



Investigating The Influence of Media on Preservice Teachers' Construction of Their Professional Identity

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Abstract

In this empirical paper, we investigate the influence that print media has on preservice teachers' construction of their teacher professional identity. Preservice teachers are a vulnerable group still undergoing training to shape their teacher identity; it is, therefore, essential to see how the stories told in the print media influence them. This paper is couched in the Social Learning Theory because it focuses on learning through interacting with social and environmental factors. This qualitative paper used focus group discussions with five purposefully sampled third-year education preservice teachers from a South African university. Data generated were thematically analysed. The findings revealed that media created multiple learning opportunities through reflection and engagement. In light of the findings, the study suggests using teacher education programs to deepen preservice teachers' sense of reflection and meaning-making beyond the information they might come across.

Keywords: Media, Preservice Teachers, Teacher Professional Identity, Social Learning Theory

Introduction

Education is a societal issue; hence most newspapers have regular columns on matters affecting and influencing education. These stories influence readers differently; they become informed about what is happening within the profession and influence their views about the trade (Jacobs, 2014). The focus on media in the field of education is not new, even though literature somewhat captures the influence of media on students. Some studies capture the negative aspects of media on young people. For instance, Utomo and McDonald (2006) argue in agreement that mass media has an effect on young people and contend that media could be linked to sexual permissiveness and rarely reach young people and provide them with information that could reduce risky sexual activities. De Wet (2002) focused on the role of media in fostering a general acceptance and legitimation of violence among children. Thus, forgoing argument by De Wet corroborates with what this paper argues that media affects human behavior and the construction of acceptable social norms. In another study, Francis and Le Roux (2011) argue that preservice teacher identity is vital for the educator to understand and conceptualize appropriate support. Their interest connected preservice teachers' emerging identity to notions of critical agency and a stance towards social justice.

Vandeyar, Vandeyar, and Elufisan (2014) focused on how immigrant in-service teachers reconstruct their professional identities in South African schools. Vandeyar et al. (2014) further make a case for the importance of understanding teachers' professional identity. Their study revealed that immigrant teachers faced the challenges of reconstructing their professional teacher identity in South Africa and other countries such as the United Kingdom. Their challenges are not surprising, as, before this, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argued that part of the reason for these challenges is contextual factors that may enhance or hinder the construction of a teacher's identity. Thus, the preceding attests that preservice teachers' education and experiences play an essential role in constructing professional identity. In their studies, Flores and Day (2006) and later Tsybulsky and Muchnik-Rozanov (2018) explored how preservice teachers developed their professional identity during the pedagogical practicum or the pre-teaching phase. Despite the positive evidence on understanding teacher identity, including studies referred to above and others, we know very little about how print media influence preservice teachers' construction of their emerging professional identity. This study seeks to challenge the idea that teacher identity is something that can be taught directly, through mentoring and modelling approaches that expect preservice teachers to internalise what they are told and what they are exposed to without thinking. Little focus is put on developing preservice teachers as reflecting beings who engages with the stimuli they get into contact with and use that to process and inform their identities. Therefore, this paper argues that professional teaching identity is a continuous dynamic sense-making process shaped throughout the different stages of one's life and career (Steinert, O'Sullivan & Irby, 2019, Steyn, 2015).

Literature Review

Social learning theory as a framework for the study

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is Social Learning Theory (SLT). According to Johnson (2017), social learning theory is a framework that focuses on learning from social and experiential perspectives. SLT believes people are social creatures who like interacting, sharing ideas, and observing others. Therefore, proponents of SLT strongly believe that people learn through observing others' behavior, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors (Stone & Walker, 2017).

In this view, the focus is on the interaction of personal, environmental, behavioral, and cognitive factors (Couros & Hildebrandt, 2016; Tu, 2000) that are engaged in a reciprocal determinism process foregrounding the interactive nature of the process in producing new knowledge (Beers, van Mierio & Hoes, 2016). According to Johnson (2017), this interplay creates a social foundation for learning that includes observation with four distinct stages: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Attention involves actively observing the modeled behavior. Various factors such as distinctiveness, affective valence, prevalence, complexity, and functional value influence attention. Individuals' sensory, arousal, perception, and past arousal level contribute to the level of attention given to a phenomenon observed. Johnson (2017) views retention as a process of storing the observed behavior to remember it. It may include cognitive actions like symbolic coding, mental images, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, and motor rehearsal. To practice, the observer actively recreates the modeled behavior during the reproduction stage. There is also a need to motivate, imitate, or disregard the observed behavior, depending on whether it is positive or negative. Another critical determinant is the ability to contextualize the behavior and establish an emotional connection (Couros & Hildebrandt, 2016).

Bandura emphasizes the value/role of self-efficacy as part of social learning. Self-efficacy is belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations. It includes how people feel, think, get motivated, and behave (1982). Self-efficacy seeks to present people as self-organizing, self-regulating, and self-reflecting. Therefore, it will determine how the observer will perceive the environment (Bandura & Evans, 2006, Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Self-efficacy positions preservice teachers as people who receive what teaching is like from the environment and can internalize those depictions with their experiences and abilities. This deliberate process on the side of the student will, we believe, influence how they construct their professional teacher identity.

Furthermore, social learning theory believes that self-concept relies upon identifying with role models, assessing self-worth, and a preferred pattern relating to the external world. The daily newspaper stories on education include the said aspects. People learn to interact by modeling and imitating others, particularly role models (Cole, 2006). Reports in the newspapers may consist of different personalities,

some of whom might be the students' role models. The influence of a role model can affect individuals' personalities, ambitions, or interests. Reflecting on the newspaper stories might influence the students' self-worth based on ones' self-assessment of their capabilities compared to others. On the other hand, they affirm the preservice teachers' ability to have a heightened sense of self and self-image (Gathondu, Kagema & Wanderi, 2020), allowing them to make sense of what they are confronted with and exposed to.

This paper focuses on how newspapers, as an environmental factor, provide images and narratives that preservice teachers can observe and learn from as they construct their professional teacher identity. SLT as a framework will serve this purpose well because it acknowledges the influence of the environment in shaping one's perspectives about the profession and allows space for individuals to interpret and interrogate what is transmitted by the environment. Furthermore, it can even enable the background to be influenced by the individual in what was referred to earlier as reciprocal determinism.

Conceptualizing teacher professional identity

The concept of identity is not something scholars readily agree upon. It is a complex construct that is not one-dimensional but multifaceted. Identity has been defined in many ways by different researchers. Walkington (2005) and Botha and Onwu (2013) state that identity is based on our core beliefs and how they influence our lived experiences and how we view others. Izadina (2013) cites that identity helps us set clear goals and directions. She further avers that without fully understanding our identities, we cannot achieve what we aspire to effectively as we are not clear on where we are going on the other hand. In agreement with the previous authors, Adams, van de Vijver, de Bruin, Torres (2014) and Adam & van de Vijver (2017) state that identity complexity allows people to draw from their values, goals, and aspirations and their multiple affiliations and group memberships in a quest to define themselves. A widely accepted feature attributed to the concept of identity is that it is dynamic (Steinert, O'Sullivan & Irby, 2019), contextual, and personal (Villegas, Vagona, & Sanchez, 2020) and that the environment has a particular influence on our identity (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018).

Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) argue that identity is not a fixed attribute but a relational phenomenon that is a situational course. The definitions imply that relationships influence multiple identities within a particular situation or context. Gur (2013) supports the preceding view by contending that identity is a social construct influenced by interactions in broader contexts in which we live. From this authors' argument, constructing identity through the interactions with family, organizations, institutions, and communities with whom they interact. The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of media on preservice teachers' professional identity. The term teacher professional identity remains distinct in the academic field.

Rus, Tomsa, Rebega and Apostol (2013) indicate that professional identity is a continuous interpretation and reinterpretation process prompted by professional experiences and contextual factors. The interaction with others in the teachers' immediate environment seems to influence teachers' identities. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) have similar views that professional identity is unstable and concur that people can use negotiation and compromise to correct professional knowledge. People must engage in self-examination and justify professional experiences. The authors' argument indicates that professional identity is constructed in personal experiences and constantly negotiates between historical, contextual, and social backgrounds and influences. Pennington and Richard (2016) argue that teachers' pedagogical art draws from their identities and must connect to the identity of the discipline or profession. Teachers thus create their professional identity by combining individual characteristics with the characteristics of the field as a whole (Wang, Xu, Zghang & Li, 2020).

This study will focus on professional identity as presented or (re) presented through preservice teachers' stories or narratives. Wenger (1998) identifies five dimensions of identity, which are helpful when thinking about professional identity. These are identity as negotiated experiences, community membership, learning trajectory, a nexus of multi-membership, and finally, as a relation between the local and the global. On the other hand, Rus, Tomsa, Rebega, and Aposto (2013) posit that professional identity can be categorized into professional identity formation and development, identification of teachers' professional identity characteristics, and professional identity presented or (re) presented teacher's stories.

Identity comprises three dimensions: personal, rational, and social (Adams & Van de Vijver, 2017). The dimensions seem to show relations amongst each other, and one can argue that individuals navigate

between these dimensions as they develop their identity between personal and environmental needs. These dimensions indicate that teacher identity constantly changes as it is exposed to different contexts and relationships. The individual always navigates and negotiates to pursue their identity to fit in or adapt to a particular context. The latter complements Dotger and Smith's (2009) situated cognition and negotiated meaning of professional identity development.

Situated cognition anticipates that a person's identity continually develops and increases in complexity as a person engages with new experiences. In contrast, negotiated experiences suggest that identity development involves both lived experiences and deliberate negotiations, reflections, or the meaning of that experiences (Gee, 2004; Wenger, 2010). The above argument suggests that the environment and its experiences strongly influence the teachers' identity development, and the individual becomes an active participant. A person's identity will affect his whole being, and indeed, the effects of the influences will come across through daily experiences.

Authors seem to agree that various factors influence the development of teacher identities. Liou (2008) and Hamilton (2013) suggest that a teacher's identity is affected by historical, contextual, and socially constructed factors, while Botha and Onwu (2013) refer to these factors as external and internal factors. Botha et al. (2013) refer to the external factors as the national curriculum, national and educational reform publications, public expectation, and school culture. The internal factors include knowledge of the curriculum goals, classroom interpretation, and educational background. Beijaard et al. (2004) agree with the latter statement; on the other hand, since identity constantly changes, the effect of media on the preservice teacher seems unclear. Studies explored the external and internal factors, but other authors also emphasized components of teacher identity such as beliefs about teaching (Williams, 2010), knowledge (Beijaard et al., 2004), motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment (Day et al., 2006). For Gathonde et al. (2020), it is also a journey to understanding oneself within the profession and what to do and achieve. Dotger and Smith (2009:163), supported by Tsybulsky and Muchnik-Rozanov (2019), emphasize that the development of a professional self is dependent on the situation novice teachers are placed in, how meaningful such contexts are, as well as the degree they engage with that environment that might result in constant transference of teacher's professional identities due to the experiences gained in the process

Factors influencing teacher identity include instructional training, expectations, and authorities' conditions. This includes learners, internal factors like motivation and emotion, family, friends, society, expectations and prior experiences, teachers' perspectives about their role, and the nature of teaching and learning to influence their work behavior.

Media and Identity

The word 'media' comes from medium, meaning an intervening agency (Adibe, 2016). Media is a means of communication that keeps the public informed about the day-to-day happenings in society (Khalid, Ahmed & Mufti, 2015). The media value has been recognized widely by authors such as Alozieuwa (2015) and Adibe (2016). They maintain that media plays a vital role in being an informer, educator, entertainer and watchdog, platform creator, publicity, adversarial, and advocacy. As a watchdog, the media protects the public interest against malpractice and creates public awareness of our society's injustice, oppression, misdeeds, and partiality. Hunt and Hubbard (2015) further acknowledged the media's importance when asserting that one of society's pivotal sources of shared knowledge, prejudices, and ideologies is the public discourses created and perpetuated by symbolic elites like journalists. Mkhandawire (2015) maintains that media not only transmits information to the public but also produces certain ideologies and discourses that support specific relations of power. Media allows people to make informed judgments and decisions about certain things (Adibe, 2016). Therefore, media is pivotal in helping society create, mold, shape, and reflect on public opinion. The above arguments seem to acknowledge the power of media in influencing the views and behavior of people in a particular manner. These roles extend to the choices people will make about the professions they will choose and the type of professional identities they might want to create. Omer (2015) strengthens this view by further asserting that media shapes public opinion and expectations about what is wrong and acceptable, which we believe can help us imagine and reimagine teaching as a profession.

In the same light different authors are also making us aware of some of the challenges in how the media reports stories. Mkhandawire (2015) identified sensationalization, adverse reporting, stereotyping, accuracy, and distortion as some aspects that impact the quality of the news. For Ayodeji

and Aderibigbe (2015), manipulating the media to suit the ideology or political agenda of a nation, establishment or person contributes to poor quality reporting. Adibe (2016) and Mkhawire (2015) further allude to irresponsible reporting's ability to reinforce or protect people's uniqueness, public stereotyping, and widening social distance, especially in diverse states such as South Africa. Hence, Alozieuwa (2015) calls for media that shows greater sensitivity to the issues that concern the nation's destiny, especially in an era of the problem of bad news is good news, as observed by Adibe (2016).

Media and education is not new area of research. Previous research focuses on informing the public about the profession's status, education policy matters, labor relation matters, funding, and raising public awareness about teaching and education (Hargreaves et al., 2006, Jacobs, 2014). In a study by de Wet (2002), she focused on media analysis of racial violence in South African schools. Hargreaves et al. (2006) focused on the dominant images/definitions of teaching portrayed in the media and the changes in such depictions in the last decade. Preeti (2014) explored how the newspaper discourse frames teacher identity regarding accountability and caring in a teaching and learning environment. Jacobs (2014) investigated how media reports school violence, while Barnard's (2015) study focused on the public perceptions of transformation within South African Universities. For De Wet (2016), the focus was on the portrayal of school violence in the Cape Times newspaper. Alhamdan, Al-Saadi, Baroutsis, du Plessis, Hamida, and Honan (2014) interest compared the representation of teachers in the newspapers in five different countries. Therefore, our study is unique because we intend to examine how media depictions of the profession influence preservice teachers' construction of their professional teaching identity.

The stories covered in the media about education and teaching might influence student teachers' sense of what education and teaching are and how they fit in such a framework. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the media's influence on preservice teachers' construction of their professional teacher identity.

Research Methodology

This paper employed a qualitative research method guided by the research questions, *how do the media influence the student teachers' construction of their teacher professional identity?* In selecting participants for the study, we employed purposive sampling of 5 third-year education student-teachers from a South African University. We send emails to the specific students explaining the purpose of the research and the conditions under which they will be participating. We explained issues of willful participation, the ability to withdraw at any time, and keeping their identity anonymous. Participants came from different socio-economic backgrounds, languages, types of schools, and gender. We used A, B, C, D, and E to code the participants.

We created a platform for students to read newspaper articles on schooling issues, including access, learners support, teaching and learning, governance, teacher wellness, education management and leadership, labor issues, and stakeholder involvement. The newspapers were purposively sampled based on their accessibility in the community and drawn from three local newspapers New Age Newspaper, Volksblad, and DFA. The researchers accessed the newspapers through the university database subscription and printed hard copies for the participants. Every week participants compiled reflective reports on how the read stories influenced their teacher identity. This process continued for seven months, starting in February until the end of August 2019. We did methodological data triangulation through focus group discussions to get more insight into the influence of media on teacher identity construction. We used thematic analysis to make sense of the data emerging from the narrative reports and discussed the emerging themes.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, we attempted to read the students' perspectives on the influence of media in constructing their professional teacher identity through the lens of social learning theory and the conceptualization of professional teaching identity. The first question we seek is whether the newspaper provided opportunities for student teachers to learn about the teaching profession. Secondly, what lessons have student teachers learned that shaped their professional identity? We used related literature on media and teacher identity to further clarify the results of the theoretical interpretation of data.

Media as an opportunity to learn

In exploring whether stories in the media created opportunities for preservice teachers to learn from, participants responded as follows:

Participant A responded, *"these stories bring joy and hope to my heart."*

Participant B supported him by asserting that

"When reading through the articles, I was exposed to topics with sensitive natures that aroused morals, values, and ethical issues. There were also success stories of learners and schools that highlighted the harsh nature of what is happening in our South African contexts."

This train of thought aligning with feelings and emotions is a powerful learning opportunity within social learning theory (Hanna, Oostdam, Severiens & Zijlstra, 2019). Participants get touched by the stories they are reading and reflect critically about them. The stories capture their attention, retain them longer, and influence participants to think about their chosen profession (Zembylas, 2018). A sense of reflection on own values and knowledge also appears to take place, as depicted in this response by participant D when asserting that

"This exercise made me aware of what is happening in the teaching profession. This exercise allowed me to identify my likes and dislikes as a teacher and that a revolution can improve education and make a change."

The participant seems to be intensely energized and motivated by the stories in the media to the extent of possible reproduction and even further enhancement; hence she uses the words *"a revolution to better education and makes a change."* What interests us is that in addition to the fact that newspaper articles served as learning opportunities for them, preservice teachers' urgency as active participants in shaping their own professional teaching identity also came to the fore. These stories helped to encourage further probing and possible molding. The following response by participant C further illuminates this fact by saying,

"Even though there were many other articles sharing success stories of education that triggered hope, these listed stories were the ones that had an impact on me becoming a teacher. These stories sparked the question: Do I still want to be a teacher?"

This further illustrates the media's power to force self-introspection and invite the participant to undergo a journey of intense self-introspection and self-understanding, thereby molding one's present and future position as articulated by (Mkhandawire, 2015). Participant C's response also demonstrated to us the power of media in shaping people's opinions, perceptions, and views about not only current affairs and general stories (Adibe, 2016) but also about their professional teacher identity, as further espoused by participants A and B when saying

"From the readings, I developed a broader understanding about the conduct of a teacher, their behavior, and the professional ethics that govern their practice. I also learned that teachers must have a personal philosophy that motivates them to be quality teachers."

and that,

"There is a plea for the teachers to be committed to their profession. The teachers are aware of the things happening within and outside their teaching/learning context, thus enabling them to tackle whichever situation arises within their reach."

We were also intrigued by the response that reading the newspaper stories gave the student teachers a broader perspective about their chosen profession, way beyond what they learned in the lecturer rooms during their initial teacher education program. Participant A alludes that reading the newspaper articles

"Also enhanced the construction of my teacher's identity as I became aware of what is going on in other districts, regions, and provinces and be conscious of their principles and ethics. Therefore, I developed a broader understanding of the conduct of teachers and their behavior, and I have realized that professional ethics governs what teachers do. Teachers also need a personal philosophy that motivates them to be quality teachers."

Media, therefore, becomes an essential tool through which this understanding can be developed and enhanced. It thus serves as an essential learning platform that aids in formulating teacher professional identity.

This section has demonstrated that learning can occur in and through different platforms. In the case of this study, our focus was on the role that the media can play. Participants' responses above demonstrated the power of media as an essential tool that can enhance learning and shape people's perceptions and views about certain things, including their identities.

In the next section, we report on the specific lessons learned by the participants from the newspaper articles they had to engage with to determine how they influenced their professional teacher identity.

Lessons learned

In responding to whether they learned anything from the stories, participants provided the following responses.

"I have learned from the readings that teaching as a profession is very challenging and also very rewarding at the same time. Passion is a driving force behind all the quality teachers I have read about. These teachers are not always given recognition for their hard work. They work under horrifying conditions. Still, they have kept steadfast on the goal of delivering quality teaching and learning."

In this response, Participant A indicates that the story gave him a sense of understanding the nature of the profession, as a challenging but rewarding one. In the process, the participant displayed a deep sense of understanding by identifying what is needed to survive in such an environment and identifying passion as a driving force to cope. This is further supported by participant B when saying,

"I have learned that for one to be successful as an educator in the profession, it requires commitment, passion, servitude, and accountability amongst many attributes, but professional ethics is a prerequisite for all teachers."

And adding to this is participant C and D, respectively, who offer even much more elaborate response by saying

"As an educator, I have to put in the hard work, go the extra mile and think about new and advanced teaching methods that can enable me to deliver the content comprehensively and understandably for all the learners."

Participant D,

"also to putting in the hard work, going the extra mile, and thinking about new and advanced teaching methods that can enable me to deliver the content comprehensively and understandably for all the learners."

These assertions are significant as they display the type of learning that has taken place and the level at which it has taken place. The student teachers showed a strong sense of self-efficacy as they could weigh themselves against the challenges they are reading about but still determine what they need to do to overcome them (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Participant E sums up the above argument well by asserting that

"The teaching profession is clouded with controversies such as the failure rate of learners, lack of infrastructure, work overload, and overcrowded classes. But focusing only on these without making alternatives to manage situations would make the problems part of our profession. Thus, I think it is imperative for teachers to make do with what they have and think out of the box to develop vibrant and relevant teaching methods."

From these responses, it is evident that participants seem not discouraged by the negative stories about teaching in the media. The above reactions seem to further resonate well with Rus, Tomsa, Rebege, Aposto's (2013) positioning that professional identity includes professional identity formation and development, identification of teachers' professional identity, and professional identity presented or (re)presented teacher's stories. In the above responses, student teachers seem to be articulating views about identity formation and development by saying what the profession is like, thereby insinuating

how they view the teaching process. Respondents take this further to provide a few aspects that can serve as characteristics of teacher professional identity, such as servitude, accountability, teaching methods, and quality teaching and learning.

The extracts above further show the educative nature of newspapers in shaping preservice teacher's identity. The forgoing finding confirms Jacob's (2014) findings that, generally, media raises public awareness about education. It was evident from the preservice teachers' reflections that newspapers create a general awareness about issues in the profession. While in agreement with Jacobs (2014), the current study results revealed further that knowledge gained by students from reading education-related stories in newspapers seems to have further shaped and influenced their teacher professional identity. Teng's (2020) conception of teacher identity helps make meaning of the data in the current study as the author correctly puts it, teacher identity, which emerges inwardly, is a process wherein teachers construct their ideas or build practical knowledge about ways to be and act like a teacher. Thus, in line with the forgoing conception of teacher identity, preservice teachers in this study demonstrated that the stories in newspaper articles help them learn how to be a teacher and act as a teacher. For instance, one of the participants (B) states that lessons she has learned through reading the newspaper articles are that, *"it is important to promote morals, values, and ethical conduct as a teacher."*

While in agreement with the preceding notion of acting like a teacher, another participant, C, added further that,

"I have learned that teachers work hard, are confident, that [they] walk the extra mile through disciplining their learners....and work effectively with each other as a team member."

Thus, we understand the evidence presented by reading the above extracts through the theoretically triangulated lens of SLT discussed earlier and teacher identity as conceptualized by Teng (2020). We understand the above quotes as evidence of knowledge constructed through social interaction between the preservice and in-service teachers. We contend that newspaper articles facilitate the exchanges as a one-directional interface where preservice observes in-service teachers. Thus, through observed knowledge of what a teacher is like, their teacher professional identity is constructed as Teng (2020) would have understood. However, drawing on SLT epistemological assumptions, we argue that preservice teachers' knowledge of ways to be and act like a teacher goes through four stages. The attention stage of SLT happens in the interface created by the newspaper stories, that is, a process of actively observing the behavior of in-service teachers (Johnson, 2017) as depicted in media. The second stage of SLT is retention, and we admit that we may not be able to present evidence of this stage directly. Part of the reason is that retention has to do with preservice teachers storing their observed behavior for reproduction (stage 3) later. However, we maintain that the data in the current study suggest that preservice teachers have held and intend to reproduce later what they have observed. For instance, below are extracts of the participants in support of forgoing: Participants D and A, respectively, *"I would like to become a teacher that is respected and accepted by the schools, learners, and community."* *"I would like my learners to feel safe in my presence and vice versa. To have a safe working environment."*

And supported by these views from participants C and B. *"I would like to be a selfless teacher and prioritize the learner's well-being."* *"I would like to be educated on cultural and community issues, and handle it with sensitivity and care as needed."*

While generally accepted that most stories in newspaper articles on education are primarily negative, it does not necessarily follow that these would negatively influence preservice teachers' construction of teacher identity. We learn from Gee's (1999: 20) contention that grammar patterns in our talk and text and other ways of acting in the world are entrenched with the perspectives that situate our identity and allow others to attribute situated identities to us. Thus, from the text of preservice teachers, the current study uncovered their situated teacher professional identity. In so doing, the analysis of what characterizes preservice teachers' professional identity reveals that the notion of what it is like to be a teacher has evidence of fluidity of identities.

Conclusions

This paper has validated the power and influence of print media in shaping preservice teachers' views, perspectives, and practices. Preservice teachers have also displayed a sense of urgency in how they respond to the stories in the print media. They applied their minds, interrogated the new information

against their schema, and responded in ways they best saw fit. Findings indicated that the stories in the media create an opportunity for novice teachers to learn about what is happening in the teaching profession. These stories can shape teachers identities – in line with social learning.

The stories forced them to engage, relate, reflect, and refine their identity. The lessons learned by the participants also reveal that the stories in the media have impacted them. The stories gave them values, skills, and information to ponder as they shaped their teacher identity. Even though, the media reports stories to educate and inform, it is sometimes found guilty of sensationalisation that might negatively affect young preservice teachers. We, therefore, recommend that teacher education programs should focus on developing more critical and independent-thinking students who can apply their minds to making sense of what is reported in the print media about the teaching profession. When dealing with teacher identity, engaging approaches grounded on teacher reflectivity and constructivism should be embraced. Furthermore, the concept of teacher identity must be treated as a flexible one whose boundaries are permeated by different factors and help to constantly and continuously shape the formulation of teacher identity.

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