REVIJA ZA ELEMENTARNO IZOBRAŽEVANJE
JOURNAL OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
Vol. 19, Sp. Issue, pp. 75–92, October 2026

THE TRANSFORMATIVE-TRADITIONAL IDENTITY AMONG FUTURE TEACHERS

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Potrjeno/Accepted
3. 7. 2026

Objavljeno/Published
28. 10. 2026

Abstract/Izvleček

The study examines how teacher education students and university instructors understand, value, and apply pedagogical principles in higher education, and how these shape future teachers' professional identity. Findings indicate a strong appreciation of contemporary pedagogical values alongside recognition of traditional values as a foundation for ethical and professional practice. Based on the findings, a transformative-traditional teacher model was developed, defining professional identity through four dimensions: value-ethical grounding, reflective pedagogical practice, critical engagement with educational innovations, and contextually meaningful application of pedagogical tradition. The study highlights the importance of balancing tradition and contemporary pedagogical values in teacher education.

Transformativno-tradicionalna identiteta učitelja prihodnosti

V raziskavi preučujemo, kako študenti pedagoških smeri in visokošolski učitelji razumejo, vrednotijo in uporabljajo pedagoška načela v visokem šolstvu ter kako ta oblikujejo poklicno identiteto bodočih učiteljev. Ugotovitve kažejo na visoko stopnjo sprejemanja sodobnih pedagoških vrednot, in sicer ob hkratnem priznavanju tradicionalnih vrednot kot temelja za etično in strokovno delovanje. Na podlagi izsledkov je bil razvit transformativno-tradicionalni model učitelja, ki poklicno identiteto opredeljuje s štirimi dimenzijami: vrednotno-etična utemeljenost, refleksivno pedagoška praksa, kritično vključevanje v izobraževalne inovacije in kontekstualno smiselna uporaba pedagoške tradicije. Raziskava izpostavlja pomembnost uravnoteženja tradicije in sodobnih pedagoških vrednot v izobraževanju učiteljev.

Keywords:
pedagogical values, teacher professional identity, transformative-traditional teacher model, teacher education, reflective teaching practice.

Ključne besede:
pedagoške vrednote, poklicna identiteta učitelja, transformativno-tradicionalni model učitelja, izobraževanje učiteljev, refleksivna poučevalna praksa.

UDK/UDC:
37.011.3-051:17

DOI https://doi.org/10.18690/rei.6549
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University of Maribor Press

Introduction

In contemporary pedagogical discourse, the teacher is recognized as a key agent in the educational process, whose role extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge to encompass a complex educational and formative function. The teacher's activity is simultaneously directed toward the student, educational goals, and mediation between the student and the world, whereby the teacher's personality and professional practice constitute a significant educational influence (Nikšić Rebihić and Komar, 2024). Traditional pedagogical thought has consistently emphasized the importance of the teaching profession, highlighting teachers' moral qualities, professional responsibility, and personal integrity as the foundation of effective educational practice. The teacher's personality has long been considered one of the decisive factors influencing the quality of educational outcomes. Despite this theoretical continuity, contemporary pedagogy faces the challenge of conceptualizing the teacher's role in the context of rapid social, cultural, and technological change. Although digitalization and globalization have transformed educational goals and practices, the need for the holistic development of students remains unchanged (Vukasović, 2001). In this context, teachers' professional identity can be understood as a dynamic, multidimensional, and contextually conditioned construct that emerges during initial teacher education and continuously evolves through the interaction of personal, professional, and institutional factors, as well as through lifelong learning and ongoing professional development (Korthagen, 2017; Obran and Ivanuš Grmek, 2010; Schön, 1983). Contemporary research identifies teachers' professional identity as a concept central to understanding the teaching profession because it shapes how teachers interpret their role, make professional decisions, and organize the teaching process (Beijaard et al., 2004; Semjonova, 2024). Within this perspective, it is defined as a complex system of beliefs, values, competences, and experiences that continuously evolve through reflection, professional experience, and adaptation to changes in the educational context (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Liu and Liu, 2025). Recent theoretical approaches further suggest that professional identity may be understood as a set of interconnected "sub-identities" emerging from different dimensions of teachers' work, such as pedagogical practice, professional values, and attitudes toward innovation (Semjonova, 2024). This complexity indicates the need for integrative approaches that can encompass multiple dimensions of professional identity within a unified theoretical framework. Although teachers' professional identity has been

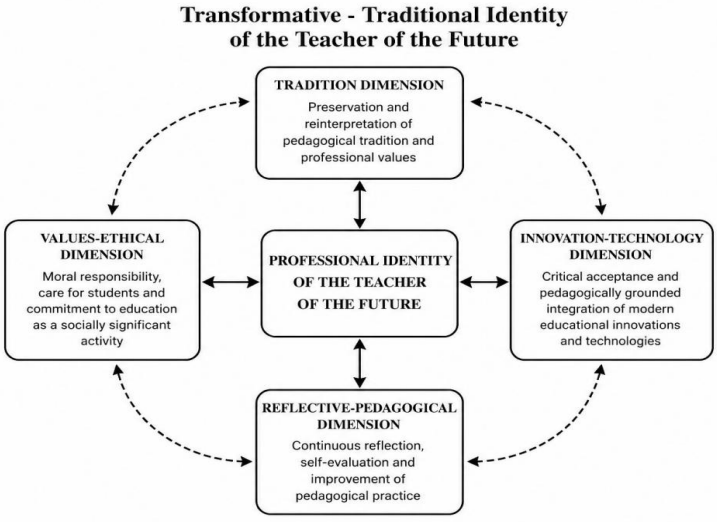
extensively studied in relation to reflection, professional competences, and pedagogical tradition, existing approaches most often address only particular dimensions of identity in isolation. Such a fragmented approach limits the possibility of achieving a comprehensive understanding of teachers' professional identity, particularly in the context of contemporary educational demands that require simultaneous interaction of values, reflection, and innovation (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004). Furthermore, research indicates that teachers' professional identity is dynamic and contextual, often resulting in tensions between normative professional expectations and the realities of teaching practice (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Flores and Day, 2006). To address this limitation, empirical research was conducted among teacher education students and university teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina to examine the structure and interrelationships among multiple dimensions of teachers' professional identity. Drawing upon diverse theoretical foundations, the study develops a model of the transformative-traditional identity of the teacher, based on the assumption that teachers' professional identity evolves through a dynamic balance between stable pedagogical values and the demands of contemporary educational change. Accordingly, the teacher of the future is not conceptualized through isolated dimensions, but rather through their integrated structure, encompassing ethical responsibility (Noddings, 2013), reflective improvement of practice (Korthagen, 2017; Schön, 1983), the critical and pedagogically grounded adoption of innovation (OECD, 2019, 2025), and the reinterpretation of professional tradition (Flores and Day, 2006). In this way, the proposed model positions the teacher as a reflective, responsible, and innovative professional who operates simultaneously within the frameworks of tradition and modernity.

Model of the Transformative-Traditional Identity of Future Teachers

This study defines the transformative-traditional identity of the teacher as a multidimensional theoretical construct that explains the development of professional identity through the interaction of four interconnected dimensions: value-ethical, reflective-pedagogical, innovation-technological, and traditional. The value-ethical dimension refers to teachers' moral responsibility, care for students, and the understanding of education as a socially responsible activity consistent with humanistic pedagogical approaches (Noddings, 2013; Semjonova, 2024). The reflective-pedagogical dimension emphasizes continuous reflection on practice and the improvement of teaching strategies as key processes in developing professional

competence and shaping teachers' professional identity (Ivajnšič and Ivanuš Grmek, 2009; Korthagen, 2017; Schön, 1983).The innovation and technology dimension refers to the critical acceptance and pedagogically grounded integration of digital tools and innovations, whereby the teacher acts as a facilitator of the learning process in accordance with constructivist approaches (Dedić Bukvić and Šuman, 2021; OECD, 2019). Finally, the dimension of pedagogical tradition and continuity implies the preservation and reinterpretation of professional values over time, enabling a balance between stability and change in educational practice (Flores and Day, 2006; Lukaš and Cikovac, 2021). Unlike existing models of professional identity, which emphasize individual aspects such as reflection, competences, or beliefs (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004), the proposed model conceptualizes identity dimensions as interdependent and simultaneously active.
The structure of the model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Model of the Transformative-Traditional Identity of the Teacher of the Future



The value of this model lies in its explicit inclusion of the dimension related to attitudes toward contemporary educational technology and innovation, as well as in its understanding of pedagogical tradition as an active and transformative element of identity.

The model thus establishes an integrative framework that connects continuity and change within the teaching profession. The present study operationalizes the model through four dimensions that constitute the foundation of the empirical investigation.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' professional identity. Integration of these approaches enabled triangulation of the findings and contributed to a deeper interpretation of both normative perceptions and experience-based professional insights.

Aim

The study aimed to examine how students enrolled in teacher education programs and university teachers understand, evaluate, and implement pedagogical values in higher education teaching, and how these values contribute to the formation of the professional identity of future teachers. Particular attention was devoted to identifying the key dimensions of professional identity and exploring their interrelationships.

Accordingly, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Which pedagogical values are recognized in higher education teaching by students enrolled in teacher education programs and by university teachers?
2. How do participants evaluate pedagogical values in relation to their own beliefs?
3. In what ways are these values reflected in contemporary university teaching practice?

Sample

The quantitative component of the study included 128 students enrolled in teacher education programs across six faculties of the University of Sarajevo. The sample comprised students from different study programs and levels of study (ranging from the first year of undergraduate studies to the doctoral level), with the largest proportion represented by students from the Faculty of Philosophy (47.6%) and the Faculty of Science (26.6%). Female participants were predominant in the sample (69.5%), while the mean age of respondents was 23.1 years (SD = 5.0). Such a sample

structure provides insight into perceptions of teachers' professional identity from the perspective of students with diverse educational backgrounds.

The qualitative component of the study involved twenty university teachers from different academic disciplines participating in three focus groups. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to include teachers with diverse professional experiences and academic specializations.

Instruments

An original measurement instrument was developed for the quantitative part of the study based on theoretical perspectives that conceptualize teachers' professional identity as a multidimensional construct. The initial item pool was generated through a literature review and expert consultation in pedagogy and teaching methodology. Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger expression of professional identity dimensions (e.g., reflection on practice and alignment of technology with pedagogical values).

Following exploratory factor analysis, the item set was reduced to those with satisfactory factor loadings and interpretability. The final instrument consists of four theoretically expected dimensions, representing an initial stage of empirical validation.

A semi-structured focus group interview protocol was used for the qualitative component. It included procedural guidelines and thematically structured questions focused on understanding, evaluating, and applying pedagogical values in the development of teachers' professional identity.

Procedure

The quantitative component of the study was conducted on a student sample and analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was applied to examine the instrument's latent structure. Data adequacy was confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO = 0.776) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 1674.762$; $df = 496$; $p < 0.001$). A four-factor solution was retained based on theoretical interpretability and scree plot criteria, explaining 44.50% of the total variance. Item selection was performed on the basis of factor loadings ($\lambda > 0.40$) and interpretability, while avoiding substantial cross-loadings.

Based on the factor structure, the following dimensions were identified: (F1) Value-Ethical Groundedness, (F2) Reflective-Pedagogical Practice, (F3) Critical and Responsible Attitudes Toward Contemporary Educational Innovations and Technologies, and (F4) Capacity for the Contextualized and Meaningful Application of Pedagogical Tradition. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α, with the highest coefficients obtained for F2 (α = 0.838) and F4 (α = 0.805), while F3 (α = 0.585) and F1 (α = 0.520) demonstrated lower, yet acceptable reliability coefficients given the exploratory nature of the study and the newly developed instrument. Correlations among dimensions were examined using Pearson correlation analysis. Since the instrument was newly developed, the findings represent a preliminary assessment of its reliability and indicate the need for further methodological refinement.

Qualitative data collected through focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis. The procedure included open coding, categorization, and the development of broader thematic units related to teachers' professional identity. Codes were generated inductively and continuously refined throughout the analysis. Representative participant quotations were used to enhance analytical transparency and illustrate the construction of pedagogical values within professional identity.

Results and Discussion

The study findings are presented in two sections. The first section presents the findings of the quantitative research conducted on the student sample, while the second section presents the findings of the qualitative research obtained through focus group interviews with university teachers.

Results of the Quantitative Study with Students

Descriptive analysis was conducted to determine the level of expression of particular dimensions of teachers' professional identity as perceived by students. For this purpose, means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum values were calculated for each of the four dimensions obtained through factor analysis. The results provide insight into the general level of respondents' agreement with statements describing various aspects of teachers' professional identity (Table 1).

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that students agreed with all dimensions of teachers' professional identity.

The highest mean value was recorded for the dimension *Critical and Responsible Attitudes Toward Contemporary Educational Innovations and Technologies* (F3), suggesting that respondents most strongly recognize the importance of innovation, critical thinking, and contemporary approaches in education. This was followed by the dimension *Capacity for the Contextualized and Meaningful Application of Pedagogical Tradition* (F4), indicating that respondents highly value the preservation of fundamental pedagogical values and their application within a contemporary context.

Table 1
Descriptive Analysis of the Dimensions of Teachers' Professional Identity

Factor	*n*	*Min*	*Max*	*M*	*SD*
F1: Value-Ethical Groundedness	128	3.20	5.00	4.41	0.46
F2: Reflective-Pedagogical Practice	128	2.14	5.00	4.21	0.65
F3: Innovation and Technology	128	3.25	5.00	4.61	0.41
F4: Pedagogical Tradition	128	2.71	5.00	4.49	0.50

Note. *M* = mean; *SD*= standard deviation; *n* = number of respondents

The dimension *Value-Ethical Groundedness* (F1) also demonstrated a high mean value, confirming the importance of ethical principles and professional responsibility in the teaching profession. The lowest still relatively high, mean value was recorded for the dimension *Reflective-Pedagogical Practice* (F2), suggesting greater variability in respondents' evaluations of this dimension.

The following sections present more detailed results of the analyses conducted for each scale.

Critical and Responsible Attitudes Toward Contemporary Educational Innovations and Technologies dimension emerged as the most prominent in the study, as reflected in the dominant values presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Critical and Responsible Attitudes Toward Contemporary Educational Innovations and Technologies

Items	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Education should connect local and global perspectives.	4.55	0.64	128
Creative interpretation of teaching content enhances the quality of instruction.	4.57	0.62	128
Teaching should not consist merely of the transmission of content from literature.	4.80	0.53	128
Critical evaluation of information sources is an important teaching competency.	4.55	0.66	128

Note. *M* = mean; *SD*= standard deviation; *n* = number of respondents

These findings are consistent with contemporary constructivist approaches to learning, according to which learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). Within this framework, the teacher's role is transformed from that of a traditional lecturer into that of a facilitator and mentor (Dedić Bukvić and Šuman, 2021), fostering active learning, inquiry, and critical reflection. More recent research further supports these findings. For example, the *Future of Education and Skills 2030* report of the OECD (2019, 2025) emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving as key competences for both teachers and students in the twenty-first century. Similarly, Voogt et al. (2013) argue that the integration of technology into teaching is meaningful only when it contributes to active learning and the development of higher-order cognitive skills, which corresponds to the concept of "critical innovativeness" identified in the present study (Pušina, 2025).

Capacity for the Contextualized and Meaningful Application of Pedagogical Tradition is the second dimension, referring to the application of pedagogical tradition and its importance for professional culture, experience, and continuity within the teaching profession (Table 3).

Table 3

Capacity for the Contextualized and Meaningful Application of Pedagogical Tradition

Items	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Innovations in teaching should be pedagogically justified.	4.45	0.81	128
Academic and pedagogical culture constitute an important part of the teaching process.	4.66	0.55	128
Teachers' professional identity develops through the continuity of experiences and values.	4.55	0.64	128
Preserving the reputation of the teaching profession is an important aspect of the teacher's role.	4.49	0.85	128
Teachers promote awareness of the professional responsibility inherent to the profession.	4.57	0.76	128
Classical pedagogical principles continue to hold significance in higher education teaching.	4.05	0.97	128
It is important to learn from personal professional experiences.	4.68	0.51	128

Note. M = mean; SD= standard deviation; n = number of respondents

Values such as learning from experience, professional responsibility, and the pedagogical justification of innovation confirm that future teachers do not reject traditional approaches but rather integrate them into a contemporary context. Such findings are consistent with contemporary understandings of teachers' professional identity as a dynamic and contextually conditioned construct (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Flores and Day (2006) and Lukaš and Cikovac (2021) argue that teachers' professional identity continuously develops through the interaction of personal beliefs, experience, and institutional context, while Akkerman and Meijer (2011) emphasize its multidimensional and evolving nature.

Value-ethical Groundedness dimension indicates a strong presence of ethical and interpersonal values, such as responsibility, respect for students, integrity, fairness, empathy, and care for students (Table 4).

Table 4

Value-Ethical Groundedness

Items	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Teachers' professional responsibility is essential for a successful educational process.	4.77	0.44	128
Caring for students extends beyond their academic achievement alone.	3.87	1.01	128
The teacher serves as an example of moral integrity.	4.48	0.75	128
Respect for students is the foundation of quality teaching.	4.74	0.51	128
Teachers respond to injustice within the educational environment.	4.22	1.01	128

Note. *M* = mean; *SD*= standard deviation; *n* = number of respondents

The highlighted values imply that the teacher of the future should function as a moral role model and a bearer of socially desirable values. Such a teacher builds relationships of trust, demonstrates humanity and understanding, and acts as a moral authority. The emphasis is therefore placed on human qualities rather than solely on professional competences. These findings are consistent with the humanistic approach to education, particularly Rogers' (1969) theory, which emphasizes the importance of authenticity, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. Lukaš and Cikovac (2021) further emphasize that ethical judgment constitutes an integral part of everyday pedagogical work, suggesting that all aspects of teachers' reflection and practice possess an ethical dimension. Authors such as Noddings (2013) further elaborate on the ethics of care in education, emphasizing that quality teaching involves emotional engagement and concern for students' overall development, rather than solely their academic achievement.

Reflective-Pedagogical Practice dimension highlights the importance of continuous professional reflection and improvement (Table 5).

Values such as self-reflection, flexibility, adaptability, and pedagogical thoughtfulness confirm that the teacher of the future is capable of critically analysing

their own practice and adapting it to students' needs. This finding is consistent with Schön's (1983) concept of the reflective practitioner, and Dewey's (1933) understanding of reflective thinking as the foundation of professional action. Within this framework, the teacher is understood as an active agent in their own professional development.

Table 5

Reflective-Pedagogical Practice

Items	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Teachers regularly reflect upon their teaching practice.	3.81	1.13	128
Teachers are willing to modify their approaches when necessary.	4.05	1.01	128
Teachers understand the learning process, and not only the content they teach.	4.43	0.92	128
Teachers adapt instruction to students' needs.	3.89	0.96	128
Teachers thoughtfully select instructional methods in accordance with the context.	4.38	0.79	128
Teachers encourage students' active participation in learning.	4.41	0.85	128
Teachers encourage critical thinking among students.	4.54	0.69	128

Note. *M* = mean; *SD*= standard deviation; *n* = number of respondents

Larrivee (2008) argues that reflection enables teachers to move from routine practice toward conscious and transformative action, while Korthagen (2017) emphasizes the relationship between reflection, professional identity, and teaching quality. Accordingly, the teacher of the future actively engages students in the learning process, avoids routine approaches, acts consciously and adaptively, and continuously re-examines their own practice.

Pearson correlation analysis (Table 6) was conducted to examine the relationships among the dimensions of teachers' professional identity (F1-F4).

Table 6

Pearson Correlations Among Dimensions of Teachers' Professional Identity

Variable	F1	F2	F3	F4
F1: Value-Ethical Groundedness	-	.381***	.232**	.392***
F2: Reflective-Pedagogical Practice	.381***	-	.278**	.448***
F3: Innovation and Technology	.232**	.278**	-	.417***
F4: Pedagogical Tradition	.392***	.448***	.417***	-

Note. *N* = 128. Pearson's *r* correlations are reported. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

The results indicated that all dimensions were positively and statistically significantly correlated at the .01 level (two-tailed), suggesting a coherent and integrative structure

of the construct. The strongest correlation was identified between reflective-pedagogical practice (F2) and pedagogical tradition (F4), $r(128) = .448$, $p < .001$, indicating a moderate positive relationship. A similarly moderate association was observed between innovation and tradition (F3 and F4), $r(128) = .417$, $p < .001$, while the weakest but still statistically significant relationship emerged between value-ethical groundedness (F1) and innovation and technology (F3), $r(128) = .232$, $p = .008$. Overall, the results indicate that while all dimensions are positively interrelated, the strength of associations varies, with the strongest links observed between reflective practice and pedagogical tradition, suggesting their particularly close conceptual integration within the structure of teachers' professional identity.

Results of the Qualitative Study with University Teachers

The results of focus groups with university teachers indicate a complex and multilayered understanding of teachers' professional identity in contemporary higher education. The identified indicators and key findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Indicators and Key Findings from Focus Groups with University Teachers

Thematic Category	Indicators	Key Findings	Interpretation
Value - Ethical Role	integrity, responsibility, fairness, role model, care for students	Ethics is perceived as an implicit and self-evident dimension of the teacher's role.	Ethics functions as a "hidden curriculum" - powerful yet not explicitly articulated enough.
Reflective Practice	self-assessment, evaluation, professional development	Reflection is present at the individual level but lacks systemic support.	Reflective practice is not institutionalized but depends on personal initiative.
Innovations and Technology	digital tools, innovation, critical use	An ambivalent relationship is evident: acceptance accompanied by criticism of superficial implementation.	The concept of "critical innovativeness" has emerged.
Tradition and Contemporary Approaches	authority, experience, active learning, flexibility	Tradition and innovation are not perceived as oppositional.	An integrative (hybrid) pedagogical model predominates.

Note. This table summarizes the thematic analysis of the focus group data with university teachers

According to the findings, faculty members perceive the value-ethical dimension of their profession as a fundamental, yet implicit component manifested in everyday practice and relationships with students, rather than as a formalized aspect of

professional work. This is reflected in one participant's statement: *"I see the value-ethical dimension of the teacher in the relationships I have with students, in the transparency of assessment, and in the evaluation of my work by students."* Although this emphasizes the teacher as a moral role model, its implicit nature results in limited visibility and insufficient institutional support, particularly in contexts where research is prioritized over teaching.

Reflective practice is recognized as an essential element of professional development; however, it remains mainly an individual activity. Participants stated: *"There should not be a mechanism forcing self-reflection; it should be self-initiated…Reflection in teaching and research work requires communication with colleagues…Feedback contributes to teachers' professional development."* Similar findings were reported by Blanuša Trošelj et al. (2021), who found that teachers' perceptions of their own competences significantly influence their professional learning and development.

An ambivalent attitude is evident regarding innovation and technology. Faculty members acknowledge their importance but emphasize their purposeful application aligned with pedagogical goals, rather than treating them as an independent value. Participants noted the following: *"Technology cannot do everything for you, nor should it become an end in itself; pedagogical goals must be respected… Digitalization contributes to attention, but it also trivializes content."*

The relationship between pedagogical tradition and contemporary approaches is perceived as complementary rather than oppositional. Traditional values remain important but require adaptation to contemporary educational contexts. A participant explained: *"Traditional approaches are highly useful, but it is important to know how to use what is contemporary… We should use contemporary teaching methods, not merely hear about them."*

Teachers' professional identity is understood as a dynamic process shaped by personal beliefs, experiences, and the institutional environment, confirming its evolving and contextually conditioned nature: *"Teachers' professional identity changes through personal maturation and the work environment; the generations we work with influence our development… Relationships with colleagues can undermine our professional identity, while relationships with students build it."* Such findings align with research emphasizing that identity is shaped through the interaction of individual and contextual factors (Flores and Day, 2006).

The findings reveal the coherent but multidimensional structure of teachers' professional identity, with differences between students' normative expectations and faculty members' practice-based perspectives.

Students emphasized innovation, creativity, and active learning, while faculty highlighted critically grounded and pedagogically justified use of innovations, forming the notion of "critical innovativeness."

Innovation and pedagogical tradition were found to be complementary rather than opposing. The transformative-traditional model reflects the dynamic interplay between teachers' professional autonomy and normative educational traditions (Topolovčan and Dubovicki, 2024). Both groups identified ethical values, responsibility, respect, integrity, and empathy as central to professional identity, although faculty noted that these often remain implicit and weakly institutionally supported. Reflective practice showed the largest gap between expectations and institutional reality, indicating its predominantly individualized character.

Based on the findings, several practical implications can be formulated: revising teacher education curricula to strengthen ethical and value-based competences (F1), establishing institutionally supported models of reflective practice (F2), developing pedagogically grounded digital competences (F3), fostering critical thinking through active learning (F2–F3), and strengthening professional identity through mentored teaching practice in authentic educational contexts (F1–F4).

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that teachers' professional identity in contemporary higher education can be understood as an integrative and multidimensional construct encompassing ethical values, reflective practice, pedagogical tradition, and a critical orientation toward innovation. Such a profile aligns with contemporary educational paradigms that emphasize a holistic approach to the teaching profession. The findings also highlight the need to strengthen institutional support for reflective practice, improve teacher-student relationships, and ensure the meaningful integration of technology to support the development of future teachers' professional identity.

Participants confirmed that professional identity is not merely a collection of individual values but rather the result of interactions among normative expectations, professional experience, and institutional conditions. Students predominantly expressed a normative-ideal view of future teachers' professional identity. They perceived teachers as innovative professionals who use digital technology, foster creativity and critical thinking, and apply student-centred approaches.

Their expectations reflect contemporary educational paradigms but pay limited attention to the constraints of professional practice.

In contrast, university teachers interpreted the same competences and values through professional experience and institutional realities. While recognizing the importance of innovation and technology, they stressed the need for pedagogical grounding and a critical approach to implementation. They emphasized that innovation alone does not ensure teaching quality unless meaningfully integrated into the didactic process. This difference is also reflected in perceptions of innovation and pedagogical tradition. Students generally perceived these dimensions as complementary, whereas faculty members viewed them as a balance that must be achieved through experience and established pedagogical principles. Consequently, faculty members offered a more realistic and reflective understanding of professional identity, while students emphasized its normative and aspirational dimensions.

The study has several methodological limitations related to its exploratory design, including the absence of confirmatory factor analysis and lower reliability coefficients for some dimensions. Since the instrument has been newly developed, the findings should be considered preliminary, and the proposed model should be understood as a conceptual framework requiring further empirical validation and confirmation of its stability.

Author Contribution Statement

Conceptualization and methodology: all authors.; data collection and analysis: all authors.; writing – original draft preparation: all authors.; writing – review and editing: all authors. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The article is based on data fully presented and discussed within the article itself; therefore, no additional data archiving is required.

Statement on the Use of Generative AI Tools

The generative AI tool [Chat Gpt] was used in the preparation of this article exclusively for support purposes (e.g., language editing, stylistic improvements, and suggestions for rephrasing text). The generative AI tool was not used to create scientific content, data, analyses, interpretations of results, or conclusions. The authors take full responsibility for the entire content of the article.

Informed Consent Statement

All research participants were adequately informed about the purpose of the research prior to participation and provided informed consent to participate.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declare(s) no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding Statement

The research received no specific funding from public, commercial, or non-profit sources.

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