

IN-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER IDENTITY

ÖĞRETMEN KİMLİĞİ İLE İLGİLİ ÖĞRETMEN GÖRÜŞLERİ

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Öz

Eğitim sistemi içinde eğitim programları, öğretmen, yönetim, okul çevresi, aileler ve öğrenciler ana objelerdir. Fakat öğretim öğretmen tarafından şekillendiği için bunların içinde en önemlisi öğretmen objesidir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, okullarda görev yapan öğretmenlerin öğretmen kimliğini nasıl anladıklarını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Nitel araştırma yöntemleri içinden öğretmenlerin öğretmen kimliği algısını daha derinden anlayabilmek için görüşme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışma grubunu Türkiye'de farklı illerde farklı branşlarda çalışan 21 öğretmen oluşturmuştur. Veriler, kodlama yöntemi ile açık temalar ortaya çıkana kadar analiz edilmiştir. Analizler sonucunda yedi ana tema ortaya çıkmıştır: öğretmen mesleğinin içeriği, bir öğretmenin mesleki özellikleri, mesleki özelliklerin standartlaşması, zaman içinde profesyonel kimliğin değişimi, öğretmen kimliğinin anlamı, öğretmen kimliğinin önemi ve öğretmen kimliğini etkileyen sebepler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: öğretmen, öğretmen kimliği, profesyonel kimlik, mesleki özellik.

Abstract

Curriculum, teacher, administration, school environment, parents, and students are the main objects in the education context; however, the teacher is the most important one among all of them because learning is shaped by the teacher. The purpose of this study was to explore and to improve understanding of in-service teachers' teacher identity in Turkey. This qualitative study involved interviewing to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' own views of teacher identity. The participants were 21 in-service teachers from various levels of education and several cities in Turkey. The data were analyzed through the coding process until clear themes emerged. Seven significant themes were explored in this study: the content of the teaching profession, occupational features of a teacher, standardization of occupational features, change in professional identity over time, meaning of teacher identity, importance of teacher identity, and factors affecting teacher identity.

Keywords: teacher, teacher identity, professional identity, professional features, standardization.

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1. In-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Identity

Curriculum, teacher, administration, school environment, parents, and students are the main objects in the education context; however, the teacher is the most important one among all because learning is shaped by the teacher. John Dewey proposed that the teacher is at the core of the educational process, and the curriculum is enhanced and made accessible through the teacher. Thus, the teacher will always be an important subject in investigative research (Bullough, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Knowles, 1992; Kompf, Bond, Dworet, & Boak, 1996). Teachers are most effective when they become experts in their field (Hattie, 2012; Wong & Wong, 2015), so many try to develop skills and expertise throughout their teaching lives. Although no precise definition of a skilled or expert teacher exists, many descriptors and attributes are generally accepted. Understanding teacher identity necessitates a standard for the designation of a skilled or an expert teacher.

Many researchers have stated that teacher identity continuously evolves and changes (Agee, 2004; Beijaard et al., 2004; Britzman, 2003; Carter & Doyle, 1996; Clandinin & Huber, 2005; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Fitzgerald, 1993; Gee, 2000; MacLure, 1993; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). Thus, a single type of teacher identity is unrealistic (Samuel, 2008). Teacher identity is dynamic and shifts under the influence of various internal and external factors (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Teachers can also experience identity alteration during their careers because of interactions with people in schools and broader communities. They do not act alone: They have conversations with countless students, parents, and staff members. Each of these interactions influences who the teacher is at every moment in time during her or his career, forming “multiple identities that teachers may construct when engaging with a diversity of colleagues (youth workers, chaplains, etc.)” (Brown & Heck; 2018, p. 50).

According to previous studies, teacher identity affects teachers' organization of the learning environment and inclination toward reform and change (Canrinus et al., 2012; Enyedy, Goldberg & Welsh, 2006; Flores & Day, 2006). For example, in an investigation of teachers' teaching applications researchers discovered that teachers who identify themselves as activists try to encourage their students to become activists (Enyedy et al., 2006). Perception of teacher identity is an important phenomenon for teachers' motivation, performance, occupational necessities and responsibilities, and self-efficacy beliefs (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

1.1.Theoretical Framework

Identity has been defined as individuals' understanding of who they are (Ahn, 2011). It is “wrapped around what we think of ourselves, in a social context, and what other people think of us” (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 10). Even though defining teacher identity is hardly simple, some scholars have defined “teacher identity or teacher self [as] who the teacher thinks he or she is or what other people think the teacher is” (Cochran, 1997; Danielewicz, 2001; Hattie, 2012; Shulman, 1987). Teacher identity can be described as the way teachers explain themselves (Lasky, 2005). Thus, teacher identity can be contemplated in terms of both identity of self as well as the identity

of self within a community. Professional identity refers not only to the influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people but also to what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives, based on both their experiences in practice and their backgrounds (Tickle, 2000).

Identity formation in social contexts and the stages people pass through derives from biological and psychological maturation; each stage has its own characteristics regarding the individual's interaction with his or her environment (Beijard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). "Identity formation is a process of practical knowledge-building characterized by an ongoing integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant for teaching" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 123). Constituent elements of effective teacher identity are subject expertise, teaching methods, classroom management, effective communication with administrators and parents (Reio, 2005). The combination of these divergent elements generates different perspectives and explanations of teachers' occupational improvement.

One's professional identity affects the "sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness" (Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006, p. 601). Teacher identity has been studied for many years, but during the latter half of the 20th century, a spotlight focused on the importance of understanding teacher identity as continually under reconstruction throughout a teacher's career, a concept commonly held in contemporary studies (Liu & Xu, 2011; Watson, 2006). Recent studies have emphasized that the development of teacher identity is important in terms of education and teaching quality (Avraamidou, 2014; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Teacher identity is a very important phenomenon in teacher's motivation, performance of occupational necessities and responsibilities, and perception of self-sufficiency (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

The importance of teacher identity or teacher self is an extension of the knowledge that creates a skilled teacher (Barone et al., 1996; Berliner, 2004; Hattie, 2012; Shulman, 1987). Teacher identity is the sum total of who a teacher is, how a teacher communicates with others, and how a teacher plans and applies teaching methods (Zembylas, 2003). Thus, teacher identity determines the teacher's occupational aims, reason for being in a class, and relationship with social environment (Duru, 2006). Identifying themselves and believing their own qualities is a necessity for qualified teaching and learning (Uğurlu & Demir, 2016). Thus, investigating teacher identity is essential in the field of education, but few studies of teacher identity among in-service teachers have shown that "a teacher's identity not only comprises personal knowledge and action, but it is also influenced by the ideological, political, and cultural interest and circumstances surrounding teachers' lives and work" (Castañeda, 2011, p. 1).

To be able to design better teacher education programs, additional knowledge about teacher identity is necessary (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Three means of conducting teacher identity research include (a) focusing on teachers' professional identity formation, (b) focusing on the identification of characteristics of teachers' professional identity, and (c) presenting teacher identity by using teachers' stories (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). Thus, the aim of this

study was to explore the understanding of teacher identity formation in the development of in-service teachers.

1.2. Previous Studies on Teacher Identity

Teacher identity affects a teacher's career, and numerous studies have been conducted on this subject. The influence of teachers' backgrounds and their beliefs, theories and attitudes about teaching, learning and assessment of their teaching, and assessment practices has been highlighted in a number of international studies (Abell & Siegel, 2011; Buck & Trauth-Nare, 2009; Flores & Day, 2006; Jones, 2010; Palmer, 2007; Wang, Kao, & Lin, 2010). Some of these studies are summarized below.

Changes in the occupation of teaching and teacher identity have been investigated with a critical view from the time of the foundation of the Turkish Republic to the time of this writing (Ünal, 2004). A study aimed at the identification of a teacher according to the nationalities of academics and teachers (Dönmez, 2008). A doctoral dissertation entitled "Effects of Globalization on Education and Teacher Identity" was written on the effects of globalization on teacher identity (Kılınç, 2009).

A master's thesis entitled "Teacher Identity: A Sociological Study on Primary School Teachers" focused on perceptions of teachers about professional identity and occupational development in the Turkish city of Malatya (Özdemir, 2010). A study examined preservice teachers' emerging sense of professional teacher identity at the exit point of their preservice program (Chong, Low, & Goh, 2011). Another study investigated the perceptions of teachers about their professional identity (Rus, Tomşa, Rebeqa, & Apostol, 2013).

How a young New Zealand secondary science teacher, raised and educated in Maori-medium and then English-medium New Zealand schools, developed his identity as a teacher as he navigated a range of educational contexts and experiences was the subject of research (Edwards & Edwards, 2017). The construction of teacher identities in an alternative school setting has also been studied (Brown & Heck, 2018).

Studies have been conducted with preservice teachers in Turkey. A master's thesis covered the relationship between levels of self-esteem and tge prevocational teacher identity of social studies teacher candidates (Karalı, 2018). Another study on teacher candidates aimed to examine the effects of the pedagogical formation education certificate program on teacher candidates' perception of teacher identity (Ulubey, Yıldırım, & Alpaslan, 2018). It showed that the program made no positive contribution to the perceptions of teacher identity held by the teacher candidates. Yet another study aimed to investigate the identity perceptions of preservice teachers studying education and preservice teachers enrolled in the pedagogical formation certificate program, comparing them across several variables (Çelik & Kalkan, 2019).

2. Methodology

The research model appears in this section as well as sampling, the data collection tool and process, data analysis, and reliability of the study.

2.1. Research Model

To explore and improve the understanding of the teacher identity of in-service teachers, the best was determined to be the qualitative method. Qualitative researchers tend to provide detailed descriptions of individuals and events in their natural settings, so interviewing has usually been a key factor in the research design (Weiss, 1994).

The interview was used to gain a deep understanding of teachers' opinions on teacher identity. Interviews, as opposed to questionnaires, are more powerful in eliciting narrative data that allow researchers to investigate people's views in depth (Kvale, 1996). Interviewing is "a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meanings in a natural setting" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 29).

2.2. Study Group

The study group consisted of 21 in-service teachers from different levels of schooling and cities in Turkey. These participants were selected with a purposeful sampling method. The participants were all from Denizli, a Turkish province, and they and the researcher were acquaintances. Most of the participants were former students of the researcher, who had been appointed to schools in various cities. To gain better understanding and a variety of views, the researcher wanted to include teachers from different levels, years of service, and cities. At the beginning of the study, 30 teachers were asked to participate; however, only 21 teachers were accepted. Detailed information about the participants appears in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Teacher	Subject Area	Years in the Profession	Gender	Teachers' Working Province
Teacher A	Psychological counseling and guidance	5	Female	Ankara
Teacher B	literature	3	Female	Diyarbakır
Teacher C	psychological counseling and guidance	3	Male	Diyarbakır
Teacher D	mathematics	2	Female	Diyarbakır
Teacher E	mathematics	20	Male	Denizli
Teacher F	literature	15	Male	Denizli

Teacher G	psychological counseling and guidance	9	Female	Ağrı
Teacher H	psychological counseling and guidance	8	Female	Ağrı
Teacher I	mathematics	3	Female	Mardin
Teacher K	philosophy	25	Male	Denizli
Teacher L	literature	12	Female	Denizli
Teacher M	literature	10	Male	Denizli
Teacher N	philosophy	12	Female	Ankara
Teacher O	philosophy	6	Male	İzmir
Teacher P	literature	6	Female	İzmir
Teacher R	mathematics	5	Female	Antalya
Teacher S	mathematics	3	Male	Van
Teacher T	mathematics	2	Male	Van
Teacher U	mathematics	2	Female	Konya
Teacher V	psychological counseling and guidance	5	Female	Denizli
Teacher Y	mathematics	6	Female	Denizli

2.3.Data Collection Tool and Process

To gather data, the researcher used semi structured interviews, a more flexible version of the structured interview that “allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee’s responses” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 88). With this type of interviewing, the researcher aimed to secure a variety of viewpoints from the interviewees.

Interview questions were prepared by the researcher as draft questions and presented to three experts. Necessary corrections were made after considering the experts’ opinions. The six semi structured interview questions used as a tool of data gathering appear in the Appendix.

To determine the time and place of the interviews, the interviewer’s expectations and requests were prioritized. Data were collected during the summer break of the academic year so that the researcher could easily reach the participants, all of whom resided in the province of Denizli during the interviews. The data were gathered between July and September and lasted two months. The 21 interviews were done by appointment. Teachers stated their free times to the researcher, who visited the teachers’ home and conducted the interviews at the appointed times. The interviews lasted approximately 25 minutes; they were audiotaped with the permission of participants.

2.4.Data Analysis

Content analysis was applied to the data in this study. To begin the data analysis, the researcher spent two weeks transcribing the audiotaped interviews. Three interviewees were asked to read the transcripts and to indicate whether they captured their intent. The analysis process should also be reflexive, that is, including the researcher's interactional experience with interviews (Creswell, 2003). In sum, no fixed method is specified for analyzing interview data in the literature, yet researchers should exercise caution because the process affects not only the quality of an interview but the validity and reliability of the entire study.

After transcription of all the interviews, the researcher sent the transcripts to the participants to make sure they preserved their intended meaning. After the participants approved the accuracy of the transcripts, the researcher began analysis by reading and rereading the transcripts to determine categories and themes. Analysis can be done through coding. Two steps of coding have widely been discussed in social science research: (a) generating meaningful data units and (b) classifying and ordering these units. Accordingly, such a process is expected to deliberately reduce the amount of data collected. Thus, the researcher determined free codes at first and focused codes later. At the end of the coding process, the researcher located seven main themes on teachers' perceptions of teacher identity. Within these seven themes, findings were interpreted.

2.5.Reliability and Validity

The interviewee should be given the opportunity at the end of the interview to make comments or ask questions (Talmy, 2010). In addition, researchers should at this point, reexpress their gratitude to their interviewees and discuss ways of future contact. To achieve this, the researcher asked three interviewees to read their answers and state whether they intended what appeared in the transcripts. Interviewing reliability is "elusive, . . . [and] no study reports actual reliability data" (Creswell, 2003, p. 45). Thus, no researcher can claim to provide total reliability; however, the researcher in the current study followed techniques recommended to help maintain the validity and reliability of interviewing: (a) avoiding asking leading questions, (b) taking notes not just depending on tape recorders, (c) conducting a pilot interview, and (d) giving the interviewee an opportunity to summarize and clarify the points made.

Robson (2002) suggested several strategies aimed at addressing threats to validity: prolonged involvement, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, negative case analysis, and keeping an audit trail. The researcher chose member checking and audit trail from among these. Member checking or testing the emerging findings with the research participants to increase the validity of the findings was used by the participants' verifying certain interpretations and themes resulting from the analysis of the data (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). In addition, the researcher used an audit trail, which refers to monitoring and keeping a record of all the research-related activities and data, including the raw interview and journal data, the audio recordings, the researcher's diary, and the coding book. The researcher retained all the data instruments throughout the research.

3. Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore and to improve in-service teachers' understanding of teacher identity in Turkey. Along with this aim, the following subquestions were posed: What are the elements of teacher identity? Can teacher identity change throughout the career? Does a standard for teacher identity exist? The seven main themes emerging from the study appear below. They are (a) the content of the teaching profession, (b) professional features of a teacher, (c) standardization of occupational features, (d) change in professional identity over time, (e) meaning of teacher identity, (f) importance of teacher identity, (g) factors affecting teacher identity. The translations excerpted from participant interviews that appear below were done by the researcher.

3.1.The Content of the Teaching Profession

Teachers were asked what the teaching profession comprises. Most cited five components. Eight teachers stated that teacher profession involved self-sacrifice. Teacher V said, “[Teaching] involves self-sacrifice and plenty of patience since you train humans. You need to deal with students all the time, and parents also expect attention.” Four teachers stated that the teaching profession includes continuous education and learning. Teachers should always be open to learning because they teach all the time. Three teachers cited devotion. Teacher C said: “For me being a teacher includes devotion.” Six teachers cited love—love of the job and love of students. Several stated that a teacher who does not love the job will find it to be utter torture. Finally, three teachers mentioned the importance of knowing students. Teacher C said, “The teaching profession necessitates knowing students and conveying knowledge according to students' needs.”

Professional Features of a Teacher

The participants noted five professional features a teacher should have: (a) competence in his or her field (13 teachers), (b) openness to innovations (seven teachers), (c) love of the job (three teachers), (d) pedagogical formation knowledge (three teachers), and (e) patience and understanding (four teachers). Most repeated features were competence in the field and openness to innovations. Teacher K said, “A teacher should have knowledge of basic educational sciences and the ability to apply this knowledge.” Teacher K said, “A teacher should be open to improvements and change.”

Standardization of Occupational Features

While talking about occupational features of the teaching profession, a new theme emerged. Participants expressed their opinions about the features of the teacher occupation, and later 17 teachers stated that these features could not be standardized. By contrast, three teachers (Teachers E, and Y) said that these occupational features can be standardized just like the standards of educational curriculum. Teachers D and M disagreed. Teacher A said, “I don't think these can be standardized because students, technology, and curriculum are always changing and developing; so a teacher must change, and features cannot be standardized. . . . It is difficult to standardize

totally. . . . [We] cannot have straight standards because the neighborhood of the school, parents' values, and the school atmosphere differ from school to school." Teacher U agreed that standardization of features can occur to an extent "because some of the situations that you face during teaching seem similar, but these are different and distinctive; however, some standard behaviors are possible."

Change of Professional Identity in Time

Teacher participants were asked whether their professional identity had changed over time. Fifteen teachers said that their professional identity had changed over time, but three teachers said that it had not. Teacher N said, "A little bit. In my first year of the teaching, I was more sensitive and idealistic; however, now I am more confident and let some things go." Teacher R said, "Always. How can I be more helpful to my students?" Teacher C said, "Throughout the years, student profiles and the flow of information have changed; thus, I think I have changed and gained experiences over the years." On the other hand, teachers said little change has occurred in them. Teacher E said: "No, not much. I have my own standards and have carried them throughout my profession."

Meaning of Teacher Identity

Participants gave many different answers to the question about the meaning of teacher identity. The answers appear separately below; however, several teachers gave nearly identical answers. For example, two teachers stated teacher identity was beneficial for humans and society. Teachers P and A said that they always tried to be useful to society and humans and act as role model. The teachers' role is not only teaching but also serving as a good role models for students and society. Four teachers expressed that teacher identity relates to respectability. Most of the teachers answered the question about the meaning of teacher identity with a negative outlook. Four teachers said teacher identity is valuable; however, its values are incoherent. Teacher O said, "It is a lot of things—even everything for me, however, it doesn't mean anything for the society. I believe that society is not aware of the importance of teachers at all." Teacher B said, "It should be the most important job; however, teachers do not get the credit they deserve." Some other responses are as follows: A teachers is "a person always learning and teaching." Teachers are "the backbone of the society." A teacher is "for students when appropriate a mother, when appropriate as a wise person, a doctor, and everything sometimes."

The Importance of Teacher Identity

Participants were asked about the importance of teacher identity. Almost all of them agreed that it is important, but three disagreed. Teacher A, who stated that teacher identity is not important, said, "For me, it is wrong to give an identity to a teacher because the teacher is a dynamic entity, who can be shaped according to all possibilities from the worst situation to the best situation." The teachers who stated that teacher identity is important said that when people learn that a particular person is a teacher, their point of view becomes more positive. They believed that most people

respect teachers, so teacher identity is important. Teacher O said, “Identity is a mirror of a person in the society.”

Factors Affecting Teacher Identity

The last theme emerging from the interviews was factors affecting the identity of the teacher participants. The most repeated factors were the point of view of society and the teaching environment itself. Seven teachers said that the point of view of society as well as the environment affects teacher identity. Teacher V said, “Society’s point of view, . . . more of an attitude of society, the way society looks at teachers affects teacher identity. For example, in the past, people respected teachers more than now. Nowadays, people don’t respect them much.” Teachers D, K, and Y stated that the school at which they worked affected their teacher identity. Teacher R cited “the school that I work at and the teachers that I work with” as a factor in his identity. Teacher S said, “I work at a supportive and good school. I have been affected positively.” Finally, four teachers stated that students’ reactions affected their teacher identity. Teacher H said, “Willing and determined students—their eagerness to learn changes a teacher’s identity, I believe.” Teacher U said, “Students’ clean hearts and shining eyes. Students’ way of looking at you or treating you as an important person changes my identity throughout the years.”

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study focused on exploring and understanding the teacher identity of in-service teachers. Teachers’ perspectives are important because the teacher is the most important element in education as learning is shaped by the teacher. Teachers are at the forefront of education, so their ideas are important. Conducting a qualitative research study using interviews facilitated the creation of a holistic image of the in-service teachers’ professional identities. The research was conducted with participant interviews, and the data were analyzed through the coding process until clear themes emerged. Seven significant themes were explored in this study: (a) the content of the teaching profession, (b) professional features of a teacher, (c) standardization of occupational features, (d) change in professional identity over time, (e) meaning of teacher identity, (f) importance of teacher identity, (g) factors affecting teacher identity..

The study was an attempt to conceptualize teacher identity, and the results were intended to produce a deep understanding of teacher identity. Teachers are an important part of the educational process. Many studies have been done with teacher candidates; however, an understanding of the in-service teachers’ points of view was lacking. Studying teacher identity can help increase the population of effective in-service teachers. “Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (Palmer, 2007, p. 10). Recent research and literature have highlighted the importance of identity in teacher development (Day & Kington, 2008; Olsen 2008).

The results of the current study resemble those of previous studies; thus, the current study supports the literature. One of the main themes of the study was the occupational features of

teaching. The five features are (a) competence in his or her field, (b) openness to innovations, (c) love of the job, (d) pedagogical knowledge, and (e) patience and understanding. Other researchers have stated that teachers defined their occupational identity in terms of the characteristics of the worker, occupational needs, worker needs, occupational knowledge, labor characteristics, and experience needs in order of priority (Rus et al., 2013). Competence in the field and pedagogical formation knowledge, which emerged in this study, parallel their findings.

Another main theme of the study was the factors affecting teacher identity. Teachers stated that the schools in which they work affect their teacher identity, similar to previous studies in which teachers were considered as persons and professionals whose lives and work are influenced and made meaningful by factors and conditions inside and outside the classroom and school (Goodson & Cole, 1994). The identity of teachers was affected by the school in which they work and the peers with whom they work.

Defining teacher identity has often been difficult for researchers because it is dynamic and shifts under the influence of various internal and external factors (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). This study supported the belief that professional identity changes over time. Based on a review of the literature concerning teachers' professional identity, researchers have found that identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences; hence, they argued that identity is an answer to the recurrent question: "Who am I at this moment?" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108). In a similar vein, others have argued that identity is shifting and unstable (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). In defining beginning teachers' identity, this study similarly showed that teacher identity cannot be standardized and changes over time in many ways.

Despite some participants' beliefs that teacher identity is static, others believed that their professional identity had changed over time in the profession, making standardization of teacher identity impossible. Instead of conceiving of teacher identity as static, such a description highlights the roles of personal and social identities in development over time, which involve drawing on personal and workplace resources to sustain goals, satisfy needs, and balance demands within the relational and political context of the workplace and wider systemic influences on the profession (Richardson & Watt, 2018).

Other results included the meaning and importance of teacher identity. Results showed teacher identity is important as did previous researchers. Teacher identity is important because teachers are more effective when they become experts in their field (Hattie, 2012; Wong & Wong, 2015). Teachers think that identity is a mirror of a person; thus, teacher identity is important for a teacher, students, and the society.

Finally, what surrounds a person, what others expect from the person, and what the person allows to impact on him or her greatly affect identity as a teacher (Reynolds, 1996). In this study, teachers mentioned that teacher identity can be affected by the environment and point of view of the society. One might say that teachers improve their professional identities according to their environment and the point of view of the society. The teacher's workplace is a landscape, which can be very persuasive, very demanding, and, in most cases, very restrictive (Reynolds, 1996). One of the teachers in the current study also stated that working at a school with supportive personnel

affected her teacher identity positively. The workplace of the teachers affects their teacher identity positively or negatively.

In conclusion, this study was designed to determine the definition of teacher identity and its various aspects by interviewing in-service teachers. Findings indicate that teacher identity has many meanings and is understood in a variety of ways. In addition, teacher identity can change over time and cannot be standardized because teaching is a dynamic job: “Teacher professional learning refers to changes in knowledge, orientation, and skills that pertain to the person’s conception of teaching and actions as a teacher” (Garner & Kaplan, 2019, p. 8). Students and the world are changing; thus, teacher identity must change with them. Because identity is a mirror of a person in the society, teacher identity is an important issue in the educational process. “Teacher identity develops in ways that mirror the unique combination of culture, contexts and experiences that they possess” (Edwards & Edwards, 2017, p. 193). Teachers are affected by the workplace and peers; thus, schoolteachers’ work is very important for a strong, positive teacher identity. This study was done with in-service teachers as opposed to preservice teachers, whose attitudes have been covered in much of the previous literature; so the resulting understanding of teacher identity derives from the point of view of teachers who are at the forefront of the educational process. Further studies on teacher identity conducted with in-service teachers are needed.

Apart from its strengths, this study also has a few limitations, one of which is that it was conducted using the interviewing method customary in qualitative research. In-depth interviews are not generalizable, nor can this study be generalized. Second, the researcher was acquainted with the participants and used purposeful sampling, the results of which could be susceptible to social desirability bias, meaning that some statements may have been over- or underestimated (Furnham, 1986). Finally, this study focused on in-service teachers in public schools, so the results cannot be generalized to teachers in other settings, such as those working in private schools.

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Appendix

Interview Questions:

1. What do you believe is the content of teaching profession?
2. What do you believe are the features of being a teacher?
3. Do you believe these features be standardized?
4. What does society expect from teachers?
5. Have any of your professional features changed during the course of your career thus far?
6. What does teacher identity mean to you?
7. Do you think teacher identity is important for the profession?
8. What factors affect teacher identity?