A Review of the Studies on College English Teacher's Professional Identity (CETPI) Development in Past Five Years in China

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Abstract: This paper reviews the studies on College English Teacher's professional identity (CETPI) development in the past five years in China with respect to research themes, methodology, and theoretical perspectives. There are three research themes: the relationships of CETPI with teacher's self-efficacy, teacher's subjective well-being, abroad study experience, etc.; factors and ways relevant to the construction or reconstruction of CETPI development; the current situation of CETPI development. It is revealed that more and more studies take mixed-methods (combined quantitative with qualitative approach) than earlier studies which merely take a qualitative approach. In terms of theoretical perspectives, most studies take a community of practice perspective, admitting a changeable, dynamic process with a view of binary opposition. Thus, theoretical perspectives should be enriched in later studies..

1. Introduction

In essence, professional identity is the self that has been developed with the commitment to perform competently and legitimately in the context of the profession, and its development can continue over the course of the individuals' careers. A person with such identifies with the profession, he or she finds meaning in the work [1]. The importance of teacher's professional identity to teacher's professional development has long been recognized through a variety of methodological approach[2][3]. It influences students' academic achievement, teacher's self-efficacy, teacher's self-esteem, commitment and job satisfaction, etc. [4][5][6][7].

The research on teacher's identity began in the 1990s, which after the great upsurge of studies on identity in the 1980s [8]. The studies on English teacher's identity sprang up in the beginning of 21st century. Scholars have already studied the influencing factors, such as educational policies, collaborative reflective practice, online peer knowledge sharing [9][10][11]. EFL student or novice teacher's professional identity construction or reconstruction by pedagogy-informed teacher education, or dual diploma program [12][13], has been conducted.

Compared with overseas researchers, Chinese researchers of EFL teacher's professional identity development was behind almost 10 years. At the beginning of the 21th century, there was a vigorous reform of College English teaching all over China. This reform attracted the attention of many foreign language education researchers. They carried out larger scale, more in-depth studies concerning this reform. In 2002, Xia Jimei conducted an empirical research with respect to College English teachers' concept, knowledge, ability, current situation of research and advanced study in 600 colleges and universities; in 2005, Zhou Yan carried out a research of College English teachers' development needs involved in College English teachers in 49 different types of colleges and universities in China; the same year, Wu Yi'an carried out a research involved in more than 200 excellent English teachers in 30 colleges and universities. Many researchers conducted qualitative research on CETPI development later [14][15]. Around 2013, several scholars began to compile

CETPI Inventory [16][17]. These studies with other scholars' researches in China direct the research dimension of EFL teachers from former knowledge, pedagogy and competency to professional development, and professional identity began to be the focus of recent studies.

This article is intended to review the studies on CETPI development in the past five years in China so as to summarize its research characteristics, analyze the existing problems and point out research orientation.

2. Selection Criteria

First, the researcher set up the criteria for including and excluding studies to be reviewed. The search is limited to studies in the field of College English teachers in China and professional identity development. The published year is between 2015-2019. Then, the database of EBSCO and CNKI is used, the keywords "professional identity development", "College English teachers in China" are used, and the publishing time period is from 2015 to 2019. Dissertations and thesis that focus on CETPI in China are also included. Studies that did not report results of a research study or that had limitations in terms of sample, data collection, data analysis, or other essential components of the research process are excluded. Finally, there are 11 journal articles (including 2 English articles), 2 doctoral dissertations, 5 master's thesis. To exclude one introduction, one review, and one master's thesis which is the same author as found in the journal article, the final corpus of this study is composed of 9 journal articles, 2 doctoral dissertations, and 4 master's thesis.

3. Findings

The researcher analyzed each selected study by designing a table that served to identify the themes of the research, methodology, and theoretical perspectives.

Author and year	Methodology	Data collection tools	Theoretical perspective	Themes
Tang (2015a)	Mixed-methods (self-confronted method), 5 year	Interview, inventory		Self-enhancement, union with others, positive and negative emotions
Tang (2015b)	Mixed-methods	Questionnaire, interview		Four dimensions of Tang's CETPII, participant's profile factors
Liu & Zhou (2016)	Mixed-methods	Questionnaire, interview		Four dimensions of Xun's CETPII, influencing factors1
Yu (2019)	Mixed-methods	Questionnaire, interview		Four dimensions of Tang's CETPII, participant's profile factors
Shi & Zhang (2016)	Mixed-methods	Questionnaire, interview	Community of practice	Four dimensions of Tang's CETPII, participant's profile factors, self-efficacy, influencing factors2
Tang (2017)	Qualitative approach, 1 year	Reflective journals, phenomenology		Teacher's agency, experience, belief, micro-political
Qi & Liu (2018)	Mixed-methods	Questionnaire, interview		Four dimensions of Xun's CETPII, development strategies
Qi & Wang (2019)	Qualitative approach	Interview, grounded theory	Community of practice	Attitude, teaching activities, expectations, learning community
Huang & Guo (2019)	Qualitative approach, 4 years	interview	Sociocultural perspective	Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral developments
Yang	Qualitative	Interview,	Community of	Teacher's agency, reflexivity,

(2017)	approach	observation, reflective journals	practice	social and institutional context, interpersonal and personal factors
Wen (2015)	Mixed-methods	Questionnaire, interview	Social psychological perspective	Self-efficacy, values, meaningfulness, loyalty, research actions
Hao (2016)	Quantitative approach	questionnaire		Xun's CETPII, Self-efficacy, identity, subjective well-being
Yao (2017)	Qualitative approach	Interview, observation	Community of practice	Self identity, major identity, situated identity, influencing factors3
Lin (2019)	Mixed-methods	Questionnaire, interview	Community of practice	Professional identity, major identity, self identity, situated identity, participant's profile factors
Han (2019)	Qualitative approach	Interview, documents	Community of practice	Identity as teacher, innovator, and researcher, influencing factors4

1) Four dimensions of Tang's CETPII: working conditions, teaching reform, professional behavior, input for research

2) Four dimensions of Xun's CETPII: vocational identity, professional identity, self identity, situated identity

3) Participant's profile factors: gender, teaching years, professional title, academic degree, university types

4) Influencing factors1: students, research, promotion, teaching and society

5) Influencing factors2: personal relationships, working atmosphere, significant persons, salary, promotion,, community of practice, policy, teaching resource

6) Influencing factors3: significant person, teaching experience, reflection, community of cooperation

7) Influencing factors4: individual difference, study abroad county, program, and period, working environment

Xun and Zheng[18] made a review of EFL teachers' professional identity development in ten years in China. They found that up to 2014, the studies in ten years they collected were taken qualitative approach without exception. Among these studies, there were theoretical analysis, narrative study, case study. With respect to data collection, these studies mainly resort to interviews and classroom observations. From the perspective of time dimension, the studies are mainly cross-sectional rather than longitudinal.

Compared with studies before 2015, the most prominent change is research methodology. 53% studies take a mix-methods approach, 6% studies take a quantitative approach. This is a breakthrough in research methodology. The surge of mix-methods studies or quantitative studies is mainly due to the compilation of CETPI Inventory (CETPII) by Tang in 2013, Xun, Sun and Peng in 2014. CETPIIs offers a research tool for many researchers, which is the main reason for the emergence of a large number of mixed-studies. We could see that 75% mixed-methods and quantitative studies are based on the two CETPIIs. The two inventories are different in dimensions which shows that CETPI is multi-dimensional. The researcher found that later studies varied the dimensions, but mainly based on the two inventories. The two CETPIIs facilitate CETPI studies to a new height. Tang [19] used self-confronted method to collect and analyze data, which made his research different from other mixed-methods studies. In his study, four indicators were used. Participants were asked to grade their evaluation according to six-point emotion inventory. The result would reveal in a Hexagon model. The model would show the level of identity. This is quite new compared with other quantitative or mixed-methods studies.

In terms of data collection tools, besides interview and class observation, there are reflective journals, documents and questionnaires, etc., which enrich data collection to some extent. Besides narrative study, case study, Tang [20] used interpretive phenomenology to supply us a better

understanding of novice College English teachers' experience of overcoming inconsistencies in the process of building CETPI. Qi & Wang [21] used grounded theory to analyze data so as to identify concepts, links categories and find first class themes to explore novice CETPI from professional attitude, professional practice (teaching activities)[22] and professional identity expectations. The two qualitative methods are new compared with other narrative studies and case studies.

Concerning study dimension, there are three longitudinal studies in addition to cross-sectional research. Tang made a five-year follow-up survey to explore tow novice CETPI process and find two different constructions with two waves of data collection. Huang & Guo [23] carried a four-year follow-up investigation to follow three college English teachers over four years, and collected four waves of data. Tang[24][25] carried out a one-year qualitative study to follow four novice College English teachers to collect two waves of reflective journals. The three longitudinal studies break the consensus of cross-sectional research, which also offer us a more vivid picture of how CETPI changes over time.

With respect to themes, there are three prominent in these studies:

a) the relationships of CETPI with teacher's self-efficacy, teacher's subjective well-being, abroad study experience, etc. There is a significant positive correlation between CETPI and teachers' self-efficacy. Professional behavior and education reform have independent and significant influence on teachers' self-efficacy. Personal relationships, working atmosphere, significant persons, salary, promotion, community of practice, policy, and teaching resource have influenced the construction of CETPI [26]. Teacher's self-efficacy, identity and subjective well-being are significantly related with each other, self-efficacy partly plays the role of inter-mediator in identity and subjective well-being[27].

b) factors and ways relevant to the construction or reconstruction of CETPI development. Subjective consciousness, competency, global vision and institutional environment could greatly influence the construction of CETPI [28]. Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development illustrates the complexity of identity negotiation through reconciling new expectations and conflicting demands. Core concepts (agency, experience, and believe, micro-political institutional environment) that constitute CETPI development [29].

c) the current situation of CETPI development. The overall score of input for research is low, and that of professional behavior is high. This shows most teachers are still willing to invest in teaching practice with positive behavior and excellent professional ethics despite of the poor professional environment and difficulty of research [30].

When it comes to theoretical perspectives, some authors clearly state their theoretical inclination. Among them, 75% studies adopt Wenger's theory: community of practice. Wenger [31] defines identity as the learning experience that the subject participates and negotiates in practice. He believes that learning practice of the subject in various practices is the basic process of identity construction. Liu and Zhou [32] point out that seeking for community of practice to change situated identity is a good way for young college English teachers. Qi and Wang [33] state that Higher Education Institutions should provide conditions for novice college English teachers to participate in learning communities so as to promote their professional development. Huang and Guo [34] suggest that participating in effective professional learning communities may promote a supportive professional network for College English teachers.

Another two studies adopts social perspective. Vygotsky [35] holds that the cognition process of human beings is closely connected with social culture and historical environments. Humans activity is a mutual interaction process between human beings and the natural, cultural environments. Social and cultural environments play an important role in the construction of identity. Huang and Guo [36] give an enhanced understanding of the dynamic reconcile process of teachers' changing professional identity through a sociocultural lens.

Other studies without explicitly statement of theoretical perspectives mainly take the view that the development of CETPI is an interactive, ongoing, multiple-dimensional process, which is not constant, single, or consolidated. Social, cultural, institutional, communities and other factors interplay in the process of identity construction. Tang[37] points out that the construction of

professional identity for novice teachers is a constant search for a way to overcome discrepancy of "claimed identity" and " assigned identity". Tang [38] states that professional identity is the result of negotiation between "person as teacher" and "teacher as person". These studies all reflect the sociocultural perspective.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The appearance of CETPIIs offer new research tools for researchers. However, over dependence on these inventories will limit research depth, and is not conducive to further research. Identity is a relatively subjective theme, there are more dimensions need to be discovered. Researchers should adopt other tools to discover its rich connotation.

Xun and Zheng point out that research theories are relatively single in the field of CETPI development. In the past five years, it is still true. Most researchers admit the dynamic, changeable process, overemphasize the non-essential identity of negotiation and change, but ignore the essential characteristics of CETPI, which is integrity and stability. Now, there is a one-side trend in theory: no-essentialism. The researcher agree with Xun and Zheng on the view that although CETPI has the characteristics of change and contradiction, it is also strongly influenced by the mainstream or core teachers' identity, which represent the perspective of stability. Therefore, researchers should pay attention to the two views, essential and nonessential, and try to avoid dichotomy in future study.

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