ABSTRACT

of the dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the specialty «6D050100 – Sociology»

Yedil Nurymbetov

on topic «Socio-professional identification of the teacher: sociological analysis»

General description of the dissertation. This dissertation work presents the results of a study of the status, role and self-perception of Kazakhstani teachers, especially in the context of post-Soviet transformations, the socio-professional identification of teachers, which has become a relevant public and scientific topic as a result of the intersection of global educational and sociological research. The aim is to determine to what extent the educational reforms, changes in public values and state policy, which are underway in Kazakhstan, affect the formation of teachers' identities in the field of secondary education, which is considered the largest social group in our country.

Relevance of the research topic. The government has taken several major initiatives aimed at strengthening the reputation and ethical foundations of the teaching profession. Among them, the adoption of the Law “On the Status of a Teacher” (2019) was an important step towards legal protection, professional motivation and redefining the responsibilities of teachers. In addition, the introduction of the Unified National Education Program “Adal Azamat” in 2025, initiated by the president, demonstrates a large-scale effort to position teachers as key moral agents in educating students in civic responsibility, honesty and national identity. This policy not only shapes the working conditions of teachers, but also affects how they view their roles in society. This dissertation examines the socio-professional identity of teachers as a multifaceted sociological phenomenon that includes self-perception, institutional context, professional motivations and societal expectations. The central research problem is to understand how teachers in Kazakhstan define their professional and social identity in the context of dynamic education reform, changing professional standards and public perception. While international literature offers a wide range of understandings of professional identity, status, and motivation, Kazakhstani academic discourse remains relatively limited in providing empirical, theory-based, and policy-relevant perspectives on teacher identity as a sociological category.

The purpose and objectives of the study. The main purpose of this dissertation is to study and analyze the socio-professional identity of teachers in Kazakhstan, identify the main factors that shape it, and provide practical recommendations for improving educational practice and policy. This general goal is implemented through several specific research objectives.

First, the study aims to conceptualize and substantiate the phenomenon of socio-professional identity from a theoretical and methodological perspective, in particular, to consider classical and modern approaches to building identity in the context of professional roles and social integration.

Second, it seeks to establish a set of sociological criteria for the analysis of social and professional identity, including the classification and description of its types, and to determine the conceptual dimensions of the term "socio-professional identity" as a social phenomenon in the field of education.

Third, the study examines how teachers in Kazakhstan perceive their professional roles and identity, focusing on their self-understanding, institutional position, and compliance with public expectations in the context of urban and rural education.

Fourth, it analyzes the key factors that influence the formation and transformation of teachers' professional identities, including the social environment, cultural norms, professional environment, and the broader socio-political landscape of Kazakhstan.

Fifth, the thesis assesses the relationship between teachers' professional identity and other variables, such as job satisfaction, pedagogical experience, and teacher-student interaction, to reveal how this identity is shaped and shaped through everyday work experiences.

Finally, it assesses the impact of recent education reforms, including the Law on the Status of Teachers and changes in national policies, on teachers' identities, and proposes evidence-based strategies for enhancing teachers' professional identity through policy interventions, professional development programs, and institutional support systems.

The object of the dissertation research is teachers as a social and professional group.

The subject of the research is socio-professional identification of teachers in modern Kazakhstani society.

Theoretical framework of the dissertation. The theoretical framework of this dissertation is based on several interrelated sociological approaches that allow us to study teacher identity as an individual and collective phenomenon. Central to this research is Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982), which provides an understanding of how teachers identify themselves within groups, particularly professional communities, and how such membership influences their sense of belonging, status, and differentiation. This is complemented by symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), which emphasizes the importance of interpersonal communication, institutional narratives, and everyday social interactions in shaping teachers' self-concept and professional meaning. In this view, teacher identity is not static but is continuously co-constructed through symbols, language, and interactions with students, colleagues, and broader societal expectations. The study also uses Role Theory to examine how professional expectations, institutional norms, and status perceptions influence teachers' behavior and attitudes toward their work. Concepts such as professional authority and role conflict are particularly relevant in the Kazakhstani context, where reforms and societal changes have altered the public image of teachers. The dissertation also explores identification as a dynamic, stage-based, and context-sensitive process influenced by motivation, critical events, and professional experiences, in line with the international literature on professional identity development, particularly Beijjaard et al. (2004) and Ackerman & Meyer (2011). This integrated theoretical lens

allows the study to connect micro-level processes of identity formation with macro-level policy and social influences.

Empirical framework of the study. The methodological framework of this dissertation is based on a mixed methods design that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively study the socio-professional identification of teachers in Kazakhstan. The quantitative component included a structured survey of 287 secondary school teachers working in urban and rural areas. The survey included data on various dimensions of teacher identification, including job satisfaction, professional motivation, acceptance of educational reforms, and demographic characteristics such as age, gender, work experience, and school type. In order to enrich and contextualize the research findings, the study also included a qualitative phase consisting of 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews with public school teachers in Almaty.

Research methodology. Statistical methods such as factor analysis, ANOVA, and multiple linear regression were used to examine the relationships between sociodemographic variables and various components of identity. This quantitative analysis provided a macro-level understanding of identity patterns and allowed us to identify important predictors that influence teachers' professional self-perceptions. The qualitative part of the study included a phase of in-depth semi-structured interviews with public school teachers in Almaty. These interviews explored teachers' narratives of identity development, focusing on significant events, professional challenges, values, and experiences of recent educational reforms. The interviews were analyzed using reflective thematic analysis as outlined by Brown and Clark (2006), which allowed the researcher to identify underlying themes, contradictions, and meaning-making processes in the participants' stories. The qualitative part of the dissertation research was conducted between 2022 and 2023 with the approval of the local ethics committee of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (IRB-A557). This qualitative insight provides a deeper sociological explanation of how identity is formed, negotiated, and transformed in the everyday lives of Kazakhstani teachers, bridging the gap between structural influences and individual agency.

Research findings. The results of this study provide a multidimensional understanding of teacher identity in Kazakhstan, shaped by both personal values and systemic factors. A central finding is that teacher identity is dualistic, with teaching taking meaning from intrinsic motivations such as my inner self, a sense of teaching, connections with students, and community service, and extrinsic factors such as salary, recognition, and professional status. Recent reforms, including the Law on the Status of Teachers and revised certification procedures, have aimed to elevate the profession. However, many teachers reported fatigue with the reforms, citing bureaucratic overload and reduced autonomy. Rather than expanding opportunities, reforms have sometimes increased pressure and undermined trust in institutional change.

Gender and leadership inequalities remain evident. Despite the feminization of the profession, women are underrepresented in leadership positions, and male teachers are undervalued, reinforcing stereotypes and concerns about status in the field. The analysis

of motivation revealed two specific dimensions, intangible drivers (e.g., passion, role modeling) and tangible goals (e.g., career advancement, better financial opportunities). Despite material challenges, many teachers were satisfied with their relationships with students and their broader social role. Quantitative models showed that identity-related factors such as motivation, autonomy, and recognition were stronger predictors of job satisfaction than salary or school type. This reflects the emotional and symbolic value of teaching. Finally, urban-rural contrasts emerged, with rural teachers having stronger community ties but a heavier workload, while urban teachers, while achieving greater innovation, experienced professional isolation and lower levels of school unity and cooperation.

Scientific novelty and practical significance. The scientific novelty of the dissertation is that it considers teachers in Kazakhstan as a sociological category and analyzes their identity in terms of post-Soviet legacies and current reforms. The study presents a localized model of socio-professional identification and substantiates the theory of teachers in the Central Asian context with empirical data. It also shows the gap between policy and the real experience of teachers and critically assesses the impact of reforms.
The practical significance of this study is that it suggests ways to improve the educational policy and teacher training system of Kazakhstan. The results of the study provide specific recommendations aimed at developing policies and professional development programs that support the socio-professional identity of teachers, taking into account the peculiarities of institutional reforms in the field of education and the professional self-perception of teachers. In addition, this dissertation work emphasizes the need to reconsider public opinion and social attitudes in order to increase the prestige of the teaching profession in society, to re-understand the role of the teacher in the context of new social perceptions and expectations. This, in turn, is considered an important factor contributing to strengthening the professional identity of teachers, increasing their professional motivation and improving the quality of education.

Conclusion. The socio-professional identity of teachers in Kazakhstan is shaped by complex interrelationships between personal aspirations, political foundations, societal recognition, and institutional realities. Understanding and sustaining this identity is important not only for teacher well-being, but also for the sustainability of education quality and the success of reforms. This dissertation contributes to both national discourse and international understanding of how teacher identity develops in transitional contexts.

Testing and implementation of research results. The dissertation was discussed and defended at a meeting of the Department of Sociology and Social Work. The main ideas of the dissertation were reflected in 13 scientific works, in particular, 2 articles in international scientific publications included in the Scopus database, 4 scientific articles in journals recommended by the Committee for the Provision of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 7 articles in materials of international conferences and domestic and foreign publications.

The structure of the dissertation. The structure of the dissertation work is logically structured in accordance with the goals and objectives of the scientific research.

The dissertation, with a total volume of 151 pages, consists of an introduction, 3 chapters, a conclusion, references and appendices.