



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 33, 2022

**A new decade
for social changes**

www.techniumscience.com

ISSN 2668-7798



9 772668 779000

Exploring the Potentials of English Teachers' Professional Identity Development in Algerian Higher Education Settings

Mustapha Boudjelal

University of Mostaganem, Algeria

mustapha-boudjelal@hotmail.com

Abstract. This article attempts to shed light on English teachers' professional identity development in Algerian higher education as it scrutinises certain interior and exterior factors that influence and shape the debated process. To explore this aim, both teachers' perceptions of the targeted concept and the contexts that shape and influence the outlined construct were investigated via two main research instruments: a questionnaire and a structured interview administered to 11 English language teachers from the University of Mostaganem. The first research instrument was used to gauge teachers' understandings and perceptions of their identities which play a cardinal role in enacting professional identities. However, the second one sought to explore the status quo of professional development in Algerian universities. The analysis of the findings revealed that teachers show a readiness and an eagerness to embrace professional identities development; however, these aspirations are obstructed by certain misconceptions about professional identity development and certain working conditions which do not help much in developing professional identities. Given the provided suggestions by the teachers, this study underscores the prioritisation of developing teachers' professional identities by means of reinforcing both the interior and the exterior factors which occupy a central role in the very construal of the debated construct.

Keywords. Perceptions, teachers, identity, professional identity, professional development

1. Introduction

Effective teaching of English language as a foreign language has always been affiliated with the successful interplay between the different elements of the didactic triangle: the teacher, the learner and the subject being taught. Despite this pedagogical fact, the learners and the learning/teaching content (s) received more attention as compared to teachers' development which remained unexplored in Algerian higher education settings. Much effort has been invested to improve and enrich the introduced syllabi and curricula in EFL teaching and learning contexts. Equally, theories of different fields such as psychology were used to offer the learners befitting educational settings. Nevertheless, teachers' professional development in some countries like Algeria is disregarded due to many reasons. As to Algerian university teachers of English, the inability to accompany the technological changes that were introduced to higher education over the past years, due to serious lacks in teachers' training and education, illustrates part of the appointed at professional development gap. This article suggests that teachers' professional development can be partly supported via developing their professional

identities that are considered vital in the process of effective 21century English language learning and teaching.

2. Review of the Literature

The review of the literature about teachers' professional identity documents various understandings that stem from different disciplines, namely psychology and education, and outlines many factors that influence its development. Nevertheless, unable to cover all of them, the author of this article reviews the main theories that elucidate particular conceptual corners needed in the process of data analysis and interpretation. Most importantly, this eclectic review allows possible analogies between the theories advanced in relation to teachers' professional identity and the participants' (teachers) understandings of the debated concept. Given this argued case, it is limited to some understandings of identity, professional developments, and the various factors that affect the development of teachers' professional identity.

2.1. Professional development

Professional development is not an option but a necessity in this postmodern world, given the fact that knowledge and skills are undergoing constant and rapid transformation. This process encompasses various components and qualities such as an awareness of the profession, be it teaching or another vocation. In relation to the field of didactics, Beara (2006) links awareness to the norms of teaching profession, the different ways teachers can improve their teaching practices, and the ultimate aim of the professionalization of teaching (as cited in Predrag Živković, 2013). A debatable aspect of professional development relates to the tension between professional and personal sides of one's identity. In relation to that, professional development is said to be enacted as the teacher/worker reconciles both aspects by means of mediating between what their job necessitates and what they prefer (Olsen, 2010; see also Lipka & Brinthaup, 1999, as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 109).

Professional development as a concept underwent a vivid change over the past years. Traditional understandings of the concept were limited to the "acquisition of assets", certain professional standards that stem from certain conventional beliefs, competencies and knowledge (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011, p. 308). In the modern era, however, these externally formulated standards are qualified rigid as they do not explore the deep sides of teachers' identity that accounts of who they are as teachers and the teachers they want to become (McLean, 1999; Pinnegar, 2005). Under the same vein, it is important to mention that professional development as a process may not be achieved via a set of seminars or professional meetings. On the contrary, it requires various types of learning, such self- education, research and practical work, research activities, and exchanging experiences with colleagues. These various practices enable the teacher to support their knowledge and skills. Most importantly, they encourage the teachers to develop their reflective practices to assess their professional development and others' (Klašnja, 2006, as cited in Predrag Živković, 2013).

2.1.1. Teachers' professional Identity.

In the field of education, professional identity is defined in different ways (Beijaard et al., 2004). Some of the definitions of the concept, like the one advanced by Lfće (2014), comprises three main components: awareness of one's identity and a representation of a certain profession. The second part represents the continuous searching for meaning in the profession. However, the last component relates to the professional ambitions one has towards the exercised profession (as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004). Following this line of definitions, Ibarra (1999),

pp. 764-765) suggests that PI outlines: the constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role.”

Despite the fact that professional identity relates to different professions, it did not receive the same research focus and interest as it did in the field of education (Beijaard et al., 2004). PI in the targeted field stressed certain features and conditions that hinder/or enhance teachers’ development of professional identity. This compelling aim was supported by the fact that as teachers develop their professional identities, they become more critical about their teaching conditions, including teaching practices as well (Hofman, 1988, as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004). Among the pertinent definitions of identity in the field of teaching is the one advanced by (Beijaard et al., 2004) who claimed it to be related to how teachers see themselves and their interpretations of a continuous interaction with the teaching context.

Professional identity is believed to have certain distinctive features that set it apart from other types of identities. To begin with, PI is relational and not rigid. This argument is averred by (Beijaard et al. 2004) in the following statement: “*what these various meanings [of identity] have in common is the idea that identity is not axed attribute of a person, but a relational phenomenon*” (p. 108). Given these qualities, PI undergoes various stages of shaping and reshaping via teachers’ interaction with the social, cultural, and structural contexts. These stages allow for interpretative practices founded on various experiences, whereby PI can be assessed and developed (Kelchtermans, 2009). The main features of teachers’ professional identity are briefly stated below:

- Professional identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences.
- It implies both person and context.
- A teacher’s professional identity is not entirely unique.
- A teacher’s professional identity consists of sub-identities that more or less harmonize.
- Agency is an important element of professional identity, meaning that teachers have to be active in the process of professional development (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 122).

2.1.1.1. Factors influencing teachers’ professional Identity

Kelchtermans (2009) argues that a teacher’s professional identity is perceived here to be shaped by the interaction between persons and contexts. Influences from many internal and external sources shape teachers’ perceptions of themselves as teachers (Olsen, 2008). According to Kelchtermans (2009), teachers’ professional identity is the outcome of interplay between the teacher and the contexts. In other words, it is influenced by both internal and external factors. The former embraces personal knowledge, beliefs, norms, and values. The external factors, however, link the teachers to the teaching environment, namely institutes, schools which outline certain professional standards (values and standards of teaching); teachers need to abide by (Beijaard et al., 2004).

2.1.1.1.1. Interior factors

Reasons of choosing the job are tightly linked to the different types of motivation. In this regard, Bastick (2000) identifies intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic reasons as the main reasons for choosing the teaching profession. Another stratification of these motives is provided by Huberman, Gronauer and Mati (1993) who group them in professional versus material reasons. In addition to the reasons for choosing the teaching profession, personal

beliefs about education are also part of the interior factors. These beliefs are pivotal with regard to teachers' dealings with exterior factors since they function as filters for the educational exterior factors. According to Akkerman & Meijer (2011), they nurture teachers' perceptions of themselves and their teaching practices. Teachers' perceptions of themselves as teachers also affiliate to the teaching roles which are altered by the new systems introduced to education. For instance, in learners-centered approach, teachers' roles have changed from knowledge providers to guiders of the students (Van Manen, 1999). Under this vein, these teachers are likely to adopt different perceptions of their roles and themselves as teachers.

2.1.1.1.2. Exterior factors

As to the exterior factors that shape teachers' professional identity, one may identify teaching communities, a social and academic sense of belonging. This latter according to Timostsuk and Ugaste (2010) is significant in teachers' development of professional identities as it acknowledges the worth of teachers' practices and ideas. This sense of community hinges on the fact teachers tend to found certain groups in their institutions. This suggests that teachers' identity is partly unique and partly shared. Beijaard et al add: "*A teacher's professional identity is not entirely unique*" (2004; p. 122). Burk & Stets (2009) develop this argument suggesting that the sense of group outlines uniformity in thoughts and action among teachers. However, parts of teachers' professional identity remain individual, unique, and unshared. Nixon (1996) argues that teaching should be considered as '*important area of professional expertise in its own right*' (p. 14). Howbeit, this area of expertise should be supported via professional development opportunities offered to the teaching staff (Nixon, 1996; Van Veen, 2008) which are also considered as part of the appointed exterior factors.

3. The Study

3.1. Aim (s)

This study aims at exploring Algerian English teachers' perceptions, understandings and awareness of their professional identities in higher education. Most importantly, it also seeks to investigate the contexts that influence these constructs. Following this line of research, it rigorously studies both the interior and the exterior factors that influence the development of this type of identities. More importantly, it scrutinizes the status quo of professional development in Algerian higher education, as it explores teachers' working conditions and professional development opportunities offered to them.

3.2. Research instruments

This study referred to two research instruments: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to collect data about teachers' perceptions of their professional identity and the status of professional development in higher education in Algeria. The questionnaire centers on gauging teachers' understandings of key-concepts in relation to teachers' professional identity, namely the distinction between personal and professional identities, and their awareness of possessing it, most importantly. It also focuses on exploring some of the interior factors that influence teachers' professional identities, namely the type of motivation for choosing the teaching profession, teachers' roles and their attitudes towards the introduction of new educational systems to higher education. Teachers' semi-structured interview, however develops the previous sections of the questionnaire and explores the issue of teachers' professional development in Algeria, allowing the participants to air their ideas about

professional development opportunities in Algeria and the nature of collaboration with the teaching members of the communities they belong to and work with.

3.3. *The participants*

The participants of this study were 11 teachers of English from the university of Abd Elhamid Ibn Badis-Mostaganem, Algeria. The majority of them are females. Their age ranges from 30 to 45 years old. Their teaching experiences extend from 8 to 15 years. The selected teachers are in charge of teaching different subjects, including the following ones: didactics of EFL, linguistics, phonology, English for specific purposes, British literature, educational psychology, American civilization, and literary stylistics. The table below provides information about the participants:

Table 1. Participants of the study

Number of teachers	Specialties	Gender
2	Didactics of EFL	Male/female
2	Linguistics /phonology	Female
2	English for specific purposes	Female
2	British literature	Female
1	Educational psychology	Female
1	American civilization	Female
1	Literary stylistics	Female

4. **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The analysis phase explores both the interior and the exterior factors that influence teachers' identity professional development in Algerian higher education settings. The first category embraces the following sections: Teachers' perceptions of their professional identities, teachers' attitudes towards teaching, teachers' professional identity and teachers' roles. However, the second category joins teachers' understandings of professional development and their views about its status quo in Algeria, professional development opportunities, and membership in teaching communities.

4.1. *Interior factors*

4.1.1. *Teachers' perceptions of their professional Identities*

This section aim at gauging teachers' understandings of professional identity and the main features that distinguish between it and personal identity. More importantly, it targets teachers' ability to identify the differences. The findings of this section were stratified in different categories according to the common shared point(s) and presented along percentages and different graphs.

4.1.1.1. *Teachers' understandings of identity*

The participants were asked to define the concept 'identity' without being oriented towards a particular field, domain, or scope so as to get unbiased answers needed for the interpretations of the findings. The collection and the analysis of the findings unveiled that the participants tend to define identity in relation to some basic understandings documented in most of the review of the literature ; others relate it to their teaching profession, while the rest of them included both personal and professional features under the heading of identity. The majority of the teachers (63, 63%) outline identity in relation basic definitions that follow the ensuing structure: '*identity is who I am*'. The second category of teachers (27, 27%) defines identity in

relation to both personal and professional features. A teacher says: *“Identity is what defines you in terms of gender, age, nationality, occupation, etc., but also in terms of qualities and flaws”*. The minority of teachers (9, 09%) tend to limit identity to their teaching profession.

4.1.1.2. *Teachers’ perceptions of their personal identities*

As to teachers’ personal identities, the majority of the participants (27.27%) identify them in relation to personal qualities such as: integrity, ambition, coolness and calmness. One of the participants says: *“I identify myself as an ambitious woman”*. The second category which represents (18.18%) relates it to gender and sex dimensions. A participant suggests: *“I identify myself as a woman”*. An important dimension of personal identity identification, according to the minority of the participants (9, 09%) springs from the teaching profession. A teacher avers: *“I identify myself as a teacher”*. Other categories which rate lowest portray teachers’ personal identities in relation to teachers’ names (9, 09%), religious beliefs (9.09%), and humanity (9.09%).

4.1.1.3. *Teachers’ perceptions of their professional Identities*

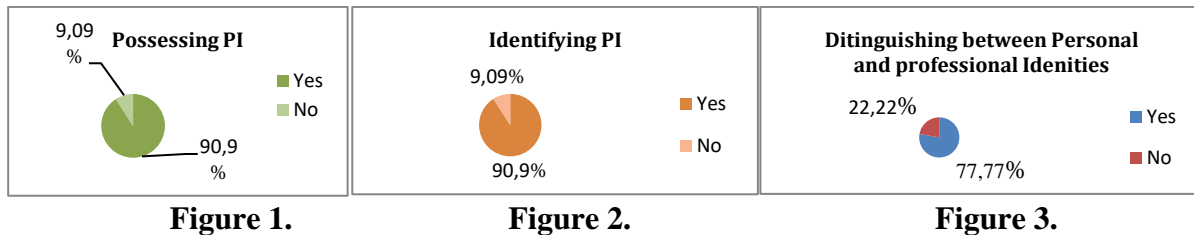
The review of the literature about professional identity development identifies the fact that a healthy PID requires teachers to have clear perceptions of themselves in the present time and the future, in terms of skills, knowledge, etc. When asking teachers how they perceive themselves in the present time, three main categories of answers were identified. The first category that represents the majority of teachers (50%) focused on some personal qualities such as *“curiosity of learning, positivity, activity, fairness, integrity and continuity of learning”*. The second category of teachers (30%) relates teachers’ perceptions of themselves broadly to the teaching profession. A teacher says: *“I act as a teacher; I teach and perform teaching tasks. Another participant adds: “An average teacher who perseveres in growing their knowledge as an educator and instructor”*.

The second question relates to the futuristic perceptions of teachers’ professional identities. Here, the participants identified two main objectives: professionalism and expertise. The majority of teachers (77, 77%) aspire to acquire more knowledge and acquire expertise in their fields of studies. They aired the following views: *“I want to be more informed, with more language, more knowledgeable about my field, having deep knowledge and passion for the subject matter, being an effective teacher, a dynamic teacher, more expertise, competent at whatever module I teach. The second group of teachers (22, 22%) aspires to become professional teachers. A teacher says: “I want to become a professional teacher”. Another teacher adds: “I want to be a skilled professional teacher”*.

In relation to the identification of the teachers’ professional identity, the participants outlined three distinctive identifiers of their PI. The majority of them (50%) believe their professional identities to be identified in relation to their teaching profession. A participant says: *“I identify myself As an English teacher at Mostaganem University”*. Another teacher adds: *“I identify myself as a person who gives lectures”*. The second group of teachers (40%), however, attributes their professional identities identification to a set of values and qualities such as seriousness, honesty, integrity and open-mindedness. A participant elaborates: *“I identify myself as a person who is open-minded to new ideas, disciplined, good environment creator.”* Another teacher adds: *“I identify myself as an honest teacher.”* The third group of teachers tends to affiliate professional identity to research scopes and specialties. A participant argues: *“I may introduce myself as specialized in phonology, phonetics and linguistics”*.

4.1.1.4. Teachers' awareness of their professional identities

This part of the study attempts to dip deeper into teachers' awareness of their professional identities and their development. It starts with two main questions that target teachers' awareness of the development of their professional identities and the ability to distinguish between their personal and professional identities. The below-mentioned pie-charts outline the participants' responses to the questions:



The above mentioned pie-charts (1, 2, and 3) make it clear that the majority of the teachers are aware of their professional identities (90, 09%) and are able to identify them (90, 09%). In the same line of thought, they believe they can draw a demarcation line between their personal and professional identities. As to the distinctive features between both types of identities, the participants identified three main elements that help them to do so. The majority of the participants (62, 5%) refer to the context to draw the boundaries. A teacher says: *“In professional contexts, it is more likely to perform professional identity though both identities may overlap”*. Other teachers' (25%), however, resort to the teachers themselves. A participant says: *“it depends on the person himself”*. The minority of teachers (12, 5%) refer to the instances they are involved in to identify the befitting type of identity. A teacher adds: *“There are certain instances that require me to act in a certain way at home but not in the class among students or teachers.”*

4.1.2. Teachers' Attitudes towards Teaching

This section that carries on the exploration of the interior factors that influence teachers' professional identity development investigates teachers' attitudes towards teaching focusing on their reasons and motivation behind choosing the job of teaching and their views about the advantages and the drawbacks of the teaching profession.

4.1.2.1. Choosing the job of teaching

Of significant importance in teachers' professional development is the motivation behind choosing the vocation of teaching. Its significance is interpreted in the motivation teachers carry along their journey of teaching, including efforts to improve their teaching skills and to target professionalism. The participants in this study were asked whether or not teaching was their dream job or they targeted other professions while carrying their studies. The pie-charts showcase the findings:

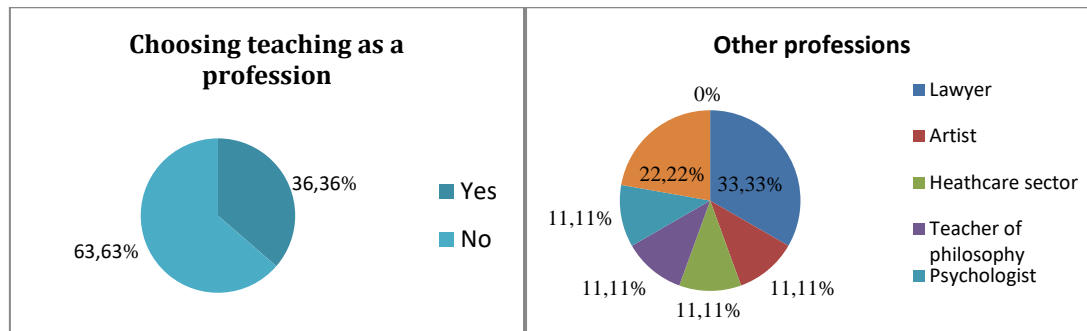


Figure 4.

Figure 5.

The pie-chart (4) indicates that most of the teachers (63, 63%) did not aspire to choose the job of teaching. Only (36, 36%) of them sought the teaching vocation as a dream job. To dig deeper in teachers' dream jobs, the participants were asked to mention the jobs they planned for instead of teaching. The second pie-chart (5) illustrates teachers' job choices. Most of the participants opted for the job of a lawyer (33, 33%). Other teachers preferred other jobs like psychologist, artist, healthcare sector, and teachers of philosophy. (22, 22%) of the participants opted for the option others (they did not mention any job).

4.1.2.2. *Teachers' motivation behind joining the profession of teaching*

The participants were asked to identify the type of motivation of choosing the job of teaching. The analysis of the findings unveiled the fact that most of the teachers (81, 81%) had an intrinsic motivation when opting for teaching as a job. The minority (18, 18%), however, described their motivation as both intrinsic and extrinsic.

4.1.2.3. *Teachers' views about the advantages of the profession of teaching*

The participants were asked to mention the positive features of the profession of teaching. The teachers provided various answers which, after analysis, unveiled three main motives of teaching. Many teachers (36, 36%) highlighted learning as a fundamental quality of teaching, as one of the participants says: "*it (teaching) is rewarding –to be continuously learning*". Another teacher adds: "*I am always learning from teaching.*" An important percentage of teachers' answers (36, 36%) focused on the significance of teaching in creating human and social relationships. A participant says: "*To track students' progress and build relationships based on respect and kindness with some of them*". Within the same category, some participants underlined personal growth as cardinal in the profession of teaching as a participant states: "*You know more about yourself and how you should interact with others.*" This contact also involves teachers and colleagues as it is mentioned in the following comment by a teacher: "*Contact with students, sharing experiences with colleagues*". Under the same vista, some of teachers' (18, 18%) feedback about the boons of teaching profession seems to have social roots since, some teachers believe; it serves society and has a humanistic aspect. The minority of teachers (9, 09%) mentioned creativity as an answer to the question.

4.1.2.4. *Teachers' views about the drawbacks of the profession of teaching*

To explore teachers' views about the other side of teaching, they were asked to identify the negative aspects of teaching. The analysis of the data gathered identified many aspects that make teaching a difficult profession to exercise. Most of the teachers (30%) believe that teaching is a tiring job and think that this tiring nature emanates, as an example, from correcting examination copies. Other teachers (20%) pointed at the time teaching takes and state that teaching profession is time consuming. An important percentage of answers centered on the status quo of teaching in their home country that is described in the following comment: "*The*

status of teaching in our country and disrespect for teachers especially for females". Other participants see teaching as stressful (10%) and demanding (10%). In connection with this, some teachers see students' low motivation as disadvantageous for the exercise of the profession. A teacher comments: *"The students' lack of motivation and interest and also the general lack of general knowledge."*

4.1.3. Teachers' professional Identity and teachers' roles

This section explores teachers' professional identity development in relation to other interior factors that are likely to influence teachers' roles. As stated in the section of the review of the literature about professional identity development, many scholars have pointed at the link between this type of identity and teachers' roles that undergo continuous changes along the implementation of new systems of education. As to the case of Algeria, two main educational systems were introduced to higher education over the past years: The Classical System followed by the LMD System. The introduction of LMD system to Algerian higher also brought new approaches to the teaching milieu.

4.1.3.1. Teaching and expertise

To explore teachers' roles, this section explores various questions administered to the teachers. The first one aimed at knowing whether or not these teachers develop certain expertise in teaching English, a necessary feature for professional development. Analyzing the findings, it was found that the majority of teachers (33, 33%) believe themselves to be subject matter experts. Other teachers (22, 22%) see themselves as simple teachers, while others consider themselves pedagogical experts (22, 22%). The rest of the teachers (22, 22%) identify themselves as having all the above mentioned qualities.

4.1.3.2. LMD System and Teachers' roles

As to the second question, it targeted whether or not these teachers' roles were influenced by LMD system introduction to higher education. The pie-chart below showcases that half of the number of participants claimed their roles to be influenced by LMD system while the rest of them argued they kept their roles intact:

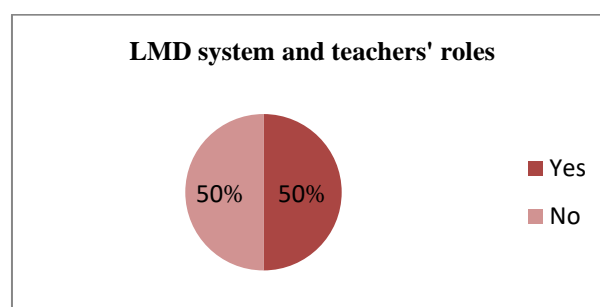


Figure 6. LMD System and Teachers' Roles

The next question aimed at identifying the type of changes that occurred to teachers' roles. In other words, the participants were asked to identify both the negative and positive changes brought to their roles along LMD system introduction. The gathered data shows that most of the participants (50%) think that LMD system positively affected their roles as university teachers of English. They identified the following boons: more autonomy and flexibility, activity, satisfaction, innovation, improving knowledge, more research, sharing with learners, and effective assessment. To illustrate more, a teacher says: *"I learnt how to be*

innovative". Another one adds: *"Maybe to assess more the students and give them the chance to be active during my class"*. Another teacher comments: *"I guide and facilitate and encourage students to share with me new learning"*. A group of teacher (11, 11%), however, believes that LMD system introduction to higher education negatively influenced their teaching roles. They argue that this system made them *"overworking teachers, unable to do their best"*, and most importantly, it added *"other burdens on the teacher"*. A good percentage of answers (33, 33%) centered on the absence of change in teachers' roles along the new system. A teacher says *"Same as classical system"* while another teacher adds: *"I did not change anything. In the same line of thought, another teacher comments: "Same role: only the name changed, two resit exams instead of one"*.

Suggesting new educational systems also means introducing novel approaches of teaching. The LMD system had been accompanied by the introduction of learner-centered approach to English language teaching. This approach brought several changes to teachers' roles. To explore these, changes, the participants were asked to say whether or not their roles were affected by this approach and the nature of these changes. The following pie- chart illustrates the first part of the question:

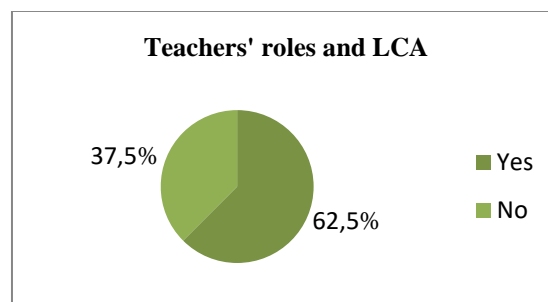


Figure 7.

Clearly, most of the teachers (62, 5%) suggest that learner-centered approach affected their roles. They elaborate these changes differently. A teacher says: *"Less talking, more choices and decision making for my students"*. Other teachers (37, 5%) claimed this approach not to have influenced their roles as it does not suit the teaching /learning environment. A teacher elaborates saying: *"It is not applied. It can't because students so far have been taught in teacher-based instruction"*. Another teacher supported the claim suggesting: *"No, because this approach does not fit the type of students we have"*. Others have put the blame on students as indicated in the ensuing comment: *"Despite the fact that this approach requires students to do most of the work, but unfortunately they do not"*.

Following the same line of thought, teachers were asked whether or not they could shift their teaching roles from knowledge providers to facilitators, a shift that is necessary for the application of learner-centered approach. The findings are represented in the below-mentioned pie -chart:

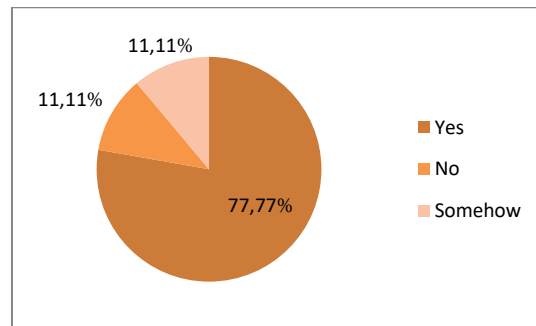


Figure 8. Shifting Roles

The last question of the section inquired about the teaching roles that need to be supported and developed within LMD system. The findings are provided below:

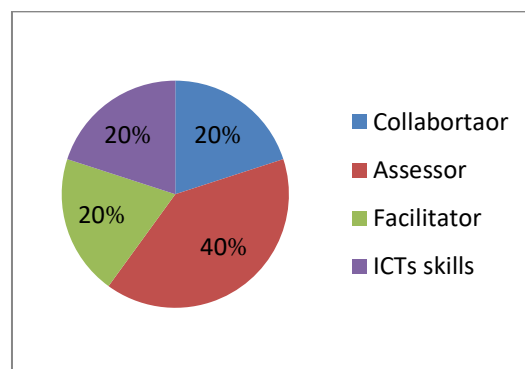


Figure 9. Teaching Roles

Most of the participants (40%) emphasized the role of teachers as assessors to be supported, as LMD system introduces various modes of assessments that need to be mastered and well used. Equally, the roles of teachers as collaborators (20%) and facilitators (20%) were also identified so as to be boosted. Another role, in a form of skills, represents ICTs skills, a role that many teachers have problems developing due to many reasons, namely the lack of ICT materials and the lack of training to use the ones available.

4.2. Exterior factors

The second part of the study explores the findings gathered from the structured interview with the same participants. It explores some of the exterior factors that deeply influence teachers' professional development, focusing on professional development opportunities and teaching communities in Algerian higher education settings.

4.2.1. Teachers' Understandings of Professional Development

The first question given to the teachers aimed at gauging teachers' conceptions and misconceptions about PD. The definitions the participants provided were grouped in three categories. Most of the participants (45, 45%) defined professional development as an opportunity to improve teachers' skills. A teacher says: *"professional development is the enhancement of skills needed for practicing a profession"*. Another teacher adds: *"It is the improvement of a person's professional capacities"*. Within the same line of thought, some teachers link professional development to activities, as the ensuing excerpt by a teacher suggests: *"professional development is the set of activities that develop knowledge and skills."*

The second group of teachers (27, 27%) linked between PD and knowledge. A teacher offers the following understanding: “*professional development is the growth of individual in terms of professionalism, behaviour and knowledge stock*”. Another teacher adds: “*For me, it is the engagement in the development of knowledge, research and academic skills*”. The last group of teachers (27, 27%) focused on the ongoing nature of professional development as it is clear in the ensuing comment: “*It is continuous acquisition of knowledge; obtaining positions that enable positive change*”.

4.2.2. Teachers’ views about professional development in Algerian Higher Education

The purpose this part of the study is to identify teachers’ views about the status quo of professional development in higher education in Algeria. Most of their views, after the process of data analysis, revealed a lucid dissatisfaction with the way professional development is approached in their country. As an illustration, (44, 44%) of the participants see PD as a neglected area as far as university teachers are concerned. A teacher elaborates stating: “*It needs to be taken into account*”. Other participants (22, 22%), however, believe that professional development is all about teachers’ and their will to improve their PIs. This is evident in the following comment by a participant: “*I think this is an issue that concerns teachers and has little to do with the Algerian context.*” Other teachers (11, 11%) alluded to the constraints teachers come across while seeking PD as it is shown in the statement: “*It depends of one’s personal identity and their attitudes towards constraints which are considered and lines which should not be crossed.* Of equal importance is motivation that some participants (11, 11%) see as hindering PD of their fellow teachers. A teacher adds: “*It (meaning professional development in Algeria) is rather linked to career motivations rewarding rather than gaining knowledge.*” Last but not least are the lacks teachers pointed at when airing their views about professional development in Algeria. A teacher avers: “*There is a lack of teaching practice in teacher education programmers.*”

4.2.3. Professional development opportunities in Algeria

As reviewed in the theoretical part of this article, professional development is likely to be boosted along various types of exterior factors such as professional development opportunities. To explore these opportunities, various interview questions were administered to the participants. The first question of this part centered on teachers’ familiarity with teachers’ professional development opportunities. As indicated in the below mentioned pie chart, (55, 55%) of them are not acquainted with them.

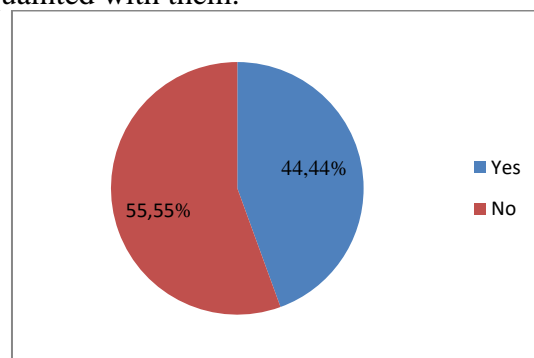


Figure 10. Teachers’ familiarity with PDO

To deeply explore this issue, the participants were asked to offer their understandings about professional development opportunities and their significance for teachers' careers. The majority of the interviewed teachers (66, 66%) believe that PDOs need to target teaching skills and competences. A teacher says: *"I reckon they could be facilities of some sort that motivate the teacher to improve their competences and welfare"*. Another teacher adds: *"Opportunities to reflect on our teaching /gain more knowledge and skills"*. The same idea is reflected in the ensuing comment: *"All that can help a teacher develop his skills. Other participants (16 66%) claimed the purpose of this opportunities to be linked to teaching materials that may enhance teachers' skills. Training abroad, some teachers (16 66%) argued, is the purpose professional development opportunities.*

As to the importance of professional development opportunities, some teachers alluded to their roles in keeping them updated, as expressed in the following comment by a teacher: *"You get more up-to-date –more flexible to support your students to learn"*. The same comment is argued by the following teacher who says: *"It allows us to keep updated and to access the necessary resources."* Other teachers, focused on teaching skills as says this teacher: *"They are essential to improving teaching skills"*.

Following the same aim, which is to explore teachers' professional development opportunities in Algerian higher education, the interviewed teachers were asked whether or not their institution provides them with these opportunities. The findings are elucidated in the pie chart:

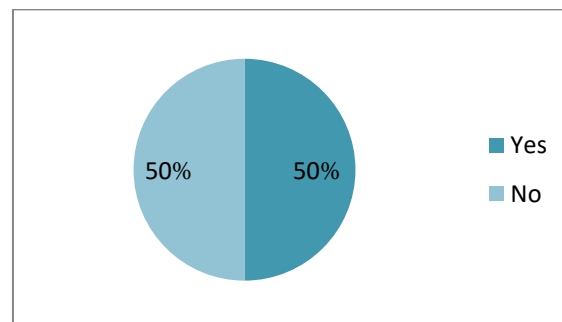


Figure 11. Providing professional development opportunities

As indicated in the above mentioned graph, half of the number of the interviewed teachers argued they were offered PDOs by their institution, while the rest of the teachers claimed they did not benefit from these opportunities. The interviewed teachers identified the following professional development opportunities offered: *"Training abroad (stage), one year of in-service training, conferences and study days"*.

4.2.3.1. Annual training abroad

The following question targets the opportunities some teachers were offered and their importance in developing teachers' professional identity. The Algerian universities tend to offer teachers an annual training for ten-to fifteen days (stage *courte durée*) abroad for teachers who score highest in their scientific achievements and administrative duties. Scientific achievements include published papers, participations in conferences, etc. As to administrative duties, they include being an assistant of the head of the department, being part of scientific committees of the department and faculties, etc.

The participants were asked whether or not they benefited from this type of annual training. After analyzing the data, it appeared that the majority of the interviewed teachers (42,

85%) did not benefit from the appointed at training. A teacher says: “*I never had the chance to benefit from one*”. Another teacher adds: “*In-service, I haven’t benefited from it yet can’t say*”. As to the ones who benefited from it, their views vary. Some teachers (28, 57%) pointed at the positive aspects it had on their professional development. A teacher says: “*It gives you mastering hints about your conduct with students*”. Another one adds: “*Be in contact with researchers*”. The rest of teachers (28, 57%), however, see that this training lacks practice.

3.2.4. Professional identity and teaching community

Carrying the exploration of the exterior factors of teachers’ professional development, the latter seems unthinkable without teachers’ sense of belonging to a particular teaching community. The first part of this section inquired whether or not the interviewed participants belong to a teaching community. As indicated below, most of the teachers (90, 09%) feel they belong to a teaching community. The minority of them, however, question their belonging to a TC. The ensuing pie-chart presents the findings:

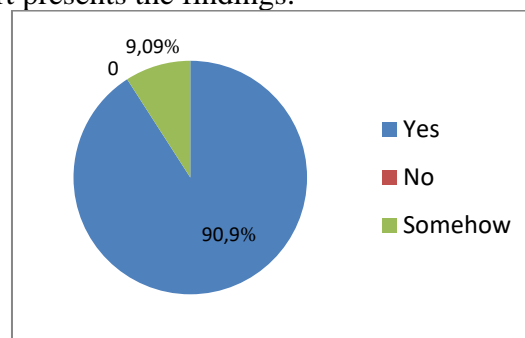


Figure 12. Teaching Community

Belonging to a community encompasses some common features among all the teachers, while some other qualities remain personal and individual. As to teachers’ personal qualities, they mentioned the ensuing ones: “*Always doing research, using humour, skills (field of expertise) the way of transmitting knowledge and assessing students, loving teaching and thinking of students before anything else, and spontaneity*”. Some of the teachers believe that some of their qualities are unique and unshared with the community due to their various experiences, as suggests the following comment by a participant: “*I believe I have been through a different experience of teaching (Spanish department :CEIL that has widened and increased my scope as well as strengthening my personal principles*”. Others argue that some of their features are unique due to their ways of teaching. A teacher says “*my way of teaching is proper to me*”. As to the shared qualities, the interviewed teachers provided the following common aspects: *sharing our practices and experiences, language commitment, flexibility, honesty, loving teaching, programme, verbal guidance, availability and helpfulness*.

The sense of community also indicates collaboration among teachers which, in various ways, enhances professional development as well. The interviewed teachers were asked whether or not they collaborate with one another. The pie-chat communicates the findings:

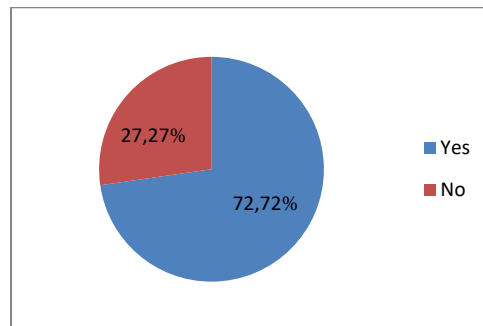


Figure 13. Collaboration between teachers

As shown above, most of the interviewed teachers (**72, 72%**) claimed they collaborate between them. The next question carried the same line of collaboration and sought to identify teachers' collaboration practices. The participants mentioned the following sharing and collaboration practices: books, preparation for conferences, exchanging experiences and ideas, knowledge, exam questions design, activities, syllabus and exams, evaluation and tasks. A teacher comments: *"We collaborate in providing the suitable syllabus for students, the mode of evaluation and many other pedagogical tasks"*. Some teachers, however, criticized the nature of these collaboration practices as being unorganized, unplanned and random, as a teacher says collaboration between teachers is *"just handing the programme"* (meaning the syllabus).

5. Discussion

The analysis of the findings of the different sections of this study showcases various shortcomings that definitely hinder a healthy development of English teachers' professional identities in Algerian higher education. This is probably the case since both the interior and the exterior factors of teachers' professional identity development do not help much in developing Algerian University teachers' PI (s). To begin with, it was shown that most of the interviewed teachers are able to identify aspects of their professional identities, relating it to certain work values and to the teaching profession. Nevertheless, they are aware of their professional identities as they are able to draw a demarcation line between their personal and professional identities, referring to certain contexts, circumstances, and to themselves as well. Howbeit, one may notice certain confusion in identifying personal identities, teachers relate to the teaching profession.

Another hindrance that comes in the way of proper development of professional identities emanates from Algerian teachers' motivations behind choosing the teaching job which are likely to affect individuals' aspirations in that vocation. Discussing the case of the Algerian university teachers of English, it was found that most of them did not aspire to become teachers as dream job. They would have liked to work as psychologists, artists, etc. Nevertheless, they seem to develop intrinsic motivation towards teaching, which we believe, is cardinal for the development of teachers' professional identities. These teachers believe that the teaching profession enables them to become life-long learners, develop relationships with learners and collaborate with colleagues. Howbeit, they also identified some aspects that qualify teaching a difficult job to exercise, claiming this job to be stressful, time-consuming, too demanding in Algerian teaching contexts and difficult due to the lack of students' motivation.

The new educational changes brought to the Algerian university also reflect certain difficulties teachers find when seeking adaption to the new approaches of teaching and assessing. That being said, as teachers' roles remain intact, their professional identity development is not likely to evolve. Exploring the tight rapport between professional identity

development and teachers' roles, it was found that some of the teachers' roles were left intact along the introduction of LMD system to Algerian higher education. Furthermore, mentioning the shortcomings of the application of the new system, work overload was the commonest. As to its advantages, autonomy, flexibility, activity, satisfaction, innovation, improving knowledge, more research, sharing with learners and effective assessment were identified as the positive features of the appointed at system. However, it was noticed that most of the teachers were not able to adopt the philosophies of learner-centered approach which has transformed the role of the teacher from knowledge provider to facilitator. Most importantly, it was found that teachers are aware of certain lacks in their teaching roles and as such suggest to the following roles to be developed and enhanced: assessor, collaborator, facilitator, and users of ICTs.

The exploration of the exterior factors, namely professional development opportunities and teaching communities, showcases apparent lacks in teachers' professional identity development. Starting with the identification of teachers' understandings of professional development, it was found that teachers believe professional development to be a dynamic process targeting skills and knowledge. Howbeit, gauging teachers' attitudes about professional development in Algerian higher education, it was discovered that most of them are unsatisfied about its neglect that emanates from the lack of practice and training.

As to professional opportunities, it was found that many teachers are not familiar with these types of opportunities. The teachers acknowledge the significance of these opportunities in keeping them updated; that is why these teachers prefer them to target skills, competences and a mastery of using teaching materials. Most importantly, teachers complain about the scarcity of these opportunities since their university does not provide these opportunities to all of them. Under the same vein, the exploration of the professional development opportunity known as "training abroad (stage), makes it clear that a considerable number of teachers do not benefit from this opportunity, while those privileged teachers believe that these opportunities lack practice.

Investigating another exterior factor that influences teachers' development of professional identities, it was found that most of the teachers belong to a teaching community, since they share with these communities certain practices such as practices and experiences, programme, verbal guidance, availability and helpfulness; however, they keep certain values and qualities individual. They also collaborate with their peers by means of exchanging books, experiences, ideas, knowledge, exam questions design, activities, syllabus and exams, evaluation and tasks, and preparing for conferences together. However, this collaboration, teachers believe, is unorganized given the fact some teachers prefer to work alone.

6. Conclusion

Professional development remains disregarded in Algerian higher education despite its significance in contributing to an effective teaching of English. In the case of Algerian higher education, supporting the interior factors that influence professional development may be attained by means of developing teachers' understandings about identity professional development. Most importantly, this process may be boosted as the exterior factors become more befitting for the attainment of professional development, the challenge that Algerian higher education and teachers need to raise.

References

- [1] Akkerman, S. F., & Meijer, P. C. (2011). A dialogical approach to conceptualizing teacher identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 308-3019.

- [2] Bastick, T. (2000). Why teacher trainees choose the teaching profession: comparing trainees in metropolitan and developing countries. *International Review of Education*, 46, 343-349.
- [3] Beijsaard, D., P. C. Meijer, & N. Verloop. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 107-128.
- [4] Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Huberman, A. M., Grounauer, M., & Marti, J. (1993). *The lives of teachers*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- [6] Ibarra, H. (1999). Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44, 764-791.
- [7] Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I am in how I teach is the message: self-understanding, vulnerability and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching*, 15, 257-272.
- [8] McLean, V. S. (1999). Becoming a teacher: The person in the process. In R. P. Lipka & T. M. Brinthaupt (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 55-91). New York: State University of New York Press.
- [9] Nixon, J. (1996). Professional identity and the restructuring of higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 21(1), 5-16.
- [10] Olsen, B. (2008). Introducing teacher identity and this volume. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35, 3-6.
- [11] Pinnegar, S. (2005). Identity development, moral authority and the teacher educator. In G. F. Hoban (Ed.), *The missing links in teacher education design* (pp. 259-279). Dordrecht: Springer.
- [12] Timoštšuk, I., and A. Ugaste. (2010). Student teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26: 1563-70.
- [13] Van Veen, K. (2008). Analysing teachers' working conditions from the perspective of teachers as professionals: The case of Dutch high school teachers. In J. Ax & P. Ponte (Eds.), *Critiquing praxis: Conceptual and empirical trends in the teaching profession* (pp. 91-112). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- [14] Van Manen, M., (1999). *The Tact of Teaching*, Toronto, Althouse Press.
- [15] Živković, P. (2013). Professional development and teachers' professional identity: self-assessment in Republic of Serbia. *Journal of Educational and Instructional Studies in the World*, Volume: 3 Issue: 1 Article: 18, 150-158.