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## Research Article

### Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions on Their Professional Identity Development (PID)

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#### ABSTRACT

This research is focused on the perceptions of the pre-service teachers' Professional Identity Development (PID). The respondents included 16 pre-service teachers from a private teacher education institution. It employed a descriptive narrative design with the qualitative method of collecting data using interview questionnaire and focus group discussion guideline as instruments. The findings showed all the shared experiences were perceived to be contributory to the development of the professional identity of the Pre-service Teachers (PTs) in the competencies stipulated in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). Results of the interview done individually and as a group revealed how PTs perceived their professional identity development, which is essentially like the competencies of Stage 1 (Beginning Teacher). These include 1) Exhibiting mastery of concepts and pedagogy; 2) Effectiveness in communicating concepts; 3) Proficiency in information and communication technology (ICT) utilization; 4) Creating safe and conducive learning environment (classroom management); 5) Flexibility with the diverse learners; 6) Efficiency in lesson planning; 7) Consistency in reporting and monitoring learners' progress; 8) Actively collaborating with colleagues and participating in the school community; and 9) Pursuing of continuous professional development. It proposes up-skilling and re-skilling of pre-service teachers which will all lead to the formation of a competent beginning teacher in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** *Perceptions, Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), Pre-service teachers, Professional identity development*

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## **Introduction**

The world needs skilled teachers for the 21st century era, considering that educational system and schooling constantly adjust to changing economic, political, social, and global contexts that consequently continue to challenge the teaching profession (Blackley & Howell, 2015). The need for educators to network professionally is more important than ever because of the growing demands placed on them, such as the increased use of digital technologies and social interaction between them and the students (Beardsley et al., 2021; Hortigüela Alcalá et al., 2019).

The school demands and challenges are inevitable and represent the level of experiences to which teachers are exposed into different classrooms. Some of the many challenges teachers face in today's classroom are 1) balancing the different cultural learning needs of students; 2) working in line with expectations of school curriculum and administrators; and 3) helping parents and students meet long-term goals (Dokocil, 2016). These teachers who handle multi-grade classes feel stunned by the lack of specific pedagogic training needed to be effective in a multi-grade environment. Brown (2010) as cited in Msimanga (2019) argues that generally in the multi-grade preparation, learners of different grade levels are in one class, yet each learner needs to pursue a grade-suitable curriculum. This is the primary challenge with multi-grade instruction since it requires new curricula, including evaluation methods and resources, and the way students learn is different than in a single-grade setting (Mulaudzi, 2016).

The Philippines educational system experiences problem with K-12 curriculum implementation, such as 1) teacher shortage; 2) curriculum unsustainability; 3) lack of resources; 4) infrastructure, and 5) non-coordination of different bureaucratic bodies (Alegado, 2018; Mahel, 2021). Also, the lack of quality and proficiency among teachers especially in subjects Science, English, and Mathematics is a problem to consider. This means that there are needs to be addressed by teacher education institutions (TEIs) with a comprehensive series of training for teachers' growth and development. Another issue is the clamour from public school

teachers for less paperwork and bureaucratic systems (Tomacruz, 2018) so that teachers could devote more time for lesson preparation and other schoolwork focused on diverse learners (Hundani & Toquero, 2021). Considering such scenario, pre-service teachers must be prepared of these eventualities; their professional identity development must be taken into consideration to make sure that when they graduate, they have the competencies necessary and expected of professional teachers ready to deal with the more challenging teaching field ahead of them. In fact, pre-service teachers themselves are already experiencing a taste of challenging experiences during their internship, the real world of teaching practice. Through teaching practice, it gives them considerable changes within pre-service teachers, like the positive adjustments by resiliency, motivation to overcome those personal obstacles, and high levels of emotional vulnerability related with fatigue and heavy workloads, including anxiety (Ismail & Jarrah, 2019; Squires et al., 2022).

Within the field of professional identity research, the teaching practice has been identified as one of the factors contributing to the development of pre-service teachers' professional identity (Wong, 2022). For instance, Ye and Law (2019) conducted a study about perceptions of pre-service teachers of their morality in China. Researchers found that pre-service teachers have adopted different values such as caring, respect, and authority, to which their ways of teaching were influenced by the country's social traditions and changes. Another study by Greisel et al. (2023) on the use of evidence-informed reasoning by pre-service teachers in Germany also showed their challenges to increase their motivation in gaining such skill. This scenario served as proof of development of pre-service science teachers' professional skills in practice.

Although a substantial number of literatures in other countries have addressed the role of educational theory to practice teaching experience in shaping teacher professional identity (TPI), local related studies are limited and of different views. For example, from a study about a phenomenographic inquiry on pre-service and beginning teachers' concept of

competence among Filipino teachers, Abulon and Balagtas (2016) found out that pre-service teachers 'see' and 'understand' teaching competence in four different ways: 1) to possess desirable characteristics of a teacher; 2) to possess professional readiness to teach; 3) to manifest positive relationship with others; and 4) to respond to environmental and social changes. Other research focused on pre-service teachers' teaching motivations and perspectives (Rogayan, 2018), which basically point out that pre-service teachers typically have strong motivation for their career choice, show a significant interest in teaching, have an unconditional appreciation of learning, and are passionate about passing on their knowledge, especially to young learners. Some other studies are about the challenges that pre-service teachers experience during their internships. Tindowen et al. (2019) also reported on their study that while pre-service teachers gained positive experiences and learnings in the cooperating school, some of them still encountered issues in the discipline-related works and their relationship with the teachers and supervisors. This is similar with the findings on teacher professional identity, reflecting participants' experiences on the importance of integrating theory and practice, sense of responsibility, and the influence of the critic teacher (Liwanag, 2018).

Amid education reforms implementation and professional development programs to improve the pre-service teachers' pedagogical competence, efforts would be futile without considering teachers' professional identity. Likewise, inspired by the narratives of the pre-service teachers' experiences which portray experiences of internship, the author conceptualized this research to dig deeper on the concrete experiences of pre-service teachers to find greater understanding of complexities of emerging professional identity of teacher interns that is grounded and contextualized in the Philippine education system. Moreover, the study integrates Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) policy which can determine how teachers are expected to advance in their careers, develop their practices, and improve teaching (Macam, 2022).

This paper will contribute to the educational research on teacher professional identity as it presents the development of teacher identity in the lens of pre-service teachers in the Philippine context. Considering the importance of professional identity in the process of learning to teach, this study will be significant to pre-service teachers and educators to help facilitate pre-service teachers' professional growth. Specifically, this study hopes to contribute to the existing knowledge and research about pre-service teacher identity development in Philippine education system. The findings of this study aim to inform stakeholders on the existing condition of TEI internship program, and in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) as the main framework for evaluating in practice teaching performance.

## **Methods**

### ***Research Methodology***

This research determines the pre-service teachers' perspectives about their professional identity based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). This study involves a qualitative research method using narrative inquiry, which explored sixteen (16) pre-service teachers' professional identity development experiences. The study was conducted in St. Dominic College of Asia, Bacoar City, Cavite, Philippines. The selection procedure used was purposive sampling; these are students who took up Bachelor of Secondary Education and Bachelor of Elementary Education. The study intentionally included those who were enrolled in the practice teaching program and were willing to share lived experiences as pre-service teachers.

### ***Research Instruments***

There are two instruments in this study to gather data: the interview questionnaire and the focus group discussion (FGD) guide. The instruments were presented for face and content validation to the researcher's adviser, Science teacher, and Psychology professor. The discussions and responses during focus group questions were recorded and transcribed. This process involved identifying blocks of data that

demonstrated some commonalities in recognizing relevant themes across the narrative data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study has considered the following ethical guidelines to be put into place for the entire period of the research. Full adherence to the researcher's integrity involves the exercise of competence common sense and has moral responsibility to the respondents,

simultaneously promoting values of collaborative work, trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness to all.

### **Results and Discussion**

The table below shows the nine (9) themes that emerged from the FGD, reflecting the PTs' perception of their Professional Identity Development (PID) according to Department of Education (2017).

*Table 1. Themes on Perceived Professional Identity Development (PID) of Pre-Service Teachers*

<b>Generated Themes</b>	<b>Theme Description</b>
1. Exhibiting mastery of concepts and pedagogy (Domain 1 – Content Knowledge and Pedagogy)	This refers to pre-service teachers' recognition of the importance of mastery of content knowledge in their respective field and its connectedness with important life's issues.
2. Effectiveness in communicating concepts (Domain 1 – Content Knowledge and Pedagogy)	This refers to the ability of a pre-service teacher to communicate skillfully with proficiency in Filipino, Mother Tongue, and English to facilitate teaching-learning concepts.
3. Proficiency in ICT utilization (Domain 1 – Content Knowledge and Pedagogy)	This describes how the pre-service teachers utilize teaching technologies (ICT) to promote high-quality learning outcomes.
4. Creating safe and conducive learning environment (classroom management) (Domain 2 – Learning Environment)	This concerns how a pre-service teacher provides learning environments that are supportive, fair, secure, and safe, to continuously promote learner achievement.
5. Flexibility with the diverse learners (Domain 3 – Diversity of Learners)	This relates to pre-service teachers' capacity to research educational environments that accommodate learners of all backgrounds and respect their variety of traits and experiences as a foundation for designing and organizing learning opportunities.
6. Efficiency in lesson planning (Domain 4 – Curriculum and Planning)	This refers to a pre-service teacher's ability to use professional knowledge to organize and develop a lesson that is carefully structured, sequential, and relevant to the requirements of the learners.
7. Consistency in reporting and monitoring learners' progress (Domain 5 – Assessment and Reporting)	This concentrates on the provisions, the essential feedback on learning outcomes that influence the reporting series and allow teachers to apply, select, and arrange sound assessment.
8. Actively collaborating with colleagues and participating school community (Domain 6 – Community Linkages and Professional Engagement)	This explains how a pre-service teacher respects professional ethics and accountability to foster professionalism and peaceful relationships with coworkers through active participation in school-community activities, and how they react to opportunities that connect learning and instruction in the classroom to the larger school community.

Generated Themes	Theme Description
9. Pursuing of continuous professional development (CPD) (Domain 7 – Personal Growth and Professional Development)	This pertains to how the future teachers take ownership of their professional and personal development, embrace lifelong learning, and have high regard for the teaching profession.

Table 1 presents and describes the nine generated themes based on the breadth of the PPST domains (Llego, 2017). These perceived characteristics of a pre-service teachers' PID are discussed:

### 1. Exhibiting mastery of concepts and pedagogy

This refers to pre-service science teachers' recognition of the importance of mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical skills in science and can share to the students. Rogayan (2018) said that the primary goals of education are to eliminate ignorance, extend people's perspectives, and develop their potential. Pre-service science teachers mainly described that as part of their professional identity development, one must have mastery of the subject matter in science. To develop the PTs' mastery of subject matter, these several actual exposures to classroom observations, practice teachings, and the demo teaching naturally equipped them mastery of the science concepts. In addition, the different science related fieldtrips to botanical and zoological museums and protected wildlife areas in the country are another source of knowledge for the PTs. They discovered in one way or another, that by demonstrating their science knowledge and skills will enhance the learners' interest to study science and can influence them to be future scientist. One respondent (PT6) said: *"Science teachers should be always ready to teach science concepts, learn to be innovative, planned all activities of the class. They must be smart and flexible, and patient to be able to answer questions relating to science matters. Science teachers who have the expertise to explain phenomenological problems leave a big mark in students' mind."* While another PT emphasized: *"As a PT, one should know how to acquire and share sufficient knowledge scientific concepts to students and the varied life situations, and problems of educational system, and issues of society"* (PT10).

### 2. Effectiveness in communicating concepts

The effectiveness of a pre-service teacher to communicate science concepts is skills requirement. This theme considers the teachers' fluency in their mother tongue, Filipino, and English to enhance science teaching and learning by utilizing technology, teaching tactics, and communication techniques to encourage high-quality learning outcomes. The PTs are aware that proficiency in communication using English, Mother Tongue, and Filipino to facilitate teaching and learning of science concepts and processes is one important requirement before becoming a beginning teacher. According to Dy and Sumayao (2023), teaching in the target language enhanced their communication skills and made the students more responsive and participative during their class discussions.

One noteworthy response along this theme is, *"A pre-service science teacher, must have a good academic background, equipped enough knowledge to teach clearly both in written and oral communication with his/her students. One more thing, a science teacher should practice bilingual fluency so that you can explain lessons both in English and Tagalog especially in a classroom having diverse languages"* (PT13). Moreover, the PTs' experiences in oral communications like practice teaching demo teaching collaborating with off campus stakeholders, in research colloquiums and public speaking in seminars presenting their research papers, in their usual class reporting (oral and written). All these activities developed the complex communication skills that extremely important to explain scientific concepts, as PT1 stated; *"A science teacher should be smart and flexible, have the art of communication, knows how to ask question for example, the Socratic way of asking questions; but most of and able to answer questions relating to the science matters and scientific issues in our society."*

### 3. Proficiency in ICT utilization

The nature of teaching in the 21st century unavoidably utilizes information communication technology (ICT) to promote high-quality learning outcomes. There is an increasing need for pre-service science teachers to develop professional identities that echo with pedagogical practices that involve and connect with learners in a positive and proactive way. This is especially true in an era where digital literacy must be associated with teacher educational practices and transformative education for 21st century learners. All TEIs are required by the country's teacher education council sector to implement digital technologies for supporting and improving instruction. The teacher training program must make sure that student teachers comprehend this digital world and create a positive sense of self (Hadar et al., 2020).

The TEI of the PTs have the following platforms for strengthening their information and communication technology (ICT) proficiency of the teachers. This includes 1:1 PC ICT facility room, which requires regular training of the MIS office to update teachers of the new technologies for classroom use. Moreover, there are Learning Management Systems (LMS) which can be useful when classes are suspended or there are activities that may affect physical classroom lectures. All of these are inclusive in the tuition fee of the PTs so anytime in the school they can research and do their requirements. One participant (PT10) said, *"Pre-service teachers should have the qualifications recognized for entry into teaching profession like teaching with technology for the 21st century learners. With the use of smart technology and ICT, clearly promotes effective classroom communication and will develop critical thinking among learners."*

### 4. Creating safe and conducive learning environment (classroom management)

True to the goal of education that concerns safe environment is how a pre-service science teacher provides learning environments that are safe, secure, fair, and supportive that will promote learners' achievement (Caliba, 2022). Numerous factors can have an impact on how well education is provided in TEIs. It depends

in part on the learning environment that teachers foster and the method of learning that students use while they are learning (Ferreira et al., 2020). A good teacher creates the right environment to foster critical scientific reasoning. The teacher researcher considers that the best classroom management plan is to care for the students.

Pre-service teachers generate an environment that is learner-focused and efficiently manage learners' behavior inside the classroom. One notable response given was, *"Learning environment plays an important role in preparing pre-service science teachers like me to the changing environment, and we must take the responsibility to hone our skills in classroom management. Most of all tap the potential talents of learners as they interact and survive in the environment where classroom size is in maximum limit and diverse. The school education program must extend beyond the walls of the school, exploring strategies that will help the school in implementing rules and regulations of the school"* (PT4).

Indeed, pre-service teachers see themselves as support towards training learners the life skills to survive in a challenge environment. Another response relative with the theme was, *"With my experience in my teaching demo, I was stressed by school workloads, but I need not show it to the students. But my situation then was a way for me to realize that a good teacher needs to always prepare. Being a teacher, one must have classroom management skills to create a safe and comfortable learning environment regardless of my personal issue"* (PT11). Furthermore, this theme highlights the role of the PTs to demonstrate the know-how of managing diverse classroom structures and activities.

### 5. Flexibility with the diverse learners

In developing PTs flexibility with the diverse learners, their practice teaching and field study are embedded with different curricular-based activities. In their field study, the PTs are immersed in the off-campus activity to observe the different classes both in the public and private schools. With these, they are required to keenly observe the in-service teachers' dealing with diverse learners vis-à-vis implemented topics for specific lessons. They should gather

enough ideas and knowledge how the teachers utilize differentiated strategies that cater the gifted, intellectual, challenged, and special learners as well as the slow versus the fast learners. Upon assimilation of all these observations, the PTs could be expected to apply their learning during the practice teaching.

As for the learners' diversity, it is an increasing concern for the teacher education program. This theme also emphasizes the key role of teachers to be flexible with the diversity of learners by establishing learning environments, which cater and respect them. As in the study of Ismailos et al. (2022), preservice teachers preferred student-centered classrooms allowing their students to have greater freedom of their choices and making differentiated instruction more relevant. The encouragement of diversity in the classrooms demands differentiated teaching practices. This pertains to planning and designing classroom environments that can cater and respect learners' diverse characteristics and experiences. One salient response from PT4 pointed out that the learners are now living in a globally competitive society. He said, *"In this new generation Z, science teachers need to be competitive in terms of teaching learners with different cultures inside the classroom which everybody is learning from diverse learners."* Another participant stated, *"The pre-service teacher should know his or her students well meaning; their backgrounds, cultures that can help plan effective teaching strategies and activities that will include all types of learners and will put consideration to learners with special students' needs"* (PT2).

## 6. Efficiency in lesson planning

Efficiency in lesson planning is an important first step in effective teaching. Lesson plan helps teachers to create effective decisions and reflect new ideas in action (König et al., 2020). This theme presents another significant characteristic mentioned by the pre-service science teachers; the application of professional knowledge to design and execute a well-structured lesson plan that is contextually relevant to the culture of the learners. The lesson plan guides the PTs to a lesson progression that can effectively help learners reach the lesson

objectives. In their practice teaching and demo teaching, they are practice to write different formats of lesson plans, for example, the detailed LP, where there are descriptions of the different classroom activities and sets of assessments that the students will be able to perform for a week. Other lesson plans are format from DepEd which is required in the curriculum. Interestingly, some participants (e.g., PT4) mentioned that lesson planning is a complex process where a model of in-service or a pre-service teacher has learned to apply the defined intended learning outcomes, form of assessment, content, and pedagogic requirements for student success across an entire curriculum standard. PT8 expressed, *"In lesson planning a pre-service teacher in terms of the following the PPST standards, must have a step-by-step framework to be able to manage better the class and know where the strengths are to be met and the weaknesses to be addressed, so in that way, discover a method of pedagogical assessment for improvement of learners' performance."*

## 7. Consistency in reporting and monitoring learners' progress

This theme concerns with pre-service teachers monitoring and providing learners with the necessary feedback about their learning outcomes and progress. Relative to this, teachers' roles are pivotal on the provisions of knowledge to learners and the necessary feedback about learning progress to enable teachers to use, select, and organize sound assessment and evaluation. One participant (PT4) clearly stated that, *"A model pre-service teacher knows how to consistently support and assess outcomes of the learners to achieve high performance and to provide basis for guiding further learning to challenge learners also informing parents for their child's progress and the records are always ready."* Furthermore, PT2 also perceived that a professional pre-service teacher should consistently monitor their student progress by tracking performances so when parents pick up report cards, they have a record as basis. Another is that the PSTs should have consistently write in their reflection journal so they can monitor and give feedback to learners' progress. Research shows that teachers assist their students in facilitating opportunities to

produce feedbacks, increasing their engagement and vice-versa (Carless, 2022).

### 8. Actively collaborating with colleagues and participating in the school community

In their four years of study, the PTs are actively involved with academic-based program like quiz bee competitions, sports fest, and research colloquiums to name some. With these activities, they learn to relate to other students from other schools or they form connections that they can turn to someday. Another activity of the PTs is their participation in outreach programs with the school-community as volunteer teachers for collaborative team teaching where they work together to help plan lessons and facilitate learning in the adapted community.

When PTs connect and work together with colleagues and mentors, harmonious relationships will show the value of ethics, accountability, and professionalism. Muñoz-Martínez et al. (2020) said that teachers who work together with students help them to transform to an inclusive education that would make a difference on their respective performance and on the quality of learning. One important characteristic of a pre-service science teacher that link teaching and learning in the classroom to the broader school community. In addition, academic collaboration has become a trend especially in the academe where teacher expectations are high due to the skills, they need to acquire for the 21st century learners. One participant said, *"Teaching is beyond the four corners of the classroom and books. Through conference of teachers and parents' teachers meeting, a stronger relationship is created to help build the character and performance of the students"* (PT4). Another participant stressed, *"A model pre-service teacher can be a contributor of literacy or volunteer to the programs of our local community, one who can share knowledge, one who plans and evaluate the programs in and out of the school"* (PT5).

### 9. Pursuing of continuous professional development

The PTs have several academic groups that the school is affiliated. It is part of their off-campus exposures to academic-based

organizations where they can present their research papers as well as inviting experts to speak and facilitate workshops on new learning trends. The skills required to be a professional pre-service teacher are not static thus they must keep pace with developments of the ever-changing mode of education and innovations. The knowledge about the process of learning is continually developing, requiring pre-service teachers to remain informed. They need to be responsible for their personal growth and professional development, value lifelong learning, and exhibit high personal regard for the teaching profession. The impact of personality development and professional growth during teaching practice depends upon students' capacity to identify and enhance their personal attitudes, acquire new experiences, and be optimistic in pursuing a career, especially in education (Morales et al., 2020). The perception of PT6 as she stated: *"One must continue to learn because you cannot teach what you do not know. Being a teacher is very hard because you must grow and cope with the system or curriculum that exists and will continue to grow in the years to come because of the changing types of learners in the 21st century."* In addition, PT13 has this to say: *"Professional growth in teaching is a continuous educational process, so we need to attend seminars or workshops and conferences that the school administration offers."*

Examining the nine themes, it eventually, define clearly how the professional identity of a pre-service teacher was developed. Likewise, these perceived themes emphasized pre-service teachers' appreciation of varied and enormous responsibilities of the teaching profession. As revealed with what the PTs concern more on domain 3 (Diversity of learners) that emphasizes the key role of teachers to be flexible with the diversity of learners. The establishment of learning environments, which cater and respect diverse students, is suggesting that teachers' knowledge and disposition matter in being perceived as a "good teacher" (Bustos-Orosa, 2021; Mangaoil et al., 2017). PTs' good collaboration with their mentors and with each other is a skill on personal growth and professional development as stated by Frank Parsons' career development theory, which is focused



on career paths, success, and behavior when education and guidance are necessary for a career of a professional teacher (Parsons, 2020). On pedagogy content and knowledge (PCK), a PT must exhibit mastery of science content and the pedagogical skills one essential domain, which encompasses other domains requiring the effectiveness to communicate science concepts using Filipino, Mother Tongue, and English language with the latest ICT resources available in the classrooms and laboratories. Having acquired the awareness of the development in their profession, one pre-service science teacher will aim to follow the PPST in developing their professional identity intrinsically and extrinsically and to be competent beginning science teacher in the K-12 curriculum and continuously grow to assume the requirements of a teacher in the 21st century.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings that led to nine (9) themes which illustrates the Pre-service Teacher Professional Identity Development that will lead to the formation of an effective beginning teacher in the 21st century. The described professional identity of the PT is embodied in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST)'s competencies and substantially parallels major competencies defining a professional beginning teacher. The same perceived professional identities also reflect the extent and quality of training; likewise, all the shared experiences were perceived to be contributory to the pre-service teachers' development of the professional identity. The participants of the study have gained from their tertiary education institution (TEI) and therefore shed light to the kind of programs that a PT expects to further develop their professional identity.

The researcher recommends some proposed activities mentioned below that hopes to become instrumental to the pre-service teacher professional identity development:

1. Incorporation of the PPST in the pre-service education program emphasizing on the Beginning Career Stage competencies.
2. Improvement of learning environment by equipping existing computer to facilitate individual and group ICT-based activities that will develop the confidence to every

pre-service teacher to become technology savvy Beginning Teachers.

3. Formation of institutional-based program to complement Teacher Education Curriculum with focus on community collaborative research and activities that promote scientific literacy of the 21st century learners.

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