective identity involves integrating pre-service and in-service education. Enhancing individual identity entails improving teachers' self-awareness. Strengthening practice identity is achieved through participation in multidimensional learning and practice communities. Elevating emotional identity involves nurturing feelings of happiness, belonging, and self-worth.

4.1. Integrate Pre-Service and Post-Service Education of Novice University English Teachers, Promote Objective Identity

Objective identity encompasses the shared understanding and knowledge among university English teachers regarding national educational policies, students' practical needs, and the objectives of university English courses. Novice university English teachers must grasp the common objectives of the course. Therefore, teacher education, which encompasses pre-service preparation, initial training, and ongoing professional development, is crucial for fostering objective identity.

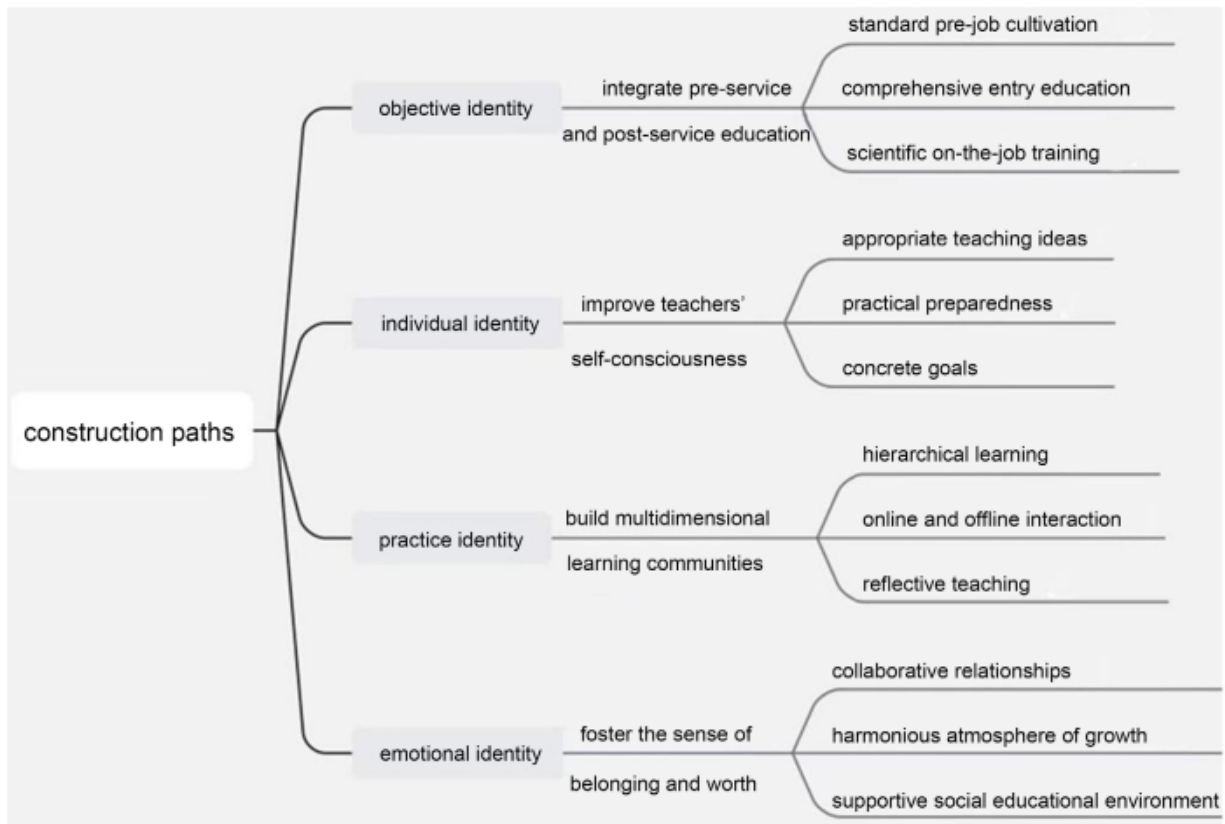


Figure 3. The construction paths of novice college English teachers' professional identity development.

Pre-job cultivation focuses on instilling education philosophy, developing professional identity, honing practical skills, and acquiring professional knowledge, including proficiency in foreign languages and language competence. This stage establishes a solid foundation for fostering objective identity.

Entry education encompasses understanding national language education policies, strategies for cultivating foreign language talent, current national development requirements, the role of university English in institutions, students' personal development, and school talent cultivation plans. It must actively align with the Ministry of Education's directives. In the journey of teachers' professional identity development, entry education for novice university English teachers acts as a bridge linking past training with future professional growth, bridging the gap between pre-service cultivation and in-service training. Scientific entry training, coupled with a conducive working environment and effective teaching and research guidance, accelerates the transition of novice university English teachers into their roles and expedites their development.

On-the-job training is another critical component in promoting objective identity. Following entry education, novice teachers embark on their roles as university English instructors. Transitioning from student to teacher may evoke feelings of nervousness or confusion due to lack of teaching experience. Therefore, on-the-job training plays a pivotal role in dispelling such uncertainties and facilitating their development. Effective on-the-job training involves preparation, teaching, discussion, research, and is centered around classroom instruction. Novice teachers attend expert teachers' classes, observe their teaching methods closely, and gain valuable teaching experience. Conversely, expert teachers visit novice teachers' classes to offer guidance and suggestions. Collaborative efforts such as lesson preparation, demonstration classes, case studies, learning communities, workshops, and peer discussions provide mutual support, alleviate anxiety, and accelerate professional identity development for novice teachers.

4.2. Improve Teachers' Self-Consciousness, Enhance Individual Identity

Teaching ideas encompass teachers' comprehension of teaching concepts, practices, and modes, serving as the guiding principles for their instructional activities and shaping their understanding of teaching essence and processes. Firstly, university English teaching in our country traditionally adopts a teacher-centered approach, emphasizing the instructor's dominant role while overlooking students' engagement and initiative in learning. Thus,

novice university English teachers should prioritize allocating time for class discussions, sharing, and active participation to foster student involvement. Secondly, novice teachers must address students' cultural differences, as many Vietnamese students may lack exposure to Western cultures. Helping students recognize and understand these differences can enhance their intercultural communication skills. Lastly, novice teachers should recognize the equal importance of students' abilities and knowledge and adjust teaching methods to promote autonomous and individualized learning.

Practical readiness is crucial for success in teaching. Educating individuals is a complex and challenging task. With pre-job cultivation and entry education, novice university English teachers must ensure they are well-prepared. When facing difficulties during teaching practice, on-the-job training provides support in problem-solving. Through participation in learning communities and reflective practices, novice teachers enhance their preparedness. Novice university English teachers' professional identity development necessitates clear and comprehensive goals or practical sub-goals to encourage their efforts. They should identify their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, striving to enhance their professional qualifications and individual identity. Additionally, experienced teachers and leaders within schools or administrative departments should provide support and encouragement, assisting novice teachers in formulating practical plans for their professional development. With both external support and internal dedication, novice university English teachers can enhance their teaching effectiveness and professional growth.

4.3. Construct Multidimensional Learning and Practice Communities, Strengthen Practice Identity

Hierarchical learning involves the formation of learning and research teaching communities within universities or colleges at different levels, tailored to the interests, academic backgrounds, and teaching subjects of novice university English teachers. These communities facilitate integration through peer coaching, class preparation, open class teaching, and collaborative learning. Novice teachers primarily develop their knowledge through practical experience. They can benefit from watching video recordings of experienced teachers' classes or attending their lectures to closely observe teaching methods. Additionally, participation in learning and practice communities extends their learning through on-the-job training, directly enhancing their practice identity. Learning and practice communities organize diverse online and offline teaching and research activities. It is essential for community members to maintain regular face-to-face communication, supported by universities allocating reasonable teaching responsibilities and providing sufficient time and space for participation. Furthermore, universities should leverage online resources by establishing various online learning and practice communities. Through online platforms, novice university English teachers can engage in discussions with peers from different institutions and countries, addressing teaching and research challenges, thereby enhancing their practice identity and fostering team development.

Theory and practice are mutually reinforcing. Theory provides the foundation for practice, while practice serves as the embodiment and refinement of theory. Reflective teaching serves as a bridge between theory and practice, facilitating professional identity development by stimulating self-awareness and integrating teaching beliefs into practice. Novice teachers can reflect on various aspects of their teaching practice, such as student learning abilities, knowledge structures, classroom management skills, role orientation, and career satisfaction. Employing reflective approaches like keeping reflective diaries, engaging in collective reflection, and conducting action research enhances self-awareness and teaching abilities. Through reflective teaching, novice university English teachers cultivate a reflective mindset, utilize reflection to address teaching challenges, and strengthen their practice identity.

4.4. Foster the Sense of Happiness, Belonging and Worth, Upgrade Emotional Identity

When individuals identify common characteristics or situations with others, their sense of connection and identity strengthens. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization at the spiritual level represents the highest ideal for individual development. Emotional identity within a learning community serves as the pathway for novice university English teachers to achieve self-realization. By igniting the inner motivation for development, novice teachers can pursue identity through shared learning and practice experiences. Schools should establish a scientific incentive system and provide humanistic care to encourage active participation of novice university English teachers in multidimensional learning and practice communities. This approach unlocks the potential of collaborative learning, enhances cohesion within the university English teaching and research team, fosters a positive learning and research environment, thereby reducing social loafing and energizing the inner development drive of novice teachers. Specifically, when assigning teaching tasks, schools should consider novice teachers' professional background, knowledge structure, and expertise, provide guidance from experienced in-service teachers, and ensure timely support for novices. Such collaborative relationships enhance novice teachers' career satisfaction, sense of belonging, and emotional identity.

A nurturing growth environment facilitates novice university English teachers in cultivating a sense of belonging and worth. Schools can establish tutorial systems to guide novices in creating personal development plans, implement collective teaching accountability systems to enhance evaluation mechanisms, and encourage communication and collaboration between novice and experienced teachers to foster a culture of cooperative collegiality. Novice teachers can maintain teaching journals and research notes for self-reflection, while experienced teachers can support novice growth through mutual cooperation and mentorship. This journey of personal growth leads to success, happiness, and dignity as university English teachers, strengthening the collective sense of belonging and worth, and enhancing professional emotional identity.

In addition to the school environment, improving the broader social educational environment is essential. Novice university English teachers' cognition is influenced by their knowledge system and macro-environmental factors such as the education system, societal requirements, and culture. Thus, providing a supportive social educational environment is crucial for developing novice teachers' cognition, involving individual teachers, schools, educational departments, and society at large. A supportive external environment contributes to elevating novice university English teachers' sense of belonging.

V. Conclusion

The paper delves into the fundamental nature and pathways toward the professional identity development of novice university English teachers, unveiling several key discoveries:

1. **Engagement in Learning and Practice Communities:** Novice university English teachers actively participate in learning and practice communities, engaging in dialogues and negotiations to address teaching challenges. Through these interactions, they update their knowledge, establish shared values, and gradually strengthen their individual self-worth. This engagement fosters a sense of community unity and contributes to the development of a professional identity characterized by happiness, belonging, and significance.

2. **Reflective Teaching:** Novice university English teachers embrace reflective practices, contemplating various aspects of teaching such as ideas, goals, content, and processes. They employ diverse reflective methods, including maintaining reflective diaries, conducting action research, and participating in collective reflection. By integrating reflection into their teaching practice, novice teachers enhance their self-awareness and evolve into reflective practitioners.

3. **Development of Professional Identity:** Novice university English teachers advance their professional identity across four dimensions:

- **Objective Identity:** This dimension is fortified through a combination of pre-service training, initial education, and ongoing professional development efforts.

- **Individual Identity:** Novice teachers refine their individual identity by delineating their teaching philosophy, refining preparation methods, and clarifying instructional objectives.

- **Practice Identity:** The establishment of multidimensional learning communities, both online and offline, plays a pivotal role in elevating novice teachers' practice identity.

- **Emotional Identity:** Novice teachers nurture their emotional identity by cultivating collaborative relationships, fostering supportive educational environments, and nurturing a harmonious atmosphere conducive to growth.

By navigating these pathways and dimensions of professional identity development, novice university English teachers can cultivate a robust and fulfilling professional identity within their educational contexts.

5.2. Implications

The analysis underscores the essence and construction paths of novice university English teachers' professional identity development, offering implications for their accelerated and enhanced growth. Given the ongoing reform in university English curriculum and the heightened demands placed on the course and teaching, the development of professional identity among novice university English teachers is both widespread and pressing.

Firstly, novice university English teachers must recognize the significance of professional identity development. Understanding the necessity of this development enables them to adapt better to new environments and roles, follow the guidance of experienced teachers more effectively, set clearer goals, prepare more comprehensively, and accumulate valuable resources and knowledge.

Secondly, leveraging communities is essential for novice university English teachers. As university English holds a distinct role in learning and daily communication, active participation and negotiation within communities afford novice teachers valuable insights into language teaching approaches, as well as the goals, orientations, and requirements of university English courses.

Thirdly, reflection proves invaluable for novice university English teachers. Through activities such as reviewing video clips of their classroom teaching and maintaining reflective diaries, novice teachers gain deeper insights into their teaching practices, thereby stimulating their internal drive for improvement.

Lastly, cultivating awareness and ability in professional identity development is vital for novice university English teachers. With heightened consciousness and enhanced abilities, novice teachers critically examine their teaching practices, enrich their teaching cognitive systems, and ultimately achieve professional identity development.

While teachers play a central role in professional identity development, the role of schools cannot be understated. Schools serve as the primary locus for teaching and learning, and thus significantly influence novice teachers' cognitive development. Therefore, schools should:

1. Strengthen material and spiritual cultures, fostering a positive school atmosphere that positively impacts novice teachers' cognitive development and teaching quality.
2. Cultivate supportive atmospheres and harmonious teaching and learning communities, providing guidance and assistance to novice teachers and facilitating their rapid growth.
3. Offer long-term external support for novice university English teachers, providing opportunities for further education and systematic immersion in language and culture, which are crucial for their development as English teachers.

5.3. Limitations

The paper provides valuable insights into the professional identity development of novice university English teachers and offers constructive pathways for their growth. However, certain limitations should be acknowledged to enhance the comprehensiveness of the study and its applicability to a wider context.

Firstly, the exclusive focus on novice university English teachers may limit the generalizability of the proposed pathways to novice teachers in other disciplines. Exploring the professional identity development of teachers across various disciplines could provide a more comprehensive understanding of this process and offer insights applicable to a broader range of educators.

Secondly, the study does not delve into the factors influencing the professional identity development of novice university English teachers. Investigating these factors could deepen our understanding of the complex dynamics shaping teachers' professional identities and provide actionable insights for supporting their growth.

Lastly, constraints in time and resources may have restricted the depth of the research. Future studies could address these limitations by expanding the scope to include teachers from diverse disciplines, exploring different stages of professional identity development, and conducting more in-depth investigations into the factors influencing this process. By addressing these aspects, future research endeavors can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of novice university English teachers' professional identity development and provide practical guidance for supporting their growth.

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