

Structural and Qualitative Aspects of Identities among English Instructors in Chinese Universities

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Introduction

This research delves into the exhibited identities of Chinese university English instructors within the domain of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). The objective is to scrutinize the fundamental structure and attributes of these instructors' identities and assess their alignment with the principles of sustainable learning in education (SLE). This concept transcends mere knowledge acquisition in a specific discipline, striving instead to nurture enduring and adaptable learners capable of introspection, rejuvenation, continual learning, and the evaluation of imparted knowledge, while also orienting themselves towards future learning endeavors. A survey was employed to collect perceptions regarding manifested identities in teaching practice from a participant pool of 326 Chinese university English teachers. Through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), four distinct dimensions of identity emerged: Champion and Motivator for English Learning, Facilitator of English Learning, Thoughtful Practitioner and Researcher, and Scholarly Teacher. Subsequently, interviews were conducted with a subset of 12 educators to delve deeper into the contextual nuances of these identity facets. The findings reveal that these identity dimensions harmonize with the four pillars of sustainable learning in education, thus mirroring the instructors' inclinations toward sustainable language teaching practices. This study enriches our comprehension of language instructors' shared identities and proffers significant implications for the professional development of language educators.

Description

The landscape of English language teaching (ELT) in China has experienced substantial transformations concerning its objectives and priorities. While the 1990s accentuated students' reading proficiencies, the early 2000s marked a shift towards prioritizing listening, speaking, and practical English skills. These adjustments align with the current state of university English education and the requisites of the nation, society, and individuals. Recent curriculum reforms in China's English education domain strive to depart from conventional, instructor-centered pedagogies in favor of a model that underscores learner autonomy and knowledge co-creation. A burgeoning theoretical concept that illuminates these pedagogical shifts is sustainable learning in education (SLE). This paradigm concentrates on equipping learners with the essential skills to partake in lifelong learning across diverse contexts and disciplines. It encourages a mindset characterized by openness,

inquiry, adaptability, and perpetual learning to tackle intricate and demanding scenarios. By infusing the principles of sustainability into educational practices, we aspire to realize the objectives of sustainable learning in education by fostering continuous assessments of the social and physical realms and fostering proactive, engaged learning. In alignment with pedagogical reforms and the tenets of sustainable learning in education, the latest Guidelines for College English Teaching (2020 Edition) in China, as a guiding policy, expand and refine the concept of College English (CE) as a pivotal general education course. These guidelines underscore that CE should not solely enhance students' language skills and communicative proficiencies but also facilitate humanistic learning and the cultivation of well-rounded individuals. Moreover, CE is anticipated to contribute to the nurturing of individuals with a global outlook, international awareness, and cross-cultural communication competencies all crucial to addressing contemporary and future global challenges.

Conclusion

The study centers on probing the manifested identities of Chinese university English educators against the backdrop of EFL curriculum reforms. The findings underscore a marked departure from conventional teaching methods, as instructors embrace student-centered and communicative approaches. They adopt roles as motivators, champions, and facilitators of English learning, giving precedence to student engagement, personal growth, and the teaching of effective learning strategies. Concurrently, they underscore reflective practice. These attributes unmistakably indicate an inclination towards a sustainable language pedagogy that emphasizes active learning, renewal and relearning, independent and collaborative learning, and the transference of knowledge.