



A Review of the Identity Crisis and Solutions for Middle School English Teachers in the “Internet+” Era

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Abstract

In the context of the "Internet +" era, information technology, like a strong east wind, has quietly penetrated every corner of the campus, promoting the continuous strengthening of campus informatization and giving wings to the development of educational informatization. This change has not only brought unprecedented teaching methods and teaching models to traditional education classrooms but also profoundly affected every corner of the education field. Teachers, as the core subject of teaching activities, have attracted widespread attention from all walks of life, and the issue of teacher identity has become a hot topic continuously discussed in the academic community. In recent years, with the rapid development of information technology, several studies have revealed a thought-provoking phenomenon: the widespread application of information technology has, to some extent, triggered a crisis of identity for teachers, especially middle school English teachers, who are facing unprecedented challenges. Against this background, this paper will focus on the specific manifestations of the identity crisis of middle school English teachers under the background of "Internet +". Through a thorough sorting and analysis of relevant literature, this study presents a series of practical suggestions for alleviating the identity crisis, with the aim of providing valuable references for the professional development of middle school English teachers.

Keywords

"Internet +" era; teacher identity; identity crisis; solutions

1. Introduction

In July 2015, the State Council issued the Guiding Opinions on Actively Promoting the "Internet Plus" Action, which clearly stated: "The education industry should encourage schools to use digital education resources and education service platforms, gradually explore networked education models, expand the coverage of high-quality education resources, and promote educational equity (Wang Dan, 2016). With the advent of the "Internet Plus" era, the rapid development of mobile Internet technology has changed the way people obtain knowledge and information, and also changed the concepts and methods of students learning English (Zhang Bing, 2017). China's secondary education has ushered in many new educational concepts and models, but it has also brought many opportunities and challenges to middle school English teachers. The advent of the "Internet Plus" era will inevitably bring great changes to middle school English teachers. These impacts are specifically reflected in the teaching environment, teaching practice, teaching norms, and teaching standards of English teachers. Such changes will have a profound effect on the identity of English teachers (Ning Xinying,

2017). Therefore, under the background of "Internet Plus", teachers are facing new opportunities, but this has also become a new source of pressure for teachers, and the identity crisis is increasing day by day. This article will focus on this phenomenon and propose some specific measures.

2. Research on Teacher Identity at Home and Abroad

During the literature search, the author found that there are several ways to express "identity", such as "teacher professional identity", "teacher occupational identity", "teacher identity", etc. Li Maosen said in his book that "identity" has a strong social attribute, so compared with the other expressions, "identity" has a broader meaning, including both social identity and professional identity. For the convenience of discussion, this article refers to it as identity recognition (Li Maosen, 2014).

Since the 1980s, the important role of teachers in teaching has gradually been valued by linguists and educators, and relevant discussions have begun. As an important part of a person's inner self, identity has attracted the interest of teacher development researchers in recent years, and researchers have continuously shifted their focus to the study of teacher identity recognition. Beijaard and other researchers have studied teacher professional identity and put forward their views on the similarities and differences in the views of teacher professional identity. They believe that how teachers know themselves, that is, teacher self-identity, is very important and affects their judgment and behavior to a large extent (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). According to Wenger's identity theory, the learning experience of the agent's participation and negotiation in practice and the learning time of the agent in various practice communities are the basic processes of constructing identity (Wenger, 1998). Wenger's theory of community of practice is also used as a theoretical framework by domestic researchers to study teacher identity. Researchers have conducted long-term research on identity, and different researchers have given different definitions of it. Beijaard believes that identity is defined as "who or what someone is, including the various meanings people give to themselves or are given by others" (Liu Jing, 2019). Miller and Tsui believe that "identity is a dynamic, changing and unstable concept" (Miller, 2009; Tsui, 2007). Lee Lee conducted an identity study on four EFL writing teachers. The cases of the four teachers show that the identity of teachers is constructed through discourse and is an activity mediated by the social, cultural and historical relations in which teaching takes place. Identity is not static but can change and develop. People can have multiple identities, and these identities may even conflict (Lee Lee, 2012).

Domestic researchers' research on teacher identity appeared relatively late. Only at the beginning of this century did some research on identity begin to appear, and most of them were literature reviews of Western teacher identity research. Wei Shuhua drew on foreign research results on teacher identity in her master's thesis and believed that it is both a process and a state. "Process" refers to the process of individual self gradually developing and confirming one's teacher role from one's own experience; "state" refers to the degree of identification of the current teacher's individual with the teaching profession he is engaged in (Wei Shuhua, 2005). Li Maosen believes that identity recognition is mainly people's understanding and confirmation of the questions "Who am I" and "Why do I belong to a specific group". Teacher identity recognition is the unity of teachers as "people" and people as "teachers" (Wei Shuhua, 2005). He also proposed that the realization of harmonious unity between teachers' ideal self and displayed self depends on teachers' identity recognition, that is, teachers constantly construct and identify their professional roles (Li Maosen, 2008). Most domestic researchers choose to adopt the perspective of constructive identity in their research on teacher identity, that is, as Wei Shuhua said above, they regard identity as a process to construct. Some researchers have reviewed the research on second language teacher identity in China in the past decade. The research found that the prosperity of second language teacher identity research abroad after 2010 has promoted the growth of domestic research, and domestic research is mainly empirical research and qualitative research is mainly empirical research. The research content mainly focuses on the development, transformation, and construction of teacher identity. The research also includes the study of the identity crisis of second language teachers (Xue Qiqi & Zhan Suxian, 2021). The identity crisis that accompanies the identity of foreign language teachers has been considered an important factor affecting the professional development of teachers (Xun Yang & Zheng Xinmin, 2014).

3. Manifestations of the Identity Crisis of Middle School Foreign Language Teachers in the "Internet+" Era

The study of identity crisis involves the study of factors influencing teacher identity. The factors influencing foreign language teachers' identity involve both personal and social factors (Xun Yang & Zheng Xinmin, 2014). Li Maosen divides the influencing factors into national education policies at the macro level, school organizational culture at the meso level, and individual teacher knowledge and attitudes at the micro level (Li Maosen, 2009). Under the new situation,

"Internet +" has changed all traditional industries or service industries and created a new pattern. Some scholars have added "interpersonal factors" based on this and combined their own research (Li Junli, 2021). In the education industry, the Internet has changed the original teaching model, teaching methods, teaching materials, and evaluation methods (Zhang Peibei, 2020). Based on the research of other researchers on this topic, the author makes the following summary of the identity crisis of middle school foreign language teachers.

3.1 Lack of personal sense of the value of teachers

With the development of information technology, recorded classes, live classes, and other course methods have been widely popularized in middle school English classrooms. In the situational teaching method, the use of information technology is even more indispensable for the need to create scenarios. In traditional offline classrooms, information technology exists more as an auxiliary tool, but with the improvement of technology, it accounts for an increasing proportion of middle school English teaching, and teachers gradually change from "master" to "slave" (Zhang Shicai & Lu Peizhu, 2019). According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the highest need of human beings is the need for self-realization. Middle school English teachers generally have stable careers, so they pursue higher-level needs more obviously (Gong Mengwei & Nan Hai, 2019). Under the impact of the Internet information age, the change in the dominant position of middle school English teachers will make teachers feel negative and lost emotionally. In addition, the recent hot topics in society such as "Will teachers be replaced by artificial intelligence?" and the emergence of "teacher uselessness theory" have gradually caused teachers to lose their sense of personal value and have a crisis of self-identity as teachers. Although online teaching is the mainstream trend in the "Internet +" era, teachers in the central and western regions of my country, where resources are relatively scarce, are still forced to cope with it. The lack of application of information technology makes it difficult to update teaching methods, and teaching results are weak, which is more likely to cause a loss of personal value, leading to an identity crisis.

3.2 Weakening of teacher-student relationship

In traditional classrooms, teachers are in a dominant position and have a strong voice. Teacher discourse identity is the recognition of their teaching activities of "teaching, imparting knowledge, and solving problems" (Zhang Yu et al., 2023). Whether or not one has the right to speak knowledge is an important factor affecting the professional identity of teachers (Li Maosen, 2009). Teachers can use discourse as a medium to impart their knowledge and values to students. Students are highly dependent on teachers, which can also arouse strong resonance between teachers and students (Wang Guan & Yu Li, 2019). However, in the context of "Internet +", with the development of information technology, teacher discourse is no longer the only way for students to acquire knowledge. The introduction of information technology in middle school English classrooms has also enabled students to acquire more learning methods. Various learning apps have sprung up like mushrooms after rain, and students can carry out learning activities even if they are not in the classroom. This has directly led to the weakening of the teacher-student relationship and the gradual weakening of students' dependence on teachers. The emotional gap brought about by the teacher-student relationship will cause emotional loss to teachers, thus leading to an identity crisis.

3.3 Uneven levels of information technology among teachers

In the "Internet +" era, the trend of using information technology for teaching is inevitable, and online teaching is more common in teaching. To meet the needs of online teaching courses and enable online teaching to proceed smoothly, in addition to external conditions such as institutional support and technical support from schools, teachers' senior information technology level is also needed to support it. In the first point, "Lack of personal values of teachers", it is also mentioned that the overall level of Internet use and informationization in the underdeveloped areas of central and western my country is low, which also leads to the lack of experience in the use of information technology by middle school English teachers in these areas, and their level in this area is poor. In addition to the gap in information technology level caused by regional differences, there are also differences in information technology level caused by age differences. For example, older teachers are less receptive to some practical operations than younger teachers. Therefore, in the "Internet +" era, teachers need information knowledge in addition to professional knowledge. Teachers will encounter various difficulties when practicing mobile Internet teaching. While enriching practical knowledge, they will also produce professional burnout, which directly leads to a crisis of identity recognition for teachers (An Kunwei, 2019).

4. Suggestions for Relieving Identity Issues for Middle School English Teachers

Based on relevant literature, the author proposes suggestions for the reconstruction of teacher identity from three perspectives: society, school, and individual teachers.

4.1 Social perspective

In the process of educational informatization in my country, teachers are on the margins of both the formulation and discussion of online education policies and the content of online education policies themselves (Mao Jingyue & Zhang Simin, 2020). To help teachers complete the reconstruction of their identity in the "Internet +" era, from a social perspective, I think it is very important to pay attention to the needs of teachers, hold discussions regularly, listen to the problems and suggestions summarized by teachers through practical operation, and then coordinate with technical personnel, schools, etc. in a more targeted manner to help teachers better complete the practical operation of information technology in teaching. Secondly, the identity and status of teachers should be determined from the institutional perspective to rescue teachers from the current embarrassing situation (Zhang Shicai & Lu Peizhu, 2019). With the widespread use of information technology, the role positioning and teaching skills of middle school English teachers have been challenged. The role of teachers has changed from knowledge transmitters and lecturers to guides and promoters of student learning. Teachers are no longer the center of knowledge interaction and application but have become scaffolds for students to easily obtain resources, use resources, process information, and apply knowledge to real situations (Zhang Jinlei et al., 2012). At the same time, the emergence of some "teacher uselessness theories" also requires the social system to affirm the status of teachers as teaching subjects.

4.2 School organization

Considering the uneven level of teachers' information technology, schools should also help provide some collective training and other activities to help teachers better adapt to the information society. By improving the level of information technology operation time, teachers can also obtain more updated teaching methods, teaching models, etc., thereby providing more support for their teaching activities. At the same time, some studies have pointed out that the conditions for teaching informatization also directly affect the quality of teachers' teaching work and students' learning, and are also important external guarantee factors for teachers' job satisfaction and their own identity (Wang Guan & Yu Li, 2019). Therefore, as a provider of teaching environment, schools should improve the level of campus informatization so that teachers can have a better experience in the process of operation and practice.

4.3 Teachers' personal

Teachers' subjective feelings and emotional factors have a very important influence on the construction of their professional identity. Some studies have shown that positive emotional experience helps to realize teachers' self-identity and thus promote the smooth implementation of educational reform; on the contrary, negative emotional experience is likely to cause a crisis of teachers' identity and cause resistance to change (Li Maosen, 2009). Therefore, first of all, teachers should have a positive attitude towards campus informatization, accept it as a new thing, take the initiative to learn, and improve their information technology capabilities.

Secondly, teachers should actively participate in information technology learning and improve their information literacy. Lave and Wenger proposed that learning means that an individual becomes a full participant in a social group (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, teachers need to keep learning new things, not only accepting it emotionally and psychologically but more importantly, practicing it in behavior. It is recommended that teachers maintain the habit of lifelong learning in their positions, improve their own level of information technology application, enhance their professional confidence, and maintain good professional competitiveness (Guo Yuqi, 2022).

In summary, in order to relieve the identity of middle school English teachers, comprehensive measures need to be taken from the three levels of society, school, and individual teachers. Society should pay more attention to the needs of teachers and help teachers complete the reconstruction of their identity in the "Internet +" era through institutional guarantees and technical support. Schools should provide collective training and other activities to improve teachers' information technology level and improve the level of campus informatization to provide teachers with better operational practice experience. Teachers should maintain a positive learning attitude, actively accept and practice new technologies, and improve their own information literacy. Through these measures, the relief and reconstruction of the identity of middle school English teachers can be effectively promoted.

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