

A Comparative Study on Primary School English Teachers' Professional Identity of Korean Nationality in Urban and Township Areas

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Abstract: 83 primary school English teachers of Korean nationality were selected as research samples in this study, and the characteristics of primary school English teachers' professional identity of Korean nationality in urban and township areas were studied comprehensively and deeply by means of questionnaire survey and interview. The results showed that: Firstly, although the overall level of urban Korean primary school English teachers' professional identity is higher than that of township teachers', the overall level of both urban and township teachers' professional identity is higher. Secondly, for urban and township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality, professional behavior tendency is the dimension with the highest degree of identification, and the identification of professional social status and professional will are the two dimensions with the lowest degree. Thirdly, primary school English teachers of Korean nationality in urban and township areas have an extensive professional identity. Finally, the difference of working and living environment between urban and township areas is the main reason that resulted in the difference of professional identity for primary school English teachers of Korean nationality.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the research on teachers' professional identity has become a hot topic in the academic circle at home and abroad. It is no doubt that the degree of teachers' professional identity will directly determine whether they are willing to devote enough energy to teaching or not, and, in turn, will greatly affect the quality of teaching. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a systematic research on the problem of teacher' professional identity. In this study, 83 primary school English teachers of Korean nationality were selected as the research samples, and the characteristics of primary school English teachers' professional identity of Korean nationality in urban and rural areas were studied comprehensively and deeply by means of questionnaire survey and interview. We hope that this study can provide a useful reference to promote Korean primary school English teachers' professional identification degree, and promote the professional development for primary school English teachers of Korean nationality.

2. Definition of Teachers' Professional Identity

“The concept of identity originated in Europe and America, it was first put forward by Erikson, a famous American psychologist” [1]. The concept of professional identity is related to the identity between individuals and professional identity. “Professional identity is based on social identity theory and developed from Erikson's concept of self-identity, it is a concept that examines practitioners' self-occupation psychology and recognition from the perspective of identity, and it has become the core concept in the field of career development research” [2]. “In the research field of teaching and teachers education, different scholars have endowed professional identity with various connotations, such as balance theory, self-concept theory, common characteristics theory, meaning construction theory, belief theory and comprehensive theory”[3]. There is no agreement on the structure of teachers' professional identity in current researches. Since the academic circle has not yet reached a consistent view on the connotation of professional identity, according to the research needs, this study agreed with the definition of professional identity that is put forward by

Shuhua Wei, that is, “Teachers’ professional identity refers to both a process and a state. The process is that teachers’ professional identity is a process in which the individual self gradually developed from his own experience and confirmed his own role as a teacher. Status means that teachers’ professional identity is the degree to which individual teachers identify with their profession” [4].

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

This study focused on the following two issues :(1) The characteristics of professional identity of primary school English teachers of Korean nationality in urban and township areas. (2) The difference of professional identity between urban and township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality.

3.2 Research Object

This study took primary school English teachers of Korean nationality as the research objects, and the sampling scope was limited to eight counties and cities in Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture. In the specific sampling process, the research group issued a total of 90 questionnaires, 83 questionnaires were the effective questionnaire, and the effective rate was 92.2%. And the 83 questionnaires covered most primary schools in the eight counties and cities, every county and city has at least one Korean primary school participated in the questionnaire survey. Among the 83 questionnaires, 55 were from urban teachers and 28 were from township teachers.

3.3 Research Tool

Based on the previous research results, the research group compiled <The questionnaire of professional identity for primary school English teachers of Korean nationality>. The participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire truthfully according to their actual situation and tick 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, the corresponding meanings of these numbers are: completely inconsistent, basically inconsistent, sometimes consistent, basically consistent and completely consistent. According to statistics, Cronbach's Alpha value of the questionnaire is 0.912, which indicates the internal consistency of the questionnaire is very good and it has a high reliability.

4. Comparison of Survey Results

All the relative statistics results were shown in the following Table1:

Table 1 Survey Results Of Professional Identity of Korean Primary School English Teachers

Item	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12	R13	R14	R15
Urban	3.96	4.45	4.47	4.11	4.02	4.11	4.07	4.36	4.20	4.09	4.05	4.25	4.09	4.24	4.00
Town	3.93	4.00	4.18	3.89	4.04	4.32	4.43	4.39	4.11	4.18	4.00	4.04	3.89	3.75	3.71
Urban - Town	0.03	0.45	0.29	0.22	-0.02	-0.21	-0.36	0.03	0.09	-0.09	0.05	0.19	0.20	0.49	0.29
Sig.	.860	.025	.084	.263	.931	.262	.064	.866	.608	.653	.760	.192	.233	.003	.156
Item	R16	R17	R18	R19	R20	R21	R22	R23	R24	R25	R26	R27	R28	R29	R30
Urban	3.60	4.40	4.18	4.02	4.58	4.67	4.69	4.55	4.00	4.22	4.27	3.35	3.49	4.07	4.04
Town	3.57	4.14	3.93	3.89	4.39	4.79	4.71	4.54	4.14	4.18	4.14	2.71	3.46	3.89	3.79
Urban - Town	0.03	0.26	0.25	0.13	0.19	-0.12	-0.12	0.01	-0.14	0.04	0.13	0.64	0.03	0.18	0.25
Sig.	.881	.058	.092	.481	.173	.285	.833	.950	.427	.769	.419	.124	.911	.356	.271
Item	R31	R32	R33	R34	R35	Value	Emotion	Ability	Behavior	Will	Status	Population Mean			
Urban	3.49	3.67	3.73	3.51	2.91	4.20	4.15	4.15	4.40	3.74	3.46	4.02			
Town	3.57	3.57	3.57	3.39	3.29	4.01	4.17	3.91	4.42	3.46	3.48	3.91			
Urban - Town	-0.08	0.10	0.16	0.12	-0.38	0.19	-0.02	0.24	-0.02	0.28	-0.02	0.11			
Sig.	.704	.619	.450	.598	.070	.210	.910	.054	.868	.210	.924	.361			

4.1 Comparison of the Overall Level of Professional Identity

Likert’s five-level scale explained the data results like this: the mean value between 4.50 and 5.0

means the professional identity level is very high, 3.50 to 4.49 means the professional identity level is high, 2.50 to 3.49 means the professional identity level is general, 1.50 to 2.49 means the professional identity level is low and 1.0 to 1.49 means the professional identity level is very low. The survey results in Table 1 showed that: 1) The overall level of professional identity of primary school English teachers of Korean nationality in urban and township areas is 4.02 and 3.91 respectively. Although the professional identity level of urban teachers is higher than that of township teachers, the difference does not form a statistically significant difference, and the professional identity level of both is between 3.50-4.49, that is to say, in general, the overall level of professional identity of primary school English teachers of Korean nationality in urban and township areas is high. 2) Although the identification degree on professional value, professional ability and professional will of urban Korean primary school English teachers is significantly higher than that of township teachers, the difference does not form a statistically significant difference. 3) Although the recognition level of professional emotion, professional behavior tendency and professional social status of township Korean primary school English teachers is higher than that of urban teachers, the difference is only 0.02. It can be said that there is no significant difference on the identification of these three aspects between urban and township teachers.

4.2 Horizontal Comparison of Professional Identity Tendency

The survey results in Table 1 showed that, urban Korean primary school English teachers' identification degree to six dimensions are as follows from high to low: professional behavior tendency identification (4.40)→professional value identification (4.20)→professional emotional identification (4.15)→professional ability identification (4.15)→professional will identification (3.74)→professional social status identification (3.46). Township Korean primary school English teachers' identification degree to the six dimensions are as follows from high to low: professional behavior tendency identification (4.42)→professional emotional identification (4.17)→professional value identification (4.01)→professional ability identification (3.91)→professional social status identification (3.48) →professional will identification (3.46). It can be seen that both urban and township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality have a high identification degree of professional behavior tendency, while the identification to professional social status and professional will are the two items with the lowest identification level for them.

4.3 Comparison of Professional Identity Scope

From the survey results we can see that R35(2.91) is the item that urban primary school English teachers of Korean nationality got the lowest score among the 35 tested items, and it is also the only one item that is below 3.0 for them. And for Korean primary school English teachers in township, R27 (2.71) is the item that is the lowest score among the 35 tested items, and it is also the only one item that is below 3.0 for them. In general, no matter 2.91 or 2.71, they both are between 2.50 and 3.49, and no one item's mean value is in the range of low level (1.50 - 2.49) or very low level (1.0 - 1.49), that is to say, for primary school English teachers of Korean nationality in urban and township areas, they both have an extensive professional identity to the 35 test items.

4.4 Micro-Comparison of Professional Identity Contents

In order to fully reveal the difference of professional identity between urban and township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality, the research group made a full comparative study on the recognition level of the 35 test items. The comparison results in Table 1 showed that: 1) Among the 35 test items, the scores of 25 items for Korean primary school English teachers in urban are higher than those of township teachers, it accounted for 71.4% of the total test items. However, only R2 and R14 had statistically significant differences. There were 18 items with a score difference of more than 0.10, and the maximum difference score was 0.49. 2) Although there were 10 items in which township English teachers had higher scores than urban teachers, none of them showed a significant difference. These 10 items mainly focused on the two dimensions of professional emotional identification (4 items) and professional behavioral tendency identification

(3 items).

5. Result Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Analysis and Discussion on the Comparative Results of Overall Level of Professional Identity

Urban and township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality not only have a higher level of professional identity, but also have a broad professional identity contents on the 35 items, this is mainly because: Firstly, from the aspect of professional value identity, the vast majority of teachers can not only correctly understand English course's important values to our country's and students' personal development, and as primary school English teachers of Korean nationality, they have a deeper understanding of their own self-worth. Therefore, they firmly believe that this profession is not only promising, but also valuable, and it is one of the most important professions in social division of labor, and they will better realize their career ideal and life value in this profession. It can be said that their success in teaching may be more self-worth than their success in other jobs. Secondly, from the aspect of professional emotional identity, relatively speaking, English, as one of the three major subjects in schools, still has a certain status among the so many subjects. And as an English teacher, the sense of superiority brought by this status naturally arises spontaneously. In addition, as people often say, "love me, love my dog", whether the Korean primary school English teachers in cities or towns, as a primary school English teacher, they surely will be very concerned about how others will evaluate the profession of English teachers and the group of primary school English teachers, and they will try to maintain the reputation of this group. Thirdly, from the respect of professional ability identity, although a part of English teachers are job-transfer teachers and the rate of non-English major teachers in township primary schools is a relatively high, in recent years, due to the increased training to primary school English teachers, most English teachers have mastered good professional skills and can well meet the requirements of English teaching in primary schools. Fourthly, from the perspective of professional behavior tendency identification, in recent years, primary school English teachers gradually to reach a consensus, that is, to promote teaching by scientific research and teaching and research can develop hand in hand, which made primary school English teachers can pay more attention to their own professional development, spend more energy on teaching and research, and strive to improve themselves through various ways. Therefore, at present they have formed a high degree of recognition on professional behavior tendency. Fifthly, from the perspective of professional will, on the one hand, as primary school English teachers with abundant teaching experience, it is much better for them to continue to engage in English teaching than to change their profession. On the other hand, most English teachers have deeply fallen in love with the occupation of primary school English teachers, therefore, whether they are the city or township Korean primary school English teachers, they have formed a higher identification degree of professional will. Finally, from the perspective of professional social status, both urban and township Korean primary school English teachers have a high identification degree with them. This is mainly because the social status of both college teachers and primary school teachers has been improved year by year in recent years, and English teachers have always been highly respected by people, therefore, they naturally have a higher identification degree with their professional social status.

5.2 Analysis and Discussion on the Comparison Results of Professional Identity Tendency

The reason why both urban and township Korean primary school English teachers have a higher identification degree of professional behavior tendency is as follows: on the one hand, English teachers have the need to actively seek their own professional development. As a matter of fact, every teacher wants to be a good teacher who is knowledgeable and popular with students since he chose to be a teacher. Therefore, they will often actively learn some English teaching skills from colleagues or other teachers and other kinds of knowledge that is conducive to teaching work, or read a variety of books to expand their knowledge. On the other hand, it is because of the

professional self-regulatory. As a teacher, the students are required to do, teachers will be the first to do, and this is the concentrated embodiment of the teachers' professional self-discipline. Among the six dimensions, urban and township Korean primary school English teachers have a low identification level to the professional social status and professional will, this is largely because, although Chinese, math, English are the three majors in every school, only the teachers who teach Chinese and math can be the teacher in charge of a class or the leaders in the schools, and English teachers generally feel marginalized. Therefore, English teachers have a relatively low recognition of professional social status, and the professional will to continue to engage in primary school English education is naturally relatively low.

5.3 Analysis and Discussion on the Micro-Comparison Results of Professional Identity Contents

Overall, urban primary school English teachers of Korean nationality scored higher than township English teachers on 25 items, while township English teachers scored higher than urban English teachers on 10 items. This is mainly because: on the one hand, for teachers living in the city, no matter their living environment or working environment are better than the township's, so it is no wonder their recognition level of each content will be substantially and extensively higher than the township teachers. On the other hand, we also found that township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality paid more attention to the profession of teachers and the group of primary school English teachers than urban teachers. This is not only because the status of English subject in township primary schools is indeed not as important as that in urban primary schools, but also because compared with the teachers in urban schools, the salaries of teachers in villages and towns are generally lower, which is an objective fact, and English teachers are no exception. Therefore, township Korean primary school English teachers' satisfaction with the current welfare package is significantly lower than that of urban teachers.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, this study has formed the following five research conclusions:(1)The professional identity level of urban primary school English teachers of Korean nationality is significantly higher than that of township teachers.(2)Both urban and township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality have a higher level of professional identity.(3)For urban and township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality, professional behavior tendency is the same dimension with the highest identification degree, and the identification of professional social status and professional will are the two dimensions with the lowest degree.(4)Both urban and township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality have an extensive professional identity.(5)The difference of working and living environment is the main cause to the difference of professional identity between urban and township primary school English teachers of Korean nationality.

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