Curriculum Reform and Iranian EFL Teachers' Professional Identity: A Marathon of Change!*

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Abstract

Professional identity has been perpetually a significant factor in teacher development. The maintenance of a strong professional identity is a key factor in teacher development which is ultimately a fundamental aspect in the prosperity or failure of any educational system. As a dynamic phenomenon, teachers' professional identity can be influenced by a variety of factors and particularly any type of educational reform. The present study with an explanatory mixed method design was used to investigate transitions in Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity in the context of Fundamental Reform Document of Education (2012). For the quantitative phase of the study, a researcher-made questionnaire developed based on the four components of professional identity namely, self-image, self-esteem, job motivation and task perception proposed by Kelchtermans (1993) was distributed among 98 Iranian EFL teachers. Considering the ongoing nature of the professional identity, the questionnaire was assigned to the teachers during the pre-reform and post – reform era. In the qualitative phase, in order to capture a comprehensive picture of the salient factors of teachers' professional identity and their underlying reasons, a set of semi-structured interviews with 7 volunteer teachers were conducted. The findings revealed that the introduction of the curriculum reform made no change in teachers' professional identity in terms of self-esteem and task perception, but it slightly affected teachers' self-image and job motivation. The findings also revealed a potential transition path in Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity development. Finally, some implications for policy-makers and material developers and suggestions for future researchers were discussed.

1. Introduction

It is an unquestionable and widely acknowledged fact that teachers' sense of well-being and self-efficacy is closely attached to how they define themselves and how they view their status and perspectives about their profession (Day & Kingtone, 2008). Teachers' professional identity is portrayed in their classroom practices through their planning lessons, style of teaching, class and school activities, and responses to the demands posed by the higher-level educational regulations (Naidoo, 2012). It is obvious that teachers' perception of their professional identity would affect how they teach and develop in their profession. This has led to the significance of teachers' professional identity as a fundamental research area during the last 20 years (Beijaard; Meijer, & Verloop, 2004).

The concept of professional identity as a dynamic concept is shaped and reshaped by contextual factors, teacher learning and experiences, their sense of agency, and powerful forces that drive teachers' behavior and actions both within and outside the classroom (O'Sullivan, 2008).

Though desperate in nature, professional identity and its working elements are interconnected through the interaction of personal, professional, situational and social factors (Day & Kington, 2008). (Figure 1).

Personal factors

Professional factors
Contextual and social factors

Figure1. Factors affecting professional identity (Day & Kington, 2008 cited in Lee, 2013).

Personal factors are elements found in teachers' lives outside the school pertaining to their family and social roles. Reynolds (1996) refers to the expectation of others, the local culture, and what the person is allowed to do as the major personal factors affecting a teacher's professional identity. Situational and social factors refer to school-

related issues such as leadership, support, and teachers' responsibility for policies of national or local nature. The impact of macro policies such as curriculum reform on the teachers' professional identity cannot be ignored. That is to say, the perception of teachers on "what a teacher should be" is greatly affected by the image of others, the requirements of macro policy or curriculum reform definitely exert a fundamental impact on teachers' professional identities through changes imposed by external agencies (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Lasky, 2005).

As mentioned above, teachers' identity can be affected by higher-level polices demanded by police-makers. This study, therefore, is an attempt to investigate the transition of EFL teachers' professional identity in the context of a curricular reform implemented by Iranian ministry of education. To be specific, this research tries to see the changes teachers may experience in their professional identity in the realm of curriculum reform.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Curricular Reform in Iran
After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, all aspects of the society were in great need for a paradigm shift corresponding to the prestige of the Islamic Republic. There was a demand for an "education system capable of materializing *Hayate Tayyebah* (the ideal Islamic life), universal justice and Islamic-Iranian civili. ation" (p.6). Therefore, in 2011, *Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) in the Islamic Republic of Iran* focusing on "the country's 2025 vision in which the country is expected to promote to the highest economic, scientific and technological position at regional level" (FRDE, p.2) was finalized.

Today, based on Iran's Reformed National Curriculum, the basic objective of English language education in secondary schools is to enable the students to understand and transfer human's cultural heritage and scientific findings through various linguistic canals such as oral, visual, and written (Zarrinabadi & Mahmoudi- Gahrouei, 2017). The new reform is an attempt to enhance collaboration among learners,

assigning appropriate feedbacks toward learners" mistakes, and paying significant attention to the learners" mental and emotional aspects in learning (Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2014).

The newly- introduced educational reform has been the target of various research studies. The findings of the study by Atai & Mazlum (2013) showed that English language teaching program in Iran is not based on a systematic needs analysis. Safari and Sahragard (2015) made an attempt to explore the problems, challenges, and concerns that English teachers have had during the period of three years after the application of new ELT program in the secondary high schools. Yaghobinejad, Zarrinabadi & Nejadansari (2016) investigated demotivating factors for Iranian junior high school teachers and found out the salient demotivating factors in the post reform era. They revealed that lack of social respect and rewards, lack of educational support and a large number of students in English classes were the dominant factors to Iranian junior high school teachers.

2.2. Professional Identity
In various definitions of professional identity, the two concepts of 'self' and 'identity' appear to be essential.

2.2.1. Self vs. Identity
Rodgers & Scott (2008) and Beijaard et al. (2004) refer to the ambiguities regarding how the two conceptions of self and identity are related from the viewpoints of teacher education and adult development. In this way, Rodgers and Scott (2008) offer four basic assumptions with respect to the conception of identity:

2.2.2. Identity as Contextual
Identity is formed within multiple contexts of social, cultural, political and historical domains. Coldron & Smith (1999) refer to the identity of a teacher as "a matter of where, within the professional pertinent array of possibilities, a particular person is located" (p. 714).

2.2.3. Identity as Relational and Emotional

Identity consists of relationships and emotions. Rodgers and Scott (2008) point out that engagement with others is an indispensable part of identity since having an identity demands ones recognition as particular type of person by others. In the same way, Hargreaves (2001) refers to how conditions and interactions determine teachers' emotions.

2.2.4. Identity as Shifting and Multiple

According to Rodgers and Scott (2008), context and relations are two external aspects of identity formation that shape teachers' identities; therefore, identity becomes a shifting, multiple, unstable and ongoing aspect. As Gee (2001) demonstrates in Rodgers and Scott (2008), "The 'kind of person' one is recognized as 'being,' at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context" (p. 99).

2.2.5. Identity as Storied

Identity involves ongoing processes of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences and stories over time. Sfard and Prusak (2005) portray a trilateral picture of identity: first-person identities, second person identities, and third person identities. Thus, identity is formed through the interpretation of the stories and its nature depends on the playing factors of time, context and relationship.

Considering the various definitions regarding the concept of identity, it appears that the concept of professional identity is also used in different ways in the domain of teaching and teacher education (Beijaard et al.2004). In some studies, the concept of professional identity was related to teachers' concepts or images of self (Knowles, 1992). It was argued that these concepts or images of self strongly determine the way teachers teach, the way they develop as teachers, and their attitudes toward educational changes. In other studies of professional identity, the emphasis was placed on teachers' roles (Goodson & Cole, 1994; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Furthermore, professional identity refers not only to the influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people, including widely accepted images in society about what a teacher should know and do, but also to what

teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives based on both their experiences in practice and their personal backgrounds (Tickle, 2000).

There have recently been several research studies examining teachers' professional identity in Iran. Eslamdoost, King, & Tajeddin (2019) examined how Iranian EFL teachers cope with the identity conflicts that arise within their language teaching contexts. Via narrative reflections on identity, they revealed that EFL teachers confront conflicts across their personal beliefs and external expectations within educational policies of Iran. In another study by Sheybani and Miri (2019) the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity and their critical thinking were investigated. Their results demonstrated there is a high positive significant relationship between total professional identity and total critical thinking of Iranian EFL teachers. Behin , Esmaeili and Asadollahi (2019) concluded that every single language teaching policy might shape and reshape teachers' understanding of themselves. Zare-eea and Ghasedib (2014) studied teachers' professional identity construction (TPI). It was shown that student teachers need more authoritative support and they also need to develop their knowledge about the cultural aspect of English-speaking countries. In another study, Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, Tavakoli and Hamman (2016) investigated identity development in terms of teachers' expected and feared possible selves. Novice teachers revealed a greater focus on task self-concepts; prospective teachers showed both task and quality possible selves; while experienced teachers were more concerned with the quality-focused ones.

Zare-eea & Ghasedib (2014) studied teachers' professional identity construction (TPI). It was shown that student teachers need more authoritative support and they also need to develop their knowledge about the cultural aspect of English-speaking countries. However, there is a paucity of research on the identity shift of teachers while a curricular reform is implemented. Therefore, this study sets out to

explore the transition of teachers' professional identity in the context of a curricular reform.

2.2.6. Theoretical Underpinning

Several scholars argue that professional identity contains a set of disparate identity elements such as self-image, job motivation, core responsibilities, self-esteem, perceptions of teaching, subject, and subject pedagogy (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink & Hofman, 2011; Van Veen & Sleegers, 2009). Kelchtermans (1993) developed two dimensions and five components in the analysis of teacher professional selves. The first dimension offered as prospective dimension refers to conception about self while looking ahead to the future from the present. It is related to the future perspective.

The other dimension viewed as retrospective one refers to self while looking back from the present to the past. It corresponds with four components of self-image, self-esteem, job motivation and task perception. Each component is clarified below.

2.2.6.1. Self-image or self- description

It is how a teacher describes him-or herself as a teacher. It corresponds with one's general description as a teacher. The view of others as colleagues, parents, etc. regarding a teacher also falls in this domain.

2.2.6.2. Self- esteem

It refers to one's evaluation of himself – herself as a teacher. It can be defined as the result of balancing self – image and the required professional norms of teacher education career (balancing ideal and reality). The view of others toward a teacher can also play a significant role in balancing ideal and reality. A negative balance leads to demotivation.

2.2.6.3. Job motivation

It refers to what spurs one to adopt teaching, stay as a teacher, or abandon it. According to Kelchtermans (1993) the increasing burden put on teachers via extra-curricular activities, team meetings and many others would lead to a decrease in both their job motivation and even their social status.

2.2.6.4. Task perception

It reflects the way teachers define their job and judge their professional behavior. The leading question a teacher may ask in this aspect is this: What's my job as a teacher?' The answer to which can operationalize the mission statement of a teacher and crystalize the personal program a teacher may strive to follow, and consequently evaluates his/her professional behavior of teacher.

2.3. Research Questions

RQ1. Has Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity changed by the curricular reform?

RQ2. Which component(s) of Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity has been mostly affected by the curricular reform?

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

A mixed methods research with an explanatory sequential design was implemented in the present study. Consequently, the researchers in this study planned and adopted an explanatory mixed methods design within two distinct stages (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011; Creswell, Planko Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003). The quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire to identify aspects of teachers' professional identity in the pre reform and post reform era, then for further explanation in order to capture a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon at question, a qualitative phase was implemented through offering interview questions to help explain and interpret the quantitative results.

3.2. Participants

A total of 98 English teachers participated in the quantitative phase of the study. These teachers were selected based on the availability technique from public and private schools of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and Isfahan provinces. They were 43 males (44%) and 55 females (56%) who were 30 to 47 years old and had work experience between 10 to 25 years. They were mostly teaching in the state schools of the central or suburban areas of the above provinces. Although the

study benefited from 98 participants, 83 questionnaires were returned to the researchers.

The participants of the qualitative phase were purposefully selected in a two-stage procedure. The researcher identified the respondents by calculating the summed mean scores for all responses to the questionnaires and then by selecting a few respondents with the mean scores within one standard error of the mean. In the second stage, twelve best informants were selected applying a maximal variation strategy by which instead of seeking representativeness through equal probabilities, the sampling seeks it by including a wide range of extremes (Creswell, 2005). This resulted in the selection of five females and two males. All seven agreed to participate in the second phase of the study (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Demographic information of the participants*

Quantitative Stage (N=98)				Qualitative Stage (N=7)			
Gender	Age	Education	Experience	Gender	Age	Education	Experience
44% male	30-47	62%BA	10-25yrs	71%Male	40-47	28% PhD	10-25yrs
56% female	30-47	33%MA	10-25yrs	29%Female	40-47	72%BA	10-25yrs
		5%PhD	10-25yrs				

3.3. Instrumentation

Due to the mixed- methods nature of the study, the researcher employed two different instruments in order to collect data for examining the target research questions. In quantitative procedure, a researcher-made questionnaire based on the four aspects of professional identity proposed by Kelchtermans (1993) was applied and offered to 98 Iranian EFL teachers.

The reliability of the scales and items was established (r = .92) using internal consistency reliability indexes.

In qualitative phase of the study, a semi- structured interview protocol including six questions was devised based on the quantitative results of the first stage of the study. The interview protocol consisted

of questions regarding teaching methodologies, text books, class management and the number of teaching hours.

3.4. Procedure

3.4.1. Quantitative Procedure

For the first phase of the study, a questionnaire developed by the researcher was administered. Regarding the significance of piloting in quantitative researches (Dornyei , 2007),the researchers asked three colleagues to go through items and provide feedback. Then, a near-final version of the questionnaires was collected and the questionnaire was administered to a group of 50 participants and the answers were analyzed statistically to finalize them. The final version of the questionnaire included four components of self-image, self-esteem, task perception and job motivation. Each component consisted of five items to be investigated. Since Beijaard et al. (2004) refers to the notion of professional identity as an ongoing process, a longitudinal research was conducted in this study to find out an in-depth understanding of teachers' professional identities during the pre- reform to the post – reform era. To do so, the first questionnaire was assigned to the teachers the year before the introduction of the *vision series textbooks* and the second questionnaire was given the next year after the implementation of the series textbooks and their results were compared.

3.4.2. Qualitative Procedure

In the second phase of the study, a semi-structured interview including six questions was conducted for further explanation .The content of the interview protocol was elicited from the quantitative results of the first stage of the study. The interview protocol consisted of questions regarding teaching methodologies, text books, class management and the number of teaching hours. Each interview lasted 15 minutes and it was audio –taped while the interviewer was also taking notes during the interview session. Data collection was done up to the point of saturation (Do¨rnyei 2007). Audio – recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and were printed for coding which explained as follows:

The analysis of the interviews was carried out through several stages. In the first stage, the researchers open coded the transcripts. The second

stage of the analysis included axial coding. In this stage, repeated ideas were extracted to arrive at more general themes. To do so, categories were monitored carefully and their high-order themes were revealed. These were then put together and a whole picture of the categories was made to be compared and contrasted with each other. These categories were then refined so that they could finally put in the same group. Then, the selective coding in the process of codifying was done and the best categories demonstrating the meaning of the data were selected.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, a colleague who was familiar with the notion of teacher motivation and qualitative research performed the external auditing of the codes and inferences. The participants were also interviewed informally and results and interpretations were reviewed to accomplish the member checking process.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1. Results
As the design of the study is of mixed-methods nature, the obtained data was of two types. In the following sections, the results of quantitative and qualitative data will be presented respectively.

4.1.1. Quantitative Findings
Five analyses were carried out in order to answer the research questions which the researchers were to find whether the newly-implemented curriculum reform has had any effect on teachers' professional identity and to find the highly affected component/ components of teachers' professional self, as well.

As it was mentioned in chapter one, teachers' professional identity as one of the underlying concepts of this study has been operationally defined using Kelchterman's (1993) in order to crystalize the effect of the curriculum reform on Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity. It corresponds with four components of self-esteem (SE), task perception (TP), self-image (SI) and job motivation (JB).

4.1.1.1. Self - Esteem

The difference in the self-esteem of teachers' self from time 1 (pre-reform) to time 2 (post-reform) was tested with a paired-sample t-test (Table 4.1.).

Table 4.1.*Paired samples statistics of self-esteem from time 1 to time 2*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Time 1	.9313	83	.15920	.02517
	Time 2	**.9675***	83	.16469	.02604

Note. Time 1: pre-reform; Time 2: post- reform; Pair: the difference on teachers' self-esteem from pre reform to the post reform era

The results indicated no significant difference from time 1 (M= .931, SD= .159) to time 2 (M= .967, SD=.164), t (82) = 1.208, p=.234 (two – tailed) (Tables 4.1. & 4.2.).

Table 4.2. *Descriptive statistics of self-esteem in teachers' identity from time 1 to time 2*

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. 2tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Time 1- Time 2	.03625	.18980	.03001	-.09695	.02445	**-1.208***	82	.234

Note. $p < .01$

4.1.1.2. Task Perception

Regarding the second category of teacher professional self, task perception, another paired – sampled t- test was carried out to analyze the difference in the EFL teachers' perceptions towards their jobs from the pre reform to the post reform era (Table 4. 3.).

Table 4.3.*Paired samples statistics of task perception from time 1 to time 2*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Time 1	.7400	83	.09840	.01556
	Time 2	.7700*	83	.15599	.02466

Note. Time 1: pre-reform; Time 2: post- reform; Pair: the difference on teachers' task perception from pre reform to the post reform era

The obtained results indicated that EFL teachers' professional identity with respect to task perception has not changed from time 1 (M = .740, SD = .098) to time 2 (M =.770, SD = .155), t (82) = 1.176, p = .247 (two –tailed) (Table 4. 4.).

Table 4.4. *Descriptive statistics of task perception in teachers' identity from time 1 to time 2*

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Time 1- Time 2	.03000	.16129	.02550	-.08158	.02158	-1.176*	82	.247

Note. *p* < .01

4.1.1.3. Self- Image

Another aspect of teachers' professional identity; namely, self-image, was tested with a paired – sample t-test (Table 4. 5.).

Table 4.5. *Paired samples statistics of self-image from time 1 to time 2*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Time 1	.9388	83	.12221	.01932
	Time 2	.9775*	83	.10374	.01640

Note. Time 1: pre-reform; Time 2: post- reform; Pair: the difference on teachers' self-image from pre reform to the post reform era

The results from time 1 (M = .938, SD = .122) to time 2 (M = .977, SD = .103), t (82) =2.117, p = .041) revealed a significant variation from the pre-test to the post-test era (Tables 4. 5 & 4. 6.). Since the results were significant the eta- squared statistics was performed (eta = .05) and it revealed a small effect size regarding self-image and teachers professional self in the post reform era.

Table 4.6. *Descriptive statistics of self-image in teachers' identity from time 1 to time 2*

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviat ion	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-taile d)
					Lowe r	Uppe r			
Pair 1	Time 1- Time 2	.0387 5	.1157 4	.0183 0	-.0757 7	-.0017 3	**-2.11 7***	8 2	.041

Note. *p* < .01

4.1.1.4. Job Motivation

Regarding the job motivation of teacher professional self, the difference from time 1 to time 2 was analyzed through a paired sample t-test (Table 4. 7.).

Table 4.7. *Paired samples statistics of job motivation from time 1 to time 2*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviatio n	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Time 1	.6600	83	.17142	.02710
	Time 2	**.7438***	83	.19877	.03143

Note. Time 1: pre-reform; Time 2: post- reform; Pair: the difference on teachers' job motivation from pre reform to the post reform era

The results revealed partial difference from time 1 (M = .660, SD= .171) to time 2 (M = .743, SD = .198), t (82) = 2.187, p = .035) (Tables 4. 7 & 4. 8.). The eta squared statistics (.05) indicated a small effect size.

Table 4.8. *Descriptive statistics of job motivation in teachers' identity from time 1   to time 2*

		Paired Differences					T	df
		Mean	Std. Devi ation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
					Lower	Upper		
Pair 1	Tim e 1 Tim e 2	-.08375	.2421 6	.0382 9	-.16120	-.00630	- 2.187 *	39

Note. *p* < .01

In order to see whether the implementation of the reform has affected the teachers' identity, a paired-sample t-test was carried out (Table 4. 9.).

Table 4.9. *Paired samples statistics of the general effect of the reform on teachers' professional identity from time 1 to time 2*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Time 1	81.75	83	9.269	1.466
	Time 2	**86.47** *	83	10.143	1.604

Note. Time 1: pre-reform; Time 2: post- reform; Pair: the difference on the general effect of the reform on teachers' professional identity pre reform to the post reform era

The results indicated a statistically significant increase from time 1 (M= 81.75, SD= 9.269) to time 2 (M= 86.47, SD=10.143), t (83) = 3.303, p=.002 (Tables 4. 9 & 4.10.). The eta squared statistics (.11) revealed a small effect size. Therefore, regarding the first research question: (RQ1. Has Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity been affected by curricular reform?), the obtained results revealed that the reform has positively influenced teachers' professional identitye

Table 4.10. *Descriptive statistics of the general effect of the reform on teachers' professional identity from time 1 to time 2*

		Paired Differences					T	df	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Time 1-Time2	4.719	9.036	1.429	-7.609	-1.829	**-3.303**	82	.002

Note. $p < .01$

To answer the second research question (RQ2. Which component(s) of teachers' professional self has mostly been affected?), the obtained results from tables (4. 1.) to (4.10.) demonstrate that self-image and job motivation were the components which were equally but slightly

affected by the reform. However, self-esteem and task perception did not encounter any change from pre reform to the post reform era.

4.2. Discussion

The results from the quantitative procedure revealed a significant variation from the pre-reform to the post-reform era in terms of teachers' professional identity. To further understand the reason behind such a change, two items regarding teachers' views toward themselves and their social popularity were included in the interview protocol.

4.2.1. Self- image or self-description

Self-image as an aspect of teacher professional identity and an individual's awareness of his/her mental and physical characteristics (Lawrence's (2006) was documented to be affected for Iranian EFL teachers through the introduction of the new reform. In terms of teachers' self-image five major issues were applied in the questionnaire. They included teachers' honor as English teachers, being prosperous teachers in society, being successful as the facilitator of teaching learning process, colleagues' and parents' view toward teachers and how teachers guide students prosperously.

The results from the quantitative procedure revealed variation from the pre-reform to the post-reform era demonstrating EFL teachers' minor shifts in how they view themselves as teachers in the post reform era. To further understand the reason behind such a change, two items regarding teachers' views toward themselves and their social popularity were included in the interview protocol.

Responses obtained from the interviewees revealed that most teachers of English described themselves as prosperous teachers in the new era. Recent global and national developments and astonishingly Iranian widespread eagerness toward studying abroad has provided a sense of efficacy for most EFL teachers. Most students are attending English classes to participate in international English exams and receive the desired score.

Responses obtained from five interviewees revealed that most teachers of English described themselves as prosperous teachers in the

new era. However, this might not have any connection with the necessities and objectives of the reform. Rather, it might be due to the recent changes in the social and economic conditions of the country leading to an enhancement in educational immigrations and the increasing demand for mastery over English skills.

It's a good feeling when you see some families ask for help or send their children to English classes to prepare them for international exams like TOEFL or IELTS .

As the following excerpt reveals explicitly, teachers gave a new definition of their professional self.

Through the journey of English language teaching, I have seldom put my English knowledge into use as I have never been in a real-world situation. This to some extent has affected my professional identity. In other words, we taught English in a traditional way. But when the new textbooks were introduced, some sort of internal earthquake shook the pillars of my professional identity structure. We came to this understanding that we, as English teachers, are given a new identity, a language user, the role has not been played in our classroom before.

4.2.2. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem as the individual's evaluation of discrepancy between self-image and ideal self (Lawrence's (2006) did not encounter any significant shift. Five issues regarding teachers' self –esteem were incorporated in the questionnaire. They included how teachers teach the four language skills and employ the CLT based methodologies, class management, teachers' relation with colleagues and students' opinion regarding the teachers.

The scores from the quantitative procedure of the study indicated that although teachers' self- esteem has not witnessed any significant difference from pre reform to the post reform era, but there is a partial shift. To shed more light on the issue, two questions regarding the necessity and difficulties of teaching the four language skills and

employing the required methodologies in the English class were offered to the interviewees.

One of the crucial requirements of a CLT classroom is that language teachers must possess a fairly high proficiency in oral/aural skills; something that most Iranian language teachers are lacking. Hence, language teachers as the dominant implementers of the new English curriculum are required to improve their oral/aural skills, pedagogical knowledge, and other types of knowledge that construct the fundamental knowledge of an effective language teacher.

Although the new national curriculum underlies communicative activities as the essential factors for stimulating the students' engagement and use of English, four interviewees stated that some teachers do not make judicious use of the activities in their instruction and rely more on traditional repetition and translation activities instead. This can be due to the teachers' experience which is rooted in the previous teaching methodologies and cannot be taken away easily. They are accustomed to some traditional techniques and have always gained efficient results.

The scores from the quantitative procedure of the study indicated that although teachers' self- esteem has not witnessed any significant difference from pre reform to the post reform era, there is a partial shift. To shed more light on the issue, two questions regarding the necessity and difficulties of teaching the four language skills and employing the required methodologies in the English class were offered to the interviewees.

Two interviewees with 20 years of teaching experience believed that some of their novice colleagues' lack of general English proficiency particularly spoken English was too challenging in English education.

I think most English teachers are not proficient in English. The most outstanding reason is due to the fact that we just graduated and did not study English in its context. We can rarely find teachers who are competent in the four language skills and this will definitely affect the way they teach.

Although the new national curriculum underlies communicative activities as the essential factors for stimulating the students' engagement and use of English, some interviewees stated that most teachers do not make judicious use of the activities in their instruction and rely more on traditional repetition and translation activities instead.

It is incredible! I hear some experienced colleagues are referring to the old repetition and translation techniques. For example, while teaching the practice section of the textbook particularly the Prospect Series, some teachers simply use the typical method of translating, reading aloud, and asking students to repeat after them.

4.2.3. Job Motivation

Job motivation as the motive to spur one to adopt teaching, stay as a teacher, or abandon it, is the other component of teacher professional identity in this study. The scores from the quantitative procedure of the study indicated that teachers witnessed a very partial shift in their job motivation from time 1 to time 2 of the data collection procedure. In this way, two questions regarding the load of teaching material and the effect of textbooks on teachers' motivation were offered to the participants.

Five participants unanimously believed that despite their positive attitude toward the new textbooks, they suffer from the heavy load of teaching material on the shoulder of teachers that leads to more teaching fronted instruction.

Communicative activities are the base of the new national reform; however, we are so restricted in covering heavy load of material concerning the four language skills that we rarely have enough time to achieve all the desired objectives. Well, students are bombarded with so many words, grammar, and functions that the teachers and even the students do not know what to do and where to begin.

However, two teachers with 25 years of experienced were more satisfied with the amount of teaching material than before.

Grammar translation method with its heavy focus on grammar and reading skill put me in the pressure to finish the textbook in due time.

We were required to read the texts as quickly as possible so that we would have sufficient time to present grammatical points and do the related exercises.

All the participants appreciated the textbooks due to their real life and active context demanding students to be more active in comparison to the previous books.

I have been teaching English in institutes and public schools. Most students were keen on the particular books covering speaking and listening skills in language institutes. The introduction of the new textbooks has created a more fascinating and motivating atmosphere for students and of course teachers!

4.2.4. Task Perception

Task perception as how teachers define their job and judge their professional behavior was another component of teacher professional identity in this study. The techniques of offering teaching material, equality assigned to the four language skills, the fundamental role of teachers in presenting teaching material, quality of class management and the use of task -based teaching materials were major items of the questionnaire. The obtained results indicated that EFL teachers' professional identity with respect to task perception has not changed significantly from time 1 to time 2 (pre-reform to post reform). To shed more light on the issue, three questions on the teachers' role in the post reform era, class management and the equality of teaching the four language skill in the post reform era were administered to the interviewees.

All the interviewees unanimously stated that class management encountered significant difference from the pre-reform to the post-reform era. This could be related to the nature of tasks used in a CLT-oriented English classroom. Cooperative learning in which pair work and group work are highly recommended are at the heart of communicative language teaching. Most of the time students are busy playing roles and doing joint in-class projects. This would lead to lessening teacher's control on students' behavior and class management

became an issue for English teachers. However, the fear of losing control of the class has discouraged teachers to use pair work or group work in an appropriate way.

All the interviewees unanimously stated that class management encountered significant difference from the pre-reform to the post-reform era.

The necessity to provide a real context situation in which the teacher is the facilitator and students are active learners has made class management as a burden on only teachers' shoulder. The new curriculum emphasizes the use of the target language, but as a teacher I must always switch the code and shout to keep the students quiet!

All the participants maintained that listening and speaking skills are perceived to be more significant for learning English for communication than for passing the University Entrance Exam (UEE). They also believed that grammar and reading comprehension ability play more crucial roles for passing the UEE than for learning English for communication. This causes a source of discrepancy between what the learners need for learning the language for communication and demands of UEE. This might restrict the use of CLT as the requirement of the exam system and most teaching methodologies lean toward the knowledge of language than the ability to use the knowledge in oral communicative activities recommended by the CLT.

One more point worth noting is that a key factor to implement curriculum reform successfully is the top-down support from the government and ministry of education. Teachers need a variety of support such as administrative, financial, and logistic to implement the reform (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). As the findings of this study reveal, teachers experienced no tangible change in their job motivation from pre- to post-reform era due to the fact that the ministry of education leaves no support especially financial one to help teacher implement the strategies suggested by the reform.

As the following excerpt from one of the teachers shows, lack of enough support on the part of the ministry of education is a great obstacle.

It is absurd to do ten times as much as you did before this reform and receive no support. No change has happened but the textbooks. No change in facilities, in classroom, in payment,….. even teachers received no reliable in-service training! I wonder how they define reform

All in all, introduction of the curriculum reform made no change in teachers' professional identity in terms of self-esteem and task perception but it slightly affected teachers' self-image and job motivation. It is necessary to mention that that the implementation of curriculum reform and its effect on teachers' professional identity is also intertwined with the wider context of social, political and cultural ones in which the reform is introduced (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). We can depict the findings of this study in light of this issue. It was found that this change made no difference in two aspects of teachers' professional identity, so it can be proposed that teachers' identity is influenced by wider domain including the school context. Therefore, the effect of any curriculum change cannot be studied without considering the social context in which it has been introduced.

The findings of this study provide an in-depth understanding of the complexity and diversity of teachers' professional identities during curriculum reform. As the findings of the study revealed, the implementation of the reform has positively affected the teachers' professional self. As stated above, the reform implemented in Iran has almost influenced all the aspects of a typical class including teachers, textbooks, teaching methodology. By introducing the CLT-oriented textbooks and methodology as the result, teachers and students found dynamism in classroom. They were asked to put more emphasis on the communicative use of English language through group work and participation. This, in turn, helps teachers use their knowledge and competence in English through the use of more English in classroom setting.

In parallel with previous studies (Lee, et al., 2013, among others) the demands of the curriculum reform can drastically influence the professional behaviors of the teachers including their moment-to-moment interactional patterns with students.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The results of this study indicate that introduction of the curriculum reform made no significant change in teachers' professional identity in terms of self-esteem and task perception but it slightly affected teachers' self-image and job motivation. From a theoretical point of view, this study emphasized the notion of transition in professional identity among teachers during their professional life in which some changes in terms of curriculum might be implemented. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of this study seem to help policy-makers take into account different aspects of teacher identity while imposing a curriculum reform.

This study benefits from several implications for authorities in teacher education in general and decision-makers in Iranian ministry of education in particular. First, sufficient teaching hours must be considered to cover all four language skills as efficiently as possible. Second, the implementation of new methodologies requested by the new curriculum, demands equipping EFL teachers with appropriate in service training and support from planners and decision makers. Third, since the nature of tasks proposed by the newly- introduced curriculum leads to uncontrollable behaviour on the part of students, the number of students in EFL classes must be limited and tailored. Finally, EFL teachers need a variety of administrative, financial and logistic aid from the ministry of education to implement the strategies and methodologies demanded by the reform (Marzano, waters & McNulty, 2005).

This study has some implications for teacher education research as well. It could only cover two districts of Isfahan and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari provinces, similar studies can be conducted in other cities with larger sample sizes. Other aspects of the new reform can also be the target of future research for education researchers. The present

study was conducted based on the impact of the Iranian context on teachers' professional identity; the same study can be performed in other contexts and cultures regarding other national reforms and curriculum changes.

All research studies usually suffer from a number of limitations and this study is of no exception. First, persuading teachers to fill the questionnaires and answer to the interview questions was not an easy task. They were reluctant to participate in the study and demonstrate their real ideas and feelings. Second, the study was supposed to cover several cities, yet it could only cover two districts of Isfahan and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari provinces. Third, in some cases, questionnaires were sent via emails, but no answer was received from the target teachers.

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