

The Impact of Lecturing on reconstructing Teachers` Professional Identity: A Case Study on Four Libyan EFL In-service Teachers Teaching at The College of Languages and Translation, Zaytuna University

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Abstract

Identity is a broad and evolving term that encompasses new variables over time. Although many studies have examined this topic, the relationship between teachers' professional identity and the impact of actual lecturing remains underexplored, particularly in the Libyan context. This case study aims to investigate the perceptions of Libyan EFL teachers regarding their professional identities and the impact of lecturing on reconstructing these identities. This qualitative study utilizes semi-structured interviews, followed by informal discussions with teachers to gain deeper insights into their responses.

The findings reveal that all teachers identified linguistic competence as central to their professional identities. Additionally, they described their roles as conveying moral values to students and highlighted gaining prestige within the family, cultural and social experience, and continuous self-improvement as important aspects of their identities.

Regarding the factors influencing identity reconstruction through lecturing, Teacher S emphasized responsibility, collaborative work, engagement, and experience. Teacher N highlighted experience, working under pressure, organizational policies, and real teaching practice. For Teacher G, support from the organization and experience were key, while Teacher M pointed to experience, quality assurance, collaboration, organizational involvement,

and responsibility for student outcomes as the primary factors reshaping his professional identity.

Key Words: *teacher professional identity, lecturing factors, reconstruction of teacher professional identity*

ملخص الدراسة

الهوية مصطلح واسع ومتطور يشمل متغيرات جديدة مع مرور الوقت. على الرغم من أن العديد من الدراسات تناولت هذا الموضوع، إلا أن العلاقة بين الهوية المهنية للمعلمين وتأثير التدريس الفعلي لا تزال غير مستكشفة بشكل كاف، خاصة في السياق الليبي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في تصورات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا حول هوياتهم المهنية وتأثير التدريس على إعادة تشكيل هذه الهويات. تستخدم هذه الدراسة النوعية المقابلات شبه المنظمة، تليها مناقشات غير رسمية مع المعلمين للحصول على رؤى أعمق حول إجاباتهم.

تكشف النتائج أن جميع المعلمين حددوا الكفاءة اللغوية كعنصر أساسي في هوياتهم المهنية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، وصفوا أدوارهم كوسيلة لنقل القيم الأخلاقية للطلاب، وأبرزوا اكتساب المكانة داخل الأسرة، والخبرة الثقافية والاجتماعية، والتحسين الذاتي المستمر كأجزاء هامة من هوياتهم. فيما يتعلق بالعوامل التي تؤثر على إعادة تشكيل الهوية من خلال التدريس، أكد المعلم س على المسؤولية، والعمل التعاوني، والمشاركة، والخبرة. وأشار المعلم ن إلى الخبرة، والعمل تحت الضغط، والسياسات التنظيمية، والممارسة التدريسية الفعلية. بالنسبة للمعلم ق، كان الدعم من المنظمة والخبرة مهمين، بينما أشار المعلم م إلى الخبرة، وضمان الجودة، والتعاون، والانخراط التنظيمي، والمسؤولية عن نتائج الطلاب كعوامل رئيسية تعيد تشكيل هويته المهنية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الهوية المهنية للمعلم، عوامل التدريس، إعادة تشكيل الهوية المهنية للمعلم

Introduction

In all educational sectors all over the world, language teachers are seen as a vital, influencing dimension in the learning process and experience of their students (Hattie, 2004). Thus, to ensure the students` successful outcomes, teachers` professional identity is one of the very important topics to be investigated in the field of ELT. Since, according to Chong,

Ling & Chuan "teacher professional identity develops over time, and involves gaining insights of the professional practices and the values, skills, knowledge required and practiced within the profession" (2011, p. 30).

Whereas many research studies have been conducted on teacher professional identity, very few studies have investigated the influencing factors of real lecturing on reconstructing teachers` professional identities. Thus, the current study aims at studying the impact of lecturing on reconstructing teachers` professional identity. First of all, the study sheds the light on the concept of teacher identity, then it moves on to study the different factors that might influence teachers` professional identity construction.

Literature Review

Since the current study involves two important topics in ELT, namely, teacher professional identity and the impact of lecturing, it is quite essential to elaborate on these two topics in more depth.

To be precise, the literature review will be divided into two main separate sections evolving around the two above mentioned topics.

Teacher Professional Identity in General

The concept of teachers` identity can be defined as the one that" reflects on how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles within different setting" (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 5). While others like Coldron and Smith (1999) believe that "teachers` professional identities are manifested in their classroom practices" (p. 715). According to Beijaard et al. (2004) teacher professional identity was established in 1980s. In most studies conducted in relation to teacher identity, it is believed that those teachers who possess a "qualified" identity are more familiar with how to have a professional participation, pedagogical knowledge of the content they are dealing with and, in return, they become passionate to teach. It is

also believed that teachers might not successes in teaching because of being unable to construct a good teacher identity (Ruahotie– Lyhthy, 2013). Therefore, those teachers are more likely to leave the teaching profession (Pillen, Den & Beijaard, 2013). To sum up, teachers with good, qualified construction of professional identity are expected to get more developed by learning for the purpose of self– improvement to become effective teachers (Battey & Frank, 2008). Surgue (1997) for example, as cited in (Beijaard et al., 2004, p.111) who defined it as "part of a discourse which is open to continues redefinition rather that a set of essential characteristics which are common to all teachers". Teachers` professional identity is very important in the field of language teaching due to its relationship with commitment. As confirmed by Rezaei (2018) who stated that several research studies have been carried out to reveal how influential teachers` professional identities in improving teachers` teaching performance.

As cited in Hashemi et al. (2021) identity is "the style of one's individuality which coincides with the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others in the immediate community" (p. 2)

Xing (2022) believes that teacher professional identity is a very important component that "affects teachers' teaching practice" and that "the positive and negative emotions are considered sporadically in Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educational contexts". As for him, research related on investigating the relationship between work engagement as a positive emotion and teacher burnout as a negative work related factor" should be carried out (p.1).

In another important study conducted by Topchyan and Woehler (2021) it was concluded that full–time female educators who possess high levels of

being social involved with students are highly engaged and more satisfied in doing their jobs. It was also revealed that there a significant correlation between experience and engagement. Therefore, it is necessary for other parties who are also directly involved in the lecturing process to verify the lecturing process that has been entered by the teacher. This research focuses on making a quality monitoring system for the lecturing process that involves students as the party verifying the lecturing process. This verification process will use media in the form of email and electronic messages in the form of chat in the chat application. When a teacher enters the lecturing process data, which consists of the material presented and the students who are taking part in the lecture, a message to verify the lecturing process will be sent via email and chat to students. Students can verify whether the course is in accordance with the course syllabus plan. By checking the conformity charged to the learning participants, a better level of trust will be obtained in order to improve the quality of learning.

The impact of the lecturing factors that influence the reconstruction of teachers` professional identities

Teachers` professional identity is influenced by several important factors, one of which is the real classroom lecturing practice and being a member of the teaching community within an educational organization.

In a recent study, Gumsok and Seferoglu (2022) conducted a qualitative case study aimed at investigating the social constructivism of teachers` professional identity. They implemented a semi- structured interview with 12 teacher educators in Turkey. Those participants were sent to the USA for getting extra training. They have found that having dealing with colleagues as audience made the teacher educators "struggle for legitimacy, conceptualize the job in the discourse of sharing" and in return

will perceive themselves through teacher approach, and "partially cling to the sense of belonging to the teacher community as a means of enhancing teacher engagement in a collaborative atmosphere" (p. 13).

In 2011, Ciahong conducted a study about the professional identity of nine in- service student teachers while they were doing their PhD studies in a Chinese university. He also focused on "split identity change" which reveals that teachers` multi- leveled, achievement- oriented and discipline- focused professional identities is influenced by policy. Thus, according to him, teachers` professional identities were "shaped and reshaped in the process of negotiating and balancing between personal beliefs and rules". Another study was conducted by Soren (2013) that was designed to investigate the obstacles of English as the medium of instruction that EFL lecturers face. 10 lecturers participated in his study, they were asked to define their own teacher identity and perceptions towards any influential factors on their identities when moving from Danish- medium of instruction to English- medium of instruction. The participants mentioned that teaching experience and pedagogical content knowledge were the core of their own identities as teachers. Therefore, it was asserted that teacher training programs need to get improved to motivate and help lecturers become more linguistically and pedagogically experienced. Wang (2014) also conducted a study aimed at exploring the challenges of 108 senior high English teachers in China in relation to their professional development. The findings showed that those challenges were mainly related to the strong pressure on participants driven by "heavy teaching burden" being less experienced in conducting research studies, being unsatisfied with the working conditions, and the low income".

Lecturing in higher education is a critical issue in obtaining the learners' output for having more qualified graduates, which goes in line with vision, mission, and the identified goals of the higher educational organization. To ensure this qualification, suitability of the teaching practice must be observed in relation to the predetermined curricula (Hampden-Thompson and Galindo, 2017). And, as for Ciahong (2011), teachers possess the role of evaluating the syllabus including books, judging the students' achievements, and using their own teaching styles.

In the same regard Heryandi (2022) argued that teachers and the other parties in the educational sector are responsible in evaluating the lectures that targeted for students. In his study, and for the purpose of evaluating and verifying the lecturing process, he has implemented a quality monitoring system that involves students as the party responsible for that verification. Teachers need to enter their lecturing process data along with the targeted group of students who will were asked, by email message, to verify the lecturing process in terms of comparing it with the course syllabus plan. Students can verify whether the course is in accordance with. Doing so, will help in having higher levels of trust for developing by checking the conformity charged to the learning participants, a better level of trust is obtained in order to improve the learning outcomes.

Long and Kowang (2014) studied the impact of lecturers' competence on the satisfaction of their students. Their study was carried out in a Malaysian private university. The findings revealed that subject matter competence, presentation clarity, interaction with students, creativity in teaching, classroom activities and lecture notes all influenced the students' outcome.

Atay (2023) conducted a study that mainly evaluates on perceptions of teachers during the pandemic. He implemented Wenger's (1997) social

theory of learning. The study also discussed teachers` professional identities in relation to their use of ICT. Engagement, Imagination and Alignment, were investigated. For collecting data, written history documents of the participants and semi-structured interviews were implemented. It was found that teachers have faced challenges in using ICT, and that teachers reconstructed new identities by collaboration, community of practice and identifying new ideas in their school contexts.

In relation to being satisfied about the teaching profession, Wahyudi (2018) conducted a study to find out the influence of teachers` job satisfaction and work experience on their lecturing performance. The context of the study was the University of Pamulang. The study was a quantitative, descriptive type of study with using different statistical analyzing procedures. He found that satisfaction and experience have a great impact on the lecturers` performance and therefore, this university "should improve its performance policy" and it needs to "set performance-oriented designs on human resources". (p.229)

Farrel (2011) carried out a study about three female experienced teachers in Canada. 16 role identities were identified and grouped as: 1) teacher as a manager in the classroom. 2) teacher as a professional in his work, and 3) a teacher as an acculturator.

In addition to the previously mentioned factors that influence the effectiveness of lecturing, there are some more important ones. Namely, clarity of holding the lectures, orientation of the tasks used and the engagement in creative teaching environment, and effectively lecturing by implementing diverse of resources (Canale et al., 2012).

Methodology

Participants

Four Libyan EFL in-service teachers teaching at the faculty of languages and translation, Azzytuna University, Tarhuna district, Libya, have voluntarily participated in the current study. Participants were referred to by the first letter of their names for confidentiality reasons.

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Degree	Years of teaching	Employment status at the organization
Teacher S	63	Male	PhD	38	Lecturer & head of the department
Teacher N	39	Female	MA	10	Lecturer
Teacher G	40	Female	PhD	20	Lecturerx
Teacher M	60	Male	MA	36	Lecturer & the coordinator of the quality assurance at the department

Research Questions

The current study is conducted to answer the following research questions:

Q1/ what kind of teacher professional identities do EFL Libyan teachers possess from their own perspective?

Q2/ what lecturing factors influenced their identities as teachers, and how their identities were reconstructed by the impact of their actual lecturing?

Data Collection Procedures

Since the current study is a qualitative type of study, it used a semi-structured interviews those were carried out collect the data from teachers in relation to their perceptions towards their professional identities. This method was also used to evaluate the lecturing factors that might play a vital role in the construction of the teachers` professional identities. Finally, it tries to understand in what sense teachers` professional identities were reconstructed by their actual lecturing performance.

The interview questions revolve around the following two major concepts.

Concept #1

Questions related to the teachers` experience as teachers in the general sense.

Concept # 2

Questions related to the teachers` experience as teachers working in an educational organization.

Questions of the interview were implemented from Bukor (2011).

Whereas, questions related to the influence of lecturing on reconstructing teachers` professional identities were included within the two interview questions.

In addition, for the purpose of gathering data related to teacher professional identity, narrative inquiry has been used in the current study for the *informal talk* held between the researcher and the participants, since, as Connelly and Clandinin (1999) believe, teachers express their teaching experiences by storytelling.

Data Analysis

To collect the required data, two-week period of time was spent during the Spring term in 2023 academic year. Individual interviews were held with each participant followed by some informal talks to enrich the data. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed in about 70 pages.

Results and discussion

This section provides the results obtained from the teachers' responses to the interview questions along with some direct quotations followed by discussing sections.

Teachers' own perceptions towards their teacher professional identities

Teacher S

To be a teacher means to be responsible for various types of students. As for him:

"being flexible is very important when dealing with university students. We should help them feel self-confident and that we, as teachers, do care about them which makes them trust us. Then they will learn everything from us, not only the subject matter but also the morals we are trying to convey".

Teacher S, with 38 years of experience, explained that he keens on teaching and that he would never change his profession for any reason. He has also mentioned that his identity as a teacher is not stable, rather, it passed through many different stages of development. Linguistic competence was also referred to as a vital component for being effective teachers. In this regard he said "to be called an effective teacher means to be linguistically competent" and that "those teachers who are effective are the ones who are respected in the society, otherwise it won't make any sense to be a teacher".

Teacher N

This teacher expresses the English language teaching profession as a prestigious profession that could make her feel unique in her family. When she was asked in what way she got prestige by her profession she said "every time they (I mean my family members) need help reading instructions written in English (for using certain products for example) they immediately seek my help". She also believes that she could help many people with her knowledge of English. She commented "as a language teacher, I try all the time to improve my English not only for the sake of teaching my students, but also for helping the whole society. I know that I can be effective, inspiring and motivating teacher in particular and a person in general". Having the required linguistic knowledge is very important from her perspective. "We as teachers must be well qualified to be able to teach university students. Therefore, we should all the time try to improve our linguistic knowledge to cope with the linguistic needs our students".

Teacher G

This teacher described her professional identity in the sense that "my teacher professional identity has arisen in linguistic knowledge, training, and education which is relevant to the job of teachers, which resulted in my teaching experience". For her, the construction of identity takes several stages and that, it is "linked to how educational process and procedures formed, experienced, negotiated and valued by all people within the organization". She further explained that "as teachers, our identity is formed from cultural and social experience and shaped from our own engagement in the educational process".

Teacher M

He started describing his teacher identity by saying that" I like being a language teacher. I really enjoy teaching. After having many years of experience (more than three decades) I became more familiar with the effective teaching methods, so I always try my best to implement different teaching methods and techniques". He believes that his profession has driven him to get improved for the sake his students. And that "good teaching means good learning, so we can only judge our teaching by our students` performance". To be called a teacher having a professional identity, "we, as language teachers should have the required linguistic knowledge that makes us able to teach university students". And that teachers should keep learning and getting more improved, because, for him, "those who think they have finished their education by graduating can never construct qualified teacher professional identities"

Discussion

Teachers perceived themselves as important influencers in their profession, particularly for their students. They felt responsible in having enough linguistic competence, as asserted by all teachers in this study, to teach effectively. As found by Long and Kowang (2014) subject matter competence, presentation clarity, interaction with students, creativity in teaching, classroom activities and lecture notes all influenced the students` outcome. And that they are also responsible for conveying some morals to their students as mentioned by teacher S. Uniquely, teacher N explained that being an EFL teacher provided her with a prestige that could help her be more motivated to improve her language use. While, as for teacher G, besides her comment on the importance of having linguistic knowledge, she has mentioned that her, as a teacher, identity is formed from with influence of her cultural and social experience and shaped from the engagement in the educational process. Teacher M also stressed the

importance of having the required linguistic knowledge to help teachers construct a qualified teacher professional identities. He also believes that teachers should keep learning and getting more improved to be able to construct qualified teacher professional identities. Since, teachers with good and qualified construction of professional identity are expected to get more developed by learning for the purpose of self- improvement to become effective teachers (Battey & Frank, 2008). As obtained from the results, providing a single title under which we can characterize teacher professional identity in not possible. Similarly, Farrell (2011) believes that identity includes "teacher beliefs, values, and emotions about many aspects of teaching and being a teacher" (p. 54).

Lecturing factors that influenced teachers` identity reconstruction

Teacher S

Factors mentioned by Teacher S:

Being responsible, working collaboratively, engagement, and experience.

As the head of the department, " I always advice teachers in my department to work very hard to be effective teachers, I feel responsible for both students and teachers. This responsibility, I think, made me reconstruct a new professional identity as an EFL teacher. He further explained that "being a teacher with 38 years of experience, I believe that our students' achievements are what reflect our successful or unsuccessful teaching performance". Working collaboratively is also a very important factor mentioned by this teacher. In this regard he said" I always advice my colleagues to work collaboratively, so they share knowledge and get more improved which will, in turn, be reflected on our students` outcomes". Engagement was also referred to as an influencing factor in reconstructing the identity of this teacher. He stated that "after teaching for 38 years, I

became more experienced in using and evaluating the teaching methods, the teaching materials, and the teaching techniques. Thus, engaging our students in the learning process proofed that students get more responsible for their learning".

Teacher N

Factors mentioned by Teacher N:

Experience, working under pressure, organization policies, real teaching practice.

Regarding the reconstruction of her professional identity she explained that her identity as a teacher is" changeable based on the influence of many factors. To name a few, gaining more experience in dealing with students and colleagues made me different compared to when I was a novice teacher. My students` needs, their different learning styles, their individual differences all affected my reconstruction of identity". Working under pressure was an important factor mentioned by this teacher. In this regard, she said "being a mother, I feel that my performance is affected negatively when working under pressure. She also referred to balancing her teaching duties with the organization policies. As she explained that "to be a teacher working in an organization means to obey the rules and obligations provided by that organization, which made me reconstruct my professional identity in such a way that I look to myself as someone working with others".

She has also talked about how her identity was reconstructed by her real teaching practice, "my professional identity has been impacted by my real teaching practice. To elaborate, I found myself in a different environment dealing with teenage students who are individually different and who are sensitive and need to be motivated all the time. So I try all the time to modify my personality in such a way that fits my profession".

Teacher G

Factors mentioned by Teacher G

Support from the organization, experience,

As a teacher "I think we need suitable, appropriate support from our organization to work effectively". She thinks that "my identity as a lecturer has been changed over time and is still changing". Comparing her professional EFL teacher identity after gaining experience with that when she was a novice teacher made her reconstruct new forms of identity as a teacher, to describe this fact she said "as a novice teacher, my identity was shaped by the effect of the institutional requirements, obligations, and rules, then, after gaining more experience, that identity was reconstructed in a different way, particularly by being a real teacher in a real classroom with different types of students". She has also referred to her prior experience as a student and how that prior experience could help her reconstruct her teacher identity. She explained what she meant by saying "I thought of a model from your prior teachers. Usually the one you liked the most, then I tried to imitate that teacher in my real teaching practices".

Teacher M

Factors mentioned by Teacher M

Experience, the role of quality of assurance, collaboration, working in an organization, responsibility for students` outcomes.

"Teaching for more than three decades means having enough experience". This teacher referred to experience as an influencing factor in reconstructing his teacher professional identity. He also referred to his role as the coordinator of quality of assurance in being very important facilitator in doing his job. "This role means a lot for me, but to play this role effectively, collaboration is required. Judging the teaching materials,

implementing new teaching methods, trying more effective teaching techniques need patience and working collaboratively with all members in the teaching community". Working in a higher educational organization was also an important factor in reconstructing his identity as a teacher. As for him" the feeling of being a member of the teaching community of this organization makes me feel more responsible. When doing my job, I all the time about our students` performance, their achievements, because at the end of the day, good teaching means good learning".

Discussion

Thematic Analysis

1 Experience

Experience was a recurring theme mentioned by all participants. Teachers highlighted how their years of teaching practice influenced their professional identities. Teacher S emphasized that their students' achievements reflect their teaching performance, gained from 38 years of experience. Teacher G and Teacher M also noted that their identities evolved over time through real classroom teaching and prior student experiences. This aligns with Wahyudi (2018) and Soren (2013), who found that experience significantly impacts teachers' performance and core identities.

2. Responsibility and Engagement Teacher S and Teacher M pointed out the importance of feeling responsible for both students and colleagues. Teacher S mentioned that this sense of responsibility and engagement led to a new professional identity. Similarly, Teacher M emphasized the responsibility for students' outcomes as a crucial factor. This notion is supported by Long and Kowang (2014), highlighting that teachers' engagement and responsibility impact their identity reconstruction.

3. Collaboration Working collaboratively was a common theme among the participants. Teacher S and Teacher M stressed the importance of sharing knowledge and working as a team to enhance teaching practices and student outcomes. Teacher N also acknowledged the role of collaboration within organizational policies. This finding is consistent with Gumsok and Seferoglu (2022), who highlighted the significance of a collaborative teacher community.

4. Organizational Support and Policies Teacher G and Teacher N emphasized the role of organizational support and policies in shaping their professional identities. Teacher G mentioned that appropriate support from the organization is essential for effective teaching, while Teacher N discussed how organizational rules influenced her identity. This aligns with Hampden–Thompson and Galindo (2017) and Heryandi (2022), who found that organizational support is vital for teachers' identity reconstruction.

5. Pressure and Work–Life Balance Teacher N referred to the negative impact of working under pressure due to her motherhood responsibilities. She noted that balancing personal and professional duties affected her teaching performance. Wang (2014) similarly found that heavy teaching burdens create significant pressure on teachers, impacting their professional identities.

6. Real Teaching Practice All teachers mentioned real teaching practice as a crucial factor in their identity reconstruction. Teacher N and Teacher G highlighted how dealing with diverse student needs and real classroom environments shaped their identities. This supports the findings of Ciahong (2011), who stated that teachers' professional identities are formed through the negotiation of personal beliefs and institutional rules.

Conclusion

The current case study tried to investigate a very important topic in ELT which teachers' professional identity. Despite the number of studies written about this topic, this study worthwhile and unique, since, to the best of the author's knowledge, very few studies have investigated the impact of lecturing on the reconstruction of teachers' professional identities. And that, no similar studies have been carried out in Libya. Findings revealed that some identity descriptions were common to all participants while the lecturing factors those caused the reconstruction of their identities were divers.

Implications

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made:

1. Professional Development: Implement comprehensive professional development programs that address the diverse needs of teachers and provide ongoing support to help them adapt to changing educational environments.
2. Organizational Support: Educational institutions should enhance organizational support for teachers, providing resources and a supportive environment that fosters collaboration and professional growth.
3. Work-Life Balance: Develop policies and initiatives that promote a healthy work-life balance for teachers, recognizing the impact of personal responsibilities on professional performance.
4. Further Research: Conduct further studies with larger, more diverse samples to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing teacher identity reconstruction. Research should also explore other potential factors, such as the role of technology and the impact of professional development programs.
5. Teacher Training Programs: Improve teacher training programs to

ensure that they equip future teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge, including linguistic competence and effective teaching strategies

Limitations

In conducting this qualitative study, several limitations were noted:

1. Subjectivity: As Farrell (2014) pointed out, there is no "pure description" in qualitative research. The analysis is subjective, and the researcher has discretion in selecting which responses to include. This can introduce bias, despite efforts to remain objective.
2. Sample Size: The study's sample size is relatively small and may not be representative of all teachers in Libya. A larger sample size would provide more generalizable results.
3. Context-Specific Findings: The findings are specific to the Libyan educational context and may not be applicable to other regions or countries with different educational systems and cultural contexts.
4. Limited Scope: The study focuses primarily on lecturing factors, potentially overlooking other significant factors influencing teacher identity reconstruction, such as technology integration or professional development opportunities.

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