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Negotiating Professional Identity among English Teachers in a Disadvantaged Mountainous School in Gia Lai, Vietnam

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Abstract

This study investigates how English teachers in a disadvantaged mountainous area of Gia Lai Province, Vietnam, construct and negotiate their professional identities within the context of national educational reforms. While language policies emphasize communicative competence, standardized outcomes, and educational modernization, less is known about how teachers in remote ethnic minority settings experience and respond to these expectations. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with four English teachers at an ethnic minority boarding lower secondary school. The findings reveal that teachers continuously negotiate between institutional expectations and local realities shaped by linguistic diversity, poverty, limited student motivation, and restricted resources. Rather than defining professionalism through measurable achievement or innovation, participants associated professional success with endurance, care, flexibility, and the ability to sustain student engagement under difficult conditions. Teachers also exercised agency through practical classroom adaptations and emotional commitment to their students. Based on these four interviews, the study offers a context-specific account of how professional identity may be negotiated under structural and contextual constraints. The findings highlight the need for more context-sensitive educational policies, flexible assessment expectations, and stronger support systems for teachers working in marginalized communities. Future research could explore teacher identity across multiple disadvantaged schools using longitudinal and classroom-based approaches.

Keywords: teacher identity; disadvantaged context; emotional labor; policy mediation; Vietnam; EFL teachers

Introduction

Teacher professional identity has increasingly become an important area of inquiry in educational research because it shapes how teachers interpret their roles, sustain motivation, and respond to institutional reforms (Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006). Recent scholarship conceptualizes identity not as a fixed professional characteristic but as a dynamic and socially negotiated process formed through interaction among personal beliefs,

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institutional expectations, and contextual realities (Beijaard et al., 2004; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Within English language teaching, identity construction is particularly complex because teachers are positioned between global discourses of educational modernization and the local realities of classroom practice. Expectations related to communicative competence, innovation, and measurable achievement often coexist with unequal teaching conditions that influence what teachers can realistically accomplish.

Recent research has highlighted the interconnected nature of language teacher identity, cognition, emotion, agency, and context. Based on a scoping review of 64 studies, Truong et al. (2025) emphasize how these dimensions interact and how contextual conditions influence teachers' professional experiences and identity development. This perspective suggests that teacher identity should be understood not only through individual beliefs and practices but also through teachers' emotional experiences, capacity to act, and institutional environments. Similarly, Tran (2024) examined Vietnamese primary school EFL teachers' identities from a micropolitical perspective, highlighting how power relations with school leaders, colleagues, students, and parents shape their professional positioning. Together, these studies provide a foundation for understanding teacher identity as an ongoing process of negotiation between teachers' agency, emotional experiences, and the contextual conditions in which they work.

These relationships are particularly significant in disadvantaged educational contexts where poverty, linguistic diversity, and limited resources affect both teaching and learning. Research on language teacher identity has shown that teachers continuously negotiate professional roles in response to social, institutional, and emotional pressures (Pennington & Richards, 2016; Varghese et al., 2005). Previous studies have highlighted how identity is shaped through classroom experiences, reform agendas, emotional labor, and professional reflection (Nguyen et al., 2025; Nguyen & Truong, 2021; Tran & Taylor-Leech, 2023). Teachers in under-resourced environments often redefine professionalism through flexibility, care, and adaptation rather than through idealized reform outcomes (Trent, 2016; Tsui, 2007). Existing scholarship has also emphasized that identity development is closely connected to micropolitical processes within schools, including institutional expectations, relationships with colleagues and administrators, and struggles for professional recognition (Ball, 1987; Kelchtermans, 2005).

In the Vietnamese context, studies on English teacher identity have primarily focused on novice teachers, educational reforms, reflective practice, and transitions into English language teaching (Hoang & Nguyen, 2024; Nguyen & Truong, 2021; Tran & Taylor-Leech, 2023). From a micropolitical perspective, Tran (2024) highlights the role of power relations within school communities in shaping teachers' professional identities. National foreign language policies in Vietnam have strongly emphasized communicative teaching, standardized language proficiency, and international competitiveness. However, the implementation of these reforms remains uneven across regions. Urban schools generally benefit from stronger infrastructure, better access to educational resources, and greater

exposure to English, while remote ethnic minority areas continue to face significant structural challenges. In many mountainous communities, students use local ethnic languages at home and Vietnamese as a second language before learning English as an additional language. Limited parental support, irregular attendance, and economic hardship further complicate the teaching process.

Although previous research has contributed valuable insights into teacher identity formation in Vietnam, the experiences of teachers working in geographically and economically marginalized areas remain underexplored. Most existing studies focus on urban or relatively well-resourced educational settings, resulting in a limited understanding of how teachers negotiate professional identity under conditions of scarcity and inequality. This gap is significant because disadvantaged contexts may produce different understandings of professionalism, success, and teacher agency. In such settings, maintaining commitment, emotional resilience, and student participation may become more meaningful indicators of professionalism than achieving standardized outcomes or implementing reform-oriented innovation.

This study addresses this gap by examining the experiences of English teachers at Kon Chieng Ethnic Boarding Lower Secondary School in Gia Lai Province, Vietnam. The school is located in a mountainous area with a high proportion of ethnic minority students and limited educational resources. Investigating this context provides insight into how teachers negotiate professional identity amid structural constraints and competing expectations. The study draws on sociocultural and micropolitical perspectives to understand professional identity as shaped through the interaction of teachers' experiences, agency, emotions, institutional relationships, and broader educational conditions (Ball, 1987; Beijaard et al., 2004; Kelchtermans, 2005). In this study, the idea of professional endurance is explored as an interpretive concept for understanding how teachers sustain their professional commitment, care, and adaptive efforts in challenging circumstances. It is not assumed to be a universal characteristic of teachers in disadvantaged settings; rather, its usefulness is examined through the accounts of the four participants in this particular school context.

Accordingly, the present study investigates how English teachers in a disadvantaged educational context construct and negotiate their professional identities and how structural and contextual constraints shape this process. By examining the accounts of four teachers in one ethnic minority school, it seeks to develop a context-sensitive understanding of teacher professionalism, with particular attention to the relationship between institutional expectations, teachers' agency and emotional commitment, and the constraints of everyday teaching. The study also considers what the concept of professional endurance may contribute to understanding teacher identity in this setting, while recognizing that insights from a single-school case are context-specific rather than representative of all disadvantaged educational contexts.

Method

Research design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine how English teachers in a disadvantaged context construct and negotiate

their professional identities. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of their professional roles within a specific sociocultural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study was bounded by the institutional and sociocultural context of Kon Chieng Ethnic Boarding Lower Secondary School in Kon Chieng Commune, Gia Lai Province, Vietnam. By examining the accounts of four English teachers working in this setting, the study sought to understand how professional identity was experienced and negotiated in relation to local educational conditions and institutional expectations. The analysis focused on recurring patterns of meaning across the four interviews rather than treating each teacher as a separate case. This design supported a context-sensitive examination of a bounded case (Yin, 2018).

Participants

Four full-time English teachers voluntarily participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used because the participants had direct experience teaching English in a disadvantaged ethnic minority context and could provide relevant accounts of the research focus. Invitations explaining the purpose of the study were sent through Zalo, and all four teachers agreed to participate voluntarily. To protect confidentiality, the participants were assigned the pseudonyms Teacher #1, Teacher #2, Teacher #3, and Teacher #4. The participants consisted of one male and three female teachers. Their teaching experience ranged from three to twenty-six years, with an average of approximately fourteen years. Although they differed in professional experience and career stage, all four worked as permanent teachers at the same ethnic minority boarding lower secondary school. Their accounts provided insights into how teachers with different levels of experience understood professionalism, emotional commitment, and the challenges of teaching in this particular context.

The school serves students from Grades 6 to 9, with approximately thirty to thirty-five students in each class. Most students come from ethnic minority communities, particularly the Jrai and Bahnar groups. In everyday communication, students commonly use their ethnic languages with family members and peers, while Vietnamese functions primarily as the language of formal education. As a result, many students learn English as a third language after their ethnic language and Vietnamese. This multilingual environment creates additional challenges for English teachers because students often have limited exposure to both Vietnamese and English outside the classroom. Economic hardship, restricted learning resources, and limited parental support further shape the educational environment in which teachers negotiate their professional identities.

Instruments

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview protocol comprising ten guiding questions organized around three areas: teachers' understandings of professional identity, their experiences of teaching in disadvantaged contexts, and their strategies for responding to professional and contextual challenges. The semi-structured format provided a consistent set of topics across the interviews while allowing participants to elaborate on experiences relevant to their individual circumstances.

The interview questions were informed by previous research on teacher professional identity, emotional labor, and contextual influences in language education, particularly studies that conceptualize identity as socially negotiated through institutional and sociocultural interactions (Beijaard et al., 2004; Nguyen et al., 2025; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Tran & Taylor-Leech, 2023; Varghese et al., 2005). Narrative prompts encouraged participants to describe concrete teaching experiences rather than provide only general opinions. Before the main data collection, a pilot interview was conducted to assess the wording, sequencing, and clarity of the questions. Minor revisions were made to improve the flow of the interview protocol.

Data collection

Data were collected in January 2026 through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted over two weeks. Each interview lasted approximately twenty-five minutes and was conducted online through Google Meet due to geographical and scheduling constraints. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent.

The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to allow participants to express their experiences and perspectives in the language in which they could communicate most comfortably. The recordings were transcribed using TurboScribe.ai, and the transcripts were manually checked against the original recordings to improve transcription accuracy and preserve contextual meaning. The transcripts were analyzed in Vietnamese, and English translations were prepared for excerpts presented in the findings section.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. This analytical approach was chosen because it allows researchers to identify recurring patterns of meaning while remaining flexible and responsive to participants' lived experiences. The analysis process involved repeated reading of the transcripts, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, refinement, and final interpretation. Coding focused on issues related to professional identity construction, contextual constraints, emotional commitment, agency, and adaptation. Particular attention was paid to how participants described their professional responsibilities and responded to the relationship between institutional expectations and local educational realities. Codes were examined for recurring patterns and grouped into broader themes addressing the research questions. The emerging themes were reviewed against the interview data to ensure that the interpretations remained grounded in participants' accounts. Coding decisions and emerging interpretations were discussed with the academic supervisor to support analytical consistency, credibility, and transparency.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The findings are organized around four major themes generated from the interview data. These themes illustrate how the four participating English teachers in a disadvantaged ethnic minority context described and negotiated their professional identities in relation to students' learning needs, their own emotional experiences, pedagogical decisions,

and the conditions of teaching in a disadvantaged ethnic minority school.

Table 1
Main themes identified from the interview data

Theme	Key Focus
Redefining expectations as responsible professionalism	Adjusting professional goals to contextual realities
Emotional commitment as an identity anchor	Positioning care and responsibility as core professional values
Adaptation as situated agency	Using flexible teaching strategies in constrained contexts
Structural and contextual constraints	Responding to linguistic, economic, and institutional challenges

Redefining expectations as responsible professionalism

Participants described professional identity as closely connected to the ability to adjust expectations in response to local realities. Several teachers explained that they initially entered the profession with aspirations influenced by communicative teaching approaches and national reform discourses emphasizing measurable achievement and language proficiency development. However, these expectations gradually changed after direct experience with students' linguistic limitations and socioeconomic difficulties.

Teacher#1 explained that she had "kỳ vọng quá nhiều… rồi phải hạ thấp xuống tiêu chuẩn" [expected too much and eventually had to lower her standards] to teach more effectively. Similarly, Teacher#4 noted that she no longer prioritized communicative fluency but instead focused on helping students develop basic language foundations and classroom confidence.

Importantly, participants did not interpret this adjustment as professional failure. Rather, redefining expectations was presented as a practical and responsible response to contextual realities. Teachers viewed professionalism not as achieving idealized reform outcomes but as maintaining meaningful learning opportunities within structural limitations. However, this adjustment also raises a question about whether adapting expectations supports students' immediate learning needs or risks reinforcing lower expectations for disadvantaged learners.

Emotional commitment as an identity anchor

Another major theme concerned the emotional dimension of teaching. Participants consistently positioned care, patience, and emotional responsibility toward students at the center of their professional identities. Emotional commitment functioned as an important source of motivation, especially in circumstances where measurable academic progress was often limited.

Teacher#3 described her students' "những đôi mắt ngây thơ" [innocent eyes] as a source of encouragement and professional purpose. Teacher#4 similarly emphasized that teachers should act not only as instructors but also as supporters and motivators who help students build confidence and remain engaged in learning.

Participants frequently described teaching as extending beyond classroom instruction. In addition to teaching English, they often felt responsible for supporting students emotionally and socially. These accounts suggest that teachers understood care and responsibility as integral to their professional roles, particularly when academic progress was slow or difficult to observe.

Adaptation as situated agency

The findings also demonstrate that teachers exercised agency through continuous pedagogical adaptation. Participants described modifying lesson content, simplifying explanations, slowing instructional pace, translating between languages, and valuing small forms of participation in order to maintain student engagement.

Teacher#2 acknowledged that students could not realistically "xuất sắc được như các vùng khác" [achieve the same level of excellence as schools in other regions]. As a result, teachers adjusted their teaching goals and instructional practices according to students' actual learning conditions.

These adaptations were not described as passive compromises. Instead, participants framed them as necessary professional decisions shaped by classroom realities. Teachers actively negotiated between curriculum expectations and students' immediate learning needs in order to sustain participation and learning continuity. Nevertheless, their capacity to adapt remained constrained by broader educational and socioeconomic conditions that individual teachers could not readily change.

Structural and contextual constraints

Teachers' professional identities were also strongly shaped by broader structural and contextual conditions. Participants consistently identified multilingualism, poverty, limited exposure to English, and uneven student motivation as significant influences on classroom practice.

Many students used Jrai or Bahnar as their first language, Vietnamese as a second language, and English as an additional language. Teacher#2 explained that many students were still "chưa giỏi tiếng phổ thông" [not yet proficient in Vietnamese] before learning English. This multilingual environment created additional difficulties for both instruction and communication.

Economic hardship also influenced learning conditions. Teacher#3 noted that some students prioritized family responsibilities and daily survival over academic achievement. Participants additionally described frustration when carefully prepared lessons received minimal response from students. Teacher#1 admitted feeling discouraged when students "không hưởng ứng" [showed little engagement], while Teacher#4 observed that students' shyness and fear of communication often restricted classroom interaction.

At the institutional level, participants generally described positive relationships with

colleagues and school leaders. Teachers appreciated collegial support and mutual understanding when dealing with professional challenges. However, they also acknowledged pressure related to curriculum implementation and assessment requirements. Teacher#4 explained that institutional expectations did not always align with local classroom realities, creating tension between formal policy demands and practical teaching conditions.

Despite these difficulties, senior teachers noted gradual improvements in infrastructure, professional development opportunities, and national investment in English education. These developments contributed to a cautious sense of optimism regarding the future of English teaching in disadvantaged areas. However, the improvements described by participants did not eliminate the linguistic, socioeconomic, and institutional challenges they continued to encounter.

Overall, the four themes illustrate how teachers negotiated their professional identities through the interaction of educational expectations, emotional commitment, pedagogical adaptation, and structural constraints.

Discussion

Interpreting professional identity negotiation in context

The findings support the view that teacher professional identity is dynamic, socially negotiated, and shaped by the interaction between personal beliefs and professional contexts. Beijaard et al. (2004) emphasized the importance of examining professional identity in relation to teachers' experiences, personal practical knowledge, and the contexts in which they work. Similarly, Varghese et al. (2005) highlighted the importance of understanding language teacher identity through social and institutional processes rather than as an individual attribute. The present study extends these perspectives by illustrating how such negotiation may take place in a disadvantaged ethnic minority school, where teachers' understandings of professionalism are influenced by persistent linguistic, socioeconomic, and educational constraints.

A particularly important point of comparison is the relationship between professional identity and context. Whereas professional identity research has established that teachers' professional understandings develop through interaction with their working environments, the study draws attention to how limited educational opportunities may reshape the standards by which teachers evaluate their own professional responsibilities. For the four teachers in this study, professionalism was not understood solely in terms of achieving curriculum objectives or implementing communicative teaching approaches. Their accounts also indicated the importance of maintaining student participation, providing emotional support, and adjusting teaching expectations to students' circumstances. This suggests that professional identity in disadvantaged settings needs to be understood not only in terms of what teachers aim to achieve but also in relation to what they consider realistically and ethically possible.

This interpretation is consistent with Truong et al. 's (2025) scoping review, which synthesized research on the interplay of language teachers' identity, cognition, emotion, agency, and context. Their review emphasizes that these

dimensions interact and are influenced by contextual factors at different levels. The study offers a context-specific illustration of this interaction: teachers' perceptions of students' learning needs informed their instructional decisions, their emotional commitment sustained their willingness to teach under difficult conditions, and their agency was expressed through adaptation rather than through extensive changes to the educational environment. However, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating that all teachers in disadvantaged schools construct their identities in the same way. The evidence comes from four participants in one school and, therefore, provides a situated interpretation rather than a general explanation of teacher identity in disadvantaged education.

The study also connects with research on the micropolitical dimensions of teacher identity. Ball (1987) and Kelchtermans (2005) provide perspectives for understanding how teachers' professional experiences are shaped by institutional relationships, power, and the conditions under which they work. More directly, Tran (2024), in a study of Vietnamese primary school EFL teachers, examined teacher identity from a micropolitical perspective and highlighted the significance of institutional power relationships in shaping teachers' roles and responsibilities. The study complements this line of research by focusing on the relationship between institutional and curricular expectations and the practical limitations experienced in a disadvantaged ethnic minority context. While institutional relationships form part of the teachers' professional environment, the accounts analyzed here also point to constraints associated with multilingual learning conditions, economic hardship, and students' limited exposure to English. These contextual factors may restrict the range of professional actions available to teachers, even when they remain committed to their work.

This distinction is important for understanding teacher agency. Adaptation can demonstrate professional judgment because teachers respond to students' needs rather than mechanically follow idealized expectations. Nevertheless, adaptation should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of successful or empowering agency. When teachers have few alternatives, modifying lesson content or reducing immediate learning goals may represent a necessary response to circumstances rather than a freely chosen professional strategy. The findings, therefore, suggest that teacher agency should be examined in relation to both teachers' capacity to make decisions and the structural conditions that enable or constrain those decisions. This interpretation reinforces the importance of considering context alongside identity, emotion, and agency, as emphasized by Truong et al. (2025).

Professional endurance as a context-sensitive concept

The study proposes professional endurance as a context-sensitive concept for understanding how teachers sustain their professional commitment while adapting to persistent contextual constraints. It captures the combination of continued engagement, emotional investment, and situated adjustment described by the participants. The concept is proposed as an interpretive lens emerging from the present findings, rather than as an established construct or a universal

characteristic of teachers working in disadvantaged settings.

Emotional commitment emerged as a central resource in teachers' professional identity negotiation, resonating with Nguyen et al.'s (2025) argument that emotional labor plays an important role in sustaining teacher professionalism under structural pressure. In the present study, teachers' care for students and sense of responsibility appeared to sustain their engagement despite persistent contextual constraints. This finding highlights the emotional dimension of professional endurance while also raising questions about the personal costs of maintaining such commitment when structural challenges remain unresolved.

Professional endurance is related to, but should not be treated as synonymous with, resilience. Resilience is commonly associated with the capacity to respond to adversity and sustain or restore functioning under challenging conditions. Professional endurance, as used in this study, places particular emphasis on the continuation of professional effort when the conditions producing difficulty may remain unresolved. The distinction is analytical rather than absolute: endurance may involve resilience, while resilience may also involve sustained effort. The potential value of the term lies in directing attention to the ongoing nature of teachers' work under persistent constraints, rather than assuming that adversity is temporary or that teachers can overcome it through individual effort alone. This interpretation is consistent with the broader argument of Truong et al. (2025) that language teacher identity, emotion, and agency must be understood in relation to contextual influences.

Professional endurance also complicates conventional understandings of professionalism that privilege innovation, measurable achievement, or visible pedagogical transformation. In the context examined here, teachers' continued commitment, care for students, and willingness to adapt were important dimensions of how they understood their responsibilities. These practices should not be regarded as evidence of diminished professionalism simply because they do not always result in the outcomes expected in better-resourced settings. Instead, they demonstrate how professional responsibility may be enacted under unequal conditions. This interpretation extends identity scholarship that emphasizes the situated and socially negotiated nature of teachers' professional understandings (Beijaard et al., 2004; Varghese et al., 2005).

However, professional endurance should not be romanticized. Sustained commitment can enable teachers to maintain relationships with students and continue working despite difficulties, but it may also impose emotional and professional burdens. When teachers are expected to compensate continually for limited resources, linguistic barriers, or inadequate learning opportunities, endurance risks becoming an individual obligation to manage problems that require institutional or policy responses. In this sense, the same practices may be both enabling and constraining: adaptation allows teachers to respond to immediate classroom needs, yet repeated adaptation may normalize unequal conditions if the underlying causes remain unaddressed. This concern is compatible with micropolitical perspectives that draw attention to the relationships between professional action, institutional power, and

working conditions (Ball, 1987; Kelchtermans, 2005; Tran, 2024).

The distinction between responsible adaptation and the normalization of disadvantage is, therefore, crucial. Adjusting learning goals may be professionally appropriate when it reflects students' current needs and supports their subsequent development. However, it becomes problematic if reduced expectations are treated as permanent or if they deprive students of meaningful opportunities to progress. The findings do not establish whether the teachers' adaptations produced long-term learning benefits or whether they contributed to the reproduction of educational inequality. Rather, they identify a tension that warrants further investigation. Professional endurance should consequently be evaluated not only by whether teachers continue working, but also by whether their efforts are supported by institutions and whether students retain opportunities for educational development.

This interpretation also raises questions about the relationship between endurance and agency. Endurance may involve agency when teachers make deliberate, context-sensitive decisions to sustain learning and student engagement. Yet, it may become burdensome when the responsibility for managing structural limitations falls primarily on individual teachers. The theoretical significance of professional endurance, therefore, lies less in presenting perseverance as an inherently desirable professional quality than in examining the conditions under which sustained commitment enables meaningful action, becomes emotionally costly, or conceals the need for structural change. Further research is needed to establish how this concept relates to resilience, emotional labor, teacher well-being, and professional agency across different educational contexts.

Limitations and implications

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved only four teachers from one ethnic minority boarding school, limiting the transferability of the findings. In addition, the research relied primarily on interview narratives without classroom observation or student perspectives. Consequently, the findings reflect teachers' accounts of their professional experiences rather than direct evidence of their classroom practices or the effects of their teaching on student learning. The concept of professional endurance should, therefore, be understood as a context-sensitive interpretation emerging from this study rather than an established theoretical construct.

Despite these limitations, the study offers important implications for language education policy and teacher development. Educational policies and curriculum frameworks should allow greater flexibility for disadvantaged multilingual contexts where standardized expectations may not fully reflect classroom realities. Such flexibility should not mean lowering expectations for students permanently; rather, it should support context-responsive teaching while maintaining meaningful opportunities for educational progress. Teacher education and professional development programs should also prepare educators for the emotional, linguistic, and sociocultural challenges associated with teaching in marginalized communities. In addition to developing adaptive pedagogical strategies, these programs should promote reflective practice, collegial collaboration, and

awareness of the emotional demands of teaching in resource-constrained settings. Institutional support is important to ensure that teachers' commitment and adaptability do not become substitutes for adequate resources and equitable learning opportunities.

Future research involving multiple schools, longitudinal designs, or classroom-based observations across disadvantaged educational settings in Vietnam and other multilingual contexts could provide broader insights into teacher identity development and the relationships between professional endurance, teacher well-being, emotional exhaustion, and agency. Combining interviews with student perspectives and institutional documents could further clarify how teachers' professional identities are shaped by classroom experiences and structural conditions.

Conclusion

This study explored how the four English teachers in a disadvantaged ethnic minority context in Gia Lai province, Vietnam, negotiated their professional identities under contextual and structural constraints. The findings show that teachers' understandings of professionalism were shaped not only by curriculum expectations and educational reforms but also by their everyday experiences, emotional commitment, and responses to local realities.

The study contributes to research on teacher professional identity by proposing professional endurance as a context-sensitive concept for understanding how teachers sustain their professional commitment while adapting to persistent constraints. From this perspective, professional identity in disadvantaged multilingual contexts involves not simply teachers' capacity to implement educational reforms, but also their negotiation of competing expectations while maintaining meaningful educational relationships. However, endurance should not be romanticized as an individual solution to structural inequality; sustained commitment requires institutional support and equitable learning opportunities.

Given the study's focus on four teachers in one school, professional endurance remains an interpretive concept that requires further investigation. Future research across diverse educational settings could examine how endurance relates to teacher agency, emotional well-being, and structural support. Such research would help clarify when professional endurance enables meaningful educational practice and when it risks placing the burden of persistent inequalities on individual teachers.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Generative AI Statement

The authors used Grammarly solely for language editing and proofreading to improve the clarity and readability of the manuscript. All AI-assisted output was critically reviewed and revised by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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