

Valued and valuable professional identity in vocational education and training (VET): collective representations among trainees, trainers and teachers.

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The paper will present main findings from a two and a half years (2005-2008) empirical study carried out in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. The research investigated collective representations of the professional identity among different groups of actors, within two vocations (polymechanics = PMC and socio-educational assistants = SEA) in the VET system. A qualitative approach was adopted and data collected in order to grasp and portrait the major components of the professional identity. A thematic content analyse allowed modelling of 4 main cross-sectional identity components which articulated in two different professional profiles: the first one for PMCs and the second one SEAs. This result (?) is related to the type of activity and the various work settings, but it is also influenced by the recent creation of the SEA profession. Professional profiles for both vocations, which are primarily conveyed and valued by groups of actors in the VET system, will be presented. While the SEAs' professional profile is still largely under construction and in a negotiation phase, PMCs' professional profile appears to be more consistent, even though facing transformations.

Findings should provide guidance for maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and training, as well as adequate adjustment between vocational education, training and professional integration.