

A Comparison of Practitioners' Perceptions about Professional Identity at Higher Secondary Level

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Abstract

The study was conducted to compare practitioners' perception about professional identity at higher secondary level. The purpose of the study was to equate practitioners' perception about three components of professional identity (1) Who am I? (2) What is my role? (3) How I should be? The population of the study comprised male and female practitioners teaching at higher secondary level. Data was collected from 633 public and private sector college practitioners through disproportionate stratified sampling technique. Major findings of study were that there was no significant difference in professional identity of public and private sector practitioners; however, private sector college practitioners were found more concerned about improving themselves. It was concluded that the teachers from both sectors had same views about their description as a teachers and their role as a teacher but teachers of private sector were more concerned about how they should be. It was suggested that practitioners at higher secondary may be provided training for enhancing professional identity through collaboration with universities and international donor agencies which are interested to raise the quality of education in Pakistan. It can be made mandatory to promote the college teachers to next grade within training courses and professional development programs.

Keywords: Professional identity, teaching learning process, professional development, public private sector, college practitioners, personal and professional growth

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Introduction

Professional identity is based on the thinking and behaviors of individuals in their professional life which make their professional survival possible and they uphold their professional status (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). When professional career is started, the professional values, responsibilities and attitudes are linked with the personal and social empathy of the individual. In this modern age the professionals of different fields like medical, engineering, law and many others have their own professional identity (Robinson & Frost 2005). Professional identity is integral part of teaching profession so it has got value in the field of teacher education. There is great impact of professional identity on teaching profession which has enhanced the value of research in this aspect. Professional identity of the teachers means that the teachers should know their own status as a teacher, their responsibilities and the expectations of the society from them as they play a vital in nation building. They have to play significant role in the development of the society (Vikas, 2015).

Education system is modified due to professional identity and teachers have adopted new pedagogical skills because of the awareness about their professional responsibilities in the society. Beijaard (2009) has stated that teachers 'attitude towards teaching learning process is more developed and they focus on their own personal and professional development due to professional identity. The teachers can judge their teaching practices with professional identity and they can decide to upraise the standard of their performance within various aspects of educational field. Beckett and Gough (2006) have mentioned in their study that teachers are responsible for the education of individuals which make them more vigilant about their role as a teacher. In this modern age the researches have highlighted the value of professional identity for the teachers because the perceptions, attitudes and pedagogical skills of teachers are improved and they can contribute constructively in the welfare of the society. Beauchamp and Thomas (2010) have concluded in their study that professional identity of the teachers is developed in the socio-cultural environment of the society which makes impact on the behaviors and skills of the teachers towards the students' development. Professional identity shapes the cognitive approaches of the teachers so they add in educational field accordingly. They can manage their attributes according to the needs of the students.

Hashwani, (2013) found that the identity of teachers is affected by the time, experience, cultural and social conditions. He further stated that teachers' personal and professional identities are shaped within the socio-cultural environment and they perceive the teaching profession subsequently. Malik (2010) has compared the professional identity of the public and private sector teachers in his research and he reached at the conclusion that different psychological, social and cultural aspects of the society frame the attitude of the teachers towards the teaching profession. Malik (2010) further claimed that the teachers of private sector are more trained professionally as compared to public sector teachers so they are much aware about the professional identity. According to Day and Kington (2008) the aims and objectives of teaching are highlighted through professional identity and teachers get assured about the concept of job satisfaction. The work place environment, administration system and students approaches towards the teaching learning process establish the professional identity of the teachers. It is very essential to note that all stakeholders of education have emotional impact on the professional identity of the teachers. Teachers can handle the academic problems including students' difficulties in learning within the professional training and development. They learn how to deal with the colleagues and how to make the healthy job environment because personal development plays a vital role in professional identity of the teachers.

Andrabi (2007) emphasized that professional development of teachers is preferred in private sector of Pakistan to enable the teachers to identify their own professional identity so they can contribute in achievements of the students effectively. He further documented that mostly the public sector educational institutions are lacking in the teachers' training programs so they should focus on providing the attentiveness about the professional identity. In-service teachers training programs are beneficial for the provision of modern information about the professional development and converting the traditional methods of teaching in new pedagogical skills according to the need of hour. Continuous professional development should be sustained in public sector educational institutions.

Alsop (2006) illuminated the need of professional development of the teachers from the beginning and they should be provided the training about the application of new teaching strategies. Training programs enhance the professional identity of the teachers so they work rigorously for teaching learning process which helps the learners in understating the demands of modern era.

Vermunt (2008) reflected upon the teachers' professional identity as the key to success in teaching profession because the personal attributes of the teachers are highlighted in their teaching skills. Personal identification is deeply integrated with the professional identity of the teachers because individual characteristics of the personality are correlated with the professional life. The sense of responsibility is generated among the teachers due to the awareness about their recognition in the society and their mindfulness about their role as a teacher. The teachers should always work on improving and enhancing the professional identity. It will be resulted in the achievement of aims and objectives of the educational institutions. Further the students will also be able to get the learning outcomes according to the needs of the modern age. It will lead the teachers towards the endorsement of modern technology in their teaching skills which will make teaching learning process interesting for themselves and for the students (Hamman & Bunuan, 2010).

Surgrue (2005) asserted that professional identity of teachers has different aspects so it is multi-dimensional term which covers all essential characteristics of the teaching profession. It is related with prior knowledge and new experiences of a teacher so the collaboration of past and present experiences makes the journey towards the success of a professional teacher. This strategy of professional identity helps the teachers to move from traditional teaching to upgraded pedagogical skills. Beara (2010) observed the concept of professional identity as the application of knowledge, experience and strategies for the learning outcomes of the students. According to Beara (2010) teaching learning process works with the collaboration of both students and the teachers so it is essential for the teachers to get information about the social and cultural environment of the society to understand the cognitive approach of the students. Macleod and Humphris (2005) have focused on the personal and professional development of the teachers through professional identity. They have mentioned in their research that all sources should be used for the endowment of professional identity in teachers. The professional development programs mentorship and peer observations can play a vital role in the promotion of professional identity. Austin and McDaniels (2006) have discussed the element of job satisfaction in their research. They claimed that teachers' professional identity provides the commitment to the professional duties and the teachers work devotedly for the attainment of the organizational goals. They are acquainted with the academic goals so they feel their responsibilities to acquire them timely and effectively.

Sweitzer (2009) has attached the effectiveness of academic arena with the teachers' professional identity. Different aspects of teaching and learning are completed with the integration of teachers' full involvement in various disciplines of education which can be possible due to the professional identity. Eteläpelto (2007) has concluded that there is the need of professional identity at all stages of teaching profession so it should be promoted in teachers' training programs. The teachers enhance their ability of expression of ideas and learn new teaching strategies due to the awareness of professional identity.

Objectives of Study

The current study has been designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To compare practitioners' professional identity at higher secondary level.
2. To determine practitioners' views about description of teacher at higher secondary level.
3. To explore practitioners' perception about teachers' role at higher secondary level.
4. To investigate practitioners' opinion about how they should be as a teacher at higher secondary level.

Hypotheses of Study

H₀1: There is no significant difference in practitioners' views about professional identity at higher secondary level.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in practitioners' views about their description as a teacher at higher secondary level.

H₀3: There is no significant difference in practitioners' perception about their role as a teacher at higher secondary level.

H₀4: There is no significant difference in practitioners' perception about how they should be as a teacher at higher secondary level.

Research Design

Descriptive method of research was applied in the study to analyze the practitioners' perception about professional identity at higher secondary level in public and private sector. Self-developed questionnaire was used as the tool for data collection which was got filled personally. The data was analyzed statistically through SPSS. Independent Sample T-Test was used to test the null hypotheses.

Population and Sample

All practitioners of higher secondary level in public and private sector colleges located in district Jhelum (Jhelum, Dina, Sohawa & Pind Daden Khan) were target population of the study. Jhelum is located in northern Punjab province of Pakistan. Sample of the study was selected through disproportionate stratified sampling technique. The teachers of 11 public sector and 22 private sector colleges teaching only higher secondary classes were chosen as the sample.

Instrument

A closed ended questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on five point Likert scale for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. First section of the questionnaire was about demographic information from the respondents whereas second section consisted of 27 items and it was developed according to the objectives of the study.

Reliability of Research Instrument

To find out the reliability of the research instrument of college teachers, Cronbach's alpha Coefficient method was adopted because this method is better to measure coefficient of reliability. The research instrument had three categories of Practitioners' Professional Identity. Table 1 shows Cronbach' Alpha Coefficient of questionnaire about professional identity and its three components.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of Research Instruments of Practitioners' Professional Identity (N = 633)

Variables	No of items	Reliability Coefficient
Who am I?	10	.724
What is my role?	10	.720
How I should be?	7	.543
Total	27	.825

The table 1 represents the Alpha reliability coefficient of total scale about practitioners' professional identity. The total scale Alpha coefficient is 0.825. The research instrument questionnaire about Practitioners' Professional Identity was divided into three subscales 1. Who am I? 2. What is my role? 3. How I should be? There were total 27 items in questionnaire of practitioners' professional identity. Alpha coefficient of subscales ranges from 0.543 to 0.724. A total sample of college teachers was 633.

Analysis and Results

The data is presented in the form of tables and graphs about practitioners' professional identity including its three aspects (1) Who am I? (2) What is my role? (3) How I should be?

H₀1: There is no significant difference in practitioners' views about Professional identity in public and private sector.

Table 2

Mean and t-value on score of Practitioners' Professional identity between public and private sector

Sector	N	Mean	S.D	t	df	p
Public	277	53.75	9.825	1.717	631	0.086
Private	356	55.02	8.837			

Significant t-value at 0.05 level

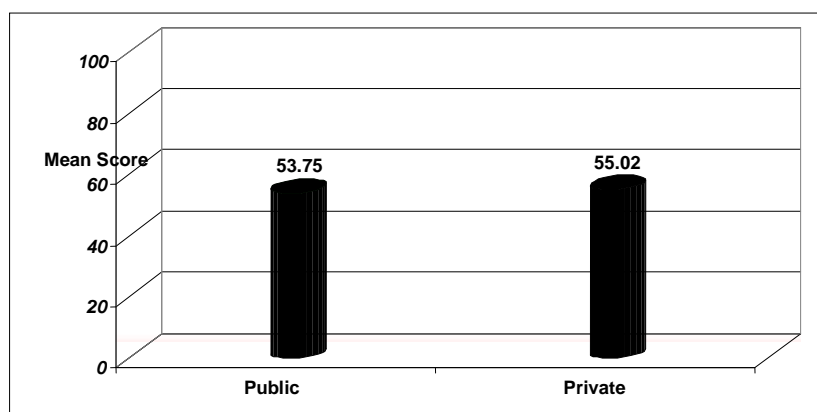


Figure 1 Sector wise mean score of college practitioners about professional identity

Table 2 and graph 1 show mean difference on the scores of practitioners' professional identity of public and private sector colleges. The mean score of public sector teachers is 53.75 and the mean score of private sector teachers is 55.02. The mean difference is 1.27. The value of t (1.717) is not significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance. Therefore our null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in practitioners' views about professional identity in public and private sector is accepted.

H₀ 2: There is no significant difference in practitioners' views about their description as a teacher in public and private sector.

Table 3

Mean and t-value on score of description as a teacher between public and private sector

Sector	N	Mean	S.D	t	df	p
Public	277	19.71	4.416	0.026	631	0.979
Private	356	19.70	4.211			

Significant t-value at .05 level

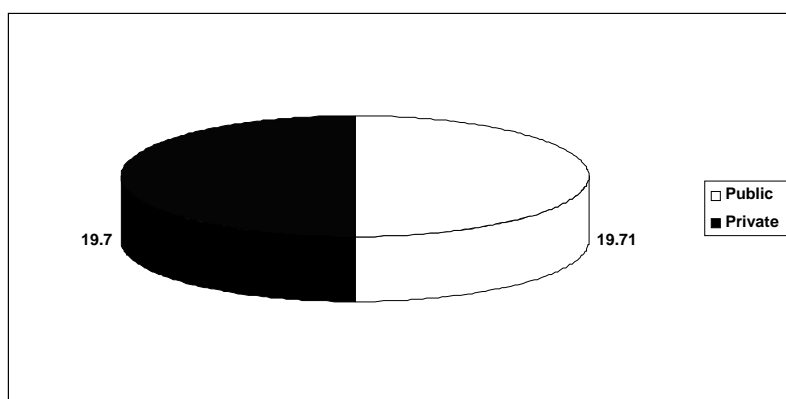


Figure 2 Sector wise mean score of college practitioners about description as a teacher

Table 3 and graph 2 indicate mean difference on the scores of description as a teacher of Public Sector College and Private Sector College. The mean score of public sector teachers is 19.71 and the mean score of private sector teachers is 19.70. The mean difference is 0.01. The value of t (0.026) is not significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance. Therefore our null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in practitioner's views about their description as a teacher in public and private sector is accepted.

H₀3: There is no significant difference in practitioners' perception about their role as a teacher in public and private sector.

Table 4

Mean and t-value on score of role as a teacher between public sector and private sector college teachers

Sector	N	Mean	S.D	t	df	p
Public	277	19.84	4.644	1.353	631	0.177
Private	356	20.32	4.174			

Significant t-value at .05 level

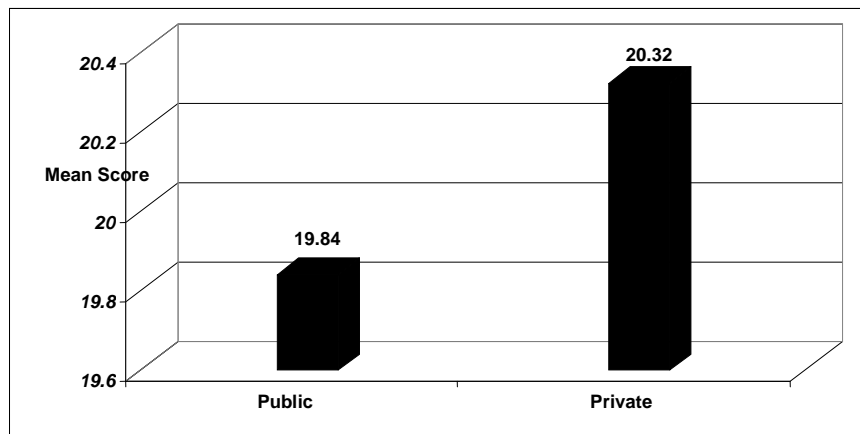


Figure 3 Sector wise mean score of college practitioners about role as a teacher

Table 4 and graph 3 describe mean difference on the scores of role as a teacher of public sector and private sector. The mean score of public sector teachers is 19.84 and the mean score of private sector teachers is 20.32. The mean difference is 0.48. The value of t (1.353) is not significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance. Therefore our null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in practitioners' views about their role as a teacher in public and private sector colleges is accepted.

H₀4: There is no significant difference in practitioners' perception about how they should be as a teacher.

Table 5

Mean and t-value on score of how they should be as a teacher between public and private sector higher secondary level teachers

Sector	N	Mean	S.D	t	df	p
Public	277	14.19	3.081	3.490	631	.001
Private	356	15.01	2.750			

Significant t-value at .05 level

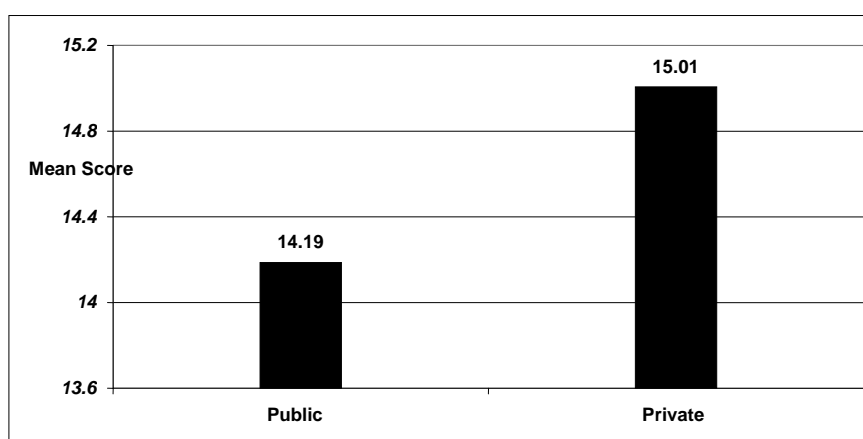


Figure 4 Sector wise mean score of college practitioners about how they should be as a teacher.

Table 5 and graph 4 represent mean difference on the scores of how they should be as a teacher of public sector and private sector college teachers. The mean score of public sector teachers is 14.19 and the mean score of private sector college teachers is 15.01. The mean difference is 0.82. The private sector teachers' mean score is greater than public sector teachers. The value of t (3.490) is significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance. Therefore our null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in practitioner's views about how they should be as a teacher in public and private sector is not accepted.

Findings

Practitioners' views about professional identity in public and private sector

It was found that there was no significant difference in practitioners' views about practitioners' professional identity in public and private sector. There were 277 teachers in public sector with the mean score of 53.75 and 356 teachers with mean score of 55.02. The mean difference is 1.27. It is not significant because p value is not less than significant level of 0.05 (Table 2).

Practitioners' views about their description as a teacher in public and private sector

The analysis of data showed that there was no significant difference in the scores of public and private sector teachers about their description as a teacher. The mean score of public sector teachers is 19.71 and the mean score of private sector teachers is 19.70. The mean difference is 0.01 (Table 3).

Practitioners' perception about their role as a teacher in public and private sector

The results of data described that there was no significant difference in practitioners' perception about their role as a teacher in both public and private sector. The mean score of public sector teachers is 19.84 and mean score of private sector teachers is 20.32. The mean difference is 0.48 (Table 4).

Practitioners' perception about how they should be as a teacher in public and private sector.

The analysis of data showed that there was difference in the views of the teachers of public and private sector about how they should be as a teacher. The mean score of public sector teachers is 14.19 and mean score of private sector teachers is 15.01 (Table 5).

Conclusion

1. It was concluded that there was no difference in views of public and private sector teachers about the professional identity. The teachers from both sectors had same views about their description as a teachers and their role as a teacher. The reason may be that the teachers of both public and private sector were aware about their status as a teacher. It means that the teachers of both public and private sector confer equal importance to the teaching profession. They keep parallel thinking about their role as teacher and responsibilities. It shows that the teachers of both public and private sector have equaling opinion about their responsibilities as a teacher

2. There was significant difference in the perceptions of public and private sector teachers about how they should be? It was concluded that teachers of private sector were more concerned about how they should be as compare to public sector teachers. Generally it is observed that public sector teachers have permanent jobs, therefore they are less interested in personal and professional development. In private sector the survival of the teachers depends upon the professional training. They want to progress in teaching field and they are more interested in professional development programs of teachers in different educational areas. Another reason may be that there is competition in private sector institutions for performing better and getting good results. Mostly private schools and colleges want to raise the standard of their academic environment more than others so the educational institutions make mandatory for teachers to get professional training for obtaining good educational standards. The administration of private sector schools and colleges also arrange different teachers' training workshops in order to provide fresh knowledge and information about innovative pedagogical skills.

The present study was aimed to examine practitioners' views about professional identity in public and private sector at higher secondary level. Professional identity of the teachers is a complex area of teaching profession because it is the collaboration of teacher's abilities as a person and as a professional. The role of the teacher is to teach with personal learning ability, knowledge in professional way. This practice has generated the concept of professional identity in research on teaching and teaching profession. Professional identity has been taken as a source of teachers' continuous professional development. Teachers' professional identity and professional learning practices are associated with one another (Beijaard, 2009).

It was found in the present study that there was no significant difference in practitioners' views about professional identity in public and private sector. The similarities of the views were found in both public and private sector teachers about the professional identity. There were three components of professional identity which were discussed in the study. First component was who am I? Second was what is my role? and third component of professional identity was How I should be? The findings of the study indicated that teachers of both public and private sector had equivalent views about professional identity with the aspect of their satisfaction as a teacher and about their role as a teacher. Olsen (2008) has mentioned in his study that professional identity of the teachers (practitioners) highlights complete picture of professional behaviors of the teachers in educational environment. It is proved

through the findings of present study that there was similarity in teachers' views about their professional status in the society and their classroom behaviors and dealings with the students. It is observed that practitioners' professional identity includes the social context, workplace environment, and professional responsibilities of the teacher. The study revealed that the teachers of both public and private keep parallel thinking about understanding of teaching profession. The findings of the study are aligned with the study of Beacuchamp and Thomas (2010) who described that the teachers understand their responsibilities as a teacher through professional identity. The results of the study were related with the views of Seidel and Shavelson (2007) who described in the meta-analysis of their research report that practitioners' various teaching strategies influence the students' outcomes. It shows that professional identity is operative for the teaching learning process in the classroom environment and students' learning achievement.

There was significant difference in public and private sector practitioners' views about how they should be? The private sector practitioners showed more interest in their professional development as compared to the teachers of public sector. It is obvious that the teachers of private sector are in favour of improving their teaching strategies through training workshops and teacher development programs because they are enforced by the authorities to perform well in the classroom environment. It is also observed that mostly the academic conditions of private sector educational institutions are better than the school/colleges of public sector. Generally it is noticed that as public sector teachers have job security so their promotions and benefits are not conditional with improving their skills or innovations. Therefore, naturally public sector teachers have no aspiration to use modern pedagogies in teaching learning process and it is the major cause of low standard of education in public sector colleges and they are losing public trust. We know that it is essential for the teachers to reflect upon their teaching practices and improve teaching strategies within the passage of time. The findings of present study are related with the research results of Andrabi's (2006) study. He concluded that in private sector of Pakistan; generally the teachers' teaching potency is developed through professional development and it becomes mandatory for them to gain professional training by their administration to apply the skills for students' learning outcomes in educational environment. He further added that intention of professional development is at low level in public sector educational institutions in Pakistan.

Recommendations

Following recommendations have been made on the bases of findings and conclusion of present study.

1. It is suggested that college practitioners may be provided proper regular training about professional identity to make them realize the importance and role of professional identity in teaching profession through collaboration with universities, Higher Education Commission and international organizations. So they may be perceived by the community as well-recognized teachers because the teachers are not only judged by the students and the authorities but the society also confers observations and annotations about the teachers according to their performance and quality of education.
2. It is recommended that the promotion of the teachers to next grade at higher secondary level can be linked with the number of professional development trainings. The promotion to next grade for college teachers can be made on the bases of practitioners' professional development during the tenure of their job and according to professional trainings courses during the possession of their service.
3. Professional identity of teachers is imperative area of teaching profession and in present days it is focused area of research. The results of present study have provided up-to-date picture of the professional identity of college teachers in public and private sector. Although teachers are aware partially about their professional identity including their own description as a teacher and their role as a teacher but it is observed that mostly society is not aware about the professional status of teachers. The interpretation of teachers about their role is different than rhetoric interpretation of teacher by the general public. So it is suggested that ministry of education should make the arrangements for procedure of constructing teachers' professional identity through reciprocal and vigorous actions in social order.

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