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### PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND VALUE ORIENTATIONS OF A NEW UKRAINIAN SCHOOL TEACHER

**Анотація.** В умовах реформування загальної середньої освіти в Україні, реалізації концепції Нової Української Школи (НУШ) та викликів воєнного часу проблема формування стійкої професійної ідентичності вчителя як носія і транслятора гуманістичних цінностей набуває першочергового значення. У статті розглянуто поняття, які взаємопов'язані і доповнюють одне одного, розширюючи та поглиблюючи зміст феномену ідентичності, проте описуються деякими авторами як синонімічні: ідентичність вчителя, педагогічна ідентичність і професійна ідентичність вчителя. Педагогічна ідентичність є системною цінністю сучасної освіти. В контексті НУШ зріла педагогічна ідентичність забезпечує реалізацію педагогіки партнерства, слугує ресурсом психологічної стійкості вчителів і учнів в умовах воєнного часу та є передумовою формування національної ідентичності учнів. Розмита педагогічна ідентичність призводить до зниження авторитету вчителя, відтворення авторитарних моделей взаємодії та підриває ціннісний потенціал освіти. У статті розкривається сутність професійної ідентичності вчителя як динамічного, ціннісно зумовленого конструкту, що займає проміжне місце між особистісною та соціальною ідентичністю. Представлено чотирикомпонентну структуру педагогічної ідентичності (когнітивно-рефлексивний, ціннісно-смысловий, емоційно-афективний та поведінково-діяльнісний компоненти), визначено її критерії (рефлексивно-пізнавальний, ціннісно-смысловий, емоційно-ідентифікаційний, поведінково-автентичний), а також три рівні сформованості ідентичності (дифузний, формувальний і зрілий). Обґрунтовано, що добре сформована професійна ідентичність виступає чинником психологічної готовності вчителя до творчої діяльності, сприяє вільному виконанню професійних функцій, підвищує рівень домагань, розвиває індивідуальний стиль і уможливорює автентичну суб'єкт-суб'єктну взаємодію в системі «вчитель–учень». Перспективи подальших досліджень вбачаються у розробці та апробації програм психологічного супроводу формування професійної ідентичності вчителів у системі неперервної освіти.

**Ключові слова:** професійна ідентичність вчителя, ціннісні орієнтації, Нова Українська Школа, аксіологічний підхід, педагогічна взаємодія, творчий потенціал, готовність до професійної діяльності.

**Abstract.** In the context of reforming general secondary education in Ukraine, implementing the New Ukrainian School (NUS) concept, and facing the challenges of wartime, the problem of forming a stable professional identity of the teacher as a bearer and transmitter of humanistic values becomes paramount. The article focuses on concepts that are interrelated and complement one another, broadening and deepening the content of the identity phenomenon, yet described by some authors as synonymous: teacher identity, pedagogical identity, and professional identity of the teacher. Pedagogical identity is a systemic value of modern education. In the context of the NUS, a mature pedagogical identity ensures the implementation of partnership pedagogy, serves as a resource for the psychological resilience of teachers and students in wartime conditions, and is a prerequisite for the formation of students' national identity. A blurred pedagogical identity leads to a decline in the teacher's authority, the reproduction of authoritarian interaction models, and undermines the value potential of education. The article reveals the essence of the teacher's professional identity as a dynamic, value-driven construct occupying an intermediate position between personal and social identity. A four-component structure of pedagogical identity is presented (cognitive-reflective, value-semantic, emotional-affective, and behavioral-activity components), its criteria



are defined (reflective-cognitive, value-semantic, emotional-identificatory, behavioral-authentic), along with three levels of identity formation (diffuse, forming, and mature). It is substantiated that a well-formed professional identity acts as a factor of the teacher's psychological readiness for creative activity, facilitates the free performance of professional functions, raises the level of aspirations, develops an individual style, and enables authentic subject-to-subject interaction within the 'teacher–student' system. Prospects for further research are seen in the development and testing of psychological support programs for the formation of teachers' professional identity within the continuing education system.

**Keywords:** professional identity of the teacher, value orientations, New Ukrainian School, axiological approach, pedagogical interaction, creative potential, readiness for professional activity.

### **Statement of the Problem and Its Connection with Important Scientific or Practical Tasks**

In the current context of Ukrainian education reform – driven by European integration processes, implementation of the New Ukrainian School (NUS) concept, and the extreme challenges of wartime – a number of contradictions in teachers' professional activity have become sharper. On one hand, society demands a teacher who is a humanist, a creator, a leader, capable of subject-to-subject interaction and able to develop in students a value-based attitude toward themselves, others, and their country. On the other hand, a decline in the prestige of the teaching profession, the erosion of professional self-awareness, and a rise in professional burnout are all being observed – factors that directly affect the quality of the educational process [1].

As noted in earlier research, students' choice of a pedagogical university is often driven not by a vocation, but by the desire to acquire higher education as such – a situation that precludes the formation of an authentic professional identity during the stage of professional training [10]. Under martial law, this problem takes on a critical weight, since it is precisely the teacher who serves as an existential anchor for the child, a bearer of cultural memory and national identity. Hence an urgent scientific-practical problem arises: identifying the factors that form the teacher's professional identity as a prerequisite for their readiness for creative, value-oriented pedagogical activity within the 'teacher–student' system.

### **Analysis of Recent Research and Publications**

The problem of identity has an interdisciplinary character and is explored across psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, and sociology. The theoretical foundations of identity research were laid by E. Erikson, who viewed it as a central psychosocial structure that forms over a lifetime [13]. The social-psychological aspects of identity are revealed in the works of H. Tajfel and J. Turner [15].

Of particular significance for pedagogical science and practice are the axiological approaches of I. Bekh, I. Ziaziun, and H. Ball, which substantiate the value dimension of education as the foundation of humanistic pedagogy [1; 3]. The problem of creative self-realization of the teacher was studied by V. Andrieiev, D. Bohoiavlenska, V. Kan-Kalik, V. Rybalka, Ya. Ponomarov, and others. Also important for our research are the contributions of foreign colleagues (C. Day, J. Nias, S. Feiman-Nemser), who demonstrate the dynamic, narrative, and value-conditioned nature of pedagogical identity [12; 14].

At the same time, despite a substantial body of scholarly work, a coherent conception of the teacher's professional identity specifically within the context of the NUS and considering contemporary socio-cultural challenges remains underdeveloped. Approaches to the structure of identity, the criteria for its formation, and the mechanisms by which identity influences the teacher's readiness for creative interaction with students all require systematization. These unresolved aspects constitute the problem field of the present article.

**Purpose of the article** – to conduct a theoretical-pedagogical analysis of the phenomenon of the NUS teacher's professional identity as an axiological category; to define the structure, criteria, and levels of pedagogical identity formation; and to substantiate its role as a factor of the teacher's psychological readiness for creative professional activity and effective interaction within the 'teacher–student' system.

### **Presentation of the Main Research Material**

The teacher's professional identity is understood here as a dynamic, multidimensional, personal-value construct that arises in the process of professional development, provides the individual with integrity, self-sameness, and definiteness in professional activity, and occupies an intermediate position between personal and social identity. Unlike professional competence, which can be formed directly through instruction, identity is built through experience, reflection, value choices, and sense-making. This is precisely why it is a deep determinant of pedagogical behavior – more stable than individual knowledge or skills.

Drawing on scholarly approaches, we propose a four-component structure of the NUS teacher's professional identity:



**Cognitive-Reflective Component** – awareness of oneself as a subject of pedagogical activity, knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses, capacity for pedagogical reflection, and critical comprehension of one's own experience.

**Value-Semantic Component** – the core component, encompassing the system of pedagogical values (love for the child, dedication to the profession, justice, respect for dignity) and understanding of the meaning of pedagogical work as a socially significant mission. Through this component, identity acquires an axiological character.

**Emotional-Affective Component** – a sense of pride in belonging to the pedagogical community, job satisfaction, pedagogical optimism, emotional resilience.

**Behavioral-Authentic Component** – the ability to act in accordance with one's identity, to choose strategies, methods, and forms of work that correspond to one's internal value convictions.

The criteria for pedagogical identity formation are: reflective-cognitive (depth of self-awareness), value-semantic (presence of a stable value system), emotional-identificatory (strength of emotional connection with the teacher role), and behavioral-authentic (alignment between convictions and practices). According to the degree of expression of these criteria, three levels are distinguished: diffuse (blurred identity, contradictory values, low reflection), forming (sufficiently conscious identification, positive attitude toward the profession, but non-systematic reflection), and mature (stable, coherent identity, organic correspondence between values and practices, authenticity) [1; 2; 10].

An important theoretical position is that a well-formed professional identity directly acts as a factor of the teacher's readiness for creative professional activity. As shown in research by V. Rybalka and V. Moliako, creativity is a property of professionals who work effectively in their respective field. Moreover, 'in the case of the unity of the specialist's personality [and] formed identity, their activity will be a flow of creativity where nothing is superfluous' [10]. Conversely, a teacher with an unstable, diffuse identity tends to reproduce reproductive, authoritarian, or manipulative interaction models – a tendency that negates any creative potential.

*Table 1 Structure of the Teacher's Personality with Formed Professional Identity*

| <b>Dimension</b>      | <b>Motivational Component</b>  | <b>Informational-Cognitive Component</b>  | <b>Goal-Forming Component</b>   | <b>Operational-Result Component</b>  | <b>Emotional-Affective Component</b>  |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
| Communication Ability | Need and motivation to communicate with students, parents, colleagues; need for psychological-pedagogical information and experience sharing | Use of professional terminology; perception and discussion of ideas; ability to objectively perceive another person's personality | Understanding partners; accepting community-developed decisions; understanding the causes of another's behavior | Effective interaction; recognizing the partner's value; establishing contacts; high speech culture | Acceptance of fellow professionals and student; ability to evoke positive emotions; tolerance and sensitivity |
| Orientation           | Humanistic pedagogical orientation; striving for creative self-realization and a positive self-image as teacher                              | Broad cognitive interests in pedagogy and psychology; creative processing of information; interest in spiritual values            | Awareness of activity goals; formation of plans for further growth  | Overcoming obstacles; identification with the professional community; career growth                | Job satisfaction; sense of love and respect for the student   |
| Character             | Initiative, responsibility, activity,  | Curiosity, diligence,   | Goal-directedness, independence,  | Perseverance, discipline,  | Sense of dignity, tact, humor; pride,   |

| <b>Dimension</b> | <b>Motivational Component</b>   | <b>Informational-Cognitive Component</b>   | <b>Goal-Forming Component</b>  | <b>Operational-Result Component</b>  | <b>Emotional-Affective Component</b>  |
|------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| Self-Awareness   | organization, demandingness toward oneself and students   | avoidance of templates   | critical thinking, decisiveness  | self-control, independence   | satisfaction from the profession  |
|                  | Awareness of oneself as a professional; need for self-knowledge and self-improvement                | Development of reflection; ability for self-observation and comparison of 'real self' and 'ideal self' | Goal-setting; possession of professional ideals and self-improvement programs    | Objective self-assessment; self-regulation and self-control in activity                  | Positive self-attitude; sense of dignity; ability to manage emotions                  |
| Experience       | Readiness to act according to ideals; need to disseminate one's own mastery                         | Deep knowledge of professional content; reflection on one's own capabilities                           | Ability to resolve complex situations; development of creative activity strategy | Developed skills; pedagogical technique; ability to mobilize all experience              | Satisfaction from acquired experience and level of mastery                            |
| Intellect        | Orientation toward concentration; motivation for intellectual development; need for creative search | Adequate attention span; sensory-perceptive abilities; 'openness' to new knowledge                     | Logical thinking, creativity; ability to independently formulate hypotheses      | Ability for 'lateral thinking'; creative imagination; developing ideas in intensive work | Sustained attention under pressure; inspiration; resilience to failures and criticism |
| Psychophysiology | Orienting-exploratory reflex reactions; formation of stable creative activity dispositions          | Average level of sensitivity; high or average level of nervous system ergicity                         | Average or high level of plasticity; emotional stability and self-regulation     | High work capacity; balance of excitation and inhibition processes                       | Average level of emotionality   |

In the context of the NUS, special significance attaches to the teacher's capacity for subject-to-subject interaction grounded in the recognition of the value of the other and of oneself. Partnership pedagogy – one of the key principles of the NUS – requires from the teacher not merely methodological preparation but, above all, value-semantic clarity. A teacher with a blurred identity cannot become an equal partner: they inevitably revert to authoritarian or laissez-faire models, often without realizing it. A mature professional identity, by contrast, generates the corresponding communicative, characterological, and reflexive properties: initiative, responsibility, goal-directedness, capacity for reflection, self-acceptance, and empathy [10].

In wartime conditions, the role of the teacher's identity becomes even more pressing. The teacher today is not only an educational agent but also a bearer of national identity and psychological resilience – a symbol of safety for the child. One's own mature pedagogical identity allows the teacher to endure high psycho-emotional demands, find resources for creativity, flexibly adapt work formats (for example, to distance learning), and simultaneously remain authentic [2; 5].

The professional community plays an important role in the development of professional identity, serving as a reference group and acting for the individual as a source of behavioral norms and value orientations, as well as a standard for comparison (T. Newcomb, M. Sherif, H. Kelley). The reflection of group values leads to the formation of value-semantic orientations in the individual, and the achievement of professional identity is associated with the person's adoption of value positions sanctioned by the professional community.

L. Roberts and J. Dutton identify four directions in the formation of professional identity: the moral direction (the content of identity includes moral qualities distinguishing 'good' from 'bad' people), the evaluative direction (the group to which the person belongs is positively assessed by members of their own and other groups), the developmental direction (change of identity over time), and the structural direction (characterizing the various ways individuals organize and structure their multiple identities, including professional identity) [4].

At the same time, the process of forming professional identity is not completed at the stage of professional training. It continues throughout the entire professional life of the teacher and depends on many factors: professional reflection, interaction with the professional community, experience of pedagogical activity, the continuing education system, and social recognition of the profession. For this reason, an important task of contemporary pedagogical education is to create conditions for supporting the teacher's professional self-determination, developing their reflective culture, and fostering awareness of their own professional mission [8].

In wartime conditions, the teacher's professional identity also fulfills a stabilizing function. The teacher's capacity to remain psychologically resilient, to support students, to demonstrate humanistic values and civic responsibility becomes a vital resource of the educational system [11]. The teacher is often the figure who helps the child preserve a sense of security, trust, and a vision of the future. This underscores the need to strengthen psychological support for teachers, to develop programs for professional self-preservation, and to support the pedagogical community.

Thus, the professional identity of the New Ukrainian School teacher is not merely an individual characteristic of the teacher's personality but a strategic resource for the development of contemporary education. Its formation must become one of the priority areas of the system of pedagogical and continuing education, since it is precisely a mature professional identity that ensures the teacher's readiness for creative activity, effective pedagogical interaction, and the realization of education's humanistic values in the face of societal challenges [16; 17].

### **Digital Transformation and the Teacher's Professional Identity in the Context of Continuing Education**

Contemporary processes of digital transformation in education introduce an additional dimension to the problem of the teacher's professional identity formation. The rapid transition to distance and blended learning formats, which was catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic and further deepened by the full-scale war, has posed qualitatively new demands on the teacher's professional self-determination. Research evidence confirms that teachers who possess a stable professional identity demonstrate greater adaptability in the face of technological and organisational changes — they perceive digital tools not as an existential threat to their professional role, but as an extension of their pedagogical capabilities [18; 19].

In this context, continuing professional education acquires a special significance. It is not merely a mechanism for the acquisition of new competencies, but a space for the “recollection” and reconsolidation of professional identity under conditions of constant change. Recent systematic reviews of the literature devoted to teacher identity demonstrate that the very process of professional learning – particularly when it is collaborative, reflective, and oriented towards practice – is one of the most potent tools for identity formation and stabilisation throughout the career trajectory [20]. The community of practice (J. Lave, E. Wenger) fulfils a function of “identity scaffolding”: it provides the teacher with recognition, value feedback, and a shared professional narrative. For the NUS teacher, such communities – methodological associations, school teams, online professional networks – constitute resources of identity support, the significance of which is particularly pronounced under martial law, when standard institutional structures may be disrupted.

A separate aspect meriting attention is the relationship between a teacher's professional identity and their psychological well-being. Studies conducted during the years of the full-scale war in Ukraine confirm that among the key predictors of emotional resilience and resistance to professional burnout in educators is precisely the presence of a clear and stable professional self-concept. Teachers who clearly articulate the meaning of their activity, identify strongly with the teaching profession, and perceive themselves as agents of change demonstrate significantly higher indicators of job satisfaction and coping

capacity under conditions of chronic stress [21]. Conversely, a blurred professional identity, accompanied by value ambivalence and a deficit of professional self-respect, creates preconditions for emotional exhaustion, the adoption of depersonalisation strategies, and ultimately for departure from the profession – a trend that has intensified considerably in the conditions of wartime dislocations [22].

The gender dimension of professional identity deserves special mention in the Ukrainian context, given that the pedagogical profession in Ukraine remains predominantly female. For women teachers, professional identity is often interwoven with family-role identity, which creates additional complexity under martial law: the need to simultaneously fulfil roles as educator, mother, carer, and psychological support figure generates a specific “identity overload.” This circumstance is particularly important for the design of psychological support programmes for teachers, which must take into account the multi-dimensionality and dynamic nature of their identity.

Regarding the methodological instruments for studying and supporting professional identity, it is important to note the growing interest in narrative approaches. The teacher’s professional narrative – the story they tell about themselves as a professional – is at once a diagnostic tool and an instrument of identity construction. Research demonstrates that participation in reflective biographical seminars and narrative writing practices significantly enhances self-awareness and strengthens the value-semantic component of identity [23]. These approaches are promising for inclusion in the continuing education system for NUS teachers, particularly at a time when the war has disrupted conventional biographical scenarios and compelled many teachers to reconstruct their professional self-image in fundamentally new contexts.

A further direction in the scholarly discussion concerns the relationship between the professional identity of the teacher and students’ national identity. In the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war, this relationship is becoming especially significant: the teacher acts not only as a transmitter of knowledge, but also as a bearer of cultural memory and civic values. A teacher who is personally immersed in a mature professional identity grounded in humanistic and patriotic values becomes a natural model for students’ civic and national self-determination. International data confirm that teachers with a clear axiological identity exert a statistically significant influence on the civic engagement and national identification of their pupils [24]. This provides an additional argument for prioritising the systematic support of teacher identity formation at the institutional level – as a strategic investment not merely in the quality of education, but in national resilience as a whole.

Thus, the problem of the teacher’s professional identity in the NUS context extends far beyond the scope of individual-psychological formation and constitutes a systemic pedagogical and socio-cultural phenomenon. The theoretical analysis conducted confirms the need for an integrated approach to its study, which combines psychological and pedagogical, axiological, biographical, and socio-cultural perspectives. The development of corresponding programmes for the support of teacher identity formation within the system of continuing education is a priority task of contemporary Ukrainian pedagogical science and practice, which acquires particular urgency in the conditions of wartime and post-war recovery of the educational system.

### **Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research**

The analysis conducted allows for the following conclusions. The teacher's professional identity is an axiological category reflecting the teacher's value-semantic self-determination and constituting a systemic value of modern education. It has a complex structure encompassing cognitive-reflective, value-semantic, emotional-affective, and behavioral-activity components; its formation is assessed by means of four criteria (reflective-cognitive, value-semantic, emotional-identificatory, and behavioral-authentic) at three levels (diffuse, forming, mature).

A well-formed professional identity is a key factor of the teacher's psychological readiness for creative professional activity, ensures the free performance of functions, an elevated level of aspirations, and the development of an individual style – and is a necessary prerequisite for authentic subject-to-subject interaction within the 'teacher–student' system in the NUS context. In wartime conditions, a mature pedagogical identity becomes a resource of psychological resilience for all participants in the educational process.

Prospects for further scholarly investigation are seen in empirical research into the levels of professional identity formation among NUS teachers, in the development and testing of a psycho-pedagogical support program for building mature teacher identity within the continuing education system, and in researching the relationship between the teacher's professional identity and students' national identity under wartime conditions.

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