

(RE)CONSTRUCTION OF STUDENT MUSIC TEACHER IDENTITY

Jolanta Lasauskiene

Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Lithuania

Abstract. *The professional identity of music teacher represents the essence of this profession. Improving the programmes of music teacher education and deciding how to (re)construct the professional identity of prospective music teachers, it is important to discuss what contextual factors can have an impact on the development of music teacher identity and what possibilities of its (self-) development are available at university. A better understanding of the role-identity of teachers at various stages of their careers could enhance the conceptions of study programmes in music teacher education. The article analyses and discusses the conception of music teacher identities, substantiates its peculiarities during pre-service training, points out the most important characteristics for the successful professional activity of the music teacher. The research presented in the article focuses on professional identity development of 30 university music students (15 Lithuanian and 15 foreign) at Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (Music Education). The method of focus group interview was used in this study. The research results show that the student music teachers have developed a distinctive attitude towards the professional education in universities and their own expectations. Suggestions for practice and further research are also provided.*

Keywords: *professional identity, teacher education, student teachers, university education.*

Introduction

Globalization and technological advance have led to rapid recent changes in many people's lifestyles. Numerous studies have attempted to determine teachers' professional identity (Van Lankveld et al., 2017). Teacher identity, as a construct, has been used to represent multiple things. S. Beltman et al. (2015: p. 226) claim that understandings of identity from different conceptual frameworks have some common elements: identity is shaped by multiple personal and contextual factors; these factors interact in a reciprocal and dynamic way; and so identity is continually reshaped over the life of an individual. Other researchers (Holgerson, 2017; Zhao & Zhang, 2017) argue that teacher's professional identity is a key component of teacher professionalism and teaching philosophy, reflection and self-efficacy are important parts of professional identity. In general, the concept of identity has different meanings in literature sources.

Most of the researchers saw the professional identity as an ongoing process of integration of the "personal" and the "professional" sides of becoming and

being a teacher. The identity question “Who am I?” is powerfully shaped by the contexts, relationships, and activities in which people are most deeply invested (Pillen et al., 2013). Building a professional teacher identity can be complex as pre-service teachers engage with a process informed by their previous experiences of teachers and teaching, by learning in their pre-service course, by field placements, and by societal expectations (Beltman et al., 2015). According to Mahsa Izadinia (2013: p. 695) understanding how the professional identity of pre-service teacher develops during the teacher education program will help teacher educators to better prepare pre-service teachers for the rigours of teaching and may shed light on how to engage in “a productive process of constructing their professional identities”.

The identity of music teacher is one of the kinds of professional identities and, therefore, it is important to single out the specific peculiarities that are characteristic of professional activities of a music teacher. The music teacher should be a wide profile specialist, sophisticated in music pedagogy, psychology, aesthetics and philosophy of music education, who could meet the most different music needs of school. Such wide-ranging needs of school pose numerous problems in music teacher education and training: what a music teacher has to be able to do best? What should the professional identities of a music teacher be like? What are the specific characteristics of these identities in the context of music teacher education?

As David J. Hargreaves et al. (2007) suggest, music teachers’ “identities inevitably determine how they project their own implicit views of the nature of music in school” (p. 666). Understanding the construction of music teacher identity may assist in developing effective teacher preparation and mentoring support for new teachers, and in turn, strengthening the professional teacher collective, increasing retention for music teachers, influencing school children, improving educational outcomes and quality of teaching. However, music teacher identity has been explored less frequently in the context of student music teachers (Bennet & Chong, 2017; Güsewell et al., 2016; Henry, 2015; Draves, 2014).

Problem statement. The professional identity of music teacher represents the essence of this profession. Improving the programmes of music teacher education and deciding how to (re)construct the professional identity of prospective music teachers, it is important to discuss what contextual factors can have an impact on the development of music teacher identity and what the possibilities of its (self-) development are available at university. A better understanding of the role-identity of teachers at various stages of their careers could enhance the conceptions of study programmes in music teacher education.

The **object of the research** is the development of the identity of student music teacher in music teacher education.

The **aim of the research** is to explore professional identities of prospective music teachers during pre-service training, and to highlight educational preconditions for their (self-) development.

The research was done applying several **methods of research**: analysis of scientific sources, focus group interview, qualitative content analysis.

Characteristics of pre-service music teacher identity

A great number and wide variety of research focusing on music teachers' professional identity has been carried out over the past years (McClellan, 2017). David J. Hargreaves et al. (2007) admitted that music teachers' identities inevitably determine how they project their own implicit views of the nature of music in school. According to Cynthia Wagoner (2012), music teacher identity is own conception of himself or herself as a music teacher, as affected by five facets: (a) music teacher self-efficacy; (b) music teacher commitment; (c) music teacher agency; (d) music teacher collectively; and (e) musician-teacher comprehensiveness (i.e., the broadness or narrowness with which one see's one's self as a musician and as a teacher).

A particular challenge to music teachers' identity construction lies in the articulation between the musician or interpreter identity and the music teacher identity. As Angelica Güsewell et al. (2016) outlines, professional music teacher education should lead students to reflect their professional identity, to combine their identity as an interpreter with their identity as a teacher, and to consider a multiple, evolving identity which aligns with the reality and the requirements of the field.

As a construct, music teacher identity has been used to represent multiple things. Many studies (Bennet & Chong, 2017; Garnett, 2014) have noted that professional identities of music teachers are consolidated within the pre-service music course, as music teachers, they are judged predominantly on their musical abilities. The musical practices create musical identities. For musicians, the musician identity is developed much earlier than that of a teacher identity, leaving pre-service music teachers to negotiate the musician-teacher identity much later than that of musician-performer. Conflicts between the musician-performer identity and the music teacher identity are suggested in many studies. Kristen Pellegrino (2015) noted that it is not clear, if the identity of music teacher-performer should be labelled conflicted or a fluid state dependent on individual, social, and cultural contexts.

As the literature review showed, there is no single fundamental idea what music teacher identity means and mostly it is viewed as a social construction. The recent research studies on music teacher identity emphasize that music teachers'

identity is influenced by personal, social and cognitive factors (Biasutti & Concina, 2017). Identity is therefore shaped by experience, training and context.

Music Teacher Education as Identity Construction

Daniel S. Isbell (2014) has noted that construction of pre-service music teacher's identity has been examined to better understand the socialization process and effective pedagogy concerning the pre-service teacher. Pre-service teachers, embodying specific identities, understandings, and early enactments of teaching, engage with the systems of teacher education to create a professional identity (Sexton, 2008). The teacher role is the set of understandings of what it means to be a teacher in a given context.

Many institutions provide undergraduate experience that can lead to professional certification to teach music. Each institution provides a unique socialization experience in the music teaching profession (Miksza & Berg, 2013). Current research on the construction of music teacher identity has struggled with finding professionally satisfying ways teacher educators might assist pre-service teacher in developing a teacher identity.

Susan Beltman et al. (2015) pointed out that identity is dynamic and during pre-service programs as they learn more and encounter different school practices in their placements, these visions of themselves as teachers could change. Patrick K. Freer (2012) has noted that the musical identity presents first and that it provides a framework for making relevant the pedagogical techniques and theoretical models encountered in education courses and initial fieldwork. Therefore, a strong musical identity may be indicative of a successful music teacher identity. In music education, learning to teach entails negotiating new meanings and reflecting upon past and present experiences to gain knowledge of (a) music, (b) teaching and learning, and (c) teaching and learning within music.

However it does validate the importance of developing professional identities in music teachers during their pre-service education. It is therefore seemed necessary to determine what the professional identities of music teachers are, in order for teacher education programs to reflect and address the emerging identities of early-career music teachers and move towards minimising "praxis shock" (Harlow & Cobb, 2014).

In Lithuania the qualification of a music teacher can be obtained at universities and music academies. The present study focuses on Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences. The study programme of *Music Education* differs from other study programs in its focus on deeper psychological-pedagogical training conditioned by the educational profile of the University. Today artistic, scientific and pedagogical subjects are equally included throughout the whole music teacher education. The scope of the Bachelor's degree

curriculum is 240 ECTS credits (it includes a module of pedagogical studies of 60 credits and a module of study subject of 90 credits).

On the other hand, present general requirements for structure of study programme development do not satisfy training of music teachers of broad profile. It is a real challenge to integrate study courses of music into strictly regulated number of study subjects within the study programme because the majority of music courses (such as piano, conducting, choir studio, singing) are of continuous nature and they require consistent studies, which embrace the whole period of university studies.

Therefore, deep knowledge of a subject and pedagogical psychological theories is not a reliable guarantee that the concepts and procedures necessary for the students will be efficiently introduced (Dobbs, 2014). For this reason, it is important not only to train specialists in music education but also to actualise the process of becoming a teacher as well as to focus on the process of teaching and subject didactics, to allocate more attention to reflective practice and ability to conduct research at school.

The experience of the author of the article and results of the conducted research revealed that the curriculum of music teacher education at higher education institutions of Lithuania is mostly predominated by “specialized training” of musicians (performers) (Lasauskiene, 2010). Another extreme is observed in other countries, when the content of subject teacher training is restricted on utilitarian basis (“a teacher has to know as much as it is necessary for teaching of learners”). Both extremes are not productive under contemporary conditions.

So without any doubt, the formation of the major identity in undergraduate music education is a primary factor in pre-service education of music teacher. However, there are many complexities involved in development of student teacher identity.

Student teachers’ reflections on the teacher identities in music education

Participants. The purpose of this research was to explore how student music teachers, involved in the programme of music education at the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, perceived themselves as future music teachers. Two groups of students (15 Lithuanian and 15 foreign, Chinese students) participated in the research. Within the overall aim of the study, one of specific objectives is related to possible differences between the opinions of national and international students.

Understanding early pre-service teachers’ emerging identity may enable teacher educators to prepare student teachers for their teaching career, through facilitating the development of a professional identity as teachers, and eventually

the development of effective teachers who thrive in the profession (Beltman et al., 2015). It has been argued that “clear self-image and ownership of an emerging professional identity” are necessary conditions that help pre-service teachers effectively apply knowledge acquired from teacher education programs into workplace situations in the future (Bennett, 2013: p. 55).

Data collection and data analysis

The method used in this study was the focus group interview since it not only enables the investigation of ideas expressed in the group, but also the interplay and dialogues within the members of the group (Parker & Powell, 2014). The focus group discussion may embrace a bigger number of informants’ responses and reflect as broad as possible range of attitudes. Each participant was expected to express his or her personal opinion, and everyone was encouraged to take an active part in the interviews.

The focus group interview questions that relate to this article were as follows: 1) Who am I as a teacher? 2) How would you describe the future professional activity of a music teacher? 3) What feelings do you have towards music teaching? 4) What is the process of teacher identity formation like in music teacher education? The conversations were audio recorded, for which the participants’ consent was obtained in advance, and later transcribed. The qualitative data analysis was carried out employing content analysis (Zydziumaite & Sabaliauskas, 2017). The approach used in this research relays on an existing theoretical model of music teachers’ role identities designed by the author of the article (Lasauskiene, 2010).

Results and discussion

Identities of music teacher acquire specific features both due to specifics of artistic expression and their links with educational activities. They predetermine peculiarities of (self-) development of professional identity. The activity of a teacher-musician is successful, when his/her turns for music and educational activities are closely interrelated. However, a musician can be a perfect performer (a singer, a piano player, a conductor) but not a good teacher.

When describing their feelings towards their professional activity, the majority of student music teachers tended to categorise themselves as teacher-musician (performer), teacher-educator, teacher-researcher and teacher-manager. Table 1 summarizes the results of the focus group interviews.

Table 1 The identities of teacher’s role according to student music teachers’ responses

Category	Sub-category
Teacher-musician	- Development of musical abilities, performer skills - Participation in musical and artistic activities - Personal (self-) development
Teacher-educator	- Management of the teaching and learning process - Didactic (educational) competence - Positive personal features
Teacher-researcher	- Performance music education research - Reflection of educational practice - Participation in research projects
Teacher-manager	- Organisation of musical and artistic activities - Management of non-formal music education

Lithuanian and foreign students expressed diverse evaluations of the identities of music teachers: some are seen in a more favourable light, others are given less favourable assessment. Many student music teachers have a perception of themselves primarily as **musicians**:

“I especially like to sing <...> music teacher is the spirit of cultural life at school. It’s a person without whom there wouldn’t be any concerts or celebrations at school and in the town” [a Lithuanian student].

Participation in musical and artistic activities plays a specific role in the spread of professional identity of a music teacher. Although most student music teachers in this study indicated importance of **participation in musical and artistic activities**:

“I think one of the most effective ways to test the overall strength of the music teachers and performers is to take part in concert<...>. If the ability is fully expressed, it will have a very deep understanding of your own singing or playing, it has a vital role in your professional identity” [a Chinese student].

The activity of music teacher goes broad and includes a big number of various functions (Gapsytė & Bankauskiene, 2016). Music teacher of general education school participates not only in classroom activities but also organises music activities in school community and are heads of non-formal music education circles. A music teacher analyses environment of music and cultural life in school, continuously improves professional knowledge and style of own activities, participates in public cultural life.

Managerial skills of a music teacher are related to public, cultural, artistic expression, promotion of arts, organisation of musical activities and participation in them (ability to bring together learners of different needs for joint musical artistic activity, to organise individual and collective music performance: to lead choirs, orchestras, vocal and instrumental ensembles, to train solo performer) and in creative projects. Students related the expression of **managerial skills** of the

music teacher more to management of the non-formal teaching and learning process:

“It’s important to take up activities in non-formal education (choirs, ensembles, bands), to organize various music events at school and in the town” [a Lithuanian student];

“A music teacher at school, in my opinion, is a person who is active not only musically but also socially” [a Chinese student].

Student music teachers discussed the importance of teaching experiences in their development as **music teachers**:

“Nowadays it’s not very easy to be a music teacher, because you are giving the information about historical times and also music which is not heard every day to children<...>” [a Chinese student];

“It is important that learners loved music. Learners should be given more creative tasks. New educational theories and methods should be applied. Music teacher should be creative. It is important to love your work” [a Lithuanian student].

Teacher education should become a research object. The goal of research-based teacher education for future music teachers is to impart reflective teaching which will help the new teachers solve problems with which they may be faced in practice, through autonomous thinking and logical argumentation (Holgersen, 2017). It is possible to state that student music teachers assign priority to the **teacher-researcher**. This student music teacher comments as follows:

“Music teachers have to analyse music and pedagogical activities, to improve their personal qualities as well as to conduct research on school students’ learning needs and outcomes, changes in school, innovations implemented at school. A music teacher has to improve own knowledge and to search for music innovations to be used in lessons” [a Lithuanian student];

“Research activities help a music teacher improve own abilities and to successfully apply knowledge during lessons of music. When a student conducts scientific research, s/he learns and analyses own musical and pedagogical activities” [a Chinese student].

Summarizing of the results of content analysis reveals that the students’ views on the teacher identities in music education are homogeneous. Lastly, the importance of the role of a teacher in a contemporary school is linked to huge responsibility and nurturance of new roles and competences. It is not enough anymore for a teacher in a contemporary school to know his/her subject well. They have to possess a range of knowledge (academic, subject-specific, pedagogical, social and cultural), to be able to use it and to professionally solve problems. A contemporary teacher, if s/he is a good one, is not put into any frames but s/he exceeds them (Duobliene, 2011). As it can be seen from the research on the good experience accumulated in foreign schools, success of schools is frequently related to the fact that teachers surpassing all the expectation work in

them. They are exceptional, thinking in an innovative way, experimenting, ready to assume responsibility when they are not expected to. She or he is a talented teacher, who follows his/her vocation, an excellent specialist in the subject and able to discuss own subject in all respects.

Moreover, by developing a vision of what music teachers do, what good music teaching is, and what the goals of music teaching should be like, student music teachers begin to build their identity (Thorgersen et al., 2016). A practical implication could be to introduce the identity of a student music teacher as a functional concept among educators in music teacher preparation. The research opens the way for prospective initiatives of the (re)construction of music teacher identity and establishes the guidelines for further research.

Conclusions

1. At present the role of music teacher has been changing: s/he becoming a creative educator, musician, manager and researcher. This gives the grounds to re-think the scheme of the professional identity of student music teachers during their pre-service training. Development of music teacher professional identity acquires specific features both due to peculiarities of artistic expression and their links with pedagogical, managerial and research activities.
2. In this study student music teachers describe their professional activities as broad and multidimensional ones but they also emphasise the importance of development of musical, educational, managerial and research identities. Participation in musical and artistic activities plays a specific role in the spread of professional identity of a music teacher.
3. The results indicate that the views of student music teachers on music teacher identity have similarities. The Lithuanian student music teachers related the expression of professional identity of the music teacher more to educational and research identities management. The Chinese students linked the expression of professional identity of the music teacher more with musical and managerial identities. A significant implication for higher education schools (universities) is that studies in music teacher education can greatly enhance student capabilities on a wide range of music teacher identities.

References

- Beltman, S., Glass, Ch., Dinham, J., Chalk, B., & Nguyen, B. (2015). Drawing Identity: Beginning Pre-service Teachers' Professional Identities. *Issues in Educational Research* 25 (3), 225–245. Downloaded from <http://www.iier.org.au/iier25/beltman.pdf>

- Bennet, D., & Chong, E. K. M. (2018). Singaporean Pre-service Music Teachers' Identities, Motivations and Career Intentions. *International Journal of Music Education* 36 (1), 108–123. Downloaded from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0255761417703780>
- Bennett, D. (2013). The Use of Learner-Generated Drawings in the Development of Music Students' Teacher Identities. *International Journal of Music Education* 31 (1), p. 53–67. Downloaded from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0255761411434498>
- Biasutti, M., & Concina, E. (2017). The Effective Music Teacher: The Influence of Personal, Social, and Cognitive Dimensions on Music Teacher Self-efficacy. *Musicae Scientia*. Downloaded from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1029864916685929>
- Dobbs, T. L. (2014). “No Actual Teaching”: Expanding Pre-service Music Teachers' Imaginaries of Teaching. In: Barrett, J. R., Webster, P. R. (Eds.). *The Musical Experience: Rethinking Music Teaching and Learning* (pp. 294–308). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Draves, T. J. (2014). Under Construction: Undergraduates' Perceptions of their Music Teacher Role-Identities. *Research Studies in Music Education* 36, 199–214. Downloaded from <https://arizona.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/under-construction-undergraduates-perceptions-of-their-music-teac>
- Duobliene, L. (2011). *Ideologizuotos svietimo kaitos teritorijos [Idealised Territories of Changes in Education]*. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla. (in Lithuanian)
- Freer, P. K. (2012). Developing Musical and Educational Identities in University Music Students. *Music Education Research* 14 (3), 265–284.
- Gapsytė, G., & Bankauskiene, N. (2016). Muzikos pedagogo kompetenciju raška [Expression of Music Teacher's Competences]. *Socialinis ugdymas [Social Education]*, 42 (1), 45–59. (in Lithuanian)
- Garnett, J. (2014). Musician and Teacher: Employability and Identity. *Music Education Research* 16 (2), 127–143.
- Güeswell, A., Joliat, F., & Terrien, P. (2016). Professionalized Music Teacher Education: Swiss and French Students' Expectations. *International Journal of Music Education*, 1–15.
- Hargreaves, D. J., Purves, R., Welch, G. F., & Marshall, N. A. (2007). Developing Identities and Attitudes in Musicians and Classroom Music Teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 77 (3), 665–682.
- Harlow, A., & Cobb, D. J. (2014). Planting the Seed of Teacher Identity: Nurturing Early Growth Through a Collaborative Learning Community. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 39 (7), 70–88.
- Henry, M. L. (2015). The Musical Experiences, Career Aspirations, and Attitudes Toward the Music Education Profession of All-state Musicians. *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 24 (2), 40–53.
- Holgerson, S. E. (2017). Music Teacher Identity and Professionalism. *Centre for Educational Research in Music* 1, 27–36.
- Isbell, D. S. (2014). The Socialization of Music Teachers: A Review of Literature. Update: Applications of Research in Music Education. Downloaded from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/8755123314547912>
- Izadinia, M. (2013). A Review of Research on Student Teachers' Professional Identity. *British Educational Research Journal* 39 (4), 694–713.
- Lasauskiene, J. (2010). *Muzikos mokytojo veikla ir kompetencijos [Activity and Competences of a Music Teacher]*. Vilnius: Edukologija. (in Lithuanian)

- McClellan, E. (2017). A Social-Cognitive Theoretical Framework for Examining Music Teacher Identity. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 16 (2), 65–101. Downloaded from http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/McClellan16_2.pdf
- Miksza, P., & Berg, M. H. (2013). The Transition from Student to Teacher: Frameworks for Understanding Preservice Music Teacher Development. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 23(1), 10–26.
- Parker, E. C., & Powell, S. R. (2014). A Phenomenological Study of Music Education Majors' Identity Development in Methods Courses Outside their Areas of Focus. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 201, 23–41.
- Pellegrino, K. (2015). Becoming Music-making Music Teachers: Connecting Music Making, Identity, Wellbeing, and Teaching for Four Student Teachers. *Research Studies in Music Education* 37 (2), 175–194.
- Pillen, M., Beijaard, D., & Brok, P. (2013). Tensions in Beginning Teachers' Professional Identity Development, Accompanying Feelings and Coping Strategies. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 36 (3), 240–260.
- Sexton, D. M. (2008). Student Teachers Negotiating Identity, Role, and Agency. *Teacher Education* 21, 899–916.
- Thorgersen, C. F., Johansen, G., & Juntunen, M. L. (2016). Music Teacher Educators Visions' of Music Teacher Preparation in Finland, Norway and Sweden. *Music Education* 34 (1), 49–63.
- Van Lankveld, T., Schoonenboom, J., Volman, M., Croiset, G., & Beishuizen, J. (2017). Developing a Teacher Identity in the University Context: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Higher Education Research & Development* 36 (2), 325–344.
- Wagoner, C. L. (2012). Defining Music Teacher Identity for Effective Research in Music Education. International Society for Music Education, At Thessaloniki, Greece, Volume: Published Proceedings from ISME 30th International Conference
- Zydziumaite, V., & Sabaliauskas, S. (2017). *Kokybiniai tyrimai: principai ir metodai [Qualitative Research: Principles and Methods]*. Vilnius: Vaga. (in Lithuanian)
- Zhao, H., & Zhang, X. (2017). The Influence of Field Teaching Practice on Pre-service Teachers' Professional Identity: A Mixed Methods Study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8: 1264. Downloaded from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5522859/>