

# Research on Present Situation of Teachers' Professional Identity for Students in Five-year Preschool Education Major in the Northwest of Hubei Province – Based on the research in Yunyang Teachers' College

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**Abstract.** The methods of the questionnaire survey and individual interviews are adopted to survey the students in five-year preschool education major in Yunyang Teachers' College. The results show that an overall level of the teachers' professional identity for students in five-year preschool education major is better, but with greater individual difference; the students with different genders in different grades and origins have significant differences in the professional emotion, professional value and professional skills.

**Keyword.** teachers' professional identity; students in five-year preschool education major; questionnaire survey

## 1 Raise of problem

The teachers' professional identity is one of the most important psychological traits to engage in the teaching profession, which can be not only obtained from continuing education, but also trained before occupation. The research finds out that "the professional identity for students in preschool education major not only directly affects the students' professional learning and career planning, but also affects the quality and stability of China's preschool teachers in the future".<sup>[1]</sup> On this basis, this paper is used to strengthen the research on the professional identity for students in preschool education major and understand the present situation and existing problems of the professional identity, so as to take targeted measures to help improve the professional quality of China's preschool teachers.

## 2 Research contents, objects and methods

In terms of the connotation of teachers' professional identity, the researchers make diversified interpretation from different points of view. On the whole, the keys of teachers' profes-

sional identity include seven factors: professional cognition, professional value, professional expectancy, professional will, professional skills, professional behavior disposition and professional emotion.

The current research gives more considerations on the identity of “preparatory teachers”. The professional cognition involves in pre-occupation and post-occupation. “The normal university students are future teachers who are now not really walking up the faculty positions and engaged in the teaching profession, whose professional growth situation is very different from that of the post-profession teachers. Due to self-involvement of recognition, the pre-occupation and post-occupation individual reactions inevitably have essential differences. For example, the pre-occupation individuals are difficult to determine their professional will and professional behavioral disposition. Therefore, the professional identity for students in five-year preschool education major includes four aspects: professional cognition, professional value, professional skills and professional behavior.”<sup>[2]</sup> The research will focus on the survey of the above four aspects, selecting the students in five-year preschool education major in Yunyang Teachers’ College—a preschool education talent cultivation place in the Northwest of Hubei Province as research objects. Yunyang Teachers’ College is known as “the backbone of basic education in the Northwest of Hubei Province”. It has cultivated numerous outstanding teachers in the Northwest of Hubei Province for many years, which is the first college approved with five-year preschool education major in Hubei Province. Therefore, this research on the professional identity of these students contributes to promote the professional quality of preschool teachers in the Northwest of Hubei Province in the future.

This research is subject to the questionnaire survey and supplemented by the individual interviews. A total of 415 students are selected as objects in the questionnaire survey. 398 valid questionnaires are recovered, with the effective rate of 96%. Among them, there are 35 boys and 363 girls, which are basically in line with the situation of more girls and less boys in the preschool education major. From the grade analysis, the sample distribution is more even with 130 sophomores, 151 junior students and 117 senior students. Viewing from the origin of surveyed students, there are 178 students from cities and urban areas, 109 people from counties, and 111 people from rural areas, which are in line with the status of the source of students from counties and cities. Finally, the data are input in SPSS19.0 software for processing.

### 3 Research results

#### 3.1 Overall situation of teachers’ professional identity for students in five-year preschool education major

**Table 1.** Real performance analysis of the surveyed students in each dimension.

	Mean value (M)	Standard deviation (SD)
Professional value	2.904	0.556
Professional emotion	3.414	0.799
Professional cognition	3.189	0.483
Professional skills	3.15	0.89
Professional identity	3.164	0.624

As can be seen from Table 1, the score of the teachers’ professional identity for students in five-year preschool education major is 3.164, higher than 0.164 of the intermediate level (3), with a better overall level. Among them, the professional emotion (M = 3.414) and

professional cognition ( $M = 3.189$ ) are higher than the overall level, while the professional skills ( $M = 3.15$ ) and professional values ( $M = 2.904$ ) are lower than the overall level. The score of the professional values are even lower than that of the intermediate level.

### 3.2 Specific situation of the teachers' professional identity for students in five-year preschool education major

#### 3.2.1 Recognition of the students in five-year preschool education major on the profession of preschool teacher

For the research on the work meaning of the preschool teachers, 67.3% of the students think that the work of preschool teachers is meaningful, of which 11.3 % of the students think that it is very meaningful, and 21.4% of the students think that it is not meaningful.

For the research on the social status of current preschool teachers, the majority (52.5%) of students think that the status is general; 18.3% of students think that the status is slightly lower than that of the general profession; 15.6% of students think that the status is slightly higher than that of the general profession; 12.6% of students think that the preschool teachers are sacred and glorious.

For the description of definition of preschool teachers by words, 47.6% of students think that the preschool teachers are "baby-sitters" and "kings of children" to "take care of children's life", but 43.1% of students use some beautiful words to describe the preschool teachers' profession, such as "children's models and norms", "enlightening teachers", "conductors" and "sacred honor".

#### 3.2.2 Professional values of students in five-year preschool education major

**Table 2.** Data performance of the surveyed students in the aspect of the teachers' professional value

Degree of respect on preschool teachers	Degree of envy on the normal school students in the preschool education major	Feelings of the normal school students in the preschool education major	Satisfaction degree of the current wage of preschool teachers	Whether the personnel teachers can realize the value of life					
Percent-age	Percent-age	Percent-age	Percent-age	Percent-age					
Not very respectable	2.5%	Very unenviable	1.5%	Very self-abased	1.0%	Very dissatisfied	25.4%	Irrealizable at all	5.8%
Not respectable	10.3%	Unenviable	13.6%	A little self-abased	10.3%	Dissatisfied	33.4%	Irrealizable	18.1%
General	57.6%	General	56.5%	General	62.1%	General	25.1%	Possibly realizable	53.8%
Respectable	25.1%	Enviably	26.1%	A little proud	20.1%	Quite satisfied	6.3%	Realizable	21.6%
Very respectable	4.5%	Very enviable	2.3%	Very proud	6.5%	Very satisfied	1.0%	Completely realizable	0.7%
						Unknown	8.8%		

As can be seen from the above data, 70% of the surveyed students believe that the degree of respect on the current preschool teacher is not too high; 62.1% of the students feel so-so to be a normal school student in the preschool education major, and they believe that the identity to be a normal school student in the preschool education major is not worthy to be envied by others. In the survey of the satisfaction degree of the income of the current preschool teachers for the surveyed students, except that a small part of students do not understand the income of preschool teachers, nearly 58.8% of the students feel very dissatisfied with the income of the current preschool teachers.

However, in the survey of the surveyed students to think about whether the preschool teachers can realize their value of life, 214 surveyed students select “possibly realizable”, accounting for 53.8%; 86 surveyed students select “realizable”, accounting for 21.6%; 72 surveyed students select “irrealizable”, accounting for 18.1%; less surveyed students select “irrealizable at all” and “completely realizable”. The above survey results show that the majority (76.1%) of the surveyed students believe that the profession of the preschool teacher can realize the value of life to some extent, indicating that the surveyed students are more recognized with the profession of the preschool teacher.

### 3.2.3 Emotion of the students in five-year preschool education major on the profession of the preschool teacher

In the survey of whether the surveyed student can feel happy to be a preschool teacher, 92.2% of the students feel different levels of happiness, indicating that the surveyed students have a more positive professional emotion on the profession of the preschool teacher. In the survey of whether favor of the profession of the preschool teacher, 182 surveyed students select “general”, accounting for 45.7%; 38.5% of the surveyed students select “favorable”; less surveyed students select other items. The above survey results show that 90.5% of students are more favor of the profession of the preschool teachers.

### 3.2.4 Understanding and mastery of the professional skills of the preschool teachers by the students in five-year preschool education major

**Table 3.** Data performance of the surveyed students in the aspect of the teachers’ professional skills

Mastery situation of the specialized theoretical knowledge		Level of education and teaching skills		Whether to be an outstanding preschool teacher	
	Percentage		Percentage		Percentage
Very unqualified	4.0%	Very unqualified	3.3%	Just impossible	1.50%
Unqualified	39.4%	Unqualified	31.6%	Impossible	6.8%
General	36.7%	General	43.5%	Unclear	24.60%
Good	19.1%	Good	21.1%	Possible	59.00%
Excellent	0.8%	Excellent	0.5%	Highly possible	8.10%

As can be seen from Table 3, 80.1% of the surveyed students believe that the mastery situation of the specialized theoretical knowledge is poor. 157 surveyed students select “unqualified”, accounting for 39.4%; 78.4% of students feel that the level of education and teaching skills is not good enough. The students are generally self-confident. 59.0% of students believe that they may become excellent preschool teachers. 8.1% of the surveyed students select “highly possible”.

## 3.3 Impact of different characteristics of the surveyed students on various dimensions of the teachers’ professional identity

**Table 4.** Data performance of different characteristics of the surveyed students on various dimensions of the teachers’ professional identity.

	Gender		Grade		Origin of student	
	Chi-square value	P value	Chi-square value	P value	Chi-square value	P value
Professional cognition	2.598	0.627	46.804	1.67	6.683	0.571
Professional value	16.094	0.003*	196.046	4.348	20.907	0.007*
Professional emotion	13.847	0.008*	52.775	1.192	8.362	0.399
Professional skills	15.977	0.003*	25.279	0.001*	14.561	0.068

Note: The significant level tested is 0.05. The data performance with “\*” is the significant difference.

In addition to the professional cognition, other three dimensions of the teachers' professional identity for students in five-year preschool education major have significant differences in the aspect of the gender, grade and origin of the surveyed students, which are specifically manifested as follows:

1. The professional value, professional emotion and promotional skills of girls are significantly higher than that of boys ( $P = 0.003 < 0.05$ ), which is consistent with the previous researches<sup>[3]</sup>. Different from girls, boys are generally not in favor of the profession of the preschool teacher and believe that this profession is not able to realize their value of life, and the mastery situation of the specialized theoretical knowledge and education and teaching skills is poorer than that of the girls.
2. Students from different grades have significant differences ( $P = 0.001 < 0.05$ ) in the professional skills. The mastery degree of the specialized theoretical knowledge of the students from different grades ranked from "good" to "bad" is successively junior students, senior students and sophomores; the mastery degree of the education and teaching skills ranked from "good" to "bad" is successively senior students, junior students and sophomores. As for whether they can become an excellent preschool teacher, the students from different grades also have differences. The hugest quantity is senior students, they believe that they can become excellent preschool teachers, which is followed by the sophomores and junior students.
3. Students from different origins have significant difference ( $P = 0.007 < 0.05$ ) in the aspect of the professional value. The cognition and concept of the professional value for the surveyed students from the rural areas are generally higher than that of the students from cities and counties, which have been verified in the previous similar research<sup>[4]</sup>.

## 4 Discussions

(1) Overall condition of the teachers' professional identity for students in five-year preschool education major

Viewing from the total data of professional identity, an overall sense of the professional identity for students in five-year preschool education major is relatively high. In particular, the data performance of the professional cognition is delighting. As the countries continue to strengthen investment in preschool education, and continuously introduce professional standard of the preschool teachers, children's learning development guidelines and other major policy document, it releases a strong signal of attaching importance to the career of preschool education and training of preschool education talents in society, thus improving the social image, status and recognition of the preschool teachers. Meanwhile, in the process of training of preschool education talents, it is necessary to strengthen the cognition of the professional development of the preschool teachers, which is attributable to promote the professional identity of the preschool teachers for the students.

The score of the professional skills is lower than the overall level, mainly because the teachers' education has many problems in the aspect of curriculum provision, teaching mode, practical teaching and internship in a long term, resulting in generally poor education and teaching skills of the normal school students. The current curriculum and teaching reform is in full swing, but it is difficult to remove the long-standing malpractice, which requires to being deposited. The five-year preschool education major must actively reform the educational practical curriculum, carry out standardized practical teaching, adhere to the "normal school student-centered" teaching philosophy to reform teaching mode, create the training strategies of the professional skills, and improve the training effect of educational practical ability.

It is worth noticing that the score of the professional value is lower than the overall level, and even lower than the middle level. Specific analysis shows that the surveyed students

recognize the intrinsic value of the profession of the preschool teacher, but the social status, economic treatment, occupational prestige and other aspects have a greater impact on the profession values of the students. In fact, the professional value is the understanding and orientation of the demand on the “matter, society and spirit to me”<sup>[5]</sup> in the process of occupation choice and completion, which is a combination of the orientation of various demands of individuals. In the process of training of talents in the five-year preschool education major, it is necessary to continuously strengthen to “guide students to correct their professional values, transit from the focus on the economic income to self-development in the profession, and inspire students to love the profession of preschool teacher”<sup>[6]</sup>, “guide students to consider the ultimate pursuit of life, form a correct understanding of the profession and self-actualization, and improve the teachers’ professional identity”.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### (2) Differences in teachers’ professional identity of the students with different genders

The professional identity of girls is significantly higher than that of boys, which is mainly caused by the characteristics of profession of preschool teacher. The surveyed boys reflect that the preschool teachers confront with trivial work and low income, and the overall environment is dominated by young children and female, which are more in line with the characteristics and expectations of the female, but they could not meet achievement motivation of the male. In fact, the male possesses natural advantages that are not available to the female in the aspect of children’s moral education and behavior guidance. The independent, autonomous, decisive, strong, confident, brave, firm and persistent traits and entrepreneurial spirit of the male are helpful for promoting the children to form positive psychology and good social adaptability. Therefore, attaching importance to the male teachers’ profession identity is very helpful for the construction of preschool teachers.

#### (3) Differences in teachers’ professional identity of the students from different grades

Students from different grades have significant differences in teachers’ professional skills. The sophomores are still at the learning phase of general education curriculum, just learning two courses of pedagogy and general psychology. The understanding of the kindergarten is limited to the perceptual knowledge obtained from one or two visits. Therefore, the self-efficacy in the mastery of the specialized theoretical knowledge and education and teaching skills is not strong, but they are confident in the future, and believe that they will be an excellent preschool teacher. In the five-year educational system, the third and fourth school years are the most concentrated period of leaning specialized courses. In order to make students successfully complete the internship tasks and smoothly achieve internship and role change, the courses related to the education and teaching skills are generally arranged in the fourth school year, and the senior students have a more comprehensive understanding of the profession of preschool teacher through several internships. Therefore, the survey results show that the senior students are more confident in the mastery of the education and teaching skills than that of the senior students, and have more confidence to become excellent preschool teachers. Confusingly, the junior students have the best mastery of the specialized theoretical knowledge. Through the survey analysis, the surveyed senior students are the first term of students in five-year preschool education major in Yunyang Teachers’ College. This school is still in an exploration stage of running a school, so there are deficiencies in the curriculum provision, teaching staff, teaching experience and other aspects. Therefore, the specialized theoretical knowledge learning for the senior students is not solid enough.

#### (4) Differences in teachers’ professional identity of the students from different origins

The teachers’ professional value of the students from rural areas is significantly higher than that of the students from cities and counties, which is mainly caused by the differences in the status of teachers, occupational prestige and organizational environment in different regions. The economic conditions in rural areas are relatively poor, the educational level of

the public is generally low, but the atmosphere of respect for teachers is strong, so the identity of preschool teacher is prone to be affirmed and highly recognized. However, in Shiyan, Xiangyang and other small cities and counties, the income of preschool teachers is lower than that of other professions. The preschool teachers confront with hard work, little promotion opportunity and low occupational prestige, resulting in a generally low recognition of the students from these areas on the profession of preschool teachers. Therefore, in order to attach importance to guide the students from different origins in different ways, we should form a correct and comprehensive understanding of the profession of preschool teachers. And strengthening the guidance and education of values is an important way to improve the teachers' professional identity.

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