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MALLEABILITY OF TEACHER IDENTITY: SHOULD CONTEXTUAL FACTORS BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE?

Abstract:

Teacher identity resides in the heart of teaching and particularly matters for early career resilience. However, little is known about teacher identity held by beginning teachers in primary and secondary schools. Less is even known regarding the leverage of contextual factors on teacher identity.

Against this backdrop, the present research employed a simple prospective panel design, primarily seeking answers to: 1) whether teacher identity is malleable; and 2) what roles learning environments and work environments play in teacher identity and, if any, its change. A series of three studies were conducted spanning 1 year. Study I involved 1,062 year-4 prospective teachers, 464 out of which partook in Study II at the end of the first teaching year. In Study III, 21 teachers were interviewed given their significant changes in teacher identity. Measures included the Teacher Identity Inventory (TII), the Inventory for Students' Perceived Learning Environment (ISPLE), and the Job Demands-Resources Inventory (JD-RI).

Results found that 1) teacher identity declined appreciably in all aspects over one year; 2) peer and facilities related constructs in both learning and work environments contributed to the majority of teacher identity; 3) work environments played a significant role in predicting teacher identity change, where peer and facilities related constructs again were the strongest contributors.

Findings suggest that educators and school administrators be more mindful of early career teachers' identity crises. Implications are discussed concerning pre and in-service training programs.

Keywords:

teacher identity; learning/work environments; malleability

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