

Professional Identity Development of Post Baccalaureate Teacher Education Candidates – A Review of the Literature

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Abstract: The purpose of this literature review is to inform professional identity development of teacher candidates during a post baccalaureate certification program. Three focus areas were selected: professional identity, alternative pathways in teacher education programs, and cohort model programs. The predominant themes in identity development are understanding the influences and tensions present throughout a student's experience in a teacher education program and strategies for characterizing identity development. With the increase in use of alternative pathways to teaching it is important to go beyond informing policy and find optimal ways to address the needs and development of these teacher candidates.

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Review of the Literature

Introduction

The intent of this paper is to present a review of the literature to inform professional identity development of teacher candidates during a post baccalaureate certification program. Three focus areas were selected to examine identity development further: professional identity, alternative pathways programs, and cohort model structures. The information will provide more insight into how the three bodies of research inform what is known about the process of preparing teacher candidates for the classroom and what questions researchers are still trying to understand. The selection process for articles in each of these areas started with an ERIC search for each category with inclusionary components: peer reviewed journal articles within the last 15 years, secondary teacher education, and programs within the United States. The search results were compared with Web of Science citation index to be sure that the voice of highly cited articles was present in the literature review. Factors which led to exclusion of articles were specific to each topic:

Table 1.

Exclusionary Criteria

Professional Identity	Alternative Certification	Cohort Model
-identity of students as scientists rather than professional identity of teachers -elementary teacher education -citizen science -less than three participants -special education and counseling programs	-elementary teacher education -programs outside of the United States -articles lacking clearly defined program models	-medical and counseling programs -elementary teacher education -K-12 student cohorts -Faculty cohorts

When comparing articles in the Web of Science search to the ERiC results it was apparent that some prominent authors in professional identity literature had been excluded, based on their

location. The contributions from these authors include an overwhelming portion of citations within identity research area and while they reside outside of the United States many of their claims are connected to stateside teacher education programs and were included in the literature review.

Section 1: Professional Identity in Education

Challenges when considering professional identity development in teacher education are attributed to the awareness that identity is not fixed but rather influenced by personal, educational, and professional experiences (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beijaard et al., 2000; Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. 2009; Luehmann 2007). This sense of identity is further complicated by the idea that it also determines what we choose to know and our willingness to engage in future learning (Cuddapah, J. L., & Clayton, C. D., 2011). In addition to the phenomenon itself, there is not a consensus in the literature as to how professional identity is conceptualized or defined among researchers based on the presence of both a sociological perspective and a cognitive psychological perspective (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beijaard et al., 2000; Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. 2009; Luehmann 2007).

A. Defining Professional Identity

The area of professional identity development in teacher education is challenged by the wide variance of definitions present in the literature. A widely cited article about professional identity provides an overview table that illustrates the lack of consistency in how researchers define the phenomenon (Beijaard et al., 2004). The table included nine studies around professional identity, of which only six had explicit definitions listed in their research. Researchers, however, do agree that professional identity development is a fluid entity, impacted by both personal and professional aspects (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beijaard et al., 2000; Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. 2009; Luehmann 2007; Izadina, M. 2014). Post baccalaureate teacher candidates participating in alternative pathways teacher education programs have an additional layer to their professional identity. Teacher candidates entering education careers with a degree and other professional experiences are reconciling their previous identities with new experiences and skill development (Williams 2010). The predominant themes in professional identity development are understanding the influences and tensions present throughout a student's experience in a teacher education program and strategies for characterizing identity development.

B. Influences and Tensions

A general understanding in the literature is that teacher candidates are entering coursework with basic core identities that they are reconciling with new experiences and knowledge. They are

also building these new identities in very public ways with their peers and field experiences (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beijaard et al., 2000; Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. 2009; Luehmann 2007). In addition to integrating these new experiences other tensions contributing to professional identity in the literature are personal viewpoints, family life, outside influences, and situational obstacles. How teacher candidates balance these components is a major part of professional identity literature.

Voices in professional identity research claim it is necessary for teacher educators and mentors to understand the tensions present so that proper support is provided, particularly during times of transitions (Pillen et al., 2013; Izadinia, M. 2014, and Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. 2009). Even though there seems to be a consensus that these tensions are present researchers are not in agreement with how to categorize the variations. One issue attributed to the contention is the idea that not only are the teacher candidates' values, beliefs, and perceptions contributing factors to tensions, but their mentors' qualities are as well which makes it difficult for teacher candidates to identify and resolve professional identity tensions (Pillen et al., 2013; Izadinia, M. 2014, and Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. 2009). An example would be a classroom situation where the candidate wants an active learning environment, but they are placed in a classroom where the mentor feels that lecture is the best strategy. It results in conflicted viewpoints on how students learn and what classroom teaching looks like (Pillen et al., 2013).

A highly cited study (Pillen et al., 2013), used semi-structured interviews to examine thirteen professional identity tensions in beginning teachers. Upon completion of the interviews, they categorized the tensions into three themes: changing roles from student to teacher, conflicts between desired and actual support, and conflicts within learning to teach. The research team reported the tension that occurred with the highest frequency was in Theme 1 and connected to the beginning teacher tension of transitioning from student teacher role to more authority with lead teaching. Their study went further and created six teacher profiles and noticed some shifts among these profiles during periods of transition. The researchers caution against making claims using the profiles, considering the low number of respondents but they state it as a possible way to try to resolve these tensions. It also serves as an example of how tension categories are being used in the literature (Pillen et al., 2013).

The area of tensions in the research is also motivated by a need to further understand the idea that professional identity is not fixed but rather evolves and changes with new knowledge and experiences (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beijaard et al., 2000; Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. 2009; Luehmann 2007; Izadinia, M. 2014). One researcher (Izadinia, M. 2014) connects tensions to points

in the process of identity formation and that while it is cyclical in nature (Fig. 1), there may be shifts back and forth based on experiences. These shifts can then create new tensions or even growth in professional identity as a teacher.

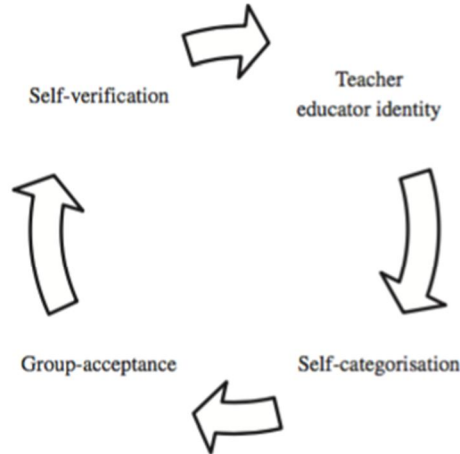


Figure 1. Process of identity formation in teacher educators.

Figure 1. Cyclical Model of Identity Formation (Izadinia, M. 2014)

C. Characterizing Identity Development

Another way that researchers are trying to understand identity development in the literature is by characterizing the phenomenon (Beijaard et al., 2004; Jarvis-Selinger et al., 2010; Friedrichsen et al., 2008). Critics see characterization as a category separate from identity. Beijaard et al., (2004) contends that to best understand the concept of professional identity researchers should focus in on identity formation studies. Their claim is that including studies which attempt to characterize teaching identities further complicates how professional identity is defined in the research despite their own quadrant classification scheme. One example includes the Friedrichsen et al., (2008) study which describes two different ways to reference teacher identity. The first strategy uses categories of identity influence: parent, student, professional, tutor, coach, and instructor. The second strategy groups incoming identities of alternative pathways students into categories: always a teacher, late decider, and career explorer. The researchers then used the categories to create a learning trajectory model (Fig. 2):

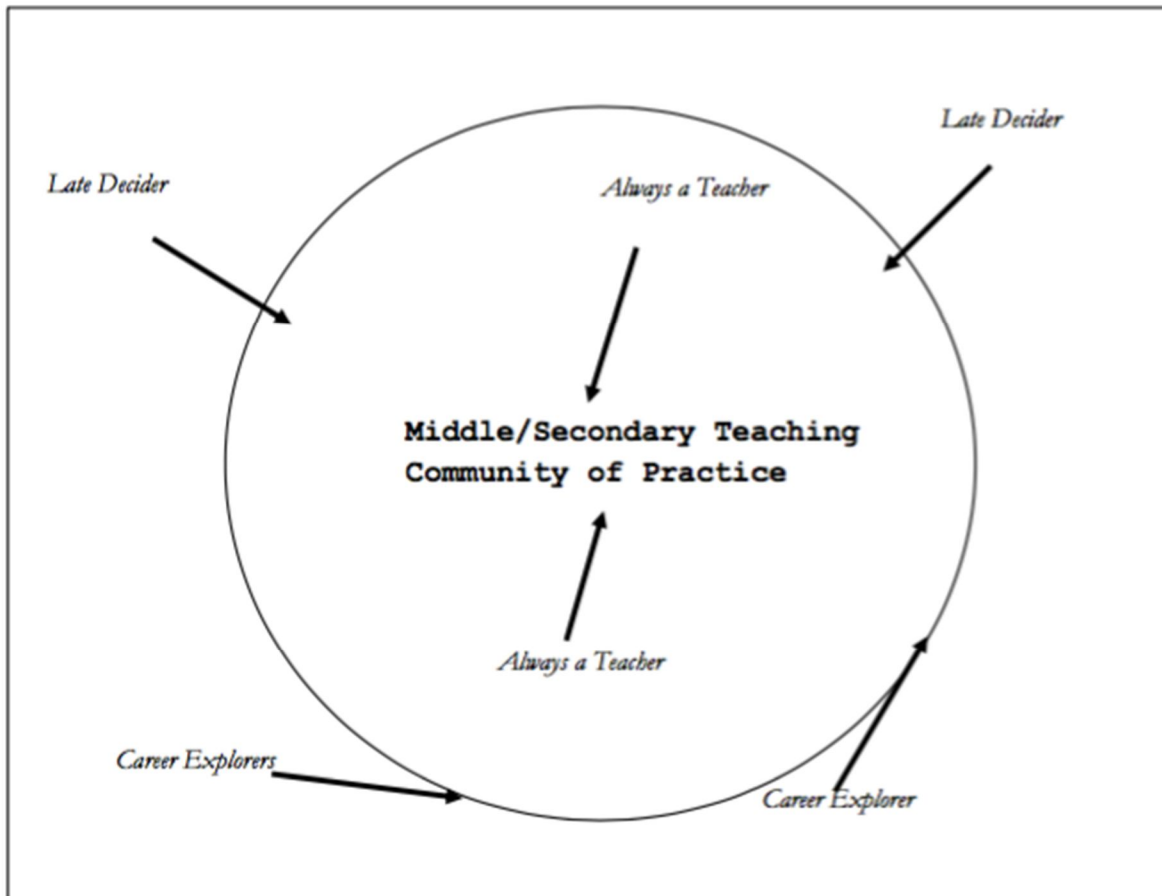


Figure 1: Trajectories of teacher identities.

Figure 2. Trajectory Model of Teacher Identity (Friedrichsen et al., 2008)

In addition to trajectory models, another method of characterizing identity in the literature are through quadrant representations such as the two here (Fig.3 and Fig.4) (Beijaard et al., 2004; Jarvis-Selinger et al., 2010):

Figure 1:
Combining Identity and Commitment

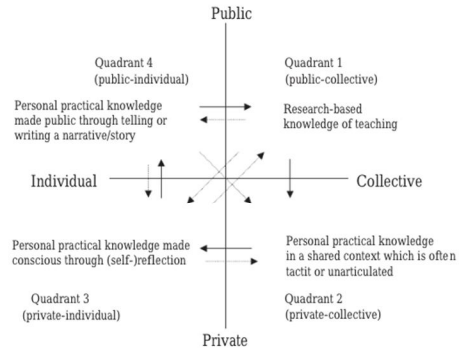
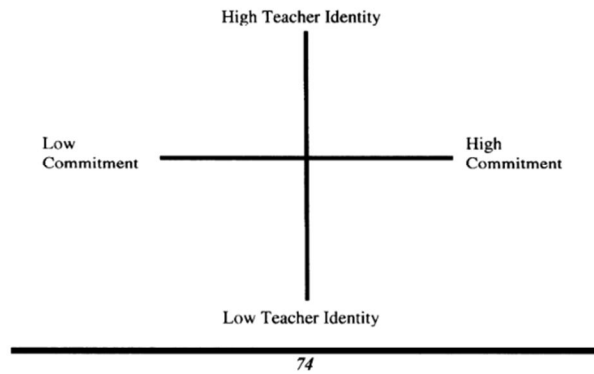


Fig. 1. Representation of professional identity formation from a teacher's knowledge perspective.

Figure 3. Quadrant Model of Teacher Identity

(Jarvis-Selinger et al., 2010)

Figure 4. Quadrant Model of Teacher

(Beijaard et al., 2004)

The quadrant model approach generally supports the idea of fluidity around identity in that there can be movement to different parts of the quadrant based on new experiences or outside influences. The purpose of identifying characteristics in professional identity literature is primarily used to look at longevity in the field and how best to meet and support candidates where they are (Beijaard et al., 2004; Jarvis-Selinger et al., 2010; Friedrichsen et al., 2007).

D. Conclusion

Researchers have provided insight on the importance of identifying professional identity components and different strategies with which to illustrate some of the mechanisms present during the process. There is agreement among researchers that it is a fluid concept with both conceptual and sociological influences. The many variables present in professional identity development result in an absence of a unified classification scheme or strategy with which to cohesively identify these influences.

While the literature has provided insight into the “what” of professional identity and the components to consider however, it is still not clear on “how” the concepts of identity translate into practice (Madden & Wiebe 2015). Researchers are still seeking to better understand how concepts of identity are influenced when assimilating into new professional learning communities. There is also a need to look deeper into trends across both traditional programs and alternative pathways to see how the components of identity development vary, if at all (Friedrichsen et al., 2008).

Section 2: Alternative Pathways in Teacher Education

Alternative pathways programs are not a new idea in the United States, the National Center for Education reported that by 2010 approximately 500,000 teachers had been certified through alternative routes (Feistritzer, C. E., & Haar, C. K., 2010). Supporters for alternative certification programs highlight the following advantages: to address the need for highly qualified teacher in high needs schools, increase teacher pools, and a way to attract candidates with strong content backgrounds. (Brantlinger, A., & Smith, B., 2013; Zeichner, K. M., & Schulte, A. K., 2001; Jorissen, K. T., 2002). Programs in California and New York account for a quarter of the AP literature over the last 20 years and the major target audience are policy makers (ERIC search May 10, 2017). Critics of alternative pathways programs, however, are concerned with the focus on cookie cutter techniques versus theoretical understanding of classroom practices (Brantlinger, A., & Smith, B., 2013; Zeichner, K. M., & Schulte, A. K., 2001; and Jorissen, K. T., 2002).

A. Program Classification Categories

The prevailing issue within alternative certification literature is a lack of consistency in how programs are classified in the research. Classification challenges contribute to muddled arguments both for and against alternative models in teacher education (Zeichner, K. M., & Schulte, A. K., 2001; Schultz, K., & Ravitch, S. M. 2013; Chin 2007). There are two main categories used in the literature: alternative certification programs and alternative routes to certification. The wording of these may seem insignificant however further exploration reveals important differences. For purposes of this literature review the following distinctions will be utilized:

- 1) The term alternative routes to certification (ARC) will follow the idea that candidates are employed as teachers of record while enrolled in a teacher preparation program but before certification requirements are achieved (Chin 2007). Also included are emergency permits and programs classified as early-entry programs that are typically associated with recruitment models such as Teach for America. This is the dominant structure for programs in New York and California, which are the prevailing states present in the literature (Zeichner, K. M., & Schulte, A. K., 2001; Schultz, K., & Ravitch, S. M. 2013; Humphrey et al., 2008).
- 2) The programs classified as Alternative Certification (AC) will include designs in which candidates do not enter the classroom as teachers of record prior to certification (O'Connor, E. A. et al., 2011). The programs within AC models are generally partnerships with universities and local school districts which focus on strong

pedagogical backgrounds and more traditional internship structures. The predominant design in AC models are MAT programs which combine teaching certification requirements, coursework towards master’s degrees, and classroom internships (O’Connor, E. A. et al., 2011).

- 3) Additionally, for general themes common among all definitions the term alternative pathways (AP) will be utilized. The distinction is unique to this literature review and may differ from how authors have defined their programs in the research. It is necessary to accurately compare trends within alternative pathways literature because the variables which impact teacher candidates in the two scenarios are likely very different.

Table 2.

Program Classifications: Alternative Certification and Alternative Routes to Certification

Alternative Certification (AC)	Alternative Routes to Certification (ARC)
-Certification requirements are completed before becoming a teacher of record -Internship component -Post Baccalaureate University Programs -MAT Programs	-Certification requirements are completed while working as teacher of record -Learn by doing model -Service Oriented Programs such as Teach for America -Emergency permits -Early Entry Programs

B. Program Model Impacts

Brantlinger, A., & Smith, B. (2013) do not disguise their criticism of ARC programs and claim that they are efficient ways to supply teachers to high needs schools at the expense of pedagogy and teacher autonomy. The researchers are not alone with that concern as other critics call out the lack of teacher preparation and limited exposure to theoretical underpinnings of teaching strategies, particularly in multicultural settings prevalent in high need urban schools (Zeichner, K. M., & Schulte, A. K., 2001; Jorissen, K. T., 2002). The absence of any theoretical understanding of pedagogy results in a lack of ability to evaluate effectiveness of techniques and ability to determine alternative ways to approach lesson objectives. (Brantlinger, A., & Smith, B., 2013). The ARC programs which are considered a service model such as Teach for America provide teachers with,

on average, a 6-week training program before being in front of their own classroom. Here, candidates are in a learn as you go model and were less likely than their AC counterparts to remain in classrooms long term (Jorissen, K. T., 2002; Zeichner, K. M., & Schulte, A. K., 2001).

Additionally, there are AC programs which run as partnerships between universities and local school districts with the hopes that the districts will retain the candidates when their certification is complete. These partnership programs tend to have mentorship components built in and contribute to longer retention of AC completers. The internship experiences present in AC models place candidates in classrooms with a certified teacher, the length of which varies from six weeks to a full school year (Jorissen, K. T., 2002; Cooperman, S., 2000).

C. Issues

Data themes present in alternative pathways literature are primarily focused on design of program models, retention data, and statistics illustrating quantities of candidates prepared through alternative pathways (U.S. Department of Education, (2015); Brantlinger, A., & Smith, B., 2013; Zeichner, K. M., & Schulte, A. K., 2001; Jorissen, K. T., 2002). With such a focus on these components there is an oversight in the literature about the lived experience of candidates entering the classroom through AP programs. Additionally, the predominant sources of data are through experiential narratives from interviews occurs after, rather than during, program completion. (Jorissen, K. T., 2002).

D. Conclusions

Alternative certification literature has shown that the primary target audiences for alternative certification literature are policy stakeholders. Researchers agree that AP candidates are placed in higher needs schools at a higher rate than traditionally certified teachers. The trend is connected to alternative certification candidates filling an immediate need for teachers and the need tends to be concentrated in urban settings (Brantlinger, A., & Smith, B., 2013; Jorissen, K. T., 2002; Zeichner, K. M., & Schulte, A. K., 2001). There is a large variance in the number of education courses students have before becoming a teacher of record, though most programs do have some type of mentorship built in. The prevailing issues within alternative pathways literature are a lack of consistency in how programs are classified, the diverse ways programs prepare candidates for the classroom, and the dominance of data being reported around retention statistics rather than participants themselves.

Within AP research, there remains a lack of consensus on how teachers themselves are experiencing the variation in programs. With such large numbers of teachers being certified through

AP structures there is a lack of data presented in the literature from full year internship programs. There is a need to further understand how teacher thinking develops so that teacher education programs can better prepare teachers participating in AP programs for longevity in the field (Larkin, D. B., 2013).

Section 3: Cohort Model Programs in Teacher Education

The Danforth Foundation in the mid-1980's provided grants to universities with a goal of improving educational programs by utilizing cohort models found traditionally in medical or law schools. The predominant purpose in cohort literature is to better understand how cohorts develop in teacher education programs to maximize the benefits to candidates and universities (Ross et al., 2006). Researchers are unified on defining cohort in the literature as: a collaborative group of students who progress through a series of coursework together and generally complete the program at similar times (Maher, M. A. 2005; Ross et al., 2006).

The main purpose for utilizing cohort models is to create supportive learning environments. Additionally, many studies refer to a cohort model solution to support faculty with advance course planning and scheduling in that rigid course schedules are in place for each cohort at the beginning of their program (Knorr, R. 2012, Beck, C., & Kosnik, C., 2001). Cohort model programs enhance interpersonal connections, a sense of belonging, and more risk taking in terms of expressing opinions (Ross et al., 2006). Additionally, cohort model programs are common in alternative pathways teacher education programs (Maher, M. A. 2005; Jorissen, K. T., 2002; Ross et al., 2006; Mandzuk, D. et al., 2005). The overall weakness in cohort literature is the lack of structured research methodologies for data collection (Maher, M. A. 2005; Ross et al., 2006; Warhurst, R. P. 2006; Knorr, R. 2012).

A. Co-Constructing Knowledge

Warhurst, R. P. (2006) expands on cohort design as "learning as belonging" in which he discusses how the dynamics of participating in a cohort over time means that there is an inevitable component of co-constructing knowledge and forming a community of practice within that group. He further states that the cohort community creates an intrinsic component and that learning becomes inevitable by simply participating in the group.

The idea of co-construction of knowledge takes on another component within cohort literature. Researchers claim another learning advantage in cohorts is attributed to how well they know each other. The familiarity creates more opportunities for receiving peer feedback and active

listening of other points of views which may have an impact on how their overall knowledge is shaped (Maher, M. A. 2005; Ross et al., 2006; Warhurst, R. P. 2006; Knorr, R. 2012).

B. Building Learning Communities

The theme of shared learning is further expanded with the idea that cohorts build a community that is supportive, rather than competitive, and they are united by a common goal (Maher, M. A. 2005; Ross et al., 2006; Warhurst, R. P. 2006; Knorr, R. 2012). Students attribute familiarity with each other as a way for their conversations to go deeper than they did in other non-cohort coursework. The trust shapes their participation in the learning community and creates opportunities to reach out when help is needed (Maher, M. A. 2005; Ross et al., 2006; Warhurst, R. P. 2006; Knorr, R. 2012). The literature is still unclear as to how trust may or may not impact participation in future learning communities outside of the cohort.

Like professional identity literature there are some attempts at classifying members of the cohort. Maher, M. A. (2004) describes three roles that developed during the cohort observations: the “nurturer,” “taskmaster,” and “tension breaker.” These roles further support the idea that “we are all in this together” sense of belongingness rather than competition. Researchers claim that a community environment enhances student learning (Maher, M. A. 2005; Ross et al., 2006). The cohort model brings other advantages to learning such as an academic focus among the group and the emotional benefits allow students to feel safe and take more risks with expressing ideas (Maher, M. A. 2005; Ross et al., 2006; Warhurst, R. P. 2006; Knorr, R. 2012).

C. Issues

A primary criticism for cohorts in the literature is that they can reinforce confusion or discourage buy in to program components (Beck, C., & Kosnik, C., 2001). Overall, cohort research is complicated by small sample sizes and the unique development of culture within each group. Studies in cohort model research are dominated by data collected after program completion and aimed at only the time during coursework. Additionally, there is a lack of data that extends cohort benefits achieved during coursework to their internship experiences. (Maher, M. A. 2005; Ross et al., 2006; Knorr, R. 2012; Beck, C., & Kosnik, C., 2001).

D. Conclusions

There is a consensus in the research that the benefits of a cohort model program include emotional support, a sense of belongingness, academic support, and social construction of coursework knowledge. The primary aim in cohort research is the development of education content knowledge, which leaves a gap in understanding how cohorts impact the growth of professional

identities as teachers (Maher, M. A. 2005). Many researchers claim a connection between cohort model programs and building skills which prepare candidates for participation in future professional learning communities however, there is a lack of supporting data to illustrate a link (Knorr, R. 2012; Fairbanks, C. M., & LaGrone, D., 2006; Maher, M. A. 2005; Ross et al., 2006).

The literature illustrates how cohort models provide an emotional support structure which builds over time as relationships deepen. There is a lack of understanding how the finding impacts candidates during their internships or future learning communities. The lapse is further emphasized by Ross et al., (2006) who calls on the need for research to better understand connections between cohorts and later participation in professional learning communities within schools. If cohort literature is considering the development of communities of practice and co-construction of knowledge during coursework, the lack of data collected outside of coursework is a major oversight.

Next Steps

The literature review provided more insight into the complicated phenomenon of teacher candidate identity development through the lens of three areas: professional identity, alternative pathways in teacher education programs, and cohort model programs. There are many variables to keep in mind when attempting to contribute additional research to professional identity development within a cohort model teacher education program. For future studies, it is important to clearly define each component. It is evident that there needs to be a deeper understanding of connections between the belongingness found in cohort models and transference to professional identities and learning communities. With the increase in use of alternative pathways to teaching it is important to go beyond informing policy. Researchers need to expand studies to find optimal ways to address the needs and development of candidates entering classrooms through alternative pathway programs.

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