

Professional Identity of the Teacher in Higher Vocational Education Colleges in Fujian Province, China

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Abstract

This study delved into the key factors influencing the Professional Identity of vocational college teachers in Fujian province, focusing on six dimensions: Self-Perception, Teacher Roles, Teaching Performance, Teaching Competence, Teacher Self-Efficacy, and Job Satisfaction. Survey research design was used with a distribution of questionnaires to a sample of 500 respondents. Descriptive Statistics with Mean, Standard deviation, Frequency, Percentage and CFA were employed to examine the six-factors model of measurement scales to accurately assess the Professional Identity of vocational college teachers in Fujian province. The findings confirmed that Self-Perception and Teaching Competence were the primary drivers of Professional Identity, while Job Satisfaction—especially in terms of salary, promotion opportunities, and relationships—strongly influenced Teachers' Sense of Identity. These findings, thus, provided theoretical insights that helped promote practical measures for policymakers and educators to enhance Professional Identity for teachers. The future research could be furthered by exploring the six-factors of Professional Identity developed by this study in different contexts and regions with longitudinal analyses to understand how Professional Identity evolves over time in vocational education in China.

Keywords: Professional Identity, Vocational College, Teachers, Fujian Province

Introduction

In recent years the Chinese government has placed increasing emphasis on vocational education, notably, in April 2022, a newly revised Vocational Education Law was introduced, marking the first major revision since the law was enacted in 1996. The law explicitly stated that vocational education holds equal importance to general education, and calls for stronger efforts to enhance it (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2022). Importantly, this policy represents a substantial shift in the landscape of vocational education, as it had formerly been regarded as relatively inferior in China (Liu & Trent, 2023). Given the crucial role teachers play in improving vocational education quality, they deserve greater attention and recognition (Wiesner & Yuniarti, 2018), especially in the area of their Professional Identity.

As Professional Identity has been conceptualized in various ways in different contexts in education, it has been highlighted with the acquisition of teachers' professional growth, knowledge, and skills (Fitzgerald, 2020) which help enhance the self-awareness and belonging within a

professional community, shaped by formal education, experience, and peer interactions, internalized roles, and ethical standards (Cruess, et al., 2019; Kunrath, et al., 2020; Toh et al., 2022). As Professional Identity is a dynamic structure of professional development that evolves throughout a teacher's career, it is believed to be significantly influenced and shaped by teachers' personal values and goals, role perception, job's performance and satisfaction, and self-efficacy (Sancar, et al., 2021; Steinert & Irby, 2019).

However, while Professional Identity has been cherished (Bakah et al., 2012) with the interpretations of its concept in different educational contexts and research (Beijaard et al., 2004; Cruess, et al., 2019), it also has been noticed that there is no existing measurement scale for the Professional Identity of greater vocational college teachers in China, especially, in Fujian province. Although there are slight variations in how Professional Identity has been conceptualized, in this study with a thorough synthesis of the related literature and relevant research, six dimensions of the Teachers' Professional Identity were derived as followed: 1) Teachers' Self-Perception; 2) Teachers' Roles; 3) Teaching Performance; 4) Teaching Competence; 5) Teachers' Self-Efficacy; and 6) Teachers' Job Satisfaction.

Teachers' Self-Perception refers to the way in which teachers view themselves as good teachers, especially, in their roles, teaching abilities, styles, and methods, as all of these perceptions can directly influence their behavior (Wang & Chu, 2023). Teachers' Roles, as it is extended beyond delivering knowledge to inspiring and motivating students (Datnow, 2020), it is responsible for fostering student development, stimulating their interest, and providing them support (Kurniati et al., 2020). Teaching Performance refers to teachers' skills in instruction and classroom management, encompassing teaching methods, classroom control, student motivation, and learning outcomes, and overall school performance (Baluyos et al., 2019; Kilag et al., 2024; Özgenel et al., 2019). Teaching Competence involves with teachers' attitudes, knowledge, skills, and values, as well as the effectiveness of their teaching practices (Blömeke et al., 2022; Qobilovna, 2023) as well as their ability to manage classrooms, and support student learning (Warren et al., 2021). Self-efficacy is the teachers' abilities and confidence in handling the effectiveness of their classroom. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt new methods and set challenging goals (Narayanan et al., 2023) that demonstrate strong planning and problem-solving skills (Ortan et al., 2021). Lastly, Job satisfaction refers to teachers' overall work outlook of their perceptions of the work environment, advancement opportunities, and relationships with coworkers and school (Heinla & Kuurme, 2024); Judge et al., 2017).

While this study aimed to develop and verify a Professional Identity scale, specifically, designed for higher vocational college teachers in Fujian province, with the expectation of understanding of how teachers' Professional Identity can help increase the passion of those teachers be better in their profession (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Nias, 2002) of to be better teachers.

Research Objective

The objective of this study, thus, was to assess internal consistency and construct validity, using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in supporting the six-factors model of Professional Identity of vocational college teachers in Fujian province, China.

Conceptual Framework

The Professional Identity of teachers in higher vocational colleges in Fujian Province, China, was clarified in this study.

Factors of Professional Identity– Teacher's self-perception, Teachers' Roles, Teachers' Performance, Teaching competence, Teachers' Self-efficacy, and Teachers' Job satisfaction.

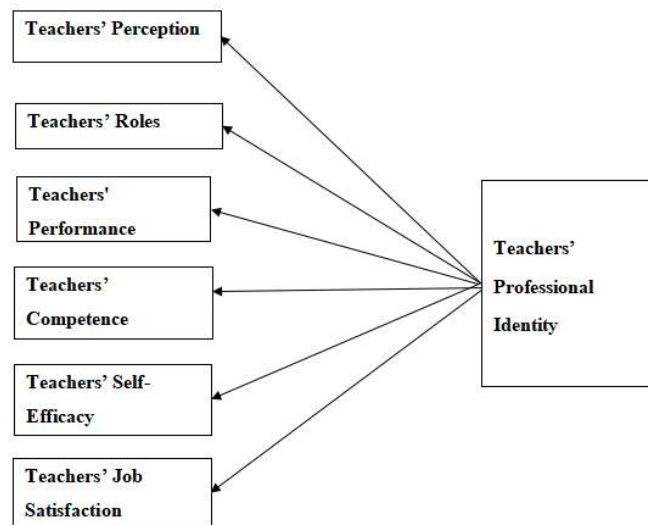


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Method

Participants and procedure

The study targets full-time teachers in higher vocational colleges in Fujian Province. A stratified sampling method was used to select the sample from the total population of 22,319 vocational college teachers. Authorized by the Institutional Review Board at Fujian Province (IRB), this questionnaire with 73 questions were distributed to 500. Employing a stratified random sampling method, first, 10 higher vocational colleges in Fuzhou, Longyan Nanping, Ningde, Pingtan Comprehensive Pilot Zone, Putian, Quanzhou, Sanming, Xiamen, and Zhangzhou, were randomly selected from Fujian province, and then 50 full-time teachers were randomly selected from each of these colleges as the sample. A structured questionnaire was employed, with the IOC resulted from the five experts of 1, back translation was also performed by two languages experts, from English to Chinese and, then, Chinese back to English. Pretest with 30 subjects outside the sampling was conducted. After conducting descriptive statistics and calculating the mean, standard deviation, frequency, and a normality test was performed to assess the distribution characteristics of the data, followed by CFA to verify the structural validity of the model.

Measurement Instrument

The Higher Vocational College Teachers' Professional Identity in Fujian questionnaire included two parts:

Part 1. Demographic information with: 1) Gender, 2) Age, 3) The city where your school is located, 4) Type of school, 5) Education level, 6) Current professional title, 7) Years of work experience, 8) Income level, and 9) Teaching field.

Part 2. The six factors related to the Professional Identity of higher vocational college teachers in Fujian Province were derived and adapted based on a literature review, theoretical concepts, and previous research by several authors, comprising a total of 73 questionnaire items: 1) Teachers' Self-Perceptions (Mohebi & Bailey, 2020; Joshi & Wijekumar, 2019; Gracia et al., 2021; Xiong & Xiong, 2017;). 2) Teachers' Roles (Cui et al., 2020; Dey, & Dutta, 2018; Erlia, 2021; Harden & Crosby, 2000; Looney, Cumming, & Wyatt-Smith, 2017). 3) Teaching Performance (Baluyos et al., 2019; Butar et al., 2020; Indajang et al., 2020; Khasanah et al., 2024; Kilag et al., 2023; Zahid & Khanam, 2019). 4) Teachers' Competence (Blömeke et al., 2022; Antera, 2021; Nurtanto et al., 2022; Rusilowati & Wahyudi, 2020; Tapani & Salonen, 2019). 5) Teachers' Self-Efficacy (Barni et al., 2019; Buonomo et al., 2020; Cai & Tang, 2021; Clark & Newberry, 2019; Korkmaz & Unsal, 2016; Shu, 2022); and

6) Teacher Job Satisfaction (Dicke et al., 2019; Dreer, 2021; João Lopes & Célia Oliveira, 2020; Olsen & Huang, 2019; Oubibi et al., 2022; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2019; Toropova et al., 2020).

Data Analysis

A Statistical Computer Program was used to examine descriptive analysis with Cronbach's Alpha, KMO, standard deviations, mean, normality, and Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the relationships among factors.

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Based on the data, Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency dependability of the 6 measurements of teacher Professional Identity. The outcomes indicated that the Cronbach's alpha values for each dimension exceeded 0.9, with KMO value was at 0.984, which was well above the typically accepted limit of 0.6. This number suggested a solid connection among the variables, making the data extremely suitable for aspect evaluation.

Research Results

The results indicated that 61% of the respondents were female, and 39% were male. In terms of age distribution, 28.4% were between the ages of 26 and 30, while 20.8% were between 31 and 35, suggesting that the sample largely consisted of teachers in their late twenties to mid-thirties. Regarding educational qualifications, 95.2% of the respondents held at least a master's degree, which indicated a high level of education among the surveyed teachers. The analysis of academic titles revealed that Assistant Professors constituted the largest group, accounting for 44.8%, followed by Lecturers at 25.8%, and Associate Professors at 27%. Only 2.4% held the title of Professor. In addition, 78% of the respondents had more than five years of teaching experience, indicating that the sample comprises well-experienced teachers. The extent of the mean values for all the observed variables varied from 3.226 to 3.688, and the series of standard deviations were from 1.070 to 1.315.

To further investigated the relationships between the dimensions of the teacher's professional identity, this study conducted a correlation analysis. Importantly, this analysis helped assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the latent variables, which provides additional support and evidence for the validity of the model.

Table 1 Correlation Coefficients Between Latent Variables

The Pair of the Latent Variables			Correlation Coefficient
Teacher's Self-Perception	<-->	Teachers' Roles	0.70
Teacher's Self-Perception	<-->	Teaching Performance	0.74
Teacher's Self-Perception	<-->	Teaching Competence	0.69
Teacher's Self-Perception	<-->	Teachers' Self-Efficacy	0.73
Teacher's Self-Perception	<-->	Teacher's Job Satisfaction	0.66
Teachers' Roles	<-->	Teaching Performance	0.73
Teachers' Roles	<-->	Teaching Competence	0.66
Teachers' Roles	<-->	Teachers' Self-Efficacy	0.72
Teachers' Roles	<-->	Teacher's Job Satisfaction	0.66
Teaching Performance	<-->	Teaching Competence	0.73
Teaching Performance	<-->	Teachers' Self-Efficacy	0.70
Teaching Performance	<-->	Teacher's Job Satisfaction	0.68
Teaching Competence	<-->	Teachers' Self-Efficacy	0.73

The Pair of the Latent Variables			Correlation Coefficient
Teaching Competence	<-->	Teacher's Job Satisfaction	0.73
Teachers' Self-Efficacy	<-->	Teacher's Job Satisfaction	0.73

The data analysis revealed strong positive correlations among teachers' Professional Identity and key variables of Self-Perception, Teacher Roles, Teaching Performance, Teaching Competence, Teacher Self-Efficacy, and Job Satisfaction. As Self-Perception had shown the strongest correlation with Teaching Performance, Job Satisfaction revealed a relatively weaker correlation with it. Instructor's Roles were likewise highly associated with Teaching Efficiency, Self-efficacy, and Teaching Competence, suggesting their important impact on Teaching Efficiency. Additionally, Teaching Performance, Teaching Competence, and Self-Efficacy were closely related to Job satisfaction, suggesting that teachers who felt competent and performed well tended to be more positive and satisfied with their jobs. Overall, the findings highlighted the main role of Professional Identity in shaping teachers' understandings their roles and effectiveness in being a teacher.

Normality

In this study, a normality analysis was conducted to verify whether the dataset adhered to the assumption of normal distribution. The skewness values ranged between -0.7 and 0.5, indicating that most variables were relatively symmetrically distributed, with only minor deviations. The kurtosis values, ranging from -0.2 to 0.8, suggested that the data were generally concentrated around the mean, resembling a normal distribution.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Data

In CFA, examining variation fit is an essential step to ensure that the proposed model aligns with the observed data. Researchers should utilize numerous in shape indices, such as RMSEA, CFI, and TLI, to effectively assess the variation's performance (Brosseau-Liard et al., 2022).

In table 2. the design representing the relationships among variables related to teachers' Professional Identity demonstrates a good overall fit. Specifically, the absolute fit index CMIN/DF was 2.517, which was below the standard threshold of 3.00. This figure showed that the design fit was within an acceptable array. Although the GFI (0.735) and AGFI (0.718) were listed below the suitable requirement of 0.80, the RMSEA was 0.055, which fell within the acceptable range of 0.05 to 0.08. In terms of incremental fit indices, the CFI reached 0.913, exceeding the benchmark of 0.90, indicating a good fit between the model and the data. Although the NFI was 0.864, slightly below the optimal value of 0.90, the strong performance of key indicators supported the model's validity. In summary, the model effectively reflected the relationships among variables related to teachers' professional identity. While some indices had room for improvement, the overall model could be deemed as reliable and explanatory.

Table 2 Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the CFA Mode

Categories	GOF Indices	Criteria	Results
Absolute Fit Indices	CMIN/DF	<3.00	2.517
	GFI	>0.80	0.735
	AGFI	>0.80	0.718
	RMSEA	<0.05	0.055
Incremental Fit Indices	CFI	>0.90	0.913
	NFI	>0.90	0.864

For the result of the CFA, in Figure 2, the relationships between the latent variables and their observed indicators were displayed in that the ellipses stood for the variables of Teacher's Self-Perception and Teacher's Teaching Performance, while the rectangular shapes suggested the

equivalent observed indications. The single-headed arrows revealed the variable loadings from the observed variables to the unexposed variables, and the double-headed arrows represented the covariances between the unexposed variables. The variable loadings indicated how much each observed variable contributes to its respective latent construct, while the covariances reflect the strength of the connections between the latent variables. This model visually mirrors the different dimensions of the teacher's Professional Identity and validates the structural validity of the constructs.

The observed variables were linked to the unrealized variables with variable loadings, which showed how well the observed variables represented their corresponding concealed variables. Higher factor loadings (usually higher than 0.7) indicated that the observed variables provide a strong explanation for the latent variables.

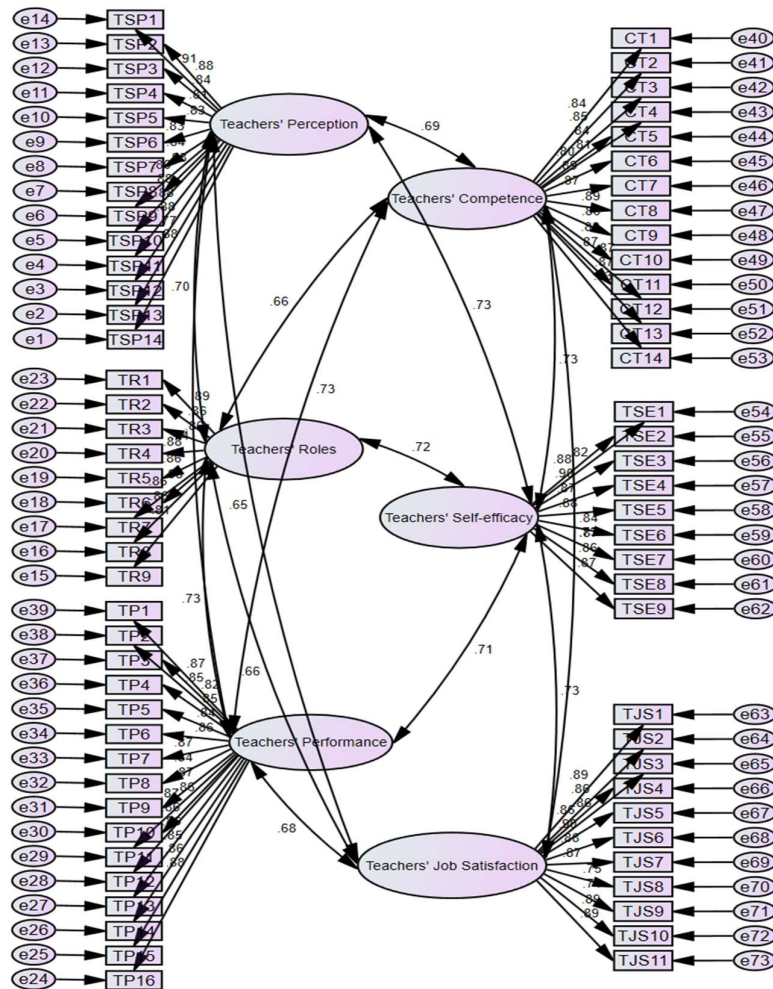


Figure 2 CFA Measurement Model

In table 3, the convergent validity and discriminant validity were tested to reflect the theoretical latent-construct, with the ideal standardized factor loading that should be ranged from 0.5 to 0.7 (Wang et al., 2015). As can be seen that the convergence validity which is generally used to measure the average variance extraction (AVE) was shown as greater than 0.5 and the combined reliability (CR) of the correlation between the same latent variable which was shown to be greater than 0.7 indicating that the convergence degree of the model was considered to meet the requirements. That, all the AVE values corresponding to the six factors were greater than 0.5, and all the CR values were higher than 0.7, which meant that the analyzed data had good aggregation (convergence) validity. The results were: TSP (AVE = .974, CR = 0.732); TR (AVE = .963, CR = 0.742); TP (AVE = .978, CR =

0.734); TC (AVE = .974, CR = 0.731); TSF (AVE = .964, CR = 0.750); TJS (AVE = .967, CR = 0.728), respectively.

Table 3 Results for Model AVE and CR

Subjective Variables	AVE price	CR price
TSP	0.974	0.732
TR	0.963	0.742
TP	0.978	0.734
TC	0.974	0.731
TSF	0.964	0.750
TJS	0.967	0.728

Discussion

Developing and validating the Teacher Identity Measurement Scale for higher vocational college teachers in Fujian province was the first main goal of this study. Expert validation and a small-scale pilot were among the few acknowledged used in order to design and validate the instrument. At last, using a sample of 500 teachers from more of the vocational institutions in Fujian province, several analyses including CFA were conducted to evaluate the psychometric quality of the instrument.

Accordingly, the findings of the research confirmed the efficiency of the measuring scale in acquiring accurate and valid data regarding the Professional Identity of teachers in higher vocational institutions, particularly, that Teachers' Self-Perception, Teachers' Roles, Teaching Performance, Teaching Competence, Teacher Self-Efficacy, and Job Satisfaction were independent yet interrelated aspects of Teachers' Professional Identity.

Teachers' Self-Perception and Teachers' Roles revealed most significant in terms of positive relationships in that the Teachers' Self-Perceptions is the main factor that underpinned the Teachers' Roles (Hanna, 2020). While Teaching Performance and Teaching Competence were identified as key factors that influenced teachers' Teaching Competence, especially, in terms of using their knowledge in enhancing the abilities in adapting effectiveness teaching methods (Protasova, 2021; Shulman, 1987).

Next, Teacher Self-efficacy showed a strong connection with Professional Identity which was consistent with Salari and Farahian (2023) in that as the teachers were able to manage their obstacles with psychological flexibility, they also could improve their abilities in preserving their professional identity, particularly in the face of work pressures and modifications in their environment (Xie, 2021; Perera, & McIlveen, 2018).

Lastly, it was revealed that the extensive effect of Job Satisfaction on Professional identity in that career improvement, along with the relationships with leader and administrators and colleagues significantly boost teachers' professional identity which in turn, promoting a supportive workplace (Knights & Clarke, 2017). All of which significantly affect their sense of professional identity.

In summary, these findings offer valuable theoretical support and practical recommendations for enhancing educational practices, ultimately promoting overall teachers' Professional Identity scale development and improving their profession of teacher.

Recommendations

To further enhance teachers' professional identity, the following steps are suggested:

1) For Teachers

The research study exposes a strong connection in between teachers' Self-Perception and their Professional Identity. Thus, teachers should participate in regular self-reflection to examine their teaching efficiency and career advancement. By setting both long-lasting and short-term goals in that they can continuously keep their interest and devotion to their occupation. Embracing new innovation and teaching strategies that resonate with student-trainees can further improve effective interaction and involvement. Moreover, positive psychological connection with colleges, co-workers, and students is also salient in supporting their professional development to cultivate positive relationships.

2) For Colleges

The findings suggested that career development chances greatly affect job satisfaction. Colleges need to develop transparent and equitable promo systems, using clear profession advancement courses for teachers. In addition to salary incentives, colleges can introduce various awards such as teaching excellence and development awards to encourage teachers and motivate their professional development.

3) For Policymakers

Policymakers should create a thorough teacher evaluation system with respect for professional standards, creative ideas, and student-teacher contacts. Management of burnout and tension depends on help for teacher well-being through mental services and profession therapy. Furthermore, ensuring sufficient research resources and offering both domestic and international interchange possibilities would help teachers grow professionally. Longitudinal studies are recommended to explore these changes over time, providing insights into how Professional Identity develops across different contexts. This approach would support vocational college teachers in strengthening their professional identity, contributing to a more skilled workforce.

Conclusion

The Teacher Professional Identity Scale created and validated in this study for teachers in Fujian province showed strong reliability and validity. It can be utilized for research and educational purposes by teachers, colleges, and policymakers. With the help of this scale, a clearer understanding of the current status and development of vocational college teachers' Professional Identity can be acquired. In view of all these findings, appropriate and targeted procedures can be performed to help teachers enhance their professional identity, consequently enhancing their life-time achievement in teaching and being better teachers.

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