

## **Scholastic Performance and Professional Identity of Prospective Early Childhood Education Teachers**



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**ABSTRACT:** This study discusses the current situation of professional identity of early childhood education students in colleges from three aspects: professional cognition, professional attitude and emotion, and professional behaviour, and tries to understand the influencing factors of professional identity, including personal information, scholastic performance, etc. The study determined the relationship between the professional identities with the scholastic performance of the prospective early childhood education teachers. Results show that scholastic performance is significantly and positively correlated with the total professional identity score.

**KEYWORDS:** Scholastic Performance, Professional Identity, Early Childhood Teachers,

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, Chinese governments at all levels have attached great importance to the development of early childhood education. In 2019, the General Office of the State Council issued guidelines on promoting the development of care services for infants under the age of 3. In 2020, the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Promoting the Healthy Development of Old-age Care Services, clearly pointing out that “provincial people's governments should incorporate old-age care into the national economic and social development planning. The National Development and Reform Commission and the National Health Commission on the Implementation Plan of the Special Action to Support the Development of Inclusive Health Care Services (Trial) clearly pointed out that the talent support policy is a necessary option for the list of local government support policies, and made further provisions on talent training objectives, training plans and subsidies. A key part of the development of early childhood education is in the training of talents. Without qualified teachers, children aged 0-3 will be difficult to receive satisfactory education.

In order to promote the development of the early childhood education industry, the government attaches great importance to the training of professional talents. In March 2021, the Ministry of Education issued the Catalogue of Vocational Education Majors (2021) (hereinafter referred to as the Catalogue) to adjust the catalogue of higher vocational education specialties according to the development needs of childcare services, retain early childhood education and preschool education majors, and renamed the adjustment of early childhood development and health management to childcare services and management. The new Directory was officially launched in 2021. Before this, the early childhood education major or direction of Chinese higher vocational colleges is the main position of the training of care service personnel team, and its training quality is related to the overall quality of care service personnel team. By the beginning of 2021, about 160 higher vocational colleges nationwide had offered early childhood education majors. In recent years, the enrollment number of early childhood education majors has been increasing.

In practice, the preschool education major has been established for a long time, mainly training kindergarten teachers, students can go to work in kindergartens after graduation, the job is stable and the income is high, and the students' sense of identity is relatively high. For the education of infants and young children aged 0-3, after graduation, they can choose kindergartens and childcare institutions for children aged 0-3 years. Many students choose majors not out of their own will but forced or adjusted by their parents. Many students are more willing to go to kindergarten because the treatment is better, but their competitiveness in employment is weaker than that of preschool education students. This has led to the situation that some students have a weak sense of identity with their majors, and many students even lose their enthusiasm for learning. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct in-depth research on the relevant situation.

This study takes the students majoring in early childhood education in higher vocational colleges as an entry point, comprehensively investigates the current situation of the professional identity of early childhood education majors in higher vocational colleges, and further explores and analyzes the impact of the professional identity of early childhood education majors in higher vocational colleges. and the relationship between professional identity and academic performance, and then put forward a practical teaching management strategy to improve the professional identity of early childhood education majors in higher

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vocational colleges, so as to promote the professional construction of early childhood education major and improve talents Cultivating quality, in order to contribute to the development of early childhood education in the country and society.

### II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Sorting out the related research on "identity" abroad, teachers and lawyers are the main sample groups for "identity" research, and in the existing research literature, there is no foreign research on professional identity and professional identity. clear division. Olsen (2001) used empirical investigation to explore professional identity, the essence of which refers to the unity or consistency of attitudes of an individual or a group on a matter, which is a comprehensive attitude performance. Gaziel (1995) took the turnover attitude of teachers as the starting point of the research and explored the relationship between professional identity and turnover attitude of teachers. The results of its research show that when teachers have a low sense of professional identity, it will affect the pressure on teachers in the work environment, thereby hindering their own progress and development. Beijard (1995) explored teachers' professional identity from the perspective of internal structure. His research results divided teachers' professional identity into the following dimensions: teachers' cognition of Work attitudes and emotions, teachers' professional values, and theoretical knowledge and professional skills. Brickson (2000) believes that in order to conduct pertinent and scientific research on teachers' professional identity, it is necessary to explore the relationship between the three levels of individual, collective and mutual. Anonymous (2006) concluded that the factors affecting teachers' professional identity have diverse characteristics, that is, education level, social class and reward and punishment system will affect the formation of teachers' professional identity. Welmond (2002) explored the relationship between professional identity and it from the perspective of competitive attitude and awareness. The research results showed that there is a positive correlation between the two, that is, teachers can quickly and efficiently solve work conflicts and problems, and at the same time dare to Enrich oneself and carry out academic inquiry.

For professional identity, although the relevant literatures have slightly different divisions of the dimension of "professional identity", they basically revolve around three aspects: professional cognition, professional attitude and emotion, and professional behavior. Kou's (2018) research believes that "professional identity is the sum of the understanding, emotional attitude and active behavior of the major that students gradually form on the basis of previous relevant learning and practice. The degree of understanding, the emotional experience generated in the learning process and the behavior of actively participating in related activities." Chen (2020) proposed that professional recognition is "in the process of fully investing in one's own profession. The dynamic process of a positive response after a deep understanding of the emotions and in-depth understanding. In this process, not only the changes of the individual's cognition, emotion and behavior, but also the change of the individual's psychological state will be involved." Wang (2019) believes that professional identity is "learners form their own unique views and understanding of the major through systematic professional knowledge learning in school, and on this basis, form an attitude of recognition and acceptance of professional learning. In the process of practice, they are willing to devote themselves to the change process of the learning and exploration activities of the major." Zhang (2019) believes that professional recognition is the recognition of preschool education majors by preschool students, and they actively learn relevant professional knowledge before school. And a positive attitude in professionalism. Professional identity is the internal driving force for preschool learners to choose to become preschool teachers, and it is also the basis for preschool teachers to realize their professional values and abide by professional ethics. Peng (2008) proposed that "professional identification" is a process in which college students objectively recognize their own majors, recognize and accept their own majors, and check whether their majors are consistent with their own development after comprehensively evaluating their hobbies, expertise, and shortcomings. Zheng and Dong (2018) believe that professional identity is the internal driving force for teacher educators to realize self-worth and perform social functions, and it is a unique sense of awareness of teacher educators about the preschool education profession, which can reflect teachers' self-esteem for the preschool education profession. Sustained subconscious effort.

In terms of the level of professional identity of preschool education students, it is generally found that they are all at the middle level, and the professional identity of boys is lower. Kou (2018) found that the overall professional identity of students majoring in preschool education in B Vocational College was at an upper-middle level. It is found that the actual scores of preschool education students' professional identity is all at the middle level. Ren and Zhang (2020) used a sample of 199 public-funded normal students in preschool majors in a university in Sichuan Province as a sample and found that the professional identity of public-funded normal students is at the general stage and pointed out that there is an inherent relationship between professional effort and professional emotion. Wang and Wang (2021) found that the professional identity of boys majoring in preschool education is generally at a medium-low level, and their sense of identity is higher in the dimensions of professional cognition and professional self-efficacy, but in the dimensions of professional emotion and professional learning. Zhou (2018) conducted a questionnaire survey on 348 preschool education students in Anshan City. The study showed that undergraduates have the lowest professional identity, the level of employment dimension identity is not optimistic, and the identity level of male learners in all dimensions is lower than that of female learners. Wang (2018) used the questionnaire survey and interview methods to analyze the current situation and influencing factors of the professional identity of pre-school postgraduates and found that the professional

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identity of pre-school postgraduates was generally at a high level. Zhang (2018) used individual interviews and questionnaires to study 20 boys in preschool education and found that male preschool students at school had a higher degree of professional identity, but due to various factors, only one was determined to become a front-line preschool teacher.

### III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study determined the relationship between the professional identity with the scholastic performance of the prospective early childhood education teachers. The results of the study were used as basis in developing strategies to provide management inputs to improve the professional recognition of early childhood education students. Specifically, the study answered the following questions:

1. What is the assessment of prospective early education teacher respondents on their future professional identity according to: Professional Understanding; 2.2 Attitudes and Emotions Behaviors; Positive Initiatives in Professional Learning?
2. What is the Scholastic performance of the prospective early education teacher respondents?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the prospective early education teacher respondents' Scholastic performance with their assessed future professional identity?

### NULL HYPOTHESIS

Scholastic performance positively predicts professional identity.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research study included five (5) schools, 3 from the eastern region, 2 in the central or western region in the country. Students in the first to third grades were selected as the research objects. Random sampling was used to select the research objects. Using the Online Qualtrics calculator, the questionnaire sample size is calculated as follows, at the 95% confidence level, the Population size is 3000 people, the Margin of error is 5%, and the ideal sample size is 341. The first part is to know the academic performance of these students. The second part is to evaluate the three dimensions of professional understanding, professional understanding, professional attitude and emotion and professional behavior, so as to understand and investigate the status quo of their professional identity. The professional understanding mainly includes whether to understand the professional requirements, professional employment status, professional curriculum, professional teachers, professional teaching objectives; professional attitude and emotion include professional affection and positive expectations; professional behavior shows positive initiative in professional learning. The evaluation method of this questionnaire adopts the Likert 5 points. The options of the Professional Identification Questionnaire for early childhood education Students in Higher Vocational Colleges are "completely inconformity", "not very inconsistent", "general", "basic compliance", and "full compliance" are divided into 1,2,3,4 and 5. The questionnaire had no negative score, and the higher the total score of the questionnaire indicates the higher the students' professional identity. The internal consistency of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha Test based on the data of 540 valid questionnaires. The reliability of professional identity and all dimensions was high. SPSS20.0 was used for statistical analysis of the collected data. The methods of using SPSS20.0 to process data include descriptive statistics, independent sample T test, one-way analysis of variance, correlation analysis, factor analysis, regression analysis, etc. The study analyzed the relationship between demographic variables and professional identity through quantitative statistics, as well as the correlation analysis and regression analysis of the influencing factors of early childhood education students' professional identity, using linear regression analysis to discuss the effect of scholastic performance on professional identity.

### V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Overall Characteristics of Professional Identity of the Students Majoring in Early Childhood Education**

Dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
Total score of professional identity	3.62	0.56	upper-middle value
Professional understanding	3.60	0.60	upper-middle value
Professional attitude and emotion	3.46	0.62	upper-middle value
Professional behavior	3.71	0.61	upper-middle value

As can be seen from Table 1 that (1) the total score of professional identity range is between 1 and 5, and the theoretical median value is 3. In this study, the professional identity score of students majoring in early childhood education is 3.62, which is above average; (2) score of professional understanding is 3.60, score of professional attitude and emotion is 3.46, and score of professional behavior is 3.71. In the scores of the three dimensions, professional behavior > professional understanding > professional attitude and emotion.

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The researcher understands the scholastic performance of students by calculating their average grades since admission. The grades have included the usual process assessment and the final assessment at the end of the term, which can more comprehensively and truly reflect the students' scholastic performance. Descriptive statistics are made on the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' professional understanding of the professional achievements of students majoring in education in the early stage.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on the Scholastic Performance of the Prospective Early Education Teacher- Respondents**

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Scholastic performance	540	50.00	99.00	79.42	7.28

It can be seen from the above table that the scholastic performance score ranges from 0 to 100, and the theoretical median is 50 points. The scholastic performance score of the students majoring in early childhood education in this survey is 79.42 points, which is at the upper-middle level. Descriptive statistics were made on the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' academic performance, and the results are presented in Table 2. It shows that the total score of professional scores ranges from 0 to 100, and the theoretical median score is 50. The scholastic performance of students majoring in early childhood education is 79.42, which is above average.

**Table 3. Linear Regression Analysis of Scholastic Performance and the Professional Identity of Early Childhood Education Students**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	P value
1	0.252	0.064	0.062	36.496	0.000

Taking the scholastic performance as the independent variable and the total score of students' professional identity as the dependent variable, a linear regression analysis was conducted to analyze whether students' professional identity level can be predicted by scholastic performance. As the table shows that the linear relationship between scholastic performance and the professional identity of early childhood education students is significant ( $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ), and a linear model can be established.  $R^2=0.064$ , indicating that the independent variable "scholastic performance" could explain 6.4% of the variability of the dependent variable "total professional identity score of students in early childhood education". As the table shows that there is a significant linear relationship between scholastic performance and professional identity of early childhood education students ( $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ) and a linear model can be established.  $R^2=0.064$ , indicating that the independent variable "scholastic performance" can explain 6.4% of the variability of the dependent variable "total professional identity score of early childhood education students".

## CONCLUSIONS

Generally speaking, the professional identity of early education majors is at an upper-middle level. In the three dimensions of professional identity, professional behavior, professional awareness, professional attitude and emotion. From the analysis of the questionnaire data, the main factors affecting the professional identity include the degree of understanding of the major before admission, the reasons for choosing the major, the family economic situation and whether to serve as a class cadre. A better understanding of the major before admission, the choice of major is voluntary, the family financial situation is better, and the experience of serving as a class cadre are all factors that are conducive to enhancing the professional identity. There is a significant positive correlation between scholastic performance and the total score of professional identity and its three dimensions of early education majors. After regression analysis, it is found that there is a significant linear relationship between scholastic performance and professional identity and its three dimensions.

Thus, it is important to underscore that during the recruitment process, the manager should attach great importance to the comprehensive professional introduction and stick to down-to-earth attitude to make students have an overall understanding before making decisions. What's more, recruitment from secondary vocational schools is suggested. However, the early interviews are not available for senior high school graduates' recruitment, leading to a situation where students who are poor in physical coordination or pronunciation get recruited into early childhood education and suffer a lot from overcoming their physical shortcomings, if only this could be resolved.

Professional staffs in this field will be invited to give a systematic introduction related to the era background, relationship between early childhood education and preschool education, future employment direction, advantages of this field, and so on, equip the students with basic understandings of the profession and vocation. Besides, experts or leaders in this field will be invited to give lectures, sharing their experiences and promote students' professional identity, as well as leading them to think more about their future directions.

Now more than ever, we must focus on teachers' professional literacy and improve the quality of teaching. Firstly, schools should strengthen training for teachers in early childhood education, especially for those who don't major in related fields. Moreover, the most fashionable concepts should be passed to teachers during training, to help them update those out-of-date ones

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in their mind. In addition, schools should attach great importance to teachers' practical ability, and encourage them to get into enterprises to practice more, thus, with teachers' personal experiences, the teaching quality will be promoted and more effective. Besides, schools should cultivate teachers' teaching enthusiasm, which will effectively attract more students to join in and love what they are learning. Secondly, as for the process of teaching, school managers should focus more on the reform of teaching methods. Teachers should adopt more practical teaching methods to their class and integrate theory with practice, which is suggested to be added into standards for teachers' assessment.

To popularize the importance of early childhood education for kids aged 0-3 years is imperative. The importance of early childhood education still needs to be popularized in the whole society to show the public how valuable and promising the industry is. The government should also take more actions, such as providing financial subsidies and setting up public day care centers, in order to provide teachers in day care centers with the same treatment as that in other institutions and to improve the stability of their work and promote their social status.

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