Professional Identity and Teaching Quality: The case of Iranian EFL teachers*

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Abstract

This paper reports on the findings of a research aimed at exploring the professional identity (PI) of English as Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in Iran. The research further examined the extent to which the identified PI factors affect their teaching quality. The authors argue that earlier classification of different factors of professional identity of EFL teachers is arbitrary and may only be valid by definition. The possible grouping of these factors is also examined to identify what clusters of factors have relative importance in EFL teacher's professional identity and how these clusters may contribute to the quality of teaching. Sample participants contributed in semi-structured interviews and subsequently based on the thematic analysis of the interviews a questionnaire was developed and completed by a total of 143 EFL instructors and students. Factor Analysis of data identified four distinct clusters accounted for a total of nineteen variables presenting the PI profile of EFL teacher in which Personal Characteristics (PC) emerged as the most important cluster. Consequently, five clusters identified to have a considerable effect on teaching quality, Pedagogical knowledge (PK) found to be the most influential cluster. These findings may well serve as a valuable pedagogical resource for EFL teachers and policy makers to help improve teaching quality, educational processes, and curriculum design.
Keywords: Identity, Professional Identity, EFL teacher identity, quality of teaching

Intoduction

The concept of Identity is explained in terms of a unique set of one's own characteristics perceived in comparison to other individuals (Pennington, 2015). It is a broad and complicated concept and new dimensions are explored and added to the original notion as it develops through time. It is, therefore, asserted that identity is related to people's concept of who they think they are, and what other people think of them (Gee, 2000). In the last decades many scholarly efforts have been devoted to the topic of language teacher identity (e.g., Duff & Uchida, 1997; Johnston, 1999, 2003; Morgan, 2004; Pavlenko, 2003; Varghese, 2000). Nevertheless this area is still a promising area of academic research compared to the vast amount of researches devoted to learner identity (e.g., Ha, 2008; Norton & Toohey, 2011). It is therefore asserted that understanding identity and its role in teacher education, contribute to the acknowledgment of what it feels like to be a teacher in today's schools, and aids to dissolve conflicts between person and context (Beijaard et al. 2004).

In educational domain, professional identity is reflected as being complex and dynamic which equalizes a balance between professional self-image and the perceived roles teachers play at work (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998; Coldron & Smith, 1999). Emphasizing the significance of investigating teachers' identity, Varghese et al. (2005), believed that understanding identity is the key to understanding language teaching and learning and helps to clarify teachers' claimed or assigned identities(e.g.; professional, cultural and political). As Fogle & Moser, (2017) acknowledged, understanding teacher identities is critical to gain deeper insights of the factors that influence a teacher's decision-making process, their attitudes and believes. Hence it may be concluded that identity is an influencing factor on teachers' motivation, self-efficacy, and commitment, as well as effectiveness. Then how teachers perceive themselves as teachers and what factors contribute to their perceptions is worthy of academic investigation. This explorative study deals with the EFL teachers and students perceptions as representation of their personal knowledge of EFL teacher professional

identity. This study also deals with teaching quality, defined as representing a good teacher who teaches effectively so to improve students learning and to promote better student achievements (Hanushek, 2002). Some studies refer to it as teachers' behavioral role with respect to beliefs, knowledge, and action in the classroom (Harris & Muijs, 2005). With respect to factors enhancing the quality of teaching, this study focuses on PI factors contributing to teaching quality.

Although there is considerable literature on teacher identity in different countries, yet EFL teacher identity has rarely been taken into account in SLA research in Iranian context. Little attention has been paid to the issue of EFL teacher identity by Iranian researchers specifically in relation to teaching quality in the context of academic arena. There also seems to be a growing interest for improvement of pedagogical competences and an increasing need to enhance teaching quality of EFL teachers at national level. Hence, further research needs to be done in order to provide greater clarity of the concept in terms of its definition and the factors that significantly affect teaching quality and its implications for the language teaching.

This study begins to fill this gap by exploring those critical factors that constitute the professional identity (PI) of English as Foreign Language (EFL) teacher from the perspectives of both the EFL participant teachers and students. As related literature suggests, earlier classifications of different factors of professional identity of EFL teachers may only be valid by definition, in this study, the possible grouping of these factors will be examined in order to identify what clusters of factors have relative importance in EFL teacher's professional identity and how these clusters may contribute to the quality of teaching.

Literature Review

Teacher identity has gained considerable attention in educational research and it is a relatively new subject in recent years .The concept of identity has taken on many meanings in the literature across a number of disciplines and perspectives. According to Gee (2000), it is viewed

as "an important analytic tool for understanding schools and society" (p. 99). It is asserted that teachers' identity can be utilized as a frame or analytical lens through which aspects of teaching can be explored (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

There appears to be a consensus that identity is not an attribute, but rather a relational phenomenon that teachers themselves adopt or assigned to them (Beijaard, et al., 2004; Johnston & Johnson, 2005). Nevertheless compared with many research topics in general education, interest in identity issues in English language education has been relatively emerged as a new line of research . According to Caihong (2011) Many studies on Second Language learners' self-identity have been reported (e.g., Gao et al., 2002, 2003, 2005; Norton, 1995, 1997, 2000), meanwhile, studies on EFL teachers' identity have also been attracting interest in SL education (e.g. Clarke, 2008; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Liu, 2009; Tsui, 2007).

Beauchamp et, al. (2009) admitted that defining identity has been a difficult task because of its multifaceted and dynamic nature that is affected by many factors and changes over time. It is further asserted that identity is affected by both internal (Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Veen & Sleegers, 2006; Zembylas, 2003) and external factors to the person (Flores & Day, 2006; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Sachs, 2005).

Many studies in the area of EFL/ESL research highlight the importance of teacher professional identity in teaching and emphasize their related implications for classroom practice (Varghese et al. 2005). Professional identity according to Lasky (2005) is considered as how teachers define their professional roles. Professional identity as the core of teaching profession provides a basis for self-conception each person perceives about themselves based on their experiences, motives, beliefs, and values (Ibarra, 1999; Sachs, 2005). It is further argued that professional identity is a multifaceted issue which involves personal, professional and situational factors which impact teachers' behavior in the classroom and their teaching effectiveness. (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000).

Related Literature

In an attempt to explore the transformative potential of teacher's identity, Morgan (2004) explains the importance of contextual factors in shaping the relational processes through which teachers and students come to understand themselves and negotiate their different roles by means of practicing language in classrooms.

In the light of Communities of Practice and critical discourse theory, Gu (2014) studied how teacher identities are broadly shaped, within the existing social structures during teacher education programs.   He concluded that identity formation is enacted individually while is under the influence of mediating contextual factors, and socio-economic backgrounds of the teachers and teaching profession.

Reviewing the notion of identity in the teaching context, Pennington (1999) explains how teacher's PI is constructed under the influence of individual characteristics and those factors which characterize EFL teaching as a whole. Penington (2016) echoes the words of Beauchamp and Thomas and concludes that "teacher identity is dynamic rather than stable and a constantly evolving phenomenon" (2009: p, 177).

 It is argued that many researches related to EFL teacher identity (Menard-Warwick, 2013; Pickford, 2014; Fogle & Moser, 2017) emphasize that language teacher identities influence teachers' practice and serve as a means for setting goals and interpreting the outcomes of teachers' work. They conclude that these studies demonstrate the complex social processes involved in language teacher development and highlight the relationships that teacher identity has to classroom practice and can serve to contextualize language teaching in place and time.

In the context of Iran, few studies have investigated issues related to identity in second language acquisition (SLA) and EFL teachers' education. Abednia (2012) reports on the findings of a critical EFL teacher education course on Iranian teachers' professional identity reconstruction. In this study   grounded theory was used to analyze the data gathered through teachers' interviews, reflective journals, class

discussions, and teacher educator's journals. The results revealed some major shifts in teachers' professional identities.

Hesamoddini (2013) studied the probable relationship between the teachers' professional identity on the one hand, and their self-efficacy on the other hand. The findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between the PI and the SE level of the participants. This research only focuses on one variable which is self-efficacy, usually considered a part of personal characteristics.

In an attempt to summarize the main findings of recent studies of teachers' professional identity and to come up with a general categorization of these findings Zare-eea & Ghasedib (2014) identified three main categories explained as: a) the construction of TPI, b) the characteristics of TPI, and c) practicing teachers' narration of TPI. Major factors affecting TPI were also summarized in four categories of: historical, sociological, psychological and cultural factors.

In a recent study by Ghanizadeh & Abedi Ostad (2016) the relation among the components of teachers' professional identity was investigated. In this study some underlying   factors of teachers' professional identity were classified as self-expectations, teacher duties, pedagogies and etc….The Kao and Lin's (2015) predetermined 22 items questionnaire was then employed in the study. The findings of a correlation analysis revealed the existing relationship among the components of hypothesized categories of EFL teacher Identity.

An investigation of identity construction processes of an Iranian EFL teacher was done by Mirzaee & Aliakbari (2017). In this study social ecology of identity by Wenger (1998) was incorporated to analyze the data. The study revealed that social issues were the most effective factor in the construction of teacher's identity in comparison to other factors such as personal agency.

In concluding the above literature review several important points are to be emphasized which highlight the theoretical framework of this study. First is the dynamic and multifaceted nature of teacher professional identity which does not bear a single definition. The

second issue concerns the internal and external factors affecting teachers' identity. Third is that identity incorporates different aspects, mainly personal, professional and situational. The fourth issue as Caihong (2011) reports is the relationships between these facets, in which themes such as teachers' characteristics and their perceptions about their work form a common pattern of interrelationship. It is generally assumed that these elements, often in interaction with each other, influence a teacher's thoughts and actions. Finally, as the professional identity of teachers is considered the core of their teaching experiences which determines their teaching practice, motivation, and commitment (Burn, 2007), valuable findings are expected to be obtained from extended researches in this area. Here we argue that the earlier classification of different elements of EFL teacher professional identity is hypothetical and may only be valid by definition.

The above review provides some guidelines for this research and supports the logical premises on which the research's questions are formulated in the following terms:

1-What factors constitute Professional teacher Professional Identity?

2-What patterns of interrelationship exists among the identified components of EFL Identity of Iranian EFL teachers?

3-What aspects of EFL teacher Professional Identity affect teaching quality?

Method

This study aimed to explore the PI of EFL teacher in order to gain a better understanding of PI of EFL teacher and those critical factors of PI contributing to the quality of teaching. A semi-structured interview and a self-designed questionnaire are two instruments used to collect the data needed. A group of EFL university lecturers (N=42) mainly from Isfahan university willingly participated in this study. The second group of participants were EFL students (N=101) who were studying at the BA, MA and Ph.D. level at the Department of English language in Isfahan University. The data were collected sequentially at two phases. At the first phase, a semi-structured interview was conducted as a

qualitative tool and three general questions were asked from each participant individually in the following terms:

1-How do you define the professional identity of an EFL teacher?

2- What factors do you think constitute the PI profile of EFL teachers?

3-What PI factors of EFL teacher enhances the quality of teaching?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted first with five EFL University teachers who had at least 10 years of teaching experience in the department of English Language at University of Isfahan, and later with five EFL students who were graduating at different levels at University of Isfahan, (Two BA students, Two MA students, and one PhD student). The interviews were individually conducted in Farsi and simultaneously audio-recorded and concurrently transcribed while important ideas regarding the theme of the discussion were mentioned by the participants.

In the second phase a questionnaire was self-designed Based on the outcome of the semi-structured interviews. The first part of the questionnaire contained demographic questions. The second part contained 19 items in relation to the components of the professional identity. The third part included 28 items to identify those PI factors that contribute to the quality of teaching.

The participants then were instructed to respond to questionnaire items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (No opinion) to 4 (Strongly agree).

In order to ensure high return rate the questionnaire was self-administered and handed out to convenient sample of EFL teachers at their office. It was later distributed amongst EFL students at the end of class sessions with the permission of instructors. The total reliability of the first set of 19 items of the questionnaire, estimated via Cronbach's alpha, was 0.84 and was 0.87 for the second set of 28 items. Right before handing out the questionnaires, the quality of teaching was explained to the respondents as a measure for learning improvement and student achievement relating to PI factors identified. By applying

these tools the researcher was able to obtain a more comprehensive image of EFL teacher professional identity, and those factors affecting EFL teacher quality of teaching. Since two different groups of participants (42 EFL teachers and 101 EFL students) completed the questionnaire, the structure of sentences on each part of the questionnaire was arranged according to the respondents.

Analysis of Data

The audio-recorded Semi-structured interviews were transcribed into texts and the transcriptions were then analyzed in detail, implementing a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the most common methods for analyzing semi-structured interviews (Flick, 2014). This kind of analysis strives to identify patterns of themes in the interview data. In doing so the researcher studied the transcriptions to find out the emerging themes as an indication of those factors which make up the professional identity of EFL teacher and those factors affecting the quality of teaching. Using thematic analysis each participant's answers were taken into account and grouped under emerging themes of the study and every theme was rounded by several answers. The result of such analysis led to designing a questionnaire for exploring EFL teacher PI and also identifying important factors in PI that may have contributed to the quality of teaching. It is important to note that the questions in the questionnaire were not presented in predetermined categories so as to increase the reliability of the measures.

The data obtained through questionnaire was then tabulated and analyzed using SPSS version 23. Statistical analysis was carried on at descriptive and analytical levels. Descriptive analysis of data gathered from 143 questionnaires (42 EFL teachers plus 101 EFL students) was used to get an overall picture of the EFL teacher PI and the importance of each component. The mean value and standard deviation for each item were then calculated based on the values assigned to them. The rank importance of each item was also obtained using Freedman Test. Same procedures were conducted for analyzing the data obtained from the third part of the questionnaire regarding those PI factors perceived by respondents as effective on teaching quality.

Factor analysis was used to analyze the data gathered by questionnaires in order to explore the possible pattern of the interrelationship between the components of EFL teacher PI it was also used to examine what set of PI factors contribute to the quality of teaching. This analysis provided the appropriate model to test the possible grouping of those components identified as the result of the thematic analysis mentioned above. This was hoped that this analysis shed some light on the relative importance of the components of the identified clusters of EFL teacher professional identity and their contribution to the quality of teaching. Factor analysis made it possible to differentiate how many factors are necessary to achieve a reconstruction of a correlation matrix that is sufficiently good to account satisfactorily for the correlation it contains (Kinner & Gray, 2008). In this study, the data gathered from the two groups of participants (EFL teachers N.42 & students N.101) were subjected to a factor analysis.

Results and Discussion

The result of descriptive analysis is summarized in Table.1. This table emerges as a clear profile of EFL teachers' PI as perceived by the sample participants of the study. The table indicates that the most important component is item 1 (Interest in teaching profession) with the mean value of 3.6923 and highest importance ranked 12.65. The least important is item 12 (Class discussion beyond course content) with the mean value of 2.3239 and ranked importance of 5.54. In general, a total of 15 items which represent 79% of the total variables have high importance and only 4 (21%) have moderate importance. Almost 50% of the variables have mean value above 3.40 which indicates high-highest level of importance. Other 50% have a high-moderate level of importance.

Table.1 Mean Value & Ranked importance of Components of EFL teacher Professional Identity

	Components	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
1	Interest in the teaching profession	143	3.6923	.69435	12.65
2	High teaching ability	143	3.6084	.84782	12.32

		N	Mean	St. Deviation	Mean Rank
3	Colleagues' perception of teachers personality	142	3.0915	1.03077	8.72
4	Colleagues' perceptions of teachers academic expertise	143	3.1259	.99906	8.79
5	Students' perceptions of the teacher	143	3.4056	.84950	10.51
6	Scientific Proficiency in the field	143	3.5734	.84328	11.75
7	High level of Self-confidence	143	3.5664	.72733	11.77
8	Using the correct pronunciation	142	3.4577	.75909	10.96
9	High level of general information	143	3.2168	1.00098	9.75
10	Familiarity with the English language culture	143	3.3497	.86610	10.47
11	Knowledge of history	143	2.4266	1.34001	6.15
12	Class Discussion beyond course content	142	2.3239	1.36080	5.54
13	Respectful Relationship with students	143	3.5734	.75517	11.72
14	Respectful Relationship with colleagues.	142	3.3028	1.10440	10.46
15	Involving students in class discussions	143	3.5594	.85269	12.03
16	Active role in related research.	143	2.8252	1.20629	7.59
17	Proper assessment of students	143	2.7413	1.26554	7.31
18	Observing ethical principles	136	3.5000	.87771	11.51
19	Good appearance	136	3.2794	.94822	10.01

Table.2 below summarizes the result of descriptive analysis of the data related to those factors that affect teaching quality. The highest ranked mean value is item 1(Interest in teaching profession) with a mean of 3.7203 ranked 18.83 as the most effective variable in teaching quality. The lowest ranked mean value is 8.8 for item 16 (Expert knowledge of English for specific purposes) having a mean value of 2.2657 ranked 8.00 having low effect on teaching quality. As the table indicates a total of 22 variables have a mean value of more than 3.0 which means to have high importance for teaching quality. The most important is variable 1(Interest in teaching profession) with a mean value of 3.72 ranked18.83 as the most important. Six items have less than 3.0 mean values which indicate 21.4 percent of total variables have moderate-high Importance for teaching quality. Seventeen variables have 3 to 3.5 mean value indicating a total of 60.7 % of the variables have high importance for teaching quality. Only 5 variables have mean value more than 3.5 which means 17.85% of total variables bear the highest importance on the quality of teaching.

Table.2 Total PI factors affecting teaching quality

PI Factors	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Mean Rank

1	Interest in the teaching profession	143	3.7203	.66508	18.83
2	Academic proficiency	143	3.5874	.74426	17.79
3	The ability to transfer the content	142	3.7042	.72238	18.70
4	High teaching ability	143	3.3706	.92446	15.66
5	High level of self-confidence	143	3.5594	.74704	17.01
6	Courteous behavior	143	3.3287	.88633	14.97
7	Creating a sense of security in the classroom	142	3.3732	.94238	15.90
8	Friendly Relationships with students	142	3.4577	.81322	16.09
9	Respectful relationships with colleagues	142	3.0070	1.22328	13.17
10	Neat and tidy appearance	142	3.2887	.89586	14.58
11	Being motivated and enthusiastic	143	3.5664	.76508	17.23
١٢	Applying the up-to-date teaching methods	143	3.4755	.93321	١٧,٠٠
13	Knowledge of psychological learning theories and application	143	3.4126	.90638	15.84
14	Active participation in related research	143	2.7273	1.29561	11.22
15	Knowledge and application of IT in teaching	143	3.0140	1.06801	12.24
16	Expert knowledge of English for specific purposes	143	2.2657	1.33190	8.00
17	Awareness of the English language culture	143	3.2657	.90344	14.31
18	Additional General knowledge	143	3.0350	1.05091	12.95
19	Awareness of social issues	142	2.9789	1.08156	12.27
20	Unbiased perspective about students' academic ability.	143	3.2448	.95103	14.03
21	Unbiased sexual perspective about students	143	3.4056	.92110	15.79
22	Class Discussion beyond course content	143	2.7483	1.23601	11.13
23	Job commitment	143	3.4615	.85390	16.33
24	Periodic evaluation of students	143	2.9301	1.15460	11.97
25	Valid evaluation of curriculum taught	141	3.0709	1.14421	13.32
26	Reliable evaluation of the exam paper	141	2.9574	1.09461	11.98
27	Punctuality	142	3.3099	.91623	14.65
28	Being accessible	137	3.0219	1.21551	13.05

Search for common patterns and interrelationships

As suggested in the literature some researchers have assumed the existence of presumably a common pattern of interrelationship between the identified set of components or variables of professional identity of EFL teachers which are usually referred to as clusters of PI (Beijard, et al. 1999; Kinner & Gray, 2000; Kao & Lin's 2015). It was therefore concluded that the earlier classification of different aspects of EFL teacher PI may only be valid by definition. Therefore this study set to test the possible grouping of PI factors of EFL teacher identified as a result of thematic analysis and to investigate the existing pattern of interrelationship in data. Factor analysis was considered to provide the

appropriate model for this purpose and Varimax rotation procedure was then employed for both sets of data. The application of the alpha model for the first set of data (Section B of the questionnaire concerning EFL teacher PI) resulted in the extraction of four common factors accounting for nearly 54.7 percent of total variance as shown in **Table.3**.

As factor loadings of variables indicate the extent of its relation to that factor the higher the loading the better they are accounted for that factor. The square of factor loadings is considered variances, which indicated communalities between variables (Yong & Pearce, 2013). Factor loadings of .40 and higher are considered moderate to high which have been highlighted in Table.3 and 4. Factor loadings between .25 and .39 are considered low-moderate, and the last column, h2 provides communality for each variable. Each h2 multiplied by 100 gives the percentage of variations in variable i which has been explained by four extracted factors. Since most variables in Table.3 have high communalities on the four extracted factors, it reveals a high degree of interrelation which best explains each factor. In Table.۳ and Table.4 the percentages of the total variance (Vt), cumulative total variance (Cum Vt), common variance (Vc) and cumulative common have been accounted for.

Table.3 Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix for components of EFL Teacher Professional Identity

		Component				
Factors:		I	II	III	IV	h2
	Factor: I Personal Charecteristics					
Q1	Interest in teaching profession	**.680**	.230	-.076	0.14	.521
Q7	High level of Self-confidence	**.616**	.235	.082	.355	.567
Q18	Observing ethical principles	**.582**	.296	.264	-.040	.497
Q19	Good Appearance	**.531**	-.051	.442	-.051	.482
	Factor II: General Knowledge					
Q11	Knowledge of history	-.074	**.730**	-.119	.228	.566
Q12	Class Discussion beyond course content	-.018	**.648**	-.092	0.64	.433
Q16	Active role in related research.	.065	**.383**	.363	.270	.356
	Factors III: Social Relations					

Q3	Colleagues' perception of teachers personality	.144	.172	**.867**	.109	.814
Q4	Colleagues' perceptions on teachers academic expertise	.128	.064	**.872**	.173	.811
Q5	Students' perceptions of the teacher	. 256	-.088	**.431**	.347	.379
Q13	Respectful Relationship with students	.489	-.023	**.622**	.122	.642
Q14	Respectful Relationship with colleagues.	.121	.118	**.712**	.425	.716
	Factor IV: Pedagogical Knowledge					
Q2	High teaching ability	-.048	.169	.073	**.772**	.632
Q6	Scientific Proficiency in the field	.273	.410	-.070	**.500**	.497
Q8	Using the correct pronunciation	.150	-.042	.297	**.604**	.477
Q9	High level of general information	.311	.098	.029	**.551**	.411
Q10	Familiarity with the English language culture	.096	.227	.105	**.478**	.300
Q15	Involving students in class discussions	.127	.028	.148	**.805**	.686
Q17	Proper assessment of students	.172	.065	.023	**.760**	.612
Vt		28.8	10.8	8.2	7	
Cum Vt		28.8	39.5	47.8	54.7	
Vc		52.7	19.7	14.99	12.8	
Cum Vc		52.7	71.3	86	100	

Cluster I: **Personal Characteristics (PC)**

Cluster I incorporates four variables and it is clearly dominated by personal characteristics of EFL teacher PI. This aspect of PI accounts for nearly 28.8 of total variance and 52.7 percent of common variance as explained by all factors. Interest in teaching has the highest loading .680, on this factor. Its respective communality .521 shows that 52 percent of variations in this variable is associated with those of, and can be explained by the derived factors. The next highest loading relates to Self-Confidence of the teachers with the loading of .616. The next loading is .582 and related to Observing ethical principles variable. The last variable of this cluster is Good appearance with the loading of .531.

Cluster II: **General Knowledge (GK)**

Cluster II incorporates 3 variables and is dominated with general knowledge of EFL teacher. This aspect of PI accounts for 10.8 of total variance and 19.7 percent of common variance as explained by all factors. The highest loading is .730 which belongs to the knowledge of history and the next highest loading is .648 which belongs to class

discussion beyond course content. The lowest loading is .383 which belongs to the active role of EFL teacher in research.

Cluster III**: Social relations (SR**)

Cluster III incorporates 5 variables and is dominated by the variables related to the perceptions and relations of the colleagues and the students about the teacher. This aspect of PI accounts for nearly 8.2 percent of total variance and almost 15 percent of common variance as explained by all factors. The Colleagues' perception on teachers' academic expertise has the highest loading .872 on this cluster. The next high loading is .867 on Colleagues' perception on teachers' personality. Respectful Relationship with colleagues has the next high loading of 712. Respectful Relationship with Students has also a high loading of .622. The strong relation between these four variables is an indication that Colleagues and Students' perception of teacher and their relation with the teacher together reveal a significant aspect of EFL teacher PI.

Cluster IV**: Pedagogical Knowledge (PK)**

Cluster IV incorporates 7 variables and accounts for nearly 7 percent of total variance and 12.8 percent of common variance as explained by all factors. Involving students in class discussions has the highest loading of .805. The next high loading is .772 and belongs to High teaching ability. The next loading is .760 which belongs to Proper assessment of students. The next loading is .604 which belongs to Using the correct pronunciation. The last three variables have loadings of .551 for High level of general information, .500 for Scientific Proficiency in the field and .478 for Familiarity with the English language culture. Such a close association between these variables suggests that pedagogical knowledge is an important aspect of EFL teacher PI profile.

Contributing Factors to teaching Quality

The application of the alpha model for the second set of data (section C of the questionnaire concerning PI factors contributing to the quality of teaching) resulted in the extraction of five common factors accounting for 59.1 percent of total variance as shown in **Table.4**

Table.4 Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix for components of EFL Teacher Professional Identity on quality of teaching

Factors:		I	II	III	IV	V	h2
				Component			
	Factor I: Pedagogical knowledge						
Q2	Academic proficiency	**.746**	.240	.222	.058	.202	.708
Q3	The ability to transfer the content	**.813**	.201	.035	.198	.160	.767
Q4	High teaching ability	**.550**	.149	.299	.075	.113	.432
Q12	Applying the up-to-date teaching methods	**.512**	.314	0.86	.424	-.144	.564
Q13	Knowledge of psychological learning theories and application	**.583**	.035	-.004	.240	.299	.488
Q15	Knowledge and application of IT in teaching	**.587**	.213	.295	.159	-.088	.510
Q17	Awareness of the English language culture	**.638**	.131	.217	.195	.180	.542
	Factor II: Social Relations						
Q7	Creating a sense of security in the classroom	.397	**.559**	.133	.289	.057	.575
Q8	Friendly Relationships with students	.407	**.633**	.079	-.090	.193	.618
Q9	Respectful relationships with colleagues	.082	**.777**	.139	.052	.234	.688
	Factor III: Unbiased Evaluation						
Q20	Unbiased perspective about students' academic ability .	.213	.144	**.731**	.117	.117	.627
Q21	Un biased sexual perspective about students	.362	.241	**.689**	-.049	.012	.666
Q23	Job commitment	.370	.393	**.481**	.069	.126	.543
Q24	Periodic evaluation of students	.168	-.079	**.790**	.188	-.015	.695
Q25	Valid evaluation of curriculum taught	.206	.115	**.754**	.053	-.025	.628
Q26	Reliable evaluation of the exam paper	.162	.402	**.614**	-.011	-.020	.566
	Factor IV: General Knowledge						
Q14	Active role in related research	.065	.243	.092	**.706**	.082	.577

Q16	Expert knowledge of English for specific purposes	-.203	.224	.311	**.526**	.397	.622
Q18	Additional General knowledge	.175	-.097	.448	**.467**	.358	.581
Q19	Awareness of social issues	.053	-.013	.395	**.438**	.351	.474
Q22	Class Discussion beyond course content	.012	.134	.150	**.651**	.327	.571
Factor V: Personal Characteristics							
Q1	Interest in teaching profession	.121	.188	.058	.163	**.779**	.687
Q5	High level of self-confidence	.058	.191	.089	.220	**.817**	.763
Q6	Courteous behavior	.296	.064	.187	.102	**.668**	.584
Q10	Good appearance	.314	.159	.093	.285	**.383**	.361
Q11	Being motivated and enthusiastic	.309	.012	-.013	.274	**.514**	.435
Q27	Punctuality	.196	.025	.022	.374	**.662**	.617
Q28	Being accessible	.071	.06٤	-.018	.353	**.725**	.660
Vt		33.1	8.8	6.6	5.7	4.9	
Cum Vt		33.1	42	48.5	54.2	59.1	
Vc		56	18.9	11.2	9.6	8.3	
Cum Vc		56	71.2	82.1	91.3	100	

Cluster I: **Pedagogical knowledge**

Cluster I incorporates 7 variables. This aspect of PI accounts for nearly 33.1 of total variance and 56 percent of common variance as explained by all factors. All seven variables have loadings on this cluster and the high association amongst them suggests that gaining a high level of Pedagogical knowledge and skills enhances the teaching quality. The highest loading .813 on this variable belongs to the ability to transfer the content. The next high loading .746 is academic proficiency. Awareness of English language culture is the next high loading. The two next variables Knowledge and application of IT in teaching and Knowledge of psychological learning theories and application have very close loadings of .587 and .583 on this factor. The lowest loadings

belong to High teaching ability and Applying the up-to-date teaching methods.

Cluster II: **Social Relations**

Cluster II incorporates three variables. This aspect of PI accounts for nearly 8.8 of total variance and 18.9 percent of common variance as explained by all factors. All three factors have high loadings on this cluster. The highest loading is .777 which belongs to Respectful relationships with colleagues. The next high loading belongs to Friendly Relationships with students and the lowest loading on this factor belongs to Creating a sense of security in the classroom. The strong association between these three variables suggests that having good relationships is an important aspects PI which positively effects teaching quality of EFL teacher.

Cluster III: **Unbiased Evaluation**

This aspect of PI accounts for nearly 6.6 of total variance and 11.2 percent of common variance as explained by all factors. This cluster incorporates 6 factors. The highest loading .790 on this cluster belongs to Periodic evaluation of students and the next high loading .754 is Valid evaluation of curriculum taught. Unbiased perspective about students' academic ability.731 is the next high loading variable in this cluster. Unbiased sexual perspective about students and Reliable evaluation of the exam paper are the two other factors in this cluster which also have high loadings. The last two factors of this cluster have high and moderate loadings which belong to Reliable evaluation of the exam paper and Job commitment has. A close association between all six variables of this cluster suggests that in general fair and unbiased assessment of students does not affect the quality of teaching.

Cluster IV: **General Knowledge**

This aspect of PI accounts for nearly 5.7 of total variance and 9.6 percent of common variance as explained by all variables. This cluster incorporates 5 variables. All loadings are high to moderate loadings on this factor. The first high loading belongs to Active role in related research and the next high loading belongs to Class Discussion beyond course content. Expert knowledge of English for specific purposes has

the next high loading on this factor. Additional General knowledge and Awareness of social issues have moderate loadings on this factor.

Cluster V: **Personal Characteristics**

This aspect of PI accounts for nearly 4.9 of total variance and 8.3 percent of common variance as explained by all factors. This cluster incorporates seven factors. All loadings on this factor are high and only one has the low loading. The first high loading factor belongs to High level of self-confidence and the next high loading belong to Interest in the teaching profession and Being accessible. Courteous behavior, Punctuality, Being motivated and Enthusiastic have all high loadings. In this cluster, Good appearance has low loading of .383.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate what critical factors shape professional identity of Iranian EFL teachers. The research also sought to investigate to what extent professional identity affects their teaching quality, a neglected area of research in the context of an academic domain in Iran. The findings clearly revealed an indigenous profile of professional Identity of EFL teachers as perceived by both teachers and students participants comprised of 19 items originated from semi-structured interviews. The application of this qualitative approach helped to get a more profound insight of what constituted the professional identity of EFL teachers in an academic arena in Iran. Interest in the teaching profession is not only the most important components of PI but at the same time is the most effective variable in teaching quality.

The findings indicated that personal characteristics such as interest in teaching profession and teaching skills and abilities are most significant components of EFL teacher PI profile. This means that the participants consider EFL teacher first as a professional who is interested in her or his job as a teacher. Self-confidence is considered the second important component of EFL teacher PI and most effective on teaching quality. In overall it is concluded that PI of EFL teacher has a multifaceted nature incorporating many aspects including motivational, relational, and pedagogical skills all of which make up the PI profile of teacher. The profile serves as a milestone for EFL

teachers to better understand their own professional identity and guides them towards positive future changes. It also provides guidelines for better assessment and selection of EFL teachers. Application of factor analysis resulted in new patterns of interrelations amongst different components of Professional Identity namely as four clusters including Personal Characteristics (PC), General Knowledge (GK), Social Relationships (SR), and Pedagogical Knowledge (PK).

The findings of this study have theoretical as well as policy implications both for EFL teachers training and development and curriculum design. It contributes valuable concepts to the existing literature both locally and universally. While Pedagogical knowledge emerged as the least important cluster in making up the EFL teacher PI profile, it emerged as the most effective cluster on teaching quality while. This is a significant finding which explains the high contribution of Pedagogical variables to the quality of teaching and is considered to have important policy implication in educational development and curriculum design of EFL teachers.

Social relations cluster emerged as the third important aspect of PI profile while it emerged as the second important cluster affecting teaching quality. This emphasizes that having a good and fair social relationship with students and colleagues is clearly perceived as an important aspect of the EFL teacher PI profile and at the same time plays a significant role in enhancing teaching quality. Unbiased evaluation as the third effective cluster on teaching quality incorporated five variables all of which had high loadings on this factor. It is worth mentioning that Proper Assessments of students as a general variable also had high loading on Pedagogical cluster. This may suggest that all variables loaded on Unbiased Evaluation cluster have Pedagogical dimension as well.

Considering the limited sample of participant teachers and students the generalizability of results obtained should be taken with cautious. It is recommended that future studies concentrate on larger samples of teachers and students for possible differentiation between the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the components of PI

and those factors affecting quality of teaching. To obtain a more realistic picture of EFL teacher PI profile, it is recommended that in similar studies in-depth interviews and grounded theory may be more feasible. It is also suggested that feature studies define a measuring criterion for teaching quality so that causal relation between PI components and teaching quality can be empirically tested.

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