

Social Representations of Professional Identity Among Future English Language Teachers at the School of Foreign Languages

Author:

Carmen Magaña, PhD - cmaganaf@ucol.mx
University of Colima

BIOGRAPHY:

Carmen Magaña, PhD

Dr. Carmen Alicia Magaña Figueroa holds a Ph.D. in Education from the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente. She works as a full-time professor in the School of Foreign Languages at the University of Colima. She specializes in teacher training and qualitative research. She teaches various courses in the Bachelor's Degree Program in Language Teaching and the Master's Degree Program in Teacher Professionalization. She attends national and international conferences as a speaker and publishes in various media.

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the social representations of professional identity among future language teachers at the school of foreign languages of the university of Colima. Grounded in social representations theory, the research examines the meanings, beliefs, and values that pre-service teachers construct regarding their professional role. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, free word association tasks, and reflective narratives with students at different stages of initial teacher education. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify key elements of these representations, offering insights into how professional identity is shaped throughout teacher training.

KEYWORDS:

Social representations, professional identity, language teachers

SUMMARY:

The professional identity of teachers has become a central topic in educational research due to its influence on teaching practices, motivation, commitment, and professional development. In the field of foreign language education, professional identity is particularly complex, as future teachers must integrate linguistic competence, pedagogical knowledge, intercultural awareness,

and evolving professional expectations within local and global educational contexts.

Teacher professional identity is not constructed in isolation; rather, it emerges through social interaction, institutional discourse, academic training, and lived experiences during initial teacher education. For pre-service language teachers, the university plays a decisive role in shaping their perceptions of what it means to be a language teacher, how they see themselves within the profession, and how they anticipate their future professional roles.

Within this framework, Social Representations Theory (Moscovici, 1961) offers a powerful lens to explore how shared meanings, beliefs, values, and emotions contribute to the construction of professional identity. Social representations allow individuals to make sense of complex social realities, such as teaching as a profession, and guide their attitudes, expectations, and practices.

At the School of Foreign Languages of the University of Colima, students in different stages of the language-teaching program are exposed to diverse academic, pedagogical, and institutional experiences. These experiences are likely to shape distinct social representations of professional identity as future language teachers. However, limited research has explored how these representations are constructed, transformed, and negotiated throughout initial teacher education in this specific context.

This research aims to analyze the social representations of professional identity constructed by future language teachers enrolled in the School of Foreign Languages at the University of Colima. Professional identity is a key component of teacher education, as it influences pedagogical beliefs, motivation, commitment to the profession, and expectations regarding professional practice. In the context of foreign language teaching, professional identity is shaped by academic training, institutional discourse, teaching experiences, and social interaction within the university environment.

The study is grounded in Social Representations Theory, which conceptualizes social representations as socially constructed systems of meanings, values, beliefs, and emotions that enable individuals to interpret reality and guide professional action. From this perspective, becoming a language teacher involves the gradual construction of shared representations about teaching, the role of the teacher, and professional responsibility.

A qualitative research approach was adopted. Participants include undergraduate students at different stages of their academic formation in the language-teaching program. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, free word association tasks, and reflective written narratives in order to capture both individual and collective dimensions of professional identity. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, guided by the principles of Social Representations Theory, with particular attention to identifying the elements of the representations.

The findings provided a comprehensive understanding of how future language teachers conceptualized their professional identity and how these representations evolved throughout initial teacher education. This study aimed to contribute to the improvement of teacher training programs by offering insights that may inform curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, and institutional support mechanisms within language teacher education.

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