

A Study on the Impact of Professional Identity on Learning Engagement of Chinese English Normal Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the current situation of professional identity and learning engagement among normal students of English majors, and explore the impact of professional identity on learning engagement. The research results show that English normal students have a relatively high level of professional identity and learning engagement. There is a positive correlation between professional identity and learning engagement. Professional identification can positively predict learning engagement. Specifically, cognitive, behavioral, appropriateness factors can positively predict learning engagement. And behavioral identity having the greatest impact on learning engagement.

KEYWORDS

English normal student; professional identity; learning engagement

1 Introduction

In recent years, the high-quality development of higher education in China. Talent development practices in higher education are being challenged in new ways. Professional identity and learning engagement are important individual psychological and behavioral variables in the development of college students, and have received great attention from the education sector. Nowadays, the status of college students' professional identity is worrying and the degree of learning engagement is insufficient, which not only impairs the quality of students' learning, but also is not conducive to the improvement of the quality of talent cultivation in colleges and universities (Li, 2018).

Professional identity is an important influence on students' engagement in learning (Sullsvan, 2002). Students' acceptance and recognition of their majors enable them to study actively and improve their academic achievement. At present, China's lack of guidance for students' career planning. It has led to students' vague orientation towards their future careers. And they don't have clear planning when choosing their majors. They find in their subsequent studies that they dislike their major. All of the above pose serious obstacles to students' professional identity. The cognition of the profession influences the emotional recognition of the learned profession as well as the behavioral engagement, which in turn affects the academic level of college students and the mastery of professional skills (Ma, 2020).

Most of the existing research literature focuses on the current situation of college students' professional identity and learning engagement. And there are fewer studies that take professional identity as an influencing factor on learning engagement. There are fewer studies that target English normal students. Therefore, this study is conducive to find effective ways to promote English normal students' learning engagement. This study raises the following three questions. 1) What is the current situation of English normal students' professional identity and learning engagement? 2) Is there any difference between English normal students' professional identity and learning engagement in terms of gender, grade, birthplace and volunteer choice? 3) How does the professional identity of English normal students affect learning engagement?

2 Research Background

2.1 Professional Identity

"Identity", also known as "the same", was first proposed by Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, who defined identity as a psychological process in which an individual subconsciously imitates another person, feels psychologically the same, and emphasizes the ego (Chen, 2013). Erickson, a psychologist, linked identity to the self and proposed the concept of self-identity, which became an important concept in developmental psychology. And professional identity is generated on the theoretical premise of self-identity. At present, there is still no consistent definition of professional identity among scholars.

In the West, there are fewer restrictions on professions, and it is relatively easy to learn and change professions according to one's own situation. So the research on professional identity in the West is more often combined with occupational identity. Chinese scholars have studied the professional identity from various aspects. In Yang's (2015) study, professional identity refers to students fully understand their majors, take the initiative to study actively, and they want to

find jobs related to their majors in the future. Ren (2016) believes that professional identity is a dynamic concept, a dynamic process from cognition, understanding to recognition and acceptance.

2.2 Learning Engagement

Schaufeli et al. (2002), a foreign researcher, considers learning engagement as a positive and fulfilling psychological state related to learning, including three dimensions: vitality (energy, resilience and persistence), dedication (total commitment, courage to accept the challenge), and concentration (all the energy is directed to learning). Most scholars define learning engagement from both psychological and behavioral dimensions. Newmann (1992) classify learning engagement into procedural and authentic engagement from both the behavioral and psychological dimensions. The former is at the behavioral level and focuses on adaptation to the administration of school rules and regulations. The latter is primarily psychological and refers to students' enduring engagement to the content and topic of learning. Fredricks (2004) views learning engagement as the interplay or integration of behavioral, affective, and cognitive aspects of the learning process.

3 Research Methods

3.1 Research Subject

This study adopts a combination of stratified and random sampling. English normal students at Jilin Normal University were selected as research subjects, 360 questionnaires were distributed and 342 valid questionnaires were recovered, with an effective recovery rate of 95%.

3.2 Research Tool

(1) The Professional Identity Scale

The Professional Identity Scale prepared by Qin (2009) was used for the study. The questionnaire consists of 12 questions, including four dimensions: cognitive (the degree of understanding of the profession), emotional (the degree of fondness for the profession), behavioral (the behavioral performance of professional learning) and appropriateness (the degree of matching between the profession and oneself), with a 5-point scale, and the higher the score, the higher the degree of professional identity. The cronbach coefficient of the total questionnaire was .914.

(2) Learning Engagement Scale

The study was conducted using the Learning Engagement Scale compiled by Schaufeli et al. (2002) and revised by Fang et al. (2008). The questionnaire consists of 3 dimensions: vitality, dedication and concentration. The scale is scored on a 5-point scale, and the higher the score the higher the learning engagement. The cronbach coefficient of the total scale is .841.

4 Analysis method

This study used spss 22.0 statistical software to perform descriptive statistics, *t*-test, ANOVA, correlation analysis and regression analysis on the data, with $p < .05$ indicating significance.

5 Research Results

5.1 Overall status of English normal students' professional identity and learning Engagement

The overall level of professional identity of English normal students is $3.41 \pm .52$, which indicates that the professional identity of English normal students is relatively high. Among them, cognitive > behavioral > appropriateness > emotional; the overall level of English normal students' learning engagement is to $3.60 \pm .66$, which indicates that English normal students' learning engagement is relatively high, among which dedication > vitality > concentration.

5.2 Differences in Professional Identity and Learning Engagement of English Normal Students

(1) Differences in Professional Identity of English Normal Students

The results showed that there were no significant differences in professional identity among English normal students in terms of gender and grade, but there were significant differences in terms of birthplace and volunteer choice. As shown in <Table 1>, there are significant differences in the professional identity of Chinese English normal students in terms of

the birthplace.

Table 1 Analysis of differences in professional identity among students from different birthplace

Variable	BirthPlace	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Cognitive	Urban	3.57	0.56	5.839	0***
	Rural	3.17	0.56		
Behavioral	Urban	3.49	0.58	4.957	0***
	Rural	3.17	0.59		
Appropriateness	Urban	3.49	0.58	4.466	0***
	Rural	3.15	0.58		
Emotional	Urban	3.48	0.56	4.843	0***
	Rural	3.14	0.55		
Professional identity	Urban	3.51	0.50	5.680	0***
	Rural	3.16	0.50		

*** $p < 0.001$

As shown in <Table 2>, there are significant differences in professional identity among English normal students in their volunteer choices. Specifically, in terms of volunteer choices, except for the appropriateness dimension, students who choose their majors independently scored significantly higher than those who are willing and adjusted by their parents and others.

Table 2 Analysis of differences in professional identity among students from different volunteer choices

Variable	Volunteer choices	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Cognitive	Self-selection	3.57	0.62	11.750	0***
	Parents and others' wishes	3.46	0.55		
	Adjustment major	3.16	0.38		
Behavioral	Self-selection	3.54	0.60	13.054	0***
	Parents and others' wishes	3.38	0.56		
	Adjustment major	3.04	0.47		
Appropriateness	Self-selection	3.39	0.62	17.353	0***
	Parents and others' wishes	3.55	0.57		
	Adjustment major	3.17	0.48		
Emotional	Self-selection	3.50	0.59	8.261	0***
	Parents and others' wishes	3.36	0.53		
	Adjustment major	3.08	0.48		
Professional identity	Self-selection	3.50	0.54	13.259	0***
	Parents and others' wishes	3.44	0.50		
	Adjustment major	3.11	0.41		

*** $p < 0.001$

(2) Differences in Learning Engagement of English Normal Students

The study found that there is no significant difference in the learning engagement of English normal students on the variables of gender, grade and birthplace. There is a significant difference in the volunteer choice. Specifically, on the volunteer choice variable, English normal students who chose their majors on their own scored significantly higher on all dimensions of learning engagement than those whose parents and others were willing and transferred, as shown in < Table 3>.

Table 3 Analysis of differences in learning engagement among students from different volunteer choices

Variable	Volunteer choices	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Vitality	Self-selection	3.74	0.78	5.298	0.005**
	Parents and others' wishes	3.66	0.80		
	Adjustment major	3.35	0.89		
Dedication	Self-selection	3.76	0.72	3.390	0.035*
	Parents and others' wishes	3.61	0.93		
	Adjustment major	3.46	0.77		
Concentration	Self-selection	3.81	0.73	8.470	0***
	Parents and others' wishes	3.63	0.89		
	Adjustment major	3.34	0.70		
Learning Engagement	Self-selection	3.77	0.60	8.244	0***
	Parents and others' wishes	3.63	0.73		
	Adjustment major	3.38	0.61		

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

(3) Correlation Analysis of Professional Identity and Learning Engagement of English Normal Students

As shown in <Table 4>, There was a significant correlation between professional identity and learning engagement among Chinese English normal students ($R=.732, p<.01$).

Table 4 Analysis of the correlation between professional identity and learning engagement

Variable	Professional Identity	Learning Engagement
Professional Identity	1	
Learning Engagement	0.732**	1

(4) Regression Analysis of Professional Identity on Learning engagement of English Major College Student

As shown in <Table 5>, under the condition of controlling demographic variables, learning engagement is the dependent variable and professional identity is the predictor variable for regression analysis. Professional identity has a positive predictive effect on learning engagement, explaining 55.1% of the total variation. Learning engagement was the dependent variable and the dimensions of professional identity were predictor variables in stepwise regression. As shown in <Table 6>, the three factors, cognitive, behavioral and appropriateness had a predictive effect on learning engagement and could explain 55% of the total variation.

The professional identity of English major college students has a significant effect on learning engagement except for the emotional dimension. The specific performance is as follows: for every one-point increase in cognitive identity of college students, learning engagement increases by 26.1%; for every one-point increase in behavioral identity, learning engagement increases by 42.3%; for every one-point increase in appropriateness identity, learning engagement increases by 23.4%; among them, behavioral identity has a greater impact on learning engagement. This shows that the more positive the students' behavior towards professional learning, the higher the students' learning engagement.

Table 5 Regression analysis of professional identity on learning engagement

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	VIF	Tolerance
Constant	0.485	0.157	-	3.084	0.002***	-	-
Professional identity	0.930	0.046	0.743	20.442	0***	1.000	1.000
R^2				.551			
Adj. R^2				.550			
<i>F</i>				$F(1,340)=417.861, p=0$			

Dependent variable: learning engagement
*** $p<0.001$

Table 6 Stepwise regression analysis of professional identity on learning engagement

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	VIF	Tolerance
Constant	0.519	0.160	-	3.253	0.001***	-	-
Cognitive	0.261	0.092	.232	2.852	0.005**	4.975	0.201
Behavioral	0.423	0.084	.385	5.027	0***	4.401	0.227
Appropriateness	0.234	0.050	.212	4.644	0***	1.572	0.636
R^2				0.550			
Adj. R^2				0.546			
<i>F</i>				$F(3,338)=137.803, p=0$			

Dependent variable: learning engagement
** $p<0.01$ *** $p<0.001$

6 Conclusion and Suggestion

This study found that, in terms of professional identity, English normal students are generally more agreeable to the English major. However, in terms of specific dimensions, their cognitive professional identity is relatively the highest, and their behavioral professional identity is relatively low. That is to say, English normal students still have a better understanding of the basic situation of the major, but the enthusiasm shown in the professional learning behavior is relatively low. In terms of study engagement, college students can generally devote themselves to their studies with a positive and fulfilling mental state. However, in terms of specific dimensions, the dedication of college students is relatively high, but the degree of their concentration to their studies is relatively poor. It can be seen that college students who have entered the adult stage are more rational in their cognition as their psychological development gradually matures. As a result, they are generally more positive in their professional identity and learning engagement. However, it is difficult to transform positive cognition into positive emotional experience and willful action, resulting in their learning identity mostly remaining at the cognitive level. In view of this, in professional teaching, schools can encourage teachers to use more interactive teaching methods on the basis of playing a role model in the professional field. Teachers should

guide students to devote more energy to acquiring knowledge, encourage them to actively delve deeper into research, actively overcome difficulties, and bravely face challenges.

Additionally, this study found that in terms of professional identity and all dimensions, students from urban areas have higher scores than those from rural areas. This is mainly because they are exposed to more resources in the city, have a more comprehensive understanding of their majors, and are more thoughtful in their choice of major. Students who chose their majors on their own had significantly higher major identity and learning engagement than students whose parents or others chose and transferred their majors. For English normal students, compared with passive choice, when faced with their own actively chosen majors, they have a higher professional identity. Therefore, when parents choose majors for their children, they should consider their children's wishes.

As shown by regression analysis, professional identity and the cognitive, behavioral, and appropriateness factors of professional identity have a predictive effect on learning engagement. This is consistent with the research results of Zhang and Li (2018). Improving professional awareness and understanding, increasing positive professional learning behaviors and adjusting the degree of fit between oneself and one's profession can all improve individual learning input. This also provides a direction for educational and teaching reforms, which can help students better match suitable majors by helping them understand the characteristics and nature of majors and actively exploring their own characteristics, while providing more information about majors and professional advantages can push students to produce more positive learning behaviors.

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