

The Meaning, Dilemmas and Methods of the Teachers' Professional Identity from the View of the Identity Theory Based on the Symbolic Interactionism^①

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Abstract

From the view of the Identity Theory, teachers' professional identity is a process of constructing social ego based on their own multiple roles games and evaluations of their teacher role from alters. Specifically the meaning of the teachers' professional identity includes two levels. On the one hand, the formation of teachers' professional identity is subjected to the internal interactions between teachers' teacher role and other roles. On the other hand, the formation of teachers' professional identity is subjected to external interactions between teachers' teacher role and other social roles. There are there main reasons leading to the dilemmas of teachers' professional identity. Firstly the changing and multi-dimensional role expectations from alters lead to the dilemmas of the teachers' professional identity. Secondly the conflicts between alters' expectations of teacher role lead to the dilemmas of teachers' professional identity. Finally the internal games between the teacher role and the individual' other social roleslead to the dilemmas of teachers' professional identity.

Keywords: identity theory, teachers' professionalization, teachers' professional identity

Introduction

This paper discussing teachers' professional identity is the result of the loss of qualified teachers in China. Nowadays in China, on the one hand there were some teacher students giving up teacher vocation when they ended up their internship or just entered into teachers' team. A survey about the work will of the free teacher students of the six normal universities subordinated to the Ministry of Education showed that only 31.9% of the students chose to teach(XIE Shu-hai,2014;XIONG Mei,2014).Another survey about the in-service teachers showed, if they were given another choice, only 20.5% of the in-service teachers would choose to

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teach, above 80% of them said “no” or “it is hard to choose”(TAN Chuan-bao,2010). This paper mainly discusses the meaning and dilemmas of the teacher’ professional identity from the view of the identity theory based on the symbolic interactionism. There are there main questions to be studied. The first question is about what is the meaning of the teachers’ professional identity; the second question is about what are the dilemmas of the teachers’ professional identity; the third question is how could we help teachers to building their professional identity ,and we have tried to give some advices to resolve the dilemmas of the teachers’ professional identity.

The Meaning of the Teachers’ Professional Identity

Around the identity or social identity, there are a variety of corresponding theories in social psychology of sociology and social psychology of psychology, one of the more famous is identity theory that is based on the microscopic sociology or symbolic interactionism, another one is the social identity theory which is founded by the European social psychology.(ZHOU Xiao-hong,2008).This paper mainly discusses the meaning of the teacher’ professional identity from the view of the identity theory based on the symbolic interactionism. Charles Horton Cooley, an Early American sociologist, proposed "the looking glass self", which has touched the core of the concept of identity. George H .Mead further put forward that ego was constructed by the "I" as the main body and "me" as the object of the self; they were formed in the process of interaction with others. Sheldon Stryker created identity theory, and he put forward that the theory was from the structural framework of symbolic interaction, to explain the different behaviors choice in the face of the numerous associated roles (2007). Sheldon Stryker cited a typical example to illustrate the individual was not only a responder of the social behavior, but also an actor, playing different roles. In a leisurely weekend afternoon, why a person will go to the zoo with his children, but the other one will choose to play golf with friends (2007)? Theorists of identity theory used identities salience and commitment these two concepts to explore the influence of identity on social behavior; they all agreed that the role choice was the result of identities salience and the commitment was the direct source of the identities salience (Sheldon Stryker,2008).

From the view of the identity theory, teachers' professional identity is a process of constructing social ego based on their own multiple roles game and evaluation of their teacher role from alters. Specifically, the meaning of the teachers' professional identity includes two levels. On the one hand, the formation of teachers' professional identity is subjected to the internal interactions between teachers’ teacher role and other roles .For example, there is a teacher who is also a mother, daughter, and a wife; the game between the four roles she has played will affect her construction of teachers' professional identity. On the other hand, the formation of teachers' professional identity is subjected to external interactions between teachers’ teacher role and other social roles. For example, evaluations of teachers’ teacher role from social important alters are related to the formation of teachers' professional identity directly. For example, there are two student teachers, one of them was always praised by his mentor teacher during his internship so he was eagerly to be a teacher; but the other one was always blamed by his mentor teacher during the internship so he was eagerly to end up his internship to quit teacher vocation. Teachers' professional identity is not a psychological unit automatically, but originated from multiple social construction based on various roles people has played in society .People have different identity because they have played different roles in the social life.

The Dilemmas of the Teacher' Professional Identity

The changing and multi-dimensional role expectations from alters lead to the dilemmas of the teachers' professional identity. Infinite extension of the scope and the rapid changes of the role expectations from alters impact teachers' professional identity seriously. Role expectations which are the bridge between social structure and role behavior refer to the specific behavior expectation from a group or individual about the corresponding role (QIN Qi-wen, 2011; ZHOU Yong-kang 2011). Teacher role expectation refers to a series of expected behaviors of teacher role from social groups. In Chinese history, the elders were the teachers, and the learned men were the teachers. The masterpiece handed down from the later Tang Dynasty 《what the teacher said》 which was written by Han Yu clearly pointed out that the social expectations of teacher role were that teacher was preaching, teaching and explaining, which were kept until modern times and also became the teachers' common role expectations. But since the middle of the 20th century, China's ongoing reform of education giving teacher role more new expectations which are different from the traditional teacher role expectations, teacher work as an learner and learning guider, psychological educator, action researcher and education innovator (SHEN Ji-liang, 2006). With the wave of global teacher professionalization and teaching professionalization, teacher role in the world are given more role expectations, such as organizer, manager, consultant, communicator, professional character, innovator, ethical character, political character and law character and so on (D. John McIntyre & Mary John O'Hair as writers. And DING Yi & MA Ling as interpreters, 2002). Along with the constant pushed forward education reform and the society' sharp improvements, the expectations of teacher role are also in constant change and accumulation. It is hard for teacher to afford so thick multi-dimensional teacher role expectations which of course make dilemmas for teachers' professional identity.

Conflicts between alters' expectations of teacher role lead to the dilemmas of teachers' professional identity. Nowadays teachers receive so many expectations from the state, society, professional organizations, schools, parents, and the students. So teachers with much pressure are a consensus. However the key problem is that these pressure sources for the teacher role expectations are not harmonious, they are contradictory. Teachers as the state employees exercise the function of the overall capital; teacher's job is to maintain the overall condition of the capitalist production, which is done by culturing students' characters, developing students' corresponding attitude, classifying students by particular standards and integrating them into society's different orbits (LIU Yun-shan, 2006). Teacher as a professional under the background of the teacher professionalization and teaching professionalization is expected by the teachers' professional organization that teacher should have professional autonomy and power which apparently are incompatible with the role expectations from state and schools. Teachers as the server of the parents who hope their children get higher grades in school from the view of serious social competition is expected they can guarantee children get high scores in the various entrance exams, which is also incompatible with the role expectations from the students and teachers' professional organization. There are so many teacher role expectations for teacher and there are so many contradictions between the teacher role expectations. So naturally these which prevent teachers from internalizing the teacher role expectations lead to dilemmas for teachers' professional identity confusion.

Internal games between the teacher role and the individual' other social roles lead to the dilemmas of teachers' professional identity. Teacher as a social person not only plays the teacher role, but also plays other

social roles (e.g., father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, etc.), and other social roles also can produce the corresponding role expectations. While the conflicts between the teacher role expectations and the individual' other social roles expectations inevitably lead to the dilemmas of teachers' professional identity. Teachers' professional identity salience and commitment require teachers to coordinate their multiple roles and make choice. Following Sheldon Stryker' example, "on a weekend afternoon, there is a teacher who is also a mother, should she go to the zoo with her children, or prepare a lesson at home?" women teachers have suffered more prominent and sharp internal conflicts between multiple roles because of their natural mother role. Now some scholars devote to explore women teachers' multiple roles conflicts, especially colleges and universities women teachers who have suffered typical conflicts between individual' teacher role and other social roles. From the point of the work' nature of women teachers in colleges and universities, they are different from other working women. For the general working women, once they master the professional skills in general they can make a living in the rest of their lives. Some of them maybe don't need read any professional books or newspapers in whole one year, beyond the eight hours they can do some housework, go to gym, and even play CARDS and MaJiang. while women teachers in colleges and universities don't have the concept of 8 hours-work, in addition to the normal teaching and research work, they have to keep learning new knowledge; with the improvement of social requirements for degree, they must constantly improve their own education; for professional title, they have to rack their brains to write more and better articles or books(CAO Ai-hua,2006;LI Jie,2006).Such a competitive game is bound to get in the way of teachers' role, so the reason why three women teachers of College of YunnanDianchiLake quitted and went to sell rice noodle is deep rooted in teacher's professional identity (LUOLan, 2016).

The Methods to Help Teachers to Building Their Professional Identity

The dilemmas of the teacher's professional identity lie in the external and internal conflict of teacher role which is rooted in the correct positioning of the teacher role.

First of all, we must recognize that teacher as a natural, physical, sensible and objective existence is a common one who is not omnipotent, but has a basic physiological needs, and is also restricted .If we require too much for teacher role, it is not only difficult for teacher to internalize these expectations, but also leads to the dilemmas of teachers' professional identity and at the end it is equal to nothing. The burden of teacher role is so heavy now that it should be alleviated. So in order to help teachers to building their professional identity we should make open and relaxing surroundings for teachers' development, and we must realize that teacher firstly is only a human person but not God.

Secondly, from teachers' identity to teachers' professional identity, it is based on the concept of teacher professionalism. As early as in 2001 Normal Education Department of the Ministry of Education in China specifically pointed out that teacher professionalization is the important symbol of modern education and the common goal of all countries in the world, teachers' specialization is a type of professional specialization and it refers to the transformation process individual becoming a teacher as a member of the teaching profession and more and more mature in teaching(Normal Education Department of the Ministry of Education,2003). Therefore, now under the background of the world development of teachers' professionalization, in numerous teacher role expectations, role expectation of teachers' professionalization which is the main requirement that

individual teacher should internalize should be the main aspect of contradiction. Teachers don't need to be a burnt candle or a devoted silkworm; do not need to be selfless, devoted, or dedicated; they only need to internalize the connotation of teacher professional: teaching students how to learn, education and service (ZHU Xu-dong,2013).So in order to help teachers to building their professional identity we should provide various paths for teachers' professional development. For the student teachers we should improve their internship and provide more opportunity to enhance their teacher' skill; for the in-service teachers we could improve their professional development by school-based training, local training, provincial level training, and national level training, school also can encourage teachers to learn as a visiting scholar or as a full-time or part-time student by various incentives.

Finally, the teacher' competence to coordinate the individual' different roles is the foundation of the teachers' professional identity. As a woman teacher, must there be a conflict between her teacher role, mother role and wife role? In order to help women teachers to coordinate the individual' different roles to building their professional identity, we should break the traditional gender division of labor and reshape the equality of male and female gender status in society; we should be giving women teachers' professional development of equality of opportunity in school; and reconstruct the male and female family division of labor pattern in the family.

Conclusion

Based on the connotation of the teacher's professional development teachers will have the corresponding coordination ability. The internalization of the connotation of teachers' professional make teachers have teacher role salience and commitment, which will help the teacher combine the development of their life-time with teacher's professional development. Teacher can achieve its own meaning of life in the process of teacher's role play.

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