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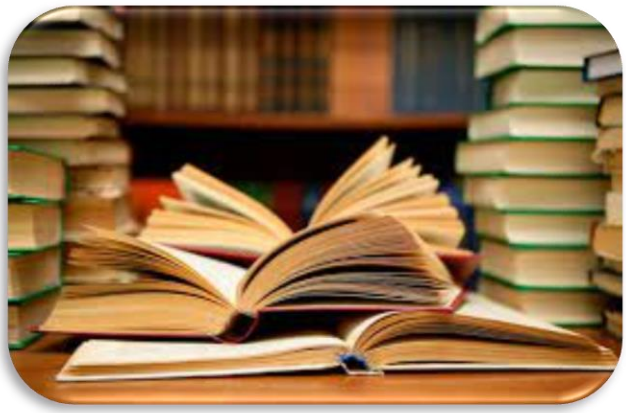

The Relationship between Iranian English Language Teachers Professional Identity and their Cognition: A Qualitative Study with Professional Development Context

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ABSTRACT

This study, delving into the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' professional identity and their cognition during professional development, employed a qualitative data collection approach. Comprising 10 Iranian EFL teachers from various institutes and schools, the study included 10 English language teachers, evenly divided between 5 females and 5 males above the age of 24. Ten participants, split equally between genders, were interviewed for the research. Analyzed using thematic analysis and the Nvivo program, the interview data explored the relationship between three key variables: teacher professional identity, teacher cognition, and teacher professional development. This analysis revealed a significant relationship between teacher cognition, professional identity, and professional development, highlighting their interconnectedness and emphasizing the inherent essence of teaching. To improve their overall experience and effectiveness in the field, teachers should actively seek to enhance their educational professionalization. Professional development holds particular significance as it contributes to teachers' growth, enhancing their effectiveness in their roles. By revealing the factors most influencing teachers, this study may provide valuable insights to the government and administrators, urging them to implement changes. To stay updated with recent teaching trends, teachers need to actively participate in diverse professional development activities.

Keywords: Teacher Cognition, Teacher Professional Identity, Teacher Professional Development, Iranian English Language Teachers

رابطه بین هویت حرفه ای معلمان زبان انگلیسی ایرانی و شناخت آن ها در طول توسعه حرفه ای

این تحقیق در رابطه بین هویت حرفه ای معلمان زبان انگلیسی ایرانی و شناخت آن ها در طول توسعه حرفه ای ، از رویکرد جمع آوری داده های کیفی استفاده کرد. این تحقیق شامل ۱۰ معلم زبان انگلیسی ایرانی از موسسات و مدارس مختلف بود و شامل ۵ زن و ۵ مرد با سن بالای ۲۴ سال بود.برای این تحقیق ، ده نفر به تساوی بین جنسیت مصاحبه شدند. داده های مصاحبه با استفاده از تحلیل موضوعی و نرم افزارهای Nvivo، رابطه بین سه متغیر کلیدی یعنی هویت حرفه ای معلم، شناخت معلم و توسعه حرفه ای معلم را بررسی کرد.این تحلیل نشان داد که رابطه قابل توجهی بین شناخت معلم، هویت حرفه ای و توسعه حرفه ای وجود دارد و برجستگی اهمیت ذاتی تدریس را تاکید می کند. برای بهبود تجربه و کارآمدی کلیه معلمان در این زمینه، آنها باید به صورت فعال سعی کنند تا حرفه ای شدن آموزشی خود را بهبود بخشند.توسعه حرفه ای اهمیت ویژه ای دارد زیرا به رشد معلمان کمک کرده و کارامدی آ نها در نقش هایشان را افزایش می دهد. با اشکار کردن عواملی که بیشترین تاثیر را بر معلمان دارند،این تحقیق ممکن است برای دولت و مدیران راهنمایی های ارزشمندی را ارائه دهد و ان ها را به اجرای تغییرات ترغیب کند. برای باقی ماندن در جریان روند های تدریس اخیر،معلمان باید به صورت فعال در فعالیت های مختلف توسعه حرفه ای شرکت کنند.

واژگان کلیدی :شناخت معلم،هویت حرفه ای معلم،پیشرفت حرفه ای معلم،معلمان زبان انگلیسی ایرانی

INTRODUCTION

Emphasizing the pivotal role of educators in educational systems, the importance of comprehending their perspectives and beliefs during the implementation of educational theories in classrooms cannot be overstated (Eslami & Fatahi, 2008). Teacher professional identity has become a central focus in understanding teachers' growth, with various factors such as motivation, commitment, efficacy, adjustment, and job satisfaction impacting its formation (Sheybani & Miri, 2019; Danielewicz, 2001). Investigating identity unveils the forces shaping individuals' leanings towards specific professions (Tsakissiris, 2015), a concept further illuminated by Bressler and Rotter (2017) who emphasize the intricate interplay between contextual factors and the self in constructing and nurturing teacher professional identity. Drawing from Borg's (2006) definition, second language teachers' cognition encompasses the practical, often implicit, mental constructs evolving throughout their educational and professional experiences (p.35).

Although seemingly obvious, it is the vital role of professional development in enhancing teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes that ultimately benefits student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2000). Driven by the motivating desire to cultivate successful learners, teachers are propelled towards ongoing professional development, a necessary adaptation to the ever-evolving demands of the classroom and the broader societal needs. What's more, by offering Iranian language teachers tailored professional development opportunities, not only can their job commitment and satisfaction be bolstered, but the quality of education in Iran can be demonstrably improved.

Statement of the Problem and Objective of the Study

Though often unacknowledged, a significant influence on teachers' instructional decisions and practices lies in their own, often limited, awareness of their beliefs about language learning and teaching. These beliefs, functioning as an invisible compass, guide teachers in navigating crucial tasks like judgment calls, strategy selection, classroom management, and responses to various scenarios.

Exacerbating the issue is the persistent tendency for teachers to solely attribute their effectiveness or ineffectiveness to external factors, like students and the very classroom environment they navigate. Blind to the crucial role their own beliefs play, shaped by elements like training and professional development, teachers might resist programs targeted at honing their pedagogical skills, perceiving them as clashing with their established beliefs and resulting teaching practices. Despite research advocating for the significant impact of in-service training on both educational reforms and teacher satisfaction, existing studies primarily focus on the influence of personality traits on teaching performance, neglecting the crucial intersection of teacher professional identity, cognition, and their perception of professional development.

Though existing research exists, understanding the intricate interplay between teacher cognition, professional identity, and the effectiveness of professional development initiatives remains elusive, particularly in the Iranian context, where limited research has delved into the multifaceted influences of EFL teachers' attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and professional identity on their engagement with professional development.

Unveiling the intricate links between teacher identity and professional development in the Iranian EFL context, this study delves into how Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity shapes their

engagement with professional growth. Furthermore, it sheds light on the influence of teachers' cognition, a significant yet often overlooked player, on their overall professional journey.

Research questions

Demystifying the potential connections between Iranian EFL teachers' professional development and their very identity, this study tackles two key questions:

RQ1: How does the professional identity of Iranian EFL teachers, often seen as a guiding star, hold any statistically significant sway over their professional development?

RQ2: How does the intricate interplay of teacher cognition, often a hidden force, hold any statistically significant influence on their professional growth?

Significance of the Study

Thrust into the whirlwind of the information age, the 21st century witnesses rapid technological advancements and unprecedented knowledge accessibility, profoundly disrupting the very landscape of the teaching profession. With the emergence of new media platforms like the internet, television, newspapers, and magazines, traditional teaching roles face unprecedented challenges. Now tasked with incorporating the latest and most accurate information into their classrooms while continuously honing their skills and knowledge, teachers often find themselves grappling with managing difficult students, maintaining discipline, and fostering positive relationships with colleagues and parents. This struggle may stem from a lack of awareness and appreciation for the transformative power of professional development, leaving them without the necessary support to navigate the complexities of their roles. Frequently overlooked in educational research, beliefs, values, feelings, and attitudes exert a substantial influence on our actions, shaping our choices and guiding our behaviors. Moreover, a teacher's identity plays a pivotal role in shaping their professional development, as they draw upon personal experiences and societal perceptions of teaching to define their role and navigate the challenges they encounter. Delving deeper into this under-explored territory, this study examines the role of teacher cognition and the imperative of cognitive engagement in teacher training, a facet that has received inadequate attention in the field. By exploring how teacher cognition and professional identity intersect with professional development, this study aims to inform and bolster teacher training programs, ultimately leading to more effective and empowered educators. The findings of this research hold wide-ranging implications for various stakeholders, including English Language learners and educators, language departments, educational institutions, and governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Education. By illuminating the factors that influence teacher growth and development, this study can contribute to the creation of more relevant, effective, and empowering professional development opportunities for teachers, ultimately benefiting students, educators, and the educational system as a whole.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Within the educational landscape, professional identity rests on a firm foundation of three pillars: specialized skills, unwavering moral integrity, and a keen command of pedagogical expertise (Carr, 2005). Transcending industry boundaries, from the realm of customer service and office work to the

rigors of construction and skilled trades, professionalism serves as the bedrock for individual advancement and success. More than a mere outward appearance, professionalism encompasses a tapestry of vital traits, including a steadfast commitment to responsibility, unwavering integrity, a keen sense of accountability, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. Furthermore, it demands effective communication and the ability to deliver results. For the truly professional individual, punctuality, time management mastery, ownership of actions, a collaborative spirit, adherence to rigorous standards, and unwavering integrity in both conduct and presentation become second nature. Indeed, effective workplace communication serves as the cornerstone of genuine professionalism.

Underscoring the crucial link between teachers' professional identity and their growth trajectory, research by Barrett (2008), Miller (2009), Varghese et al. (2005), and others reveals the significant impact identity plays on both teachers' development and their performance in the classroom. Scholars have delved deeply into the intricate relationship between teacher identity, professional development, and ultimately, teaching quality, as evidenced by the work of Beauchamp & Thomas (2009), Labbaf et al. (2019), Moral et al. (2014), Pennington & Richards (2016), and Xiong & Xiong (2017). For example, Labbaf et al. (2019) conducted interviews with 143 EFL instructors and their students, utilizing thematic analysis to develop a questionnaire. This research revealed the substantial influence exerted by teachers' professional identity on the quality of their teaching. Further complicating the picture, teacher cognition, encompassing the internal cognitive landscape of knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts, is itself shaped by a teacher's educational background and their accumulated professional experiences (Borg, 2003, 2013). Several studies, including the work of Brookhart & Freeman (1992), have highlighted the prevalence of unrealistic or immature beliefs held by students even as they enter teacher education programs, painting a complex picture of the factors influencing teacher development.

Though cloaked in various terms like "continuing education," "professional learning," and "in-service training," professional development at its core is about empowering individuals to grow and enhance their professional capabilities (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Within the Iranian context, recent studies have meticulously explored various facets of teacher identity in Second Language (L2) teaching and its intricate interplay with other relevant variables. For instance, Sugesti, Rukmini, and Fitriati (2020) unearthed a positive correlation between EFL teachers' cognition and their actual teaching practices. Similarly, Sheybani and Miri (2019) established a statistically significant connection between Iranian English foreign language teachers' professional identity and their critical thinking skills, while Derakhshan et al. (2020) demonstrated the synergistic effects of both professional identity and autonomy on teachers' overall success. Shifting the focus to student outcomes, Anning (2020) investigated the impact of teacher professional development on students' academic performance, highlighting the positive influence of recent programs on teachers' research abilities and instructional methods, which ultimately led to improved student outcomes. Further delving into the complex web of relationships, Parsi and Ashraf (2020) explored the connections among EFL teachers' critical thinking, professional identity, and teaching experience, noting significant positive correlations between these key variables. Finally, Pinar, Bardakci, and Arslan (2021) examined the intricate tapestry of factors influencing teachers' professional learning, emphasizing the significant influence of teacher cognition and beliefs, teacher emotions, and contextual variables on the overall learning process.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

To delve deeply into participants' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes, this research adopted a qualitative design, wielding interviews as the primary tool for gathering detailed insights

Participants

A diverse group of ten teachers, evenly split between genders with five males and five females, participated in this study. Selected through convenience sampling for their accessibility and willingness to share their experiences, these individuals were interviewed directly in their workplaces during the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. All participants boasted 5-10 years of valuable teaching experience within private English language institutes and schools in Shiraz, Iran, further bolstering their knowledge and understanding of the local educational context. Possessing qualifications in TEFL or related fields, including both master's and PhD degrees, these dedicated teachers brought a wealth of expertise and perspectives to the research.

Instrument

To delve deeply into Iranian language teachers' perspectives on professional development, this study relied exclusively on interviews as its research instrument. The interview questions themselves were meticulously crafted, drawing upon the established frameworks of Horwitz's Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), the Teacher Professional Identity Scale (Hashemi, Karimi, & Mofidi, 2015), and the Professional Development Scale (Ayyoobi, Pourshafei, & Asgari, 2016), thus ensuring both the reliability and validity of the data collected.

Interviews are primarily done in qualitative research and occur when researchers ask one or more participants in general, open-ended questions and record their answers. Often audiotapes are utilized to allow for more consistent transcription (Creswell,2012).The researcher often transcribes and types the data into a computer file, in order to analyze it after interviewing. Interviews are particularly useful for uncovering the story behind a participant’s experiences and pursuing in-depth information around a topic. Interviews may be useful to follow-up with individual respondents after questionnaires, e.g., to further investigate their responses. (McNamara, 1999).In qualitative research specifically, interviews are used to pursue the meanings of central themes in the world of their subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (McNamara, 2009). Usually open-ended questions are asked during interviews in hopes of obtaining impartial answers, while close ended Questions may force participants to answer in a particular way(Creswell,2012; McNamara,1999).An open-ended question gives participants more options for responding.

Data Collection Procedure

Delving into the intricate interplay between teacher cognition and professional identity and their impact on professional development, this study utilized individual semi-structured interviews as its qualitative arm. Prior to each interview, participants were meticulously briefed on the research's purpose, data usage, interview duration, and the importance of confidentiality, and were subsequently presented with

informed consent forms. With their gracious permission, interviews were digitally recorded for accurate transcription, ranging in duration from 15 to 50 minutes.

Data Analysis Procedure

To unlock the hidden stories within the interview data, this study employed thematic analysis, empowered by the analytical prowess of NVivo software. This approach, grounded in exploring, identifying patterns, meticulously coding, and subsequently distilling themes into a cohesive narrative, allowed for a deep dive into the qualitative data set. Interview transcripts were rigorously reviewed, unveiling meaningful patterns that were then meticulously coded, a process fueled by an iterative cycle of evaluation and revision to ensure both the internal coherence of the themes and their relevance to the research question. Crucially, NVivo software served as a powerful co-pilot, facilitating the organization and analysis of the interview data, ultimately contributing to a comprehensive understanding of how teacher cognition and professional identity intertwine with professional development.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Descriptive statistics for interview

To further enrich the research tapestry, the study not only leveraged quantitative methods but also weaved in the invaluable insights gleaned from qualitative data analysis. This section delves into both the descriptive statistics obtained from the quantitative analyses and the illuminating themes extracted from the qualitative data.

Tables 1, Table 2 and Table 3 represents descriptive statistics for participants of the interview.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for gender in the interview

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	5	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Male	5	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

As Table 1 showed that there were 5 males (50 percent) and 50 females (50 percent) in the interview, giving a total of 10 respondents.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for degree in the interview

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	PhD	3	30.0	30.0	30.0
	M.A	7	70.0	70.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Diving into the demographics of the interviewed teachers, Table 2 reveals that three participants, representing 30%, held PhDs in applied linguistics, while the remaining seven, or 70%, possessed Master of Arts degrees in English teaching. This brings the total number of respondents to a well-rounded ten.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for the place of work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Institution	5	50.0	50.0	50.0
	School	5	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

As Table 3 represented that there were 5 participants from institution (50 percent) and 5 participants from school (50 percent).

What to code

Delving deeper into the interview data, a rich tapestry of coding themes emerged, encompassing skills like communication, teamwork, and organization, as well as confidence, imagination, and commitment. Additionally, understanding of technology, vocabulary development, and exposure to diverse professional development opportunities (workshops, seminars, online courses, Iranian and international programs) were highlighted. The data also revealed variations in participation duration (from 1 day to 34 days) and emphasized the importance of attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs, and skills such as self-efficacy, critical thinking, and commitment. Furthermore, the text underscores the complementary relationship between professional identity and professional development, highlighting the influence of teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes on their practices. This interplay is further bolstered by complementary connections between teacher cognition and professional development, suggesting that teachers' beliefs, reading habits, observation skills, and engagement with current trends and professional development activities significantly shape their classroom practices.

Figure 1

The important coding of the qualitative part

	Teacher 1	Teacher2	T 3	T 4	T 5	T 6	T 7	T 8	T 9	T 10
Advanced skills, traits, strategies, improving your career	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Competence ,performance	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Iranian workshops	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Foreign workshops(CELTA course)	*									
Receive no salary supplement for participating in different workshops	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs	*		*	*	*	*	*		*	*
Teacher's work		*								
Other opinion(if you are professional)								*		
Authentic , consistent, distinctive	*									
Psychological process	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Complementary relationship between professional identity and professional development	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Complementary relationship between teacher cognition and professional development	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Take part in professional development workshops	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Useful (PD)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

TO answer the research questions through qualitative results

Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity and their professional development?

A dynamic and ever-evolving construct, teachers' professional identity shapes not only their professional persona but also their personal lives. This intricate interplay necessitates investigating both the personal and professional dimensions of teaching, unraveling the essence of being and empowering an educator. Beyond initial training, professional development serves as a catalyst for acquiring new skills and knowledge, achieved through diverse avenues like continuing education, workshops, conferences, and specialized certifications. To delve deeper into these complexities and validate the quantitative findings, qualitative interviews employed targeted questions specific to the first research question.

In the interview part, the question related to the first research question was asked.

How can you relate professional identity to professional development?

They are complementary and based on the pure nature of teaching, each and every teacher must try to comprehend the necessities, and criteria for the high quality teaching systems in a better way. In other words, teachers must try to enhance their educational professionalization. By following the educational professionalization. By following the educational professionalization, teachers would be able to experience everything in a better way.

Teacher (1) said, '*Every teacher is expected to try to comprehend the necessities, and criteria for the high quality teaching systems in a better way*.'

Teacher (3) said, '*Developing a professional identity includes assessing who you are and what you have to offer.'*

Developing your professional identity hinges upon a crucial first step: self-assessment of your skillset. This critical introspection demands shunning toxic workplace behaviors, cultivating purposefulness, and meticulously organizing both your schedule and assigned tasks, while honing your communication skills can further bolster this journey.

Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' cognition and professional development?

Rooted in a teacher's educational background and professional journey, teacher cognition—an umbrella term encompassing knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts—is a dynamic entity that shapes their practice, as noted by Borg (2003, 2013). In contrast, professional development embodies the purposeful pursuit of self-improvement through learning and training to propel career advancement. While schools and institutions may offer valuable training sessions, the onus of professional development often falls squarely on the shoulders of individual teachers, who diligently seek out diverse avenues for growth. Whether it's enrolling in classes, attending workshops, or independently acquiring new skills, teachers possess an agency to cultivate their expertise. Ultimately, professional development also encompasses staying abreast of current trends within your field and seamlessly integrating these innovative practices into your existing repertoire, leading to a refined and dynamic teaching approach.

A cornerstone of professional success, ongoing development empowers you to become a more effective teacher, unlocking doors to career advancement through promotions and improved compensation. Your dedication to acquiring knowledge and expertise through professional development elevates your marketability, making you a more desirable candidate within your field. Furthermore, investing in your professional growth not only benefits your skillset and knowledge base, but also yields positive outcomes for your school or university. Your institution recognizes and potentially rewards your success, creating a mutually beneficial cycle. As the results demonstrate, professional development and institutional recognition are not independent entities, but rather complementary forces working in tandem to fuel your career trajectory.

Different teachers were interviewed and they had the same taste about it.

In the interview part, the question related to the second research question was asked.

How can you relate teacher cognition to professional development?

Teacher 2 said, '*They are complementary*.'

Teacher 9 said, '*Teacher cognition may strongly cause the teacher to keep their interest in learning more and more, being familiar with many new approaches, and methods in professional development.'*

Teacher 6 said, '*By increasing your knowledge and beliefs you can increase your sense of commitment.'*

Empowering students to solve problems independently, respecting their unique beliefs and thoughts, lies at the heart of effective teaching. This approach not only fosters student autonomy but also has a profound impact on the teacher's personal and professional development, shaping both self-identity and career trajectory. For instance, a teacher's understanding of how students learn (their cognition) can manifest in the classroom through concise instructions that blend words and actions, facilitating clearer comprehension. Investing in professional development opportunities further empowers teachers to hone their time management and organizational skills, transforming them into efficient educators who can dedicate more time to their students, beyond the burden of paperwork. Ultimately, students yearn for educators who possess subject-matter expertise in the topics they teach, and fostering this expertise through continuous learning benefits both teachers and their students.

Since the mid-1990s, the enigmatic realm of teacher cognition – the unseen dimension of their professional lives – has captivated both researchers and practitioners in the field of language teaching. This intricate concept has been scrutinized from diverse perspectives, with a unifying thread across disciplines and research paradigms: unraveling the very essence of "cognition" and its indispensable role in effective pedagogy and teacher development. By meticulously observing teachers' actions and words within their professional context, we can peel back the layers of their thought processes and glean how those invisible workings manifest in their teaching practices. As Vygotsky (1986) aptly noted, "The relation of thought to word undergoes changes that themselves may be regarded as development in the functional sense" (p. 218).

DISCUSSION

Delving into the intricate tapestry woven between Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity, their cognition, and their professional development, this study unveiled a dynamic interplay of factors shaping their growth and effectiveness. The findings, illuminating the significant correlations between these variables, offer valuable insights for educators and stakeholders seeking to cultivate a thriving learning environment.

Professional Identity and Professional Development

Unveiling a powerful connection within the field of EFL education, this study illuminated a noteworthy relationship between teachers' professional identity and their engagement in professional development. Individuals possessing a firmly established sense of professional identity demonstrated markedly higher levels of engagement and success in these growth-oriented activities. This powerful link underscores the crucial role professional identity plays in shaping teachers' motivations, priorities, and ultimately, the choices they make regarding their ongoing development and refinement.

Teacher professional identity, a multifaceted tapestry woven from beliefs, values, and a sense of belonging within the teaching profession, serves as the inner compass guiding teachers' perceptions of themselves within their roles. Conversely, professional development activities, strategically designed to enhance knowledge, skills, and competencies, act as the external catalyst for growth. This study revealed a profound connection between these two forces, demonstrating that a robust professional identity significantly influences teachers' engagement in professional development activities, shaping their motivations and preferences like a potter molding clay. Fueled by a robust professional identity, teachers

naturally gravitate towards continuous learning opportunities that resonate with their core beliefs and career aspirations. This unifying thread between their identity and their professional development choices suggests that a teacher's sense of self acts as a powerful guiding force, shaping their journey towards professional growth. Furthermore, collaborative endeavors like workshops and communities of practice emerge as powerful catalysts, fostering a shared sense of professional identity among teachers. These shared spaces, buzzing with interactions between colleagues who resonate with similar values and goals, not only reinforce and validate teachers' individual identities but also fuel their engagement in professional development activities, igniting a collective spark of growth.

In alignment with previous research, which highlights the significant relationship between teacher professional identity and professional development, the findings underscore this correlation. A positive correlation between professional identity and professional autonomy among EFL teachers was discovered by Dilek and Altas (2022), emphasizing the crucial role of autonomy in defining teachers' identities within the profession. Likewise, experience was identified as a key factor influencing the construction of professional identities among Iranian EFL teachers, as revealed by Gheitasi and Aliakbari (2022).

Noonan (2023) investigated an affinity for learning: teacher identity and powerful professional development. The results showed that professional identity is a durable (but malleable) filter through which teachers interpret professional learning.

Xu, Li, Sun (2022) investigated relationship between professional identity, career satisfaction, value of competence and growth, and job burnout. The results indicated that career satisfaction mediated the relationship between teachers' professional identity and job burnout. When the scores for competencies and growth were high, teachers' professional identity exhibited the greatest predictive effect on burnout through career satisfaction.

Maftoon, and Siyyari (2022) investigated teachers' professional identity development. This study explored Prospective teachers' (PTs) professional identity development at different stages of learning to teach within a four-year Second Language (L2) initial teacher education program. The results of both quantitative and qualitative data analyses revealed that the second-year PTs' language awareness had a major contribution to the enactment of collective identity of language analyst and language user roles as part of their professional identity. Teaching practicum experiences also helped the third-year PTs develop a sense of belonging to the school community by aligning themselves with its rules and policies, which helped them develop their professional identity in a prescribed manner, informing institutionally situated identity of formal teachers. The fourth-year PTs' identification of themselves with regard to their prospective learners' needs was also the identity development observed in the form of learner-oriented attitude towards learners as whole persons, all conducive to imagined future identity of needs analyst.

Teacher Cognition and Professional Development

Revealing a meaningful relationship between teachers' cognition and professional development, the qualitative analysis sheds light on this connection. Serving as a foundational element in shaping professional development experiences, teacher cognition encompasses beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and thought processes about teaching and learning.

Deeply embedded within teachers' existing beliefs and knowledge lies a powerful force shaping their engagement with professional development activities. This influence not only guides their interpretations of new skills and knowledge, but also dictates their application after participating in training. Take, for instance, teachers who hold strong convictions in student-centered learning: They are far more likely to actively seek out professional development opportunities that resonate with and reinforce their existing educational philosophy. Far from simply reinforcing existing beliefs, professional development experiences can act as catalysts for growth, challenging and shaping teachers' cognitive landscape. This transformative power often leads to seismic shifts: not only in their instructional practice, but also in their very perception of their professional identity. The study serves as a testament to this dynamic dance, illuminating the reciprocal nature of the relationship between teacher cognition and professional development. Consistent with previous research that emphasizes the influence of contextual factors, learner variables, and teaching experiences on teacher cognitions and classroom practices (Bagheri & East, 2021), the findings are presented. Identifying various challenges to teacher cognition in EFL contexts, including societal factors, student attitudes, and educational policies, Ahmad, Farid, and Hussain (2021) have contributed valuable insights.

Li Li (2023) investigated a discursive psychological perspective on teacher cognition, investigating novice teacher cognition using applied conversation analysis. The data revealed the key themes in teachers' understanding of 1) focusing on linguistic knowledge, 2) establishing teacher authority, and 3) developing practical pedagogical knowledge. The findings reveal teachers' moment – by- moment cognition-in interaction and multiple roles in facilitate learning.

Gao and Yang (2022) investigated a novice teacher to a teacher leader: An English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher's cognitions about her professional development.

In this paper, a qualitative study was conducted on Jennifer. Findings suggest that Jennifer has clear cognitions about how she learned and improved, i.e., the positive changes, in her professional journey and the facilitating factors that mediated her improvements and progress. These facilitating factors were found to include her teaching experience, in –service training, administrative promotion, drawing wisdom for reading Chinese classics, and constant reflection upon her English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching, etc.

Krulatz, Christison, Lorenz, Sevinc (2022) investigated the impact of teacher professional development on teacher cognition and multilingual teaching practices. The findings suggest that the teachers displayed individual trajectories in the development of teacher cognition and practices. While one of the teachers showed considerable change over time, the other one remained more stable, suggesting that individual differences, such as language and family background, education, and teaching experience mediate the impact of PD.

Cao, Zhang, Liu, and Pu (2022) investigated exploring English for medical purposes (EMP) teacher cognition in the Chinese context. The results revealed that significant differences in EMP teacher learning in terms of gender, differences in EMP teacher attitude and teacher support in terms of EMP teaching experience.

Blomeka, Jentsch, Ross, Kaiser, and Konig (2022) investigated the impact of teacher competence, instructional quality, and students' learning progress. The results revealed a mediating role of teachers'

skills and their instructional quality for the relation between teacher knowledge and students' learning progress.

Limitations and Future Directions

While insightful, this study, like any other, possesses limitations that demand consideration. The relatively small sample size restricts the generalizability of its findings. Future research, armed with a larger and more diverse sample, could replicate the study, validating the results across wider contexts. Furthermore, the study's singular focus on the Iranian EFL context raises questions about its transferability to other settings. Expanding the research scope to encompass different EFL contexts could assess the universality of the findings, illuminating broader patterns and complexities. Providing valuable insights into teacher cognition and professional identity, the study, however, encounters a limitation with the limited number of teacher participants, constraining the depth and breadth of the findings. Future studies, aiming to capture a more comprehensive understanding of these phenomena, could involve a larger pool of participants.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, the study not only underscores the critical role of professional identity and cognition in shaping EFL teachers' professional development experiences, but it also emphatically highlights the need for carefully tailored professional development initiatives that are meticulously aligned with teachers' personal beliefs, cherished values, and ever-evolving knowledge. Teacher cognition and professional development are closely intertwined. Teacher cognition influences how teachers engage with professional development opportunities and shapes their interpretation and application of new knowledge.

At the same time, professional development experiences can challenge and reshape teacher cognition, leading to growth and improvement in teaching practices.

The interaction between teacher cognition and professional development forms a dynamic and continuous process that supports ongoing professional growth and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Teacher professional identity and teacher professional development are intertwined. Professional development can both shape and be shaped by a teacher's professional identity.

The study's findings resonate not only with language instructors and EFL students, but their implications extend to a wider circle of stakeholders in the education sector, including educational managers, policymakers, and syllabus designers. Consequently, the study recommends promoting collaborative professional development opportunities, empowering teachers with greater autonomy, and ensuring that professional development activities are strategically aligned with teachers' unique cognitive processes.

Overall, the study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge on teacher professional development, and it does so by underlining the utmost importance of considering teachers' identities and cognitions when designing effective and impactful professional development programs.

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