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## THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF FUTURE TEACHERS IN THE RESEARCH OF UKRAINIAN SCHOLARS

### INTRODUCTION

Ukraine is currently undergoing a comprehensive reform of its education system aimed at modernization and alignment with contemporary standards of European Union. These changes necessitate a significant evolution of the teacher's role, demanding not only advanced professional competencies but also a profound understanding of their professional identity. Given the education reforms and the need for new approaches to teaching during wartime, research into the processes of professional self-determination and the development of future teachers' professional identity has become especially relevant. This is due to the fact that professional identity plays a significant role in adapting to the professional environment and structuring professional experience. A comprehensive analysis of Ukrainian scholars' research on teacher professional identity is essential to identify the prevailing theoretical frameworks, findings, and knowledge gaps in the field. It is important to understand the development of future teachers' professional identity, particularly within the context of wartime.

The theoretical and methodological foundations of Ukrainian pedagogical science provide a framework for comprehensively understanding and investigating the development of future teachers' professional identity. However, discrepancies

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exist between the desired and the actual levels of personal development of students at pedagogical universities. Additionally, there is also a disparity between the insufficient emphasis on developing future teachers' professional identity within pedagogical curricula in the educational process of universities and the widely acknowledged significance of this construct for personal and professional growth. Furthermore, although it is necessary to develop a targeted model to cultivate and develop future teachers' professional identity within pedagogical universities, there are no adequate pedagogical conditions to support this process amid wartime challenges.

#### 1. THE CONCEPT OF "PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF A FUTURE TEACHER"

In recent decades, Ukrainian researchers have been actively engaged in developing methods for shaping the professional identity of future teachers. Special attention is devoted to the development of professional identity in the context of socio-political transformations, considering it a key aspect of improving professional training in pedagogical universities (e.g., Andrushko, 2013; Burch, 2015; Kichuk, 2023; Kolosovych, 2016; Pohribna, 2008; Virna, 2013).

Professional identity is a multifaceted concept that can be considered from various perspectives, including pedagogical, psychological, sociological, and philosophical ones. In essence, a professional identity is characterized by an individual's self-perception as a representative of their profession, a sense of belonging with a professional community, and their position and influence within society. The professional identity of a future teacher is a phenomenon encompassing values, beliefs, attitudes, motives, and interests related to professional activity. It determines students' attitude towards their work, children, colleagues, parents, as well as influencing their professional development and self-realization.

Lytvynenko and Yamnytskyiy (2017, p. 170) define the professional identity of the future teacher as a dynamic system that is a necessary component of professional development and career growth. This process starts during professional training in pedagogical universities and becomes more intense throughout one's professional career. The researchers conceptualize professional identity as a constituent element of personal identity. This viewpoint is shared by Melnyk (2018a, p. 285), who argues that the future primary school teacher's professional identity is an essential aspect of their overall personal identity. Consequently, this professional identity develops if personal experiences are explored. It serves

to integrate the individual into the teaching community, organize professional knowledge, and anticipate future career paths. Melnyk (2018a) points that intentional strategies designed to cultivate personal reflection among future teachers can significantly enhance the development of their professional identity.

Lukyanchuk (2006) conceptualizes professional identity as a dynamic system that evolves through professional education and the active cultivation of professional competence. Professional identity significantly influences the value-based worldview and enhances the future teacher's professional expertise. Its framework encompasses cognitive, motivational, and value components. The interplay of these elements constitutes the core of professional identity – the perception of oneself as a professional who integrates educational and professional endeavors, exploration of innovative pedagogical approaches, academic capabilities, and other facets of pedagogical practice. According to Lukyanchuk (2010, p. 373), these components will contribute to the development of several key qualities in future primary school teachers: adherence to moral and universal human values; a broad range of interests; understanding of contemporary social issues, spirituality, and human existence; foundational knowledge in various cultural, artistic, and scientific fields; general erudition; and strong empathy and communication skills with diverse age groups. These qualities are essential for developing a robust professional identity and fostering both personal and professional growth.

The development of a professional identity is influenced by both internal and external factors (Borisyuk, 2007). According to Romanyshyna (2015, p. 136), professional identity is structured by motivational and cognitive components (linked to external factors) as well as emotional-volitional and empathic components (reflecting internal factors). The discrepancy between future teachers' internal perceptions of their profession and the evolving expectations of society contributes to a crisis of professional identity (Shakhrai, 2012, pp. 117–118). One factor contributing to teachers' stress is the excessive demands placed on them, which often disregard the constraints of the educational system. Educational programs can also induce shifts in teachers' professional self-perception. These changes are characterized by two types of contradictions:

- sociopedagogical: a disparity exists between society's idealized image of a teacher and the educational system's actual capacity to deliver quality education during crises;
- organizational-pedagogical: these arise as the focus in learning transitions from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered, independent inquiry. This necessitates increased student autonomy and initiative in their professional development.

Recognizing contradictions in the field can ignite a strong desire for professional identity among aspiring teachers. These contradictions serve as catalysts for personal and professional growth. To effectively cultivate a new generation of educators, the state must prioritize the timely development of their spiritual and intellectual capacities, grounded in values that align with societal needs.

A literature review will allow us to identify the main components of professional identity: cognitive (knowledge, beliefs, perceptions about one's profession, its values, norms, standards, requirements, and possibilities), emotional (feelings of pride, satisfaction, responsibility, belonging to the profession, as well as experiencing difficulties, challenges, and conflicts related to professional activity), value-based (personal values, beliefs, ideals that correlate with the values of the profession and influence the choice of a professional path, attitude towards work, and professional development), and behavioral (actions, habits, work style that reflect professional identity and correspond to professional norms and standards). These components are interconnected and mutually influential. For instance, a shift in one's professional perspective (cognitive) can alter their work attitude and experiences (emotional), subsequently impacting career goals, aspirations (value-based), and workplace behaviors (behavioral). A strong grasp of one's professional role and values empowers future teachers to create a positive learning environment, build trust with students and parents, and effectively address professional challenges.

## 2. FEATURES OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

According to Byhar, Prokop, and Pits (2019, p. 401), the development of a future teacher's professional identity is a complex interplay of self-awareness, alignment, and comparison, serving as a cornerstone of professionalism. Pavlyuk (2009, p. 320) emphasizes the foundational role of personal attributes, potential, and specialized expertise in shaping a teacher's professional identity. Shakhrai (2012, p. 118) further posits that this identity emerges from recognizing one's connection to the teaching profession and community, understanding personal limitations, cultivating self-efficacy, and developing a strong professional self-concept. The extent to which future teachers demonstrate professional orientation is a reliable indicator of their evolving professional identity.

Professional identity (Borysyuk, 2007; Melnyk, 2018b; Romanyshyna, 2015) is shaped throughout one's life by a variety of factors, including:

- the family and social environment (influence of parents, relatives, friends, teachers, mentors, colleagues who form ideas about different professions and help to determine one's own interests and abilities);
- education and professional experience (studying in educational institutions, participation in trainings, seminars, conferences, internships, work for various organizations that contribute to the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as the development of professional values and attitudes);
- personal qualities and characteristics (temperament, character, interests, abilities, motivation, values, which influence the choice of profession, attitude to work, and professional development).

The development of professional identity is a dynamic process that evolves throughout one's career. Melnyk (2018b, p. 161) identifies three categories of factors that influence the teacher's professional identity development:

- individual and personal: values, motivations, self-perception of the profession, self-esteem, essential professional qualities, readiness for self-fulfillment, and the alignment between ideal and actual professional self;
- educational: teaching technologies, formats and methods, teacher–student interactions, psychological and pedagogical support, modeling professional activity in teaching, curriculum relevance, effectiveness of educational organization, and integration of new and traditional pedagogical approaches;
- socioprofessional: information environment, development of the professional community and culture, professional identification, job demand, professional prestige, working conditions, salary, and social benefits.

Soldatenko (2006, p. 78) outlines three primary directions for developing professional identity in future teachers:

- cognitive-dispositional – it forms the cognitive component through lectures, seminars, discussions, observations, independent work, and preparation of reports, creating an image of a professional and professional awareness;
- orientation-reflective – it develops the emotional-volitional and empathic components through reflective trainings, self- and peer assessment, discussions, and round tables, promoting self-analysis and comparison with the ideal image of a professional;
- practice-oriented – it is represented by business and role-playing games, modeling professional situations, role-playing trainings, developing plans and strategies, professional internships, contributing to the realization of the formed image of a professional in educational and professional activities. The goal of this direction is to form the communicative and activity-practical components of professional identity, which contributes to the realization of a formed professional

image and values through the performance of social and professional roles, self-determination in professional culture, mastering models of interpersonal interaction, and the development of experience in creative professional activity.

The theoretical foundations for developing organizational and methodological principles for shaping the professional identity of future teachers during their studies involve a variety of approaches that contribute to this process. Lytvynenko and Yamnytskyiy (2017) argue that this can be a system of practices, internships, reflection, and the use of cinema as an effective tool in extracurricular educational work. Their research showed that running a student film club intended to familiarize viewers with the best works of Ukrainian and world cinema and discussions of cinema in general contributed to several aspects:

- the personal and professional development of students and their professional identity;
- the emotional experience and understanding of the participants' current life situations and problems;
- the development of self-reflection, empathy, and awareness of oneself, one's goals and needs, feelings, and actions;
- the ability to see the multidimensionality and multivalence of situations and problems;
- the development of the ability to self-disclose, be sincere, and express feelings freely.

Such an approach allows students not only to deepen their knowledge of cinema but also to develop important skills and personal qualities necessary for their future professional career as a teacher. The development of professional identity is aimed at mastering the chosen type of activity (Romanyshyna, 2012, p. 132). The most important task is to form in students the ability to apply existing ideas, attitudes, and skills according to the conditions of a specific situation. This includes developing a positive attitude towards the profession, forming a system of professional concepts, and the ability to apply them in specific situations. Three types of skills are distinguished among them: technological (using knowledge and skills in professional activities), strategic (choosing the optimal strategy of activity according to the situation), and dispositional (forming an attitude towards professional activity and an adequate reaction to professional situations).

The expediency of forming the future teacher's professional identity is due to the fact that it serves as the foundation of their professionalism and determines the success of personal development in pedagogical activities (Atroshchenko, 2021; Kondratyuk, 2022; Pavlyuk, 2009; Sozonyuk, 2019; Sokolova, 2012).

The development of professional identity is determined through its components, which are external and internal. Such a division has been confirmed by research, in particular, when determining the specific components of forming the professional identity of future teachers (Romanyshyna, 2012).

The development of a professional identity (Lyalyuk, 2017, p. 102) is determined by various factors, including:

- the development of a self-image, an internal perception of oneself as a professional;
- professionally important qualities and personal characteristics that are essential for successful pedagogical activity;
- professional knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for discharging pedagogical duties;
- ideal images of the chosen profession, ideas about the ideal model of a teacher and their role in society;
- individual expectations and social perspectives regarding career development and social opportunities provided by the chosen profession;
- professional communication and interaction with specialists in the professional community, which contributes to solving professional tasks and supporting professional growth.

These aspects allow for the systematization and development of the professional identity of future teachers during their professional training and at subsequent stages of professional development.

Professional identity can be formed through the coordination of components of the educational process when students are actively involved in professional activities. Vaskov (2000) identified four stages of its development:

- self-determination in a specific professional situation (awareness of oneself in a particular professional role and identification of one's capabilities and limitations);
- searching for the meaning of performing specific professional functions (a teacher's awareness of the value and significance of their work, understanding its impact on others);
- self-determination in a specific professional area (choosing a specific area of activity within the chosen profession and focusing on it);
- self-determination in a specific professional specialization (choosing a narrow specialization within the chosen professional area and developing expertise in it).

At the final stage, there occurs sectoral self-determination, narrowing of the problematic field of professional interests, and the development of a full-fledged subject of professional psychological activity.

Professional identity development is a crucial aspect of a future teacher's personal development during professional training (Andrushko, 2013, p. 110). Beyond acquiring knowledge and practical skills, students undergo professional genesis, where professional identity emerges as a cornerstone. Recognizing oneself as a professional and identifying with one's chosen field are essential for self-reflection, growth, and enhancement of personal and professional attributes. This empowers the specialist to thrive in the dynamic job market, effectively adapting to its demands and evolution.

Professional identity begins to form already at university, shaping the students' understanding of their role in the profession and their personal growth. This process is influenced not only by academic coursework but also by the overall socio-professional environment of the university.

Atroshchenko (2021, p. 17) identifies several key factors in the development of a professional identity among future teachers: positive self-esteem, appropriate aspirations, job satisfaction, a sense of responsibility for adhering to professional standards, alignment with the values of the teaching community, and academic achievement. Ultimately, professional identity is cultivated through self-directed learning, professional training, and successful integration into the teaching profession.

Therefore, the development of future teachers' professional identity is a complex process involving awareness, correspondence, and comparison. This means that a future teacher must be aware of their professional role, correlate their personal qualities and values with the requirements of the profession, and also compare their vision of the profession with the real conditions of its implementation. Professional identity is an important factor in professional success and job satisfaction. It helps a person to define their professional goals, find their place in the professional environment, develop, and realize their potential.

### 3. CHALLENGES OF TODAY

The professional identity of future teachers is undergoing profound challenges and transformations in wartime conditions. Military actions and associated stressors, such as the threat of death, bereavement, forced displacement, and the destruction of familiar surroundings, significantly impact teachers' self-perception, values, and professional outlook. In this context, teachers must redefine their roles and responsibilities, seek new purpose in their work, adapt to unconventional teaching environments, and support children grappling with



traumatic experiences. Simultaneously, the war underscores the pivotal role of future teachers' professional identity as a source of resilience, facilitating the overcoming of adversity and the maintenance of psychological well-being. A strong sense of mission, commitment to children, self-efficacy, and professional competence empowers students to stay motivated, solve problems, and uphold quality education even in the most challenging circumstances (Prodan, 2023).

War also accelerates the development of new facets of professional identity, necessitating skills in providing psychological support to children and their families, operating under conditions of uncertainty and risk, and collaborating with diverse social services and volunteer organizations. Volunteer engagement significantly enhances the quality of professional training, serving as an abundant extracurricular resource that fosters professional development, cultivates a sense of professional responsibility, sharpens communication abilities, and facilitates the acquisition of practical empathy (Vakolya & Popadych, 2023; Polloi et al., 2023).

During their practicum, students demonstrate a high level of professional responsibility, empathy, and resilience (Hnizdilova et al., 2023; Czepil, 2023). Their tasks encompass not only educational support but also sociopsychological assistance, helping children maintain a sense of normalcy and safety. The war necessitates continuous professional development and the implementation of new pedagogical approaches focused on supporting children in crisis situations. On the one hand, the war leads to the loss of familiar landmarks, values, and beliefs, causing feelings of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty about the future, which negatively impacts students' professional motivation and self-esteem. On the other hand, the war actualizes new aspects of professional identity, related to the need to provide psychological support to children and their families, and to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability. In these conditions, it is important to create a system of sociopedagogical support and professional development for students, which will help them preserve their professional identity, find new meaning in their work, and effectively fulfill their professional duties even in the most challenging circumstances (Karpenko, 2023).

Therefore, the professional identity of future teachers during wartime is shaped by their ability to adapt to new conditions, provide a high level of emotional support to children, and collaborate with parents and the community. These processes contribute to the strengthening of the professional community of teachers, their personal growth, and professional self-assertion in times of crisis.

## CONCLUSION

The development of the future teacher's professional identity is a multifaceted and dynamic construct shaped by cognitive, emotional, value-based, and behavioral factors. Researchers emphasize the importance of the social context, individual experience in identity development, and its subjective nature. A deep insight into one's professional role, values, and beliefs, a positive attitude towards work, and adherence to professional standards are the core elements of the successful professional identity of a future teacher. Developing and supporting a student-teacher's professional identity is a critical task to ensure the quality of education and children's well-being. The development of professional identity occurs through self-development, professional learning, and successful integration into the professional environment. The student-teacher's development is influenced by family, social environment, education, professional experience, personal qualities, and characteristics. The professional identity of future teachers in wartime is formed through active adaptation to new challenges, the ability to provide emotional support to children and cooperate with parents. Scholarly research mostly reveals the theoretical foundations of the professional identity of future teachers, in particular, the content, components, directions, stages, factors, etc.

The study of the professional identity of future teachers has not only theoretical but also practical significance, as its results can be used to improve the system of training and retraining of pedagogical staff, develop professional development programs, and create favorable working conditions for teachers. Further scientific research in this direction will allow a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of the war's influence on the professional identity of future teachers and the development of effective strategies to support their psychological well-being and professional development.

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## SUMMARY

The article analyzes the concept of “professional identity of future teachers” in the research of Ukrainian scholars. It reveals the components, directions (cognitive-dispositional, orientation-reflexive, practice-oriented), and factors (individual-personal, educational, socio-professional) that influence the development of the professional identity of future teachers. The stages of the development of professional identity are highlighted (self-determination in a specific professional situation, the teacher’s search for the meaning of certain professional functions, self-determination in a specific professional area, self-determination in a specific professional specialization). It is proven that professional identity is an essential component of the professionalism of a future teacher and one of the conditions for its development. The emphasis is on the crisis of teachers’ professional identity, which is aggravated by the gap between their personal values and beliefs, formed during the process of professional development, and the dynamic expectations of society regarding the role and functions of a teacher. The relevance of developing a stable professional identity as a source of resilience and a resource for overcoming difficulties during wartime is highlighted. Particular attention is paid to the awareness of one’s own mission, responsibility for children, belief in one’s own strengths and professional competencies, as well as the analysis of new challenges faced by teachers during the war and the need to develop new competencies related to providing psychological support, working in conditions of uncertainty, and interacting with various social institutions.

**Keywords:** future teachers; professional identity; professionalism; scientific research; Ukrainian scholars

TOŻSAMOŚĆ ZAWODOWA PRZYSZŁYCH NAUCZYCIELI  
W BADANIACH UKRAIŃSKICH NAUKOWCÓW

## STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł analizuje koncepcję „zawodowej tożsamości przyszłych nauczycieli” w badaniach ukraińskich naukowców. Omówiono składniki, kierunki (orientacja poznawczo-dyspozycyjna, orientacyjno-refleksyjna, praktycznie zorientowana) oraz czynniki (indywidualno-osobowe, edukacyjne, społeczno-zawodowe) wpływające na kształtowanie się tożsamości zawodowej przyszłych nauczycieli. Przedstawiono etapy rozwoju tożsamości zawodowej (samookreślenie w konkretnej sytuacji zawodowej, poszukiwanie przez nauczyciela sensu wykonywania określonych funkcji zawodowych; samookreślenie na konkretnym obszarze zawodowym; samookreślenie w konkretnej specjalizacji zawodowej). Udowodniono, że tożsamość zawodowa jest niezbędnym składnikiem profesjonalizmu przyszłego nauczyciela i jednym z warunków jego kształtowania. Zwrócono uwagę na kryzys profesjonalnej tożsamości nauczycieli, który nasila się z powodu rozbieżności między ich osobistymi wartościami i przekonaniami, ukształtowanymi w procesie profesjonalizacji, a dynamicznymi oczekiwaniami społeczeństwa co do roli i funkcji nauczyciela. Podkreślono aktualność rozwoju stabilnej tożsamości zawodowej jako źródła odporności i zasobów do przezwycięzania trudności w czasie wojny. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na świadomość własnej

misji, odpowiedzialności za dzieci, wiarę we własne siły i kompetencje zawodowe, a także na analizę nowych wyzwań, przed którymi stają nauczyciele podczas wojny, oraz konieczność rozwoju nowych kompetencji związanych z udzielaniem wsparcia psychologicznego, pracą w warunkach niepewności i współpracą z różnymi instytucjami społecznymi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przyszli nauczyciele; tożsamość zawodowa; profesjonalizm; badania naukowe; ukraińscy naukowcy