

## TEACHER'S IDENTITY, ROLE, AND SOCIAL STATUS

**Konstadina Balala**

South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Department of Sociology, Faculty of Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, [konstadinabalala@gmail.com](mailto:konstadinabalala@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** The purpose of this comprehensive report is to examine and present the multifaceted dimensions of teacher identity, exploring the interaction between personal, professional and socio-cultural factors. Methodologically, the report takes a holistic approach, drawing on a variety of sources, including existing literature, case studies and interviews with teachers in a variety of educational contexts. Through this comprehensive methodology, the report seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the formation and evolution of teacher identity. The results of the research present the factors shaping a person's sense of self in the teaching profession. It becomes apparent that teacher identity is deeply influenced by personal experiences, upbringing and socio-cultural background. The report highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing different teacher identities in promoting a supportive and inclusive learning environment. In addition, the report delves into the evolving role of teachers in modern education systems. Traditionally perceived as agents of disseminating knowledge, teachers are now seen as facilitators of learning, guiding students toward critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The integration of technology into teaching practices has further expanded the scope of the teacher's role, providing new opportunities for innovation and engagement in the digital age. In addition, educators are increasingly called upon to advocate for social justice and equity in education, address systemic inequities, and promote inclusive practices. Despite their critical role, teachers are often undervalued and marginalized within society, leading to the 'paradox of teaching', where the importance of the profession is not commensurate with its social recognition. The report concludes with recommendations for improving the social status of teachers. It emphasizes the need for systemic support and recognition to raise the status of the teaching profession by supporting competitive salaries, professional recognition and opportunities for career advancement. The report further highlights the importance of investing in teacher support systems and fostering a culture of respect and appreciation for teachers. Additional data presented in the report underscore the imperative to prioritize teacher well-being and professional development to ensure the continuity of quality education for future generations.

**Keywords:** teacher identity, social status, educational landscape, implications, challenges

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the complex field of education, teachers are the key figures who have an impact on the progress and maturation of students. Within this framework, the personality of a teacher is a fundamental component, closely linked to his professional function and his social status. This article attempts to decipher the identity of a teacher, exploring the different aspects that shape his self-perception in the educational field. As highlighted by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), a teacher's identity comprises a broad spectrum of personal, professional, and socio-cultural elements. These components encompassing beliefs, values, and experiences that shape an individual's perception of the teaching profession. Ranging from the influence of upbringing and personal experiences to the significance of socio-cultural context and educational philosophy, the development of a teacher's identity is intricate and multifaceted.

Personal factors play a key role in shaping a teacher's identity, along with a sense of purpose and passion for their profession. Upbringing, family values, and life experiences contribute to the development of a teacher's professional identity (Day & Gu, 2014). For example, a teacher who grows up in a family of teachers may inherit a deep commitment to the profession, seeing teaching not just as a job but as a calling. Likewise, personal experiences and encounters throughout life can shape a teacher's perspective, influencing their approach to pedagogy and student engagement. In addition, socio-cultural factors exert a profound influence on a teacher's identity, shaping their worldview and interactions within educational contexts (Nasir & Hand, 2008). Race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic background contribute to how teachers perceive themselves and their students. These factors not only inform teaching practices but also influence the dynamics of classroom relationships and the wider educational environment.

Professional experiences also play an important role in the formation of teachers' identity, as emphasized by Flores and Day (2006). Continuing professional development, pedagogical approaches, and classroom management strategies contribute to a teacher's sense of efficacy and competence. Teachers practicing their profession and realizing the complexity of their profession, undergo a process of self-reflection, improving their identity, following the evolving educational standards. In addition to shaping individual identity, the role of teachers in the educational landscape has undergone profound evolution in recent years. Traditionally seen as agents of knowledge

dissemination, teachers are now taking on a more dynamic and multifaceted role in promoting student learning (OECD, 2019). By turning to student-centered approaches and constructivist pedagogies, educators are tasked with creating inclusive learning environments, cultivating critical thinking skills, and facilitating collaborative learning experiences.

Additionally, the advent of technology has redefined the scope of the teacher's role, expanding opportunities for innovation and engagement in the digital age (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). From integrating interactive learning platforms to leveraging multimedia resources, teachers are leveraging technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences, further blurring the lines between traditional and digital pedagogies.

However, despite the critical role they play in shaping future generations, teachers often find themselves undervalued and marginalized in society. The discrepancy between the importance of the teaching profession and its social recognition poses a significant challenge, commonly referred to as the "teaching paradox" (Ingersoll, 2001). Despite their important contribution to society, teachers are often overlooked and undervalued, facing various challenges, creating an urgent need to address the phenomenon. Valuing and recognizing the contribution of teachers through competitive salaries, professional development opportunities and career paths is essential to the elevation of the teaching profession (Hargreaves, 2000). Cultivating respect and appreciation for teachers and their important role emerges as important.

In conclusion, a teacher's identity is intricately intertwined with his role and social position in the educational landscape. By exploring the multifaceted dimensions of teacher identity, this article seeks to explore the interplay of personal, professional, and socio-cultural factors that shape teachers' sense of self. Through a deeper understanding of teacher identity, stakeholders can work to foster a supportive and empowering environment for teachers, ultimately enhancing the quality of education for future generations.

## **2. EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITY OF TEACHER IDENTITY**

The concept of teacher identity is a combination of personal, professional and socio-cultural elements. It serves as a reflection of an educator's self through education. In this chapter, the complex dimensions that contribute to the formation and development of teacher identity are explored and analyzed.

At its core, teacher identity is directly linked to an individual's personal experiences, beliefs and values. Upbringing, family influences, and life events shape the context through which teachers perceive themselves and their role in society (Day & Gu, 2014). For example, a teacher who comes from a family of educators may inherit a deep sense of duty and intense passion for the profession, viewing teaching as a noble profession rather than simply a career path. Likewise, personal experiences and encounters throughout life shape a teacher's pedagogical philosophy and approach to classroom interactions.

In addition, socio-cultural factors exert a significant influence on the construction of the teacher's identity. Race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic background intersect to shape teachers' perceptions, behaviors, and interactions within educational settings (Nasir & Hand, 2008). These factors not only inform teaching practices but also influence the dynamics of classroom relationships and the wider educational environment. Educators from marginalized backgrounds can bring heightened awareness of social inequalities to their teaching practice by advocating inclusive and equitable education.

Professional experiences play a decisive role in shaping the identity of teachers. Continuing professional development, pedagogical approaches, and classroom management strategies contribute to a teacher's sense of efficacy and competence (Flores & Day, 2006). As teachers navigate the complexities of the profession, they undergo a process of self-reflection and growth, refining their identity in response to evolving educational standards. Collaboration with colleagues, mentoring experiences and participation in professional learning communities further contribute to the construction of teacher identity.

In addition to personal and professional factors, the evolving role of teachers in the educational landscape plays a decisive role in shaping their identity. Traditionally seen as knowledge disseminators, teachers are adopting a more dynamic and student-centred approach to teaching (OECD, 2019). With the emergence of constructivist pedagogies and a focus on inquiry-based learning, educators are tasked with creating inclusive learning environments that foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. The integration of technology into teaching practices has further expanded the scope of the teacher's role, providing new opportunities for innovation and engagement in the digital age (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

However, despite the central role they play in shaping future generations, teachers often face challenges related to social recognition and professional status. The 'paradox of teaching' highlights the difference between the importance of the teaching profession and its social recognition (Ingersoll, 2001). Despite their important contribution to society, teachers are often undervalued and marginalized, facing challenges such as modest salaries, limited autonomy and minimal social recognition.

Addressing the social position of teachers is imperative to foster a supportive and empowering environment within the education system. Valuing and recognizing the contribution of teachers through competitive salaries, professional development opportunities and pathways for professional advancement is essential to the elevation of the teaching profession (Hargreaves, 2000). By empowering teachers and fostering a culture of respect and appreciation, society can foster an environment conducive to teacher professional development and fulfillment.

### **3. THE EVOLVING ROLE OF TEACHERS**

As for the role of teachers, it has undergone a profound evolution, reflecting changing paradigms in teaching and learning. The concept of the teacher is linked to the concept of the main body of knowledge dissemination, while nowadays they have a more dynamic and multifaceted role in the educational environment. This chapter explores the transformative changes that have shaped the evolving role of educators, examining the emergence of student-centered approaches, the integration of technology, and the growing emphasis on social justice and equity in education.

One of the most significant changes in the role of teachers is the shift towards student-centred approaches to teaching and learning. In contrast to traditional teacher-centered pedagogies, which prioritize the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, student-centered approaches place greater emphasis on active student engagement, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative problem solving (Darling -Hammond, 2006). Teachers no longer serve as the sole source of information. Instead, they act as facilitators of learning, guiding students through the process of discovery and exploration.

Central to the learner-centred approach is the concept of personalized learning, which recognizes the unique strengths, needs and interests of each learner (OECD, 2019). By tailoring instruction to individual students, teachers can foster deeper engagement and motivation, leading to improved learning outcomes. This shift toward personalized learning reflects a broader recognition of the diverse needs of students and the importance of meeting those needs to ensure equitable access to education.

In addition, the integration of technology into teaching and learning has revolutionized the role of teachers in the modern classroom. Digital tools and resources offer new opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and engagement, transforming the way educators deliver instruction and assess student learning (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). From interactive whiteboards and educational apps to online learning platforms and virtual reality simulations, technology has opened up a wealth of possibilities to enhance teaching and learning experiences.

Teachers are no longer limited by the boundaries of the physical classroom. Instead, they have access to a vast array of digital resources and tools that can enrich their educational practices. Technology allows educators to differentiate instruction, provide real-time feedback, and create immersive learning experiences that meet the diverse needs of students. In addition, digital literacy has become an essential skill for both teachers and students, enabling them to effectively navigate the digital landscape and critically evaluate online information.

In addition to adopting student-centered approaches and leveraging technology, educators are increasingly called upon to advocate for social justice and equity in education. In today's diverse and multicultural societies, addressing systemic inequalities and promoting inclusive practices has become a central tenet of effective teaching (Freire, 1970). Teachers play a vital role in creating inclusive learning environments and challenging discriminatory practices and biases.

Furthermore, educators are charged with fostering critical consciousness among students, encouraging them to critically examine social issues and take action to promote positive change (Freire, 1970). By incorporating issues of social justice and equity into their curriculum, teachers can empower students to become informed and engaged citizens who are capable of addressing the complex challenges facing society.

However, despite the transformative changes in the role of teachers, teachers continue to face many challenges and obstacles. Limited resources, large class sizes, standardized testing pressures, and inadequate professional development opportunities are just some of the obstacles that educators must overcome (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In addition, the demands of the teaching profession can affect teachers' well-being, leading to burnout and attrition.

### **4. IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES**

Although the adoption of learner-centered approaches, the integration of technology, and an emphasis on social justice and equity hold promise for improving teaching and learning outcomes, they also present significant challenges that need to be addressed.

One of the key implications of the evolving role of teachers is the need for ongoing professional development and support. As educators transition to student-centered approaches and use new technologies, they require training and resources to effectively implement these practices in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Professional

development programs should focus on equipping teachers with the pedagogical knowledge, technological skills, and cultural competencies needed to meet the diverse needs of students and create inclusive learning environments. In addition, the integration of technology into teaching and learning presents opportunities and challenges for educators. While technology offers new avenues for innovation, collaboration, and engagement, it also requires teachers to navigate unfamiliar tools and platforms (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Educators need to receive training to develop digital literacy skills and learn how to effectively leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences. In addition, schools must ensure equitable access to technology and provide ongoing technical support to teachers.

Furthermore, the emphasis on social justice and equity in education requires educators to critically examine their own biases and privileges and actively work to create inclusive learning environments (Freire, 1970). This includes integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum, challenging stereotypes and discriminatory practices, and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion in the classroom. However, addressing systemic inequities within education requires systemic changes at the policy level, including equitable funding, developing culturally diverse curricula, and supporting marginalized students and communities.

Despite the potential benefits of the evolving role of teachers, teachers face many challenges in implementing these changes. Limited resources, including time, funding, and support, can hinder efforts to adopt student-centered approaches, integrate technology, and promote social justice and equity in education (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In addition, the demands of the teaching profession can affect teachers' well-being, leading to burnout and attrition. High workloads, administrative responsibilities, and challenging classroom dynamics can contribute to stress and burnout among teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Addressing teacher burnout and promoting teacher well-being is essential to retaining talented teachers and ensuring continuity of quality education for students.

In conclusion, the evolving role of teachers in education has important implications and challenges for educators, policy makers and stakeholders. By addressing these challenges and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration, educators can fulfill their potential as agents of positive change in education.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the investigation of teacher identity reveals a multifaceted construct shaped by personal, professional, and socio-cultural influences. From upbringing and personal experiences to socio-cultural background and educational philosophy, the formation of teacher identity is a complex and nuanced process. Understanding the complexities of teacher identity is essential to fostering a supportive and empowering environment for teachers. By recognizing and valuing the diverse identities of teachers, stakeholders can work to improve the quality of education for future generations.

The evolving role of teachers in education reflects changing paradigms in teaching and learning. After all, their role is essential in shaping the future of education. Despite the challenges they face, teachers remain committed to their craft, striving to create inclusive, engaging and transformative learning experiences for all students.

But their role also has profound implications and challenges. While student-centered approaches, technology integration, and social justice initiatives hold promise for improving teaching and learning outcomes, they also require investments in professional development, resources, and support. Addressing the challenges and managing them properly is considered imperative.

## REFERENCES

- Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), 175-189.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21st-century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(3), 300-314.
- Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2014). *Resilient teachers, resilient schools: Building and sustaining quality in testing times*. Routledge.
- Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(2), 219-232.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Hargreaves, A. (2000). Four ages of professionalism and professional learning. *Teachers and Teaching*, 6(2), 151-182.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499-534.
- Mishra, P., & Koehler, M. J. (2006). Technological pedagogical content knowledge: A framework for teacher knowledge. *Teachers College Record*, 108(6), 1017-1054.

- Nasir, N. S., & Hand, V. (2008). From the court to the classroom: Opportunities for engagement, learning, and identity in basketball and classroom mathematics. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 17(2), 143-179.
- OECD. (2018). *Teachers and school leaders as career-long professionals*. OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2019). *Teaching for the future: Effective classroom practices*. OECD Publishing.
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/teacher-identity>, 2024
- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1384638>, 2024
- <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2264595>, 2024
- <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/237301166.pdf>, 2024