

Empowering Educators: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy in Reflective Practice and Teacher Identity Development

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the mediating roles of reflective practice and teacher self-efficacy in the development of Teacher Professional Identity (TPI). Although participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is widespread, little is known about how these experiences contribute to meaningful identity transformation for teachers. Addressing this gap, the study proposes a mediation model in which reflective practice indirectly enhances TPI through the intermediary construct of self-efficacy. Utilizing a cross-sectional design with a sample of 420 in-service teachers, the research employed validated instruments to measure reflective practice, self-efficacy, and TPI. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and PROCESS macro (Model 6) were used to analyze the direct and indirect effects. Bootstrapped confidence intervals and model fit indices (CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.045) confirmed the robustness of the proposed model. Results revealed a significant direct effect of reflective practice on TPI ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.042$), and a stronger indirect effect mediated by self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). The findings support the hypothesis that self-efficacy plays a central role in converting reflective experiences into professional identity development. This mediation framework contributes to the theoretical discourse on TPI and underscores the importance of incorporating reflective and efficacy-building components into CPD. The study offers key implications for CPD design, advocating for culturally responsive and psychologically enriching programs that prioritize structured reflection and empower teachers to engage deeply with their evolving roles. Such initiatives are likely to yield sustained improvements in instructional quality and teacher resilience.

Keywords: Reflective Practice, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Professional Identity, CPD, Mediation Model, Teacher Development.



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INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of global education, the professional growth of teachers remains a critical focus of academic and policy discourse. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is internationally recognized as a key strategy for improving educational quality and teacher effectiveness. However, while global participation in CPD programs is widespread, the extent to which these initiatives foster meaningful transformation in teachers' instructional practices and

professional identities varies considerably. The literature highlights a persistent mismatch between the structure and focus of CPD programs and the lived realities of teachers, particularly in relation to their evolving professional identities (Cameron & Grant, 2017; McLean & Price, 2017).

Teachers across regions acknowledge the importance of CPD for enhancing pedagogical competencies, yet participation rates often reflect systemic challenges, including time constraints, limited institutional support, and a perceived disconnect between CPD content and daily classroom practice (Souto-Gómez et al., 2023; Ulla, 2022). This disconnection contributes to disengagement, limiting the potential of CPD to influence broader professional trajectories. Notably, teachers express frustration with CPD models that overlook their unique contexts and fail to integrate elements that resonate with their instructional realities and personal growth goals.

Amid these challenges, the concept of Teacher Professional Identity (TPI) has gained prominence as an essential lens for understanding teacher development. TPI is now understood not as a fixed or static attribute, but rather as a dynamic, multifaceted construct shaped by individual experiences, professional roles, and socio-cultural interactions within educational environments (Arias et al., 2020; Sueningrum et al., 2022). Importantly, TPI encapsulates how teachers perceive themselves, their work, and their roles in relation to students, colleagues, and broader institutional structures. It reflects ongoing negotiations between internal beliefs and external expectations and is continually reshaped through professional experiences, including CPD engagement.

Recent research emphasizes the critical role of reflective practice and collaborative professional environments in shaping and reinforcing TPI. Teachers who engage in structured reflective activities are more likely to develop coherent professional self-concepts, informed by deeper awareness of their pedagogical values and instructional approaches (Balta et al., 2022; Ladehoff et al., 2023). Reflection enables educators to critically examine their practices, beliefs, and assumptions, allowing for adaptive responses to the complex demands of teaching. This reflective engagement fosters both self-efficacy and professional coherence, supporting sustained identity development over time.

However, gaps persist between CPD participation and outcomes related to professional identity formation. Many CPD initiatives remain narrowly focused on technical or content delivery, neglecting the psychological and identity-based dimensions of teacher learning. As a result, teachers may complete CPD without gaining a clearer understanding of how new strategies align—or conflict—with their existing professional identities (Karim et al., 2023; Reynolds et al., 2021). This misalignment hinders integration of new knowledge and impedes authentic instructional transformation, especially in contexts where teachers lack opportunities for critical reflection and peer dialogue.

Theoretical frameworks linking reflective practice to identity formation underscore the psychosocial mechanisms that underpin professional growth. Reflection is positioned as a central process in developing adaptive teaching strategies and integrating new experiences into a coherent self-concept (Antera & Teräs, 2024). Structured reflective practice encourages educators to make sense of challenges, reinterpret classroom events, and align their actions with deeply held values

(Català, 2024). Moreover, reflective activities facilitate professional agency by enabling teachers to act with intentionality and purpose, informed by both experience and introspection (Korau et al., 2024).

Self-efficacy—teachers' beliefs in their capacity to influence student learning and instructional outcomes—is another critical construct interwoven with reflective practice and identity. Research consistently shows that high levels of self-efficacy correlate with openness to innovation, engagement in complex teaching tasks, and resilience in challenging environments (Wang & Mason, 2023). Teachers with strong self-efficacy are more likely to engage in reflective practices and to adopt instructional strategies aligned with emerging pedagogical paradigms (Varol, 2017). In turn, these processes reinforce a positive and adaptive professional identity, contributing to job satisfaction and long-term retention (Fisher et al., 2018).

At the policy level, global frameworks aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) advocate for CPD that goes beyond technical upskilling to include the development of critical thinking, creativity, and leadership among educators. These guidelines emphasize inclusivity, equity, and quality as pillars of effective teacher development (Longhurst et al., 2019). They also encourage active participation from teachers in shaping CPD agendas, ensuring responsiveness to the professional, emotional, and contextual needs of educators (Riyanti, 2020). By centering the voices and experiences of teachers, CPD can become a transformative space for identity formation and pedagogical renewal.

This study responds to these calls by investigating how reflective practice and self-efficacy function as mediators in the development of teacher professional identity. By modeling the indirect pathways linking these constructs, the research aims to clarify the psychosocial mechanisms through which CPD can lead to meaningful identity transformation. The findings have the potential to inform more responsive and effective CPD designs that are grounded in the realities of teaching, and aligned with global goals for educational improvement and teacher empowerment.

METHOD

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to examine the mediating roles of reflective practice and self-efficacy in the development of Teacher Professional Identity (TPI). It details the research design, instruments, participant selection, data collection procedures, and analytical strategies.

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and the PROCESS macro (Model 6) to test the sequential mediation pathway from reflective practice to TPI via self-efficacy. This design was chosen to capture the complex interrelationships among psychological constructs in a robust statistical framework. Data

normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were tested and confirmed prior to model execution, in line with SEM prerequisites (Chien, 2022).

Participants

Participants included 420 in-service teachers from various school levels and disciplines, selected through stratified random sampling. The sample ensured representation across regions and school types. Demographic data such as teaching experience, school support, and subject area were collected and later used as control variables to test the stability of mediation pathways (Berger & Van, 2018).

Instruments

Three validated instruments were used:

- *Reflective Practice Scale*: Adapted from the Reflective Teaching Scale and the Teacher Reflection Scale, both established for reliability and construct validity in instructional settings .
- *Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES)*: A widely recognized tool for evaluating instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement across various conditions,
- *Teacher Professional Identity Scale (TPIIS)*: Assesses multiple dimensions including professional commitment, teaching beliefs, and career satisfaction. Proven effective in diverse educational contexts.

All instruments underwent pre-testing for internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.85 across subscales.

Data Collection Procedures

Surveys were distributed digitally to ensure reach and accessibility. Participation was voluntary and anonymized. Respondents completed all items using a 5-point Likert scale. Reflective practice, self-efficacy, and TPI were treated as latent variables during modeling.

Data Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) preceded Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate construct dimensionality. Following this, the two-step SEM approach was employed: measurement model validation, then structural model estimation. Mediation was tested using bootstrapping to derive confidence intervals for indirect effects (Mooman & Sadrudin, 2023).

Control variables such as years of experience and school support were included to account for external influences. Prior literature confirms their influence on identity development, making them essential for accurately modeling mediation dynamics (Haatainen et al., 2024).

Ethical Considerations

The study obtained ethical approval from the institutional review board. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, and informed consent was secured. Anonymity and confidentiality were upheld throughout the research process.

Through rigorous instrument selection, sampling methods, and analytical techniques, this methodology ensures the reliability and validity of findings, thereby contributing credible insights into the psychosocial mechanisms underlying teacher professional identity formation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings from the statistical analysis, structured around descriptive statistics, mediation analysis results, and model fit assessment. The results provide empirical support for the hypothesized relationships among reflective practice, self-efficacy, and teacher professional identity (TPI).

Descriptive analysis indicated moderately high levels of all three measured constructs. Reflective practice had a mean score of 3.8 (SD = 0.6), self-efficacy scored 4.1 (SD = 0.5), and TPI averaged 3.9 (SD = 0.7), all on a 5-point Likert scale. These findings are consistent with existing literature, which places average TPI and self-efficacy scores between 3.5–4.0 (Alnahdi et al., 2021). Cronbach's alpha values confirmed strong internal consistency across all scales: 0.87 for reflective practice, 0.91 for self-efficacy, and 0.88 for TPI, aligning with previously reported reliability coefficients exceeding 0.80 (Lamash & Fogel, 2021).

Demographic analysis revealed meaningful patterns. Experienced teachers reported higher TPI levels, corroborating findings that years of service positively influence identity development (Izzo et al., 2018). Female participants generally exhibited greater reflective engagement than male peers, aligning with prior gender-based findings (Živković et al., 2018). Higher educational qualifications also correlated with stronger self-efficacy and professional identity (Hanna et al., 2019).

Psychometric validation of the instruments reaffirmed their reliability and factor structure. Confirmatory factor analyses supported the multidimensionality of TPI (commitment, growth, belonging), consistent with past studies (Rey et al., 2024). These metrics validated the tools for continued use in identity-related research.

The mediation analysis revealed statistically significant direct and indirect effects. Reflective practice directly influenced TPI ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.042$), while the indirect effect through self-efficacy was stronger ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$), supporting sequential mediation. Reflective practice significantly predicted self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.55$), which in turn significantly predicted TPI ($\beta = 0.62$).

These results are consistent with existing research emphasizing the mediating function of self-efficacy in professional development contexts (Balgiu & Simionescu-Panait, 2024). Indirect effects were larger than direct effects, echoing trends noted in reflective practice literature (Aslam & Chaudhary, 2021). Path coefficients in this study align with benchmarks from similar educational

models, where indirect effects range from 0.30 to 0.70, indicating moderate to strong mediation (Buils et al., 2022).

Model fit indices demonstrated a strong alignment between the hypothesized model and observed data: CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.045. These values meet accepted thresholds for good model fit (Gusar et al., 2021). Comparisons with similar mediation studies show contextual variations in fit indices, but the present values indicate a robust structure (Jemolajeva et al., 2019).

Reporting best practices were followed, with bootstrapped confidence intervals confirming the stability of indirect effects (Rezaei, 2018). The results validate the theoretical model and enhance understanding of the relational dynamics between reflective practice, self-efficacy, and TPI. This validation supports future application of the model in different educational settings.

The findings of this study offer significant insights into the processes through which teacher professional identity (TPI) is shaped and reinforced. By validating a sequential mediation model where reflective practice influences TPI through the intermediary of teacher self-efficacy, this research advances our understanding of identity development in educational settings. The results align closely with existing theoretical frameworks, particularly those that conceptualize teacher identity as dynamic, context-dependent, and continuously shaped by reflective engagement and validated teaching experiences (Alnahdi et al., 2021).

This mediation model reinforces foundational theories by Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop, which position professional identity as a product of interaction between personal beliefs and contextual teaching experiences. In highlighting the central role of self-efficacy, this study supports the view that robust professional identities are not solely the result of experience or qualifications, but also emerge from a teacher's internal confidence in their professional capabilities. Such findings strengthen the conceptualization of teacher identity as fluid and adaptable, capable of evolving through reflective practice and efficacy-building mechanisms (Lamash & Fogel, 2021).

The long-term implications of enhanced self-efficacy on teacher retention and resilience are important because they influence career longevity and reduce burnout. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more committed to their roles, experience less burnout, and are more likely to remain in the profession. This connection underscores the value of psychological empowerment within CPD design. As teachers feel more capable of influencing student outcomes, they derive greater satisfaction from their work, which in turn enhances classroom stability and student success (Tsukawaki et al., 2023). The development of such internal resources contributes significantly to resilience, a key determinant of professional longevity, especially in high-stress educational environments (Byman et al., 2020).

In terms of practical application, the study's findings suggest that CPD programs should incorporate evidence-based practices such as reflective journaling, peer coaching, and collaborative workshops to strengthen teacher efficacy and identity. These may include reflective journaling, peer coaching, collaborative workshops, and mentoring sessions that encourage teachers to examine their teaching narratives critically. The integration of such reflective elements into CPD not only supports professional identity development but also reinforces instructional confidence (Izzo et al., 2018). Teachers who set personal goals, reflect on their progress, and receive feedback

from peers are more likely to experience growth in both their instructional practice and professional self-concept (Živković et al., 2018).

Moreover, cultural context plays a pivotal role in shaping the implementation and effectiveness of reflective practice. Reflective models must account for sociocultural norms that influence how teachers perceive their roles and their engagement with introspective activities. In collectivist cultures, for instance, reflection may be more effectively embedded through collaborative discussion and community mentorship, whereas in individualist settings, personal journaling or self-evaluation might be more resonant (Hanna et al., 2019). Understanding these cultural variables is critical to designing inclusive CPD strategies that promote reflection without conflicting with local values or pedagogical traditions (Mateu et al., 2020).

Ultimately, this study confirms the utility of integrating reflective practice and self-efficacy enhancement into identity-focused CPD design. The mediation model not only explains how identity transformation occurs but also provides a foundation for practical intervention. Educators and policymakers are encouraged to consider these mechanisms when crafting teacher development initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable professional growth. The findings advocate for CPD that is both psychologically enriching and culturally responsive, thereby equipping educators to navigate the complexities of modern teaching with confidence and resilience.

CONCLUSION

This study confirmed that reflective practice significantly enhances Teacher Professional Identity (TPI), both directly and indirectly through teacher self-efficacy. Using Structural Equation Modeling, the findings validated a mediation model that illustrates how reflection strengthens professional identity by increasing teachers' confidence in their instructional abilities. These results support theoretical perspectives that view identity development as dynamic and rooted in psychological empowerment.

Practically, the study highlights the need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs that integrate structured reflection and efficacy-building components. Such programs are more likely to yield sustainable identity transformation, contributing to teacher resilience, job satisfaction, and long-term retention. Future research should apply longitudinal methods and explore additional variables to deepen understanding of professional identity pathways across diverse educational settings.

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