

Reconstructing teacher identity in the era of digital transformation: a cross-cultural perspective

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords

digital transformation,
teacher identity,
intercultural education,
professional identity,
education policy

Article Type

Review Article

Received : 4 Dec 2025

Accepted : 23 Dec 2025

In the era of digital transformation, education systems are being reshaped not only through technological innovations but also through the redefinition of the teaching profession. In this process, teacher identity has evolved beyond traditional roles to encompass digital literacy, intercultural sensitivity, critical pedagogical awareness, and continuous professional learning. This study presents a comprehensive review examining the impact of digital transformation on teacher identity from an intercultural perspective. Theoretical and empirical studies were systematically analyzed using the document analysis method. Within this framework, studies accessed through open-access academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and TR Dizin were evaluated via descriptive analysis, while policy documents published by organizations including the OECD, UNESCO, the European Commission, and the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye were examined in depth. Findings reveal that teacher identity in the digital age extends beyond technical proficiency, emerging as a dynamic construct shaped by intercultural understanding, ethical responsibility, and social justice. A comparative analysis of educational policies in Türkiye, Finland, South Korea, and the United States highlights that digital pedagogical competencies are closely linked to cultural contexts. The study emphasizes the need to strengthen digital pedagogical skills, intercultural communication competencies, and continuous professional development to support teacher identity in the digital era.

Introduction

The first quarter of the 21st century is characterized as a period in which technological advancements have transformed not only economic and communicative fields but also every layer of educational systems (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014; Selwyn, 2020). Digitalization is redefining access to information, learning processes, assessment practices, and the roles of teachers. This transformation profoundly affects the notion of ‘teacher identity’. While teaching was traditionally perceived as a role centered on knowledge transmission and classroom authority (Beijaard et al., 2004), contemporary teachers have evolved into facilitators of learning who cultivate students’ digital competencies, promote intercultural communication, and build learning communities (Day, 2018; Sachs, 2001).

Digital transformation reshapes both the personal and institutional dimensions of the teaching profession. Teacher identity is not merely an individual sense of professional self but also a reflection of broader social and cultural structures (Kelchtermans, 2009). Therefore, teacher



Yetkiner, A., & Sert, O. (2025). Reconstructing teacher identity in the era of digital transformation: a cross-cultural perspective. *Curricular Studies & Perspectives*, 1(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.29329/csp.2025.1384.1>



identity cannot be separated from the political, economic, and cultural dynamics of the educational system in which it exists. Understanding the transformation of teacher identity in the digital age requires evaluating technological competencies alongside cultural contexts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Digital transformation represents not only a technical change but also a conceptual shift in education. The production, dissemination, and verification of knowledge now occur predominantly through digital environments (UNESCO, 2023). This reality compels teachers to redefine their pedagogical roles. According to OECD's (2022) Future of Education and Skills report, digital competence has become one of the essential components of the teaching profession. However, this competence extends beyond the use of technological tools; it must be integrated with critical thinking, digital ethics, data security, information verification, and intercultural awareness (Voogt et al., 2015).

Teacher identity has long been a prominent topic in educational research. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) describe teacher identity as a continuously developing and reconstructed entity shaped by individuals' experiences, values, and professional contexts. Day (2018) characterizes teacher identity as a dynamic process involving ethical positioning, professional commitment, and interactions within learning communities. In the digital age, this process has become more complex, as teachers' spheres of interaction are no longer confined to physical classrooms. Teachers now establish pedagogical interactions within virtual learning environments, digital platforms, and social networks. Consequently, teacher identity is also represented and reproduced in digital spaces (Koehler & Mishra, 2009).

An intercultural perspective provides a critical framework for understanding teacher identity in the digital age. Education is a process that reflects each society's cultural values, worldviews, and social norms (Banks, 2015). Teacher identity is therefore shaped through the internalization of these cultural elements. With globalization and digitalization enabling students from diverse cultural backgrounds to share the same learning spaces, teachers must develop intercultural sensitivity and establish responsive relationships with different value systems (Gay, 2018; Nieto, 2017). Thus, teachers are no longer merely transmitters of a national curriculum but facilitators who manage cultural plurality and construct inclusive learning environments.

Intercultural teacher identity is also linked to the increasingly important concept of 'global citizenship' in the digital era. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that teachers are key actors in building sustainable, inclusive, and equitable educational systems in a digitalized world. Therefore, teachers must develop a professional identity that not only enables them to use technology effectively but also equips them to uphold ethical values in digital environments, respect cultural diversity, and cultivate learners who are committed to social justice (Howard & Navarro, 2016).

In the Turkish context, the Ministry of National Education's (MoNE, 2024) digital transformation policies prioritize the enhancement of teachers' digital pedagogical competencies. The General Competencies for the Teaching Profession (MoNE, 2017) identify technology integration, information literacy, and lifelong learning as integral components of teacher identity. However, this policy framework does not sufficiently incorporate the intercultural dimension of teacher identity. As a country with diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural communities, Türkiye holds significant potential for the implementation of intercultural pedagogy.

Global examples of the reconstruction of teacher identity demonstrate that countries follow distinct orientations in this regard. In Finland, teaching is regarded as a profession that requires high levels of autonomy and professionalism (Sahlberg, 2015). In South Korea, teacher identity is built on principles of discipline, excellence, and social prestige (Kim & Kim, 2020). In the United States, teacher identity has a more individualistic foundation, with innovation, personal

responsibility, and learner-centeredness at the forefront (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Historically shaped by a state-centered structure, Türkiye's teacher identity has recently begun shifting toward a more flexible, learner-oriented, and digitally focused orientation under the influence of global trends (Altıntaş & Görmez, 2023).

Within this context, digital transformation extends far beyond the mere adoption of pedagogical technologies. It requires rethinking the epistemological foundations of teaching, professional roles, and ethical responsibilities (Goodson, 2020). Teachers are now expected to construct professional identities in digital spaces, engage in online professional communities, and adapt continually to rapidly evolving information flows. This shift transforms teacher identity into a dynamic, fluid, and multilayered phenomenon (Friesen, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to explore how teacher identity is reconstructed in the digital age through an intercultural lens. By synthesizing contemporary research in the field, the study examines the transformation of teacher identity through sociocultural, pedagogical, and policy-oriented dimensions. Türkiye's position is analyzed comparatively with other countries, highlighting the interplay between local and global dynamics.

The study is built upon three central assumptions. First, digital transformation reshapes teacher identity not only technologically but also culturally and ethically. Second, intercultural differences play a decisive role in the formation of teacher identity. Third, the reconstruction of teacher identity is directly linked to educational policies. In line with these assumptions, the study underscores the need to reconceptualize teacher identity within an intercultural framework.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The Concept of Digital Transformation and Its Implications for Education

Digital transformation is a multidimensional phenomenon that goes beyond the integration of technological tools into educational settings and profoundly reshapes the ways knowledge is accessed, produced, and shared. Concepts such as the information society, network society, and Industry 4.0 demonstrate that this transformation generates not only economic changes but also conceptual shifts within the field of education (Castells, 2000). In the educational context, this transformation necessitates the restructuring of curricula, the personalization of learning processes, the widespread production of digital content, and the redefinition of teacher–student roles (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014).

Particularly for the teaching profession, digital transformation requires a shift from the teacher as a mere transmitter of content to the teacher as a designer and facilitator of learning processes (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Providing access to technology is no longer sufficient on its own. Teachers are now expected to develop digital pedagogical strategies, adapt digital content to students' needs, and manage digital learning environments effectively. In Türkiye, for example, investments made within the scope of the FATİH Project have played a significant role in expanding digital infrastructure. However, challenges have emerged regarding the alignment of pedagogical practices and teacher competencies with these technological resources (Akgün & Topal, 2020). This situation clearly demonstrates that digital transformation is not merely a technical process but also a cultural, professional, and identity-based transformation.

Digital transformation also introduces new teaching–learning tools such as learning analytics, adaptive learning systems, augmented and virtual reality applications, and online collaboration platforms. Thus, teachers' responsibilities extend beyond using these tools; they must guide students' digital learning pathways, translate data into pedagogical insight, and build ethical, safe, and inclusive digital learning environments (Redecker, 2017; Siemens, 2005). The impact of this transformation on teacher identity requires teachers to reconsider their professional roles:

the teacher is no longer simply one who ‘delivers lessons’, but one who ‘designs learning environments’, ‘cultivates students’ digital competencies’, and ‘manages intercultural digital interaction’.

Teacher Identity: Conceptual Foundations

Teacher identity refers to how individuals perceive their professional selves, the values, beliefs, and attitudes that guide their teaching practices, and the degree to which they internalize their professional roles (Beijaard et al., 2004). This identity emerges through the interplay of numerous social, cultural, and personal factors and is in a constant state of reconstruction.

Identity formation in teaching is not solely an individual process; it is shaped through social interactions, professional communities, and institutional contexts (Wenger, 1998). In the digital age, these interactions extend beyond physical classrooms to online professional learning communities, social media networks, and digital teaching platforms (Kelchtermans, 2009). Consequently, teacher identity is increasingly redefined as a structure integrated with digital culture and no longer bound by spatial limitations.

In Türkiye, teacher identity has long been shaped around roles such as ‘knowledge authority’ and ‘moral guide’, with teachers viewed as carriers of social respect and idealism (Yıldırım, 2018). Today, however, this understanding is changing: the teacher is evolving into a ‘facilitator of learning’ a ‘digital designer’, and a ‘manager of intercultural learning environments’. This shift requires teachers to renegotiate their professional identities and internalize pedagogical values, digital ethics, and cultural sensitivity.

Transformation of Teacher Roles in the Digital Age

Digitalization reshapes teacher roles not only through technology adoption but also by introducing new pedagogical, ethical, and cultural responsibilities. The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model emphasizes the need for teachers to balance technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2009). This model provides a theoretical foundation for redefining teacher identity in the digital age.

However, achieving this balance is not merely a matter of technical skill. Protecting student data privacy on digital platforms, recognizing algorithmic biases, and developing culturally responsive digital content are also essential teacher responsibilities (Selwyn, 2020). Accordingly, teacher identity in the digital era is reimagined beyond the role of ‘information provider’ and includes roles such as ‘ethically aware digital citizen’, ‘data-literate practitioner’, ‘innovative instructional designer’, and ‘intercultural mediator’.

In countries where educational technologies are well established (e.g., Finland, South Korea, Canada), teachers consistently participate in professional development programs designed to support these emerging roles (OECD, 2021). Although the institutionalization of this process in Türkiye is still developing (Şimşek & Yazar, 2018), it offers significant potential for strengthening teachers’ digital pedagogical competencies and professional identities.

Teacher Identity from an Intercultural Perspective

The intercultural perspective emphasizes understanding teacher identity not only within personal and professional contexts but also in relation to societal culture, value systems, and communication patterns. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory provides a useful framework for explaining how teacher behaviors are shaped by societal values (Hofstede, 2001). For example, in high power-distance societies, teachers may be perceived as more authoritative figures, whereas in low power-distance societies, teacher–student relationships tend to be more egalitarian.

In this context, although Türkiye demonstrates stronger collectivist tendencies, its intermediate position between collectivist and individualistic cultural structures frames teaching as a profession closely associated with social respect, responsibility, and guidance. In contrast, in individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States, the Netherlands), teacher identity is more closely associated with professional autonomy and individual expertise (Triandis, 1995). Digital transformation introduces new forms of teacher identity on top of these cultural foundations. As teachers interact digitally with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, they encounter new responsibilities such as intercultural sensitivity, linguistic diversity, and addressing digital access inequalities.

From an intercultural lens, teacher identity in the digital age is not merely a process of technological adaptation but also one of cultural adaptation. Teachers' digital practices, online communication with students, and sense of professional belonging are shaped to a large extent by cultural codes. At this point, intercultural pedagogical competence and intercultural learning communities have become essential components of teacher identity reconstruction (Banks, 2015).

Theoretical Approaches: Social Constructivism and Identity Theory

This study examines the relationship between digital transformation and teacher identity through two foundational theoretical approaches: Social Constructivism and Identity Theory.

Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) posits that knowledge is constructed through social interaction. In the digital era, teacher identity is similarly constructed through digital communities, online learning networks, and professional sharing platforms. The teacher becomes not only a producer of knowledge but also an active agent who continuously reconstructs identity within digital culture (Gee, 2000).

Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) explains how individuals internalize social roles. In digital contexts, teacher identity evolves into a hybrid model in which traditional roles (e.g., facilitator, evaluator) coexist with newly emerging digital roles (e.g., online content creator, network builder). Within this theoretical framework, teacher identity transitions from a static structure to a socially constructed process continually reproduced in digital environments.

Together, these theoretical approaches reveal that teacher identity is not merely an individual psychological construct but a dynamic process shaped through interactions with social, cultural, and technological contexts in the digital age. The future of the teaching profession depends on recognizing and supporting this multilayered identity construction process..

The Impacts of Digital Transformation on Teacher Identity

Methodology

This research was designed as a qualitative review study that examines the reconstruction of teacher identity within the context of digital transformation from an intercultural perspective and is based on an extensive literature analysis. The primary aim of the study is to evaluate, in a multidimensional manner, the effects of digital transformation processes on teacher identity through theoretical approaches, international policy documents, comparative education studies, and recent academic research. Accordingly, the document analysis technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was employed. Document analysis is a method that allows the systematic examination of written materials and is widely used in educational sciences, especially for understanding historical, cultural, and political transformations. Through this technique, various types of documents can be analyzed to reveal common themes, structural tendencies, and conceptual relationships within a holistic framework.

The data sources of this research consist of national and international academic studies and institutional documents published between 2010 and 2024. Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters published by international academic presses, graduate theses, policy reports, and strategic documents prepared by national and international institutions were included in the analysis. The literature review was conducted through open-access academic platforms such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and Semantic Scholar. Additionally, university open-access institutional repositories, online academic journals, public e-book collections, and digital report databases contributed to the literature scanning process.

Furthermore, policy documents, strategy reports, and current evaluations regarding the teaching profession prepared by international and national organizations—such as OECD, UNESCO, the European Commission, Eurydice, and the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye (MoNE)—were incorporated into the study. The simultaneous analysis of theoretical sources and policy documents expanded the scope of the research and enabled a multilayered evaluation.

The documents obtained during the study underwent a two-stage evaluation process. In the first stage, a preliminary screening was conducted based on criteria such as relevance to the research aim, currency, accessibility, and scientific quality. Studies directly related to themes such as the impact of digital transformation on education systems, the transformation of teacher identity, and intercultural teacher roles were selected. In the second stage, the selected documents were analyzed through content analysis. During this process, the data were systematically coded, and shared concepts, themes, and cross-national trends that allowed comparative evaluations were identified. Special attention was given to themes such as digital technology use, pedagogical adaptation, cultural differences, professional identity debates, and the transformation of teacher roles. This analytical process enabled an in-depth understanding of the multidimensional structure of teacher identity within the context of digital transformation.

This methodological approach made it possible to synthesize the existing literature through both a holistic and critical lens. Document analysis provided a strong analytical foundation for comparing teacher education policies across countries, evaluating intercultural approaches to teacher identity, and linking the transformation in Türkiye with international examples. Thus, the study systematically compiles the current body of knowledge on the reshaping of teacher identity in the digital age while simultaneously contributing new insights based on diverse contextual practices.

The Influence of Digitalization on Changing Roles in Education

Digital transformation brings profound structural changes to the field of education and redefines teachers' roles. Today's teacher is no longer merely a transmitter of knowledge; instead, they have evolved into a 'learning designer' who manages learning processes, constructs pedagogical contexts through digital tools, facilitates intercultural interaction, and develops students' critical digital citizenship awareness (Laurillard, 2012; Puentedura, 2014). This transformation restructures teacher identity at pedagogical, epistemological, and cultural levels.

At the pedagogical level, teachers have shifted from being one-way transmitters of information to guides who support active student learning. Learning environments now extend beyond the physical classroom and offer time- and place-independent learning experiences through virtual platforms (Siemens, 2005). In this context, teachers assume the role of structuring digital tools in pedagogically meaningful ways to personalize, direct, and assess learning processes. This shift has laid the groundwork for integrating 'technological wisdom' into teacher identity (Mishra & Koehler, 2009).

At the epistemological level, the concept of knowledge has been transformed by the nature of digital networks. Knowledge is no longer static but continuously updated and shared (Siemens, 2005). Accordingly, teachers adopt a new epistemic role as producers, curators, and facilitators of knowledge. In the digital age, teachers are not only responsible for teaching knowledge but also for cultivating individuals capable of questioning the meaning and validity of information.

At the cultural level, digitalization positions teachers at the center of intercultural interaction. Teachers now engage with students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds in multicultural virtual spaces, leading to the emergence of cultural flexibility and tolerance as new components of teacher identity (Howard & Mozejko, 2015). Concepts such as digital citizenship and media literacy have become integral elements of teacher identity.

Thus, teachers are expected not only to possess technical knowledge but also to develop ethical sensitivity, sociocultural awareness, and critical pedagogical perspectives. Responsibilities such as ensuring the confidentiality of student data, maintaining accuracy in online information, and respecting cultural diversity represent essential ethical components of contemporary teacher identity (Floridi, 2013; Ribble, 2015).

Digital Pedagogical Competence and Identity Formation

One of the key determinants of identity reconstruction in the digital era is digital pedagogical competence. Digital pedagogical competence refers to teachers' ability to integrate technology into instructional processes in meaningful, ethical, and pedagogically grounded ways (Redecker, 2017). This concept encompasses not only the technical dimension of teacher identity but also dimensions of professional autonomy and ethical responsibility.

The TPACK model developed by Koehler and Mishra (2009) enables teachers to integrate technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, thereby supporting the development of an effective digital pedagogical identity. In this model, technology combined with pedagogy transforms teachers from merely 'using tools' to 'creating meaning'.

The European Commission's Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu) (Redecker & Punie, 2017) conceptualizes teachers' digital competencies across six dimensions: professional engagement, digital resource use, teaching and learning, assessment, learner empowerment, and facilitating learners' digital competence.

These dimensions redefine teacher identity within digital contexts, shift professional engagement to online platforms, and shape teachers' roles as multilayered professional identities. For instance, when selecting digital resources, criteria extend beyond accessibility to include accuracy, cultural representation, and ethical appropriateness (Instefjord & Munthe, 2017). Thus, digital pedagogical competence incorporates a moral responsibility that strengthens professional identity.

Studies in Türkiye indicate that teachers' digital competencies tend to concentrate on technical dimensions, while pedagogical and cultural competencies remain limited (Göktaş & Özcan, 2020; Kurt, 2021). This situation hinders the full internalization of digital transformation. Teachers' capacity to understand the pedagogical value of digital tools—not merely to use them—lies at the core of identity construction.

Psychosocial Effects of Digital Environments on Teacher Identity

Digitalization creates both opportunities and challenges within teachers' psychosocial worlds. In online teaching environments, teachers must engage in screen-based communication rather than face-to-face interaction, prompting a re-examination of the relational nature of teacher identity (Day & Gu, 2010).

Teachers are increasingly evaluated based on digital indicators—such as participation rates, interaction data, and online assessment results—which creates a sense of ‘measurability pressure’ (Selwyn, 2020). Additionally, constant visibility in digital platforms, characteristic of the ‘always-on’ culture, blurs work–life boundaries and elevates burnout risk (Huang et al., 2021).

However, digitalization can also strengthen teacher identity. Online professional learning networks (e.g., ResearchGate, LinkedIn) enhance information sharing, collegial support, and collective identity formation (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Through these networks, teachers interact with international professional communities and reframe their pedagogical identities from an intercultural perspective.

Thus, digital transformation not only reshapes teacher identity but also influences teachers’ emotional resilience, sense of belonging, and professional commitment (Kelchtermans, 2009).

Digital Ethics and Professional Responsibility

Digital transformation reshapes teacher identity not only at pedagogical and technological levels but also in terms of ethics and professional responsibility. Integrating digital technologies into education requires teachers to redefine their personal and professional boundaries. Information security, data privacy, digital rights, and norms of online behavior constitute the contemporary ethical framework of the teaching profession (Ribble, 2015).

As both producers and consumers of digital content, teachers are expected to safeguard intellectual property rights, maintain copyright awareness, and model ethical digital behavior for their students (Livingstone, 2018). In this regard, teacher identity represents not only academic responsibility but also a digitally informed form of citizenship.

Digital ethics guide how teachers express themselves online, respect the rights of others, and responsibly use digital materials. Teaching in the digital age is no longer a profession sustained solely through technical competence; educators must observe ethical principles while integrating technology into learning processes. Responsibilities such as protecting student data, managing privacy settings, and ensuring consent for shared materials constitute critical components of teachers’ professional obligations (Floridi, 2013).

Teachers’ awareness of digital ethics directly influences students’ behavior, as role modeling in education is closely tied to behavioral consistency. Therefore, digital ethical leadership is becoming increasingly vital in the reconstruction of teacher identity (Howard & Mozejko, 2015).

However, the boundaries of professional identity become increasingly blurred in digital environments. Social media and online communication tools extend teacher–student interactions beyond traditional classroom limits, presenting both opportunities and risks. Expectations for teachers to remain accessible while protecting their private lives lead to ambiguity between personal and professional identities (Selwyn, 2020). Thus, digital professionalism requires not only technological proficiency but also the cultivation of boundary-setting awareness and ethical sensitivity.

As digital transformation accelerates, teachers must continually adapt to new platforms, software, and learning systems, contributing to the emergence of digital burnout (Pressley, 2021). Therefore, digital well-being has become an integral component of teacher identity. Maintaining digital boundaries, fostering healthy communication online, and using technology purposefully sustain long-term professional satisfaction and ethical consistency.

In sum, digital ethics and professional responsibility lie at the core of contemporary teacher identity. Every role that teachers assume in digital settings serves as a model for students.

Consequently, the teacher of the digital age is not only a knowledge transmitter but also an ethically aware professional who integrates technology with humanistic values.

Digital Transformation and Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Digital transformation directly influences teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. According to Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, individuals' beliefs in their ability to successfully perform a task determine the quality and persistence of their behavior. In education, digital transformation reshapes teachers' professional confidence and renders self-efficacy a key factor in using digital tools, designing online courses, and assessing student performance in digital environments (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

Teachers' levels of digital self-efficacy are typically associated with their attitudes toward digital tools, previous experiences with technology, and the degree of institutional support (Koehler & Mishra, 2009; Redecker, 2017). Teachers with high digital self-efficacy are more open to technology integration, more willing to experiment with innovative teaching methods, and more effective in supporting students' digital competencies (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010).

Conversely, low self-efficacy is often accompanied by resistance, anxiety, and uncertainty regarding digital tool use. This tendency is particularly observable in older teachers or in institutions with limited technological support (Instefjord & Munthe, 2017). Thus, strengthening teacher identity during digital transformation requires not only technical infrastructure but also robust psychosocial support mechanisms.

The Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye's Digital Education Vision (MoNE, 2023) outlines comprehensive strategies for enhancing teacher self-efficacy. The document emphasizes the need for teachers not only to use digital tools but also to integrate them with pedagogical goals. It also highlights the importance of expanding continuous professional development programs through online platforms.

Digital self-efficacy is closely linked to teachers' professional motivation. Research demonstrates that teachers with strong digital self-efficacy exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction and innovation tendencies (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Thus, digital transformation functions not only as a mechanism for reshaping identity but also as a process that strengthens teachers' professional self-worth.

Nevertheless, digital self-efficacy is not solely an individual construct; it is also institutional. Support from school leadership, technological infrastructure, collegial collaboration, and a coherent digital vision at the policy level all directly affect teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Kelchtermans, 2009). Therefore, digital transformation policies must position teachers not just as technology users but as active agents of transformation.

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: The Transformation of Teacher Identity in Türkiye and Other Countries

Teacher Identity from an Intercultural Perspective

Teacher identity is not merely the expression of an individual professional stance; it is also shaped by the cultural fabric, historical legacy, and educational policies of the society in which it exists. Educational systems define teachers not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as bearers of national values and agents responsible for sustaining intergenerational cultural continuity (Day, 2018). From this perspective, teacher identity is closely connected to a country's historical conditions, socioeconomic structure, development goals, and social norms (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Globalization, advancements in communication technologies, and digital transformation have expanded teacher identity beyond national boundaries. Today's teachers are not only practitioners of local curricula but also multifaceted professionals navigating international standards, universal competencies, and digital pedagogies. However, this dynamic manifests differently across societies (Schweisfurth, 2015).

Viewed from an intercultural lens, teacher identity in the digital era emerges as a hybrid construct in which global norms intersect with local realities. Within this framework, the teacher is no longer merely an instructor, but a transformative actor who generates intercultural meaning, integrates technology as a pedagogical tool, and negotiates shifting value systems.

The Transformation of Teacher Identity in Türkiye

The roots of teacher identity in Türkiye are deeply intertwined with the founding ideology of the Republic. In the 1920s and 1930s, educational and cultural reforms positioned teachers not only as conveyors of knowledge but as key agents in nation-building, citizenship formation, and the dissemination of modern values. During this period, the teaching profession was framed around social prestige, moral responsibility, and ideological exemplarity; teachers served as local representatives of the modernization project carried out through schools (Akyüz, 2019). Teacher training institutions and appointment systems were designed in line with these goals, emphasizing pedagogical preparation alongside a mission-oriented conception of national education.

The expansion of education in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the quantitative growth of the teaching profession; however, the political and social turbulence of the era generated ambiguity and divergent expectations regarding professional identity. By the 1980s, under the influence of global neoliberal trends, significant shifts occurred in Turkish education policies. The penetration of market dynamics into the education sector, along with the rise of performance indicators and outcome-based accountability mechanisms, began to shape teaching practice (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2021). The dominance of centralized examination culture increasingly confined teachers' roles to 'preparing students for exams', thereby constraining professional autonomy and agency.

In the 2000s, the rapid integration of information and communication technologies added new dimensions to teacher identity. Policy initiatives launched by the Ministry of National Education (such as EBA) required teachers to adapt to digital content production, online teaching processes, and new assessment approaches (MoNE, 2020). However, the rapid introduction of technology into classrooms did not always correspond to pedagogical transformation; limitations in infrastructure, inadequacies in in-service training, and issues of equitable access often restricted digital adaptation (Bozkurt, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic created a clear rupture in teacher identity in Türkiye. With the sudden shift to remote teaching, teachers assumed new responsibilities—lesson design, online interaction management, digital assessment, and psychosocial student support. This experience led many teachers to redefine their professional competencies while simultaneously increasing emotional burdens (Aydın & Aslan, 2024). In the post-pandemic context, two tendencies became evident: strengthened professional identification with roles such as digital mentorship and learning design, and, conversely, heightened concerns about workload, uncertainty, and emotional exhaustion.

Today, teacher identity in Türkiye takes on a hybrid form that attempts to reconcile historically embedded community-oriented, ethical, and idealistic roles with the demands of a globalized and digital world. Teachers strive to maintain local student–community bonds while facing pressure to comply with international pedagogical standards. This dual tension necessitates rethinking

teacher education programs and in-service professional development, as fragmented identity construction has become a growing risk (Şimşek & Kılıç, 2020).

Additionally, teacher unions, professional communities, and municipality-supported educational initiatives continue to play influential roles in shaping teacher identity in Türkiye. These actors can contribute to the sustainable reconstruction of teacher identity by generating policy recommendations that support digital competence development, ethical guidance, and intercultural pedagogy.

The countries examined in this section were selected because they exemplify high-performing educational systems recognized in the international literature for their teacher education policies and approaches to teacher identity formation. Their strong outcomes in international assessments such as PISA make them valuable for comparative analysis, highlighting the relationship between teacher quality and student achievement. Accordingly, comparing Türkiye's transformation of teacher identity with the structures of these countries enables a more comprehensive understanding of similarities, differences, and potential implications for policy transfer.

The Evolution of Teacher Identity in Finland

Understanding the development of teacher identity in Finland requires examining the long-term consistency of its educational policies since the mid-20th century. Following World War II, Finland adopted broad-based egalitarian educational reforms and established teacher education programs within universities, forging strong links between pedagogical research and classroom practice (Sahlberg, 2015). This process elevated the academic prestige of teaching and institutionalized professional autonomy.

Reforms between the 1970s and 1990s promoted student-centered and inquiry-driven learning, granting teachers substantial professional discretion. In Finland, teacher identity came to be associated with the image of the 'reflective professional', signifying a teacher who not only implements but also researches, evaluates, and continually refines educational practice (Niemi et al., 2016). High societal trust further reinforced teacher autonomy and enhanced teachers' capacity to adapt curricula to local needs.

Digital transformation in Finland has been integrated into pedagogy with deliberate attention to educational purpose. Technology is used to enrich learning processes and is placed under the teacher's professional judgment rather than functioning as a replacement for the teacher. Teacher education programs include structured coursework and practicum experiences in digital pedagogy, and teachers participate in extensive professional learning networks that facilitate ongoing knowledge exchange (Ilomäki et al., 2018).

In recent years, Finnish teacher identity has remained robust despite increased global scrutiny and pressures from comparative assessments, largely because policymakers have refrained from implementing accountability mechanisms that undermine pedagogical autonomy. Consequently, teaching continues to represent a profession in which autonomy and societal respect are sustained.

Looking ahead, the Finnish example suggests that preserving teacher identity in the digital age requires high-quality university-based teacher education, institutionalized trust in teachers, and technology policies designed to serve pedagogical objectives.

Teacher Identity in South Korea: Discipline, Technology, and Culture

Teacher identity in South Korea has long been shaped by Confucian heritage, which links education to social mobility and family honor. Teachers are traditionally regarded as symbols of respect and competence (Kim & Kim, 2020). During the nation's rapid industrialization,

education was positioned at the core of national development strategies, and teachers were seen as key actors in sustaining high academic standards.

In the competitive educational environment of the 1980s and 1990s, teachers faced intense performance expectations. The country's exam-oriented structure aligned teacher identity with student achievement metrics. In parallel, the past two to three decades witnessed large-scale government investments in technology, expanding infrastructure and implementing digital learning programs (OECD, 2021).

National initiatives such as 'Smart Education' provide comprehensive in-service training and support systems to strengthen teachers' digital pedagogical competencies. However, despite high levels of technological investment, the combination of academic pressure and long working hours has contributed to increased burnout among teachers. Research by Lee and Park (2019) indicates that while Korean teachers maintain a strong sense of professional pride, they also need increased psychological support and workload management.

Digitalization has enhanced teachers' pedagogical repertoires, yet societal expectations and competitive structures often limit the creative and flexible use of digital tools. Thus, the South Korean example underscores the need to consider technological modernization alongside cultural and institutional pressures.

Teacher Identity in the United States: Policy Pressures and Professional Roles

Teacher identity in the United States is shaped by a complex interplay of social, political, and economic factors. Throughout the 20th century, teacher identity developed within the context of professionalization trends, unionization, the growth of teacher preparation programs, and strong traditions of local autonomy (Apple, 2013). However, federal policies implemented from the 2000s onward—such as the No Child Left Behind Act—centralized accountability, standardized testing, and performance-based evaluation mechanisms (Darling-Hammond, 2017). This shift significantly reoriented teacher identity toward metrics tied to student test scores.

The proliferation of digital technologies has reshaped teacher roles into those of online learning designers, users of learning analytics, and digital content creators. Open educational resources and learning management systems have further transformed instructional practices (Selwyn, 2020). However, the market-oriented structure of U.S. education has amplified the influence of technology providers, leading in some cases to practices guided more by efficiency and data-tracking than by pedagogical value (Cochran-Smith, 2018).

Historically, U.S. teachers have sought professional identity grounded in autonomy and expertise. Yet rising accountability pressures and data-driven practices have challenged this identity, compelling teachers to navigate a delicate balance between creativity, ethical responsibility, and external performance demands in the digital era.

Teacher Identity in Japan: Between Tradition and Innovation

In Japan, teaching has long been regarded as a respected profession imbued with cultural and moral responsibility. Since the Meiji Restoration, education has served as a tool of nation-building, and teachers have played central roles in shaping student character and civic values (Sugimoto, 2019). Group harmony, discipline, and collective responsibility form the core of Japanese teacher identity.

Since the late 1990s, educational policies in Japan have aimed to integrate digital technologies to prepare students for the information society. Digital initiatives have been implemented with an emphasis on preserving compatibility with traditional pedagogical values. With the GIGA School Program (MEXT, 2022), device distribution and infrastructure development accelerated

significantly. Teachers began incorporating technology into classroom practices; however, they continued to prioritize group cohesion, interpersonal relationships, and moral education.

The Japanese example demonstrates how teacher identity can evolve in the digital era while maintaining cultural continuity: technology is integrated for pedagogical purposes, and teachers balance modern digital competencies with traditional social responsibilities. This process highlights the potential for identity evolution without undermining local cultural norms.

Comparative Evaluation: Commonalities and Differences

The comparison among these countries reveals that digital transformation shapes teacher identity in distinct ways across different cultural contexts:

Table 1

Cross-cultural comparison of teacher identity in the digital transformation era

Dimension	Türkiye	Finland	South Korea	USA	Japan
Identity Basis	Social responsibility, ideal of modernization	Professional autonomy, research-based pedagogical approach	Discipline, pursuit of excellence	Individualism, performance-based professionalism	Moral responsibility, social harmony
Approach to Digitalization	State-based alignment (EBA, etc.)	Teacher autonomy integrated with comprehensive digital pedagogy	State-supported technological modernization	Market-driven digital education tools	State-supported, culturally compatible digitalization
Teacher Autonomy	Limited	High	Moderate	Limited	Moderate
Identity Tension	Tradition–modernity	Innovation–research balance	Performance–burnout	Creativity–measurability	Tradition–technology

Table 1 clearly demonstrates that digital transformation exerts a universal influence on teacher identity, yet the manifestation of this influence varies according to cultural context. While autonomy and trust are central in the Finnish model, state-driven policies emerge as defining factors in countries such as South Korea and Türkiye.

In conclusion, the cross-cultural analysis shows that the reconstruction of teacher identity in the digital transformation era is not merely a process of technical adaptation; rather, it represents a cultural, political, and ethical reconfiguration. As seen in the case of Türkiye, tensions between tradition and modernity; in Finland, innovative pedagogies supported by professional autonomy; in South Korea and Japan, digitalization blended with cultural continuity; and in the United States, individualistic and performance-oriented systems each shape teacher identity in different ways.

Therefore, in the age of digital transformation, teacher identity has evolved into a composite structure shaped not by a universal form but by local meaning systems. This structure requires redefining the teacher not merely as a transmitter of knowledge, but as an intercultural mediator, a transformer who localizes technological innovations, and an actor who contributes to building a sustainable future.

Results and Discussion

Results

This research examined the reconstruction of teacher identity in the digital transformation era from an intercultural perspective. The findings indicate that the transformation generated by digital technologies in educational environments encompasses not only pedagogical changes but

also identity-related, cultural, and ethical dimensions. The study revealed that teacher identity is no longer static; rather, it is dynamically reproduced within digital networks, online communities, and intercultural interaction spaces.

In this context, digital transformation encourages teachers not only to use new technological tools, but also to question the pedagogical implications of these tools. Teachers are shifting away from the role of information transmitters toward becoming designers of digital learning environments, data-literate practitioners, ethically responsible digital citizens, and facilitators of intercultural communication. This finding aligns with Mishra and Koehler's (2009) TPACK model, which emphasizes that effective digital teaching requires maintaining a continuous balance between technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge.

Additionally, the results show that teacher identity in the digital age is reconstructed in accordance with principles of social constructivism. Digital communities, online sharing networks, and virtual professional learning environments emerge as new social spaces where teachers redefine their identities and strengthen their sense of professional belonging. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning based on social interaction.

In the context of Türkiye, the digital transformation process requires not only technological but also cultural adaptation. Teachers encounter both pedagogical and cultural resistance when transitioning from traditional to digital roles. This finding is supported by studies on the FATİH Project conducted by Akgün and Topal (2020). Moreover, since the teaching profession in Türkiye has historically been associated with social respect and moral responsibility, preserving and reinterpreting these values in the digital age becomes important.

From an intercultural perspective, although the transformation of teacher identity shows universal tendencies, it also exhibits variations specific to different cultural contexts. When examined through Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory, it becomes evident that digital transformation influences teacher–student relationships differently in high power-distance societies, whereas it contributes to more participatory and flexible learning environments in low power-distance cultures. Thus, cultural norms and values play a significant role in shaping the digital pedagogical transformation of teachers in Türkiye.

Another important result of the study is that teacher identity is no longer one-dimensional but has evolved into a hybrid structure. Teachers simultaneously maintain both their traditional roles (mentor, evaluator) and new digital roles (online content creator, data analyst, digital designer). This hybridization leads to the reconstruction of teacher identity within multiple contexts, transforming the profession into a flexible, adaptive, and evolving structure.

Discussion

The findings of this research demonstrate that the reconstruction of teacher identity in the digital transformation era cannot be reduced merely to the acquisition of technological competencies. Rather, it constitutes a multilayered process encompassing cultural, pedagogical, and ethical dimensions. The data indicate that the redefinition of teacher identity in digital contexts is discussed in similar ways at the global level. Indeed, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) conceptualize teacher identity as 'a continuously reconstructed process shaped by changing educational contexts,' emphasizing that this reconstruction accelerates particularly in the digital age.

In the context of Türkiye, the impact of digital transformation on teacher identity aligns with educational policies emphasizing technology-centered transformation strategies. The Ministry of National Education's 'Education Vision 2023' (MoNE, 2018) identifies strengthening teachers' digital skills as a priority and aims to position teachers not merely as users of digital tools but as digital content creators and learning designers. This reflects a shift in teacher identity from being

a ‘transmitter of knowledge’ to becoming a ‘navigator of the learning ecosystem’. Similarly, Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) argue that digital transformation is strongly connected to teachers' pedagogical beliefs and that technological adaptation is intertwined with teacher identity.

From an intercultural perspective, the reconstruction of teacher identity varies across different societal value systems. Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory demonstrates that teacher–student relationships are shaped by societal characteristics such as power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance. In collectivist cultures like Türkiye, teacher identity is shaped by authority-based respect and a sense of social responsibility. In contrast, in more individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States, the Netherlands, Australia), teacher identity is reconstructed around professional autonomy, innovation, and personal expertise (Sachs, 2001; Triandis, 1995). These variations indicate that teacher identity in the digital era cannot be evaluated independently of cultural context.

Digital transformation also reshapes the epistemological and ethical dimensions of teacher identity. In online learning environments, teachers become not only knowledge providers but also actors who ensure information security, promote digital citizenship, and design inclusive learning experiences in multicultural classrooms (Howard, 2019; Jones & Kessler, 2022). Accordingly, teacher identity expands toward roles such as ‘ethical facilitator’, ‘digital mediator’, and ‘intercultural connector’.

International examples support this transformation. The OECD (2021) ‘Teachers in the Digital Age’ report notes that digitalization transforms the teaching profession not only in terms of technical skills but also regarding professional identity and autonomy. Teacher education policies in Finland integrate digital pedagogy with cultural competence, aiming to train teachers as ‘innovative professionals’ (Niemi et al., 2016). Similarly, teachers in South Korea and Singapore continuously update their identities through ongoing digital professional development programs (Kim & Kim, 2020).

In Türkiye, the digital transformation process has not yet fully matured institutionally or culturally. Although teachers show considerable improvement in their technical use of digital tools, there remain areas for development in pedagogical adaptation and cultural transformation (Şimşek & Yazar, 2018). Nevertheless, the recent integration of digital pedagogical competencies into teacher education curricula indicates that the identity transformation is gradually being grounded in a structural framework.

In conclusion, the findings of this research are largely consistent with national and international literature. Digital transformation redefines teacher identity not only in terms of professional roles but also from cultural, ethical, and pedagogical perspectives. Through an intercultural lens, it can be argued that Türkiye is developing a unique model shaped both by its strong cultural values and by the new learning paradigms introduced by digitalization.

Declarations

Acknowledgements: Not applicable

Authors' contributions: The authors contributed equally to the article.

Competing interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Funding: This study has not received any funding.

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Since this article is a review study, it does not require ethical approval.

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