Glocalizing identities: grounded theory of networked scholar

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This study researched how academics from different countries construct their professional identities in social media. Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) was used for data collection and analysis. Interviews were conducted with full and associate professors and researchers from universities in Lithuania and Italy. Professors and researchers were engaged in social sciences, humanities and technologies. They were active social media users. A core category Glocalizing identities showed the process of professional self-presentation of university teachers in social media environments. The core category Glocalizing identities was related to the identity construction regarding self-regulation and self-regulated learning, and to the self and the personal autonomy (Oyserman et al., 2017). Two opposite paths of identity construction were researched. The first showed direction to a person’s self-regulated learning in social media. The second path pointed to social media skepticism.

The first Glocalizing identities direction was constructed from subcategory Accepting with dimensions Flowing and Learning. Findings revealed that self-regulated learning in social media was important to university professors and researchers as autonomous learners and to their professional identity construction. Authors found that university professors and researchers applied social media for information sharing outside of the classroom and, more often, for teaching within the class and personal self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning was related to decision-making regarding publishing the specific content in social media, consolidating the personal scientific reputation and increasing the personal popularity. These learners were open to new experiences and willing to learn from it. They accepted the identity change (Nagy & Koles, 2014).

The second direction was constructed from subcategory Hiding with dimensions Disassociating and Ignoring. Some research participants feel unsafe to be a part of the social media world, because they were not sure somebody could share their texts or information about them. These participants choose reticence which leads to ignoring social media. Skepticism revealed defensive attitudes and the aversion to new experiential learning, which is an important part of constructing the identities (Oyserman et al., 2017). These research participants assumed that their professional identity was already formed. In the social media with the disappearance of professional roles it is difficult to maintain hierarchical academic structures. For some research participants it was not easy to be open to autonomous self-regulated learning possibilities, which are provided in social media regarding identity construction (Rambe, 2013).

These findings contributed to understanding how active networked university professors and researchers in non-English speaking European countries – Lithuania (post-Soviet country facing rapid university transitions) and Italy (having old scholar traditions, transforming scientific knowledge for productive purposes) – constructed their professional identities in social media.

Keywords: glocalizing identities, grounded theory, professional identity construction, social media, university professor.
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References


