FACTORS IN THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVELY CERTIFIED ENGLISH LANGUAGES TEACHERS (ACELTS)

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Abstract

This study investigates the contributing factors that are influential in the professional identity development (PID) of alternatively certified English language teachers (hereafter as ACELTs). 12 English language teachers with alternative teaching certificates participated in the study. The data were collected through self-reflection journals, in-class observations and semi-structured interviews during a 15-week semester. The results obtained from the data revealed that there are two main categories of factors that affect the PID of ACELTs which are the external and the internal factors, that is, the professional identity of ACELTs is a combination of effects of the external and the internal factors. It was concluded that the external factors assume re(shaping) roles whereas the internal ones act as lenses through which the enforcements of the external factors are filtered. Moreover, the findings revealed the existence of a context-bound professional identity of ACELTs which is in search of professional development to break the routines created by the context and the enforcement of the administration.

Keywords: teacher identity, professional development, alternative teaching certificate, alternatively certified English language teachers.

1. Introduction

Since 1982, along with other teacher education departments, the English language teaching departments have been under the responsibility of Higher Education Council (HEC). The teachers of English are trained through four-year undergraduate programs at Faculties of Education (FE) in English language teaching departments (ELT), the number of which is 56 according to ÖSYS Kontenjan Kılavuzu 2014 (The Quota Booklet) announced by ÖSYM (Measuring, Selection and Placement Center). Although the number of the departments cannot be underestimated, it has been a great challenge to train a sufficient number of English language teachers in Turkey. Experiencing such a challenge and the necessity to satisfy the demand for English language teachers led the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to find other alternative routes to English teacher certification, namely pedagojik formasyon in Turkish (pedagogical formation) or certificate of teaching (Seferoğlu, 2004). Graduates of different, however, at the same time related, departments (e.g. American Language and Literature, English Language and Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies) started to be accepted to these programs [especially in the past years] so that they become eligible to be teachers after a very short training of two semesters which might not even include any practice teaching. As a result, to fill the gap between the supply and the demand in the field

of English language teaching, those graduates have been hired by the government and private institutions as long as they hold an alternative teaching certificate.

The fact that there are English language teachers who are not graduates of ELT departments but of different or related ones has drawn the attention of many researchers in the field and led them to conduct studies on the issue. These studies generally focused on the perspectives of prospective English language teachers coming from different backgrounds other than ELT (Seferoğlu, 2004), the problems related to the alternative teacher certification (Taneri & Ok, 2014), the attitudes of these teachers towards teaching profession (Kartal & Afacan, 2012; Tural & Kabadayı, 2014), their motivation for teaching profession (Altınkurt, Yılmaz & Erol, 2014) and the perceptions, opinions and problems of teachers holding an alternative teaching certificate (Gökçe, 2010). It can be concluded from the abovementioned studies that the literature has focused mostly on the problems of alternative teaching certificate programs (ATCPs) and the perspectives, the motivation, and the attitudes of the teachers holding an alternative teaching certificate. Moreover, the foci of the abovementioned studies were not only English language teachers but also classroom teachers along with science teachers. Therefore, it is evident that there is a lack of research in the literature focusing on alternatively certified English language teachers (ACELTs) and their professional identity development.

ELT graduates being the focus, very few, if any, of these studies have been conducted on the PID of the teachers holding an alternative (language) teaching certificate. Consequently, there seems to be a growing need for conducting studies on the PID of English language teachers coming from alternative teaching certificate programs in order to understand their professional development and needs, to address their problems and to reflect back on the ELT programs as well. Consequently, this qualitative study is concerned with exploring, describing and understanding the factors which affect the PID of ACELTs by answering the question:

What are the contributing factors that affect professional identity development of alternatively certified English language teachers (ACELTs)?

2. Literature Review

Given the fact that identity studies in the field of language teaching have mainly concentrated on the identity development of either pre-service or in-service English language teachers from ELT departments (e.g., Farrell, 2010; Flores & Day, 2006; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010), this part of the paper will dwell on the literature related to the professional identity development (PID) of English language teachers who are graduates of ELT departments.

As the study is concerned with the PID of English language teachers coming from alternative teaching certificate programs, there is a need to provide the description and operationalization of the term identity for the purposes of this specific study.

2.1. The Definition of Identity

The term teacher identity has been a controversial one to define in its exact form as many researchers studying teachers' professional identity differ in the way they define, view and study this concept (Pillen, Brok, & Beijaard, 2013). Pillen et al. (2013) note that this mainly results from the fact that identity is not a stable 'product' but rather a continually changing, active and ongoing 'process'. After analyzing different definitions, Miller (2009) found out that there are some basic key words related to the concept of identity such as relational, negotiated, enacted, transforming, and transitional, which emphasizes the ongoing and dynamic nature of the term identity. Moreover, Varghese (2006) defines identity as "…the

influences on teachers, how individuals see themselves, and how they enact their profession in their settings."

The different terms, key words and concepts related to the teacher identity clearly show that the concept identity is not a single-layered, static and unilateral phenomenon. Rather, it is a multilayered, dynamic and multilateral one. The multilayered nature of the identity can be best seen in the definition of Duff and Uchida (1997) in which they claim that:

> Language teachers and students in any setting naturally represent a wide array of social and cultural roles and identities: as teachers or students, as gendered and cultured individuals, as expatriates or nationals, as native speakers (NSs) or non-native speakers, as content-area or TESL/English language specialists, as individuals with political convictions, and as members of families, organizations, and society at large. (p. 451)

Considering, different definitions and aspects of language teachers' identity, instead of sticking to one definition or explanation, this study aims to embrace different elements from different definitions and explanations in order to have wider and deeper understanding of the PID of ACELTs.

2.2. Literature on Teacher Identity Development from Global Contexts

Conducting studies on the concept of language teacher identity development and negotiation has been the focus of attention in the recent years (e.g., Borg 2011; Cohen, 2010; Ghasedi & Zareee, 2014; Phipps & Borg, 2009); consequently, there have been studies in the second language teaching field related to the language teacher identity development concentrating on the different aspects of the process.

The relevant studies portray various aspects of identity and contexts as well as research methodologies for identity studies. The aspects regarding the identity studied in the articles include factors affecting identity (e.g., Borg 2011), the relationship between identity and language (e.g., Urzua &Vasquez, 2008), the identity development with respect to experience (e.g., Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013), the relationship between identity and workplace (e.g., Kang & Cheng, 2014), identity vs. tensions, roles and identity negotiation (e.g., Farrell, 2010) and so on. Furthermore, the contexts in which the studies were conducted are different from each other, which enables us to see how identity is shaped in different contexts and environments.

Flores and Day (2006) focused on contexts shaping the identities of new teachers in Portugal. The results highlighted the powerful relationship between personal histories and the contextual influences of the workplace.

Similarly, in the study by Kang and Cheng (2014) in China, it was found out that the teacher identity and cognition development was a result of cyclical interaction between teacher's knowledge and beliefs and her classroom practices a favorable workplace is described as a place where there is suitable workload, collegial   support and availability of learning opportunities.

2.3. Literature on Teacher Identity Development from Turkish Contexts

Upon looking at the studies in global contexts, there is a need to go through the related studies in Turkey due to the fact that the present study was conducted in a Turkish university context.

Although there is a long history of alternatively certified English language teachers in Turkey, to the researcher's knowledge, very few, if any, focused on the professional identity of development ACELTs. However, a close look at the literature reveals that studies related

to teacher identity development and alternative teaching certificate programs mostly tended to focus on the perspectives and attitudes towards these programs and their graduates. The studies conducted within Turkish context concentrated mostly on alternatively certified teachers (ACTs) from different branches rather than ACELTS. For instance, Gur (2013) examined the basic and developmental characteristics of teachers' professional identity of Turkish language teachers in an elementary school. He found out that teachers change and develop their professional identities "...based on expectations and conditions that emerge in line with instructional, personal and social contexts" (p. 193).

In another study carried out by Atay and Ece (2009), it was found out learning English had a positive effect on the identity development of these pre-service teachers who claimed that learning English added another identity to them, which enriched them in terms of cultural and social aspects.

Oruç (2013) investigated how a teacher trainee constructs and evaluates her identity and found out that the teacher trainee went through a transformative process in which several aspects of her identity from self-efficacy to classroom management changed, and she developed a better understanding of who she was as a teacher

In her study, Gökçe (2010) revealed that ACTs in different fields had problems basically with material designing and development, planning, finding resources and lecturing along with carrying out group activities, dealing with the students and having a good relationship with the students.

There are also studies (e.g., Taneri & Ok, 2014) focusing on the perceptions and attitudes of teachers trained through alternative teaching training certificate programs in Turkish context. Based on the content and purpose of the studies in Turkey in terms of both teacher identity development and alternative teaching certificate programs, some common conclusions below can be reached:

a. The identity development studies in Turkey have concentrated mostly on the teacher identity development of prospective pre-service (English language) teachers along with the in-service ones (e.g., Kartal & Afacan, 2012).

b. The studies related to alternative teaching certificate programs are limited in scope as they only focus on teachers' attitude and motivation (e.g., Kartal & Afacan, 2012), ignoring the PID of those teachers who have a different background other than teaching.

c. The studies generally include participants working in the elementary or secondary schools (e.g., Gökçe, 2010; Taneri & Ok, 2014).

Taking these findings into consideration, there seems to be a pressing need to investigate the PID of ACELTs in the Turkish university (the tertiary level) context.

The foci of these studies seem to ignore the impact of INSET and other professional development opportunities such as conferences, MA and PhD. This may be because the studies are mainly concerned with English language teachers who are graduates of English Language Teaching Departments (ELT). Miller (2009) states that "...pre-service teachers have a repertoire of resources they can deploy and test as they negotiate and build their professional identities in social and institutional contexts." (p. 175), which may not be the case for ACELTs as they are educated in a different area, but become language teachers through alternative teaching certificate programs. Therefore, it is important to conduct identity development studies with ACELTs to be able to explore the factors that affect PID, to decipher and to understand the way they (re)construct their identities.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Setting of the Study

The study was carried out at the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) of a highly reputable English-medium Turkish University. SFL aims to provide the students whose level of English is below proficiency level with basic language skills so that they can pursue their undergraduate studies at the university without major difficulty. It also offers compulsory English courses for undergraduate students.

SFL does not only employ instructors who are graduates of ELT departments, but also other instructors either from related departments such as Linguistics, American Literature, English Literature and Translation Studies as long as they hold an alternative teaching certificate or graduates of other departments provided that they hold a teaching certificate or an MA degree in ELT. Although there are foreign instructors at SFL, the majority of the instructors is hired from Turkey.

3.2. Participants

The data for the study were collected from 12 English language teachers working at the School of Foreign Languages (SFL). Some teachers were offering courses for matriculated undergraduate (credit bearing courses) students; while others were teaching courses for pre-matriculated (preparatory class) students. The participants of the study were chosen on the basis of three types of nonprobability sampling which are purposive, convenience (availability) and homogeneous sampling (Check & Schutt, 2012; Dörnyei, 2007; Punch, 2005; Wellington, 2000). Their ages ranged between 24 and 44 (six participants between 24 and 30 and six participants between 24 and 30). They were all speaking Turkish as their native language. The participants were graduates of different related departments which were Linguistics (two teachers), Translation and Interpretation (two teachers), American Culture and Literature (four teachers) and English Language and Literature (four teachers). As it is a requirement to have a teaching certificate so as to be able to teach (English) in many institutions in Turkey, nine participants completed teaching certificate programs, while ten participants completed ICELT. The number of the participants who completed both a teaching certificate program and ICELT is seven. One of the participants, moreover, completed a TESOL program in testing and evaluation.

The participants differed in terms of their experience in language teaching. At the time when the study was conducted, four of the participants had one to five year/s of experience in language teaching; five of them had six to 10 years of experience, and three of them had 11 to 20 years of experience. For some participants SFL was the first workplace; on the other hand, some participants had worked in different institutions before they started their careers at SFL. Nine of the participants were teaching pre-matriculated students (preparatory classes) while three of them were teaching matriculated students (department students).

Bearing the ethical issues in mind, in order to protect the rights and privacy of the participants, each participant was randomly given a unisex name in Turkish to create anonymity and confidentiality and to make participants feel secure. Therefore, all the participants will be referred as "s/he" throughout the chapters in order to be able to maintain anonymity possible.

3.3. Data Collection

This qualitative study made use of various data collection instruments which included bio-data questionnaire, reflection journals, observations (along with field notes), semi-structured interviews and focus group interview. Using such variety of data collection instruments also

ensured having data triangulation which means "using multiple data sources to build a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201).

The bio-data questionnaire was created to identify the potential participants aiming to find out the departments that the participants graduated from, their experiences in the language teaching field, degrees and certificates that they hold.

The second data collection instrument utilized in this study was reflection journals prepared by the researchers. Reflections were exploited as one of the data sources since they have the potential to provide us with the deep insights of participants' identities as Gee (2000) claims that "…the person's own narrativization is what constitutes his or her (never fully formed or always potentially changing) core identity" (p. 111). The focus of the reflection journals was to reveal the teaching journey of the participants along with their teaching philosophies and teaching experiences.

Gray (2009) states that "observation provides an opportunity to get beyond people's opinions and self-interpretations of their attitudes, behaviors, towards an evaluation of their actions in practice" (p. 397), which indicates the importance of having observations for a study on beliefs and practices. Therefore, there were two in-class observations (CO I and CO II) per participant. In order to keep a record of the data, the researchers also benefitted from field note sheets (FN I and FN II). The observations were also recorded by means of a voice recorder in order to hinder any data loss and rely on them if necessary.

Packer (2011) states that "interviews are a ubiquitous way of collecting data throughout social sciences" (p. 42) as interviews are very useful "to explore people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions [in a social setting]" (Mason, 2002, p. 63). Taking these claims into consideration, the present study used interviews to address the research question more comprehensively. There were two semi-structured interviews (SSI I and SSI II) per participant, and 24 in total. In order to be able to obtain coherent and consistent data from participants, there were questions which were the same or similar along with different ones depending on what was written in the reflections and what was observed in the classrooms

The last data collection method used in the present study was focus group interview (FGI). The rationale behind employing such instrument in the study was to create "a collective mind allowing participants to think together, inspire and challenge each other and react to emerging issues and points (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 144). The questions for the FGI were also prepared by the researcher in line with the aims of the study as well.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

After collecting the data from reflections, observations and interviews, they were transcribed by using the software "Express Dictate" and coded based on the stages of grounded theory and thematic content analysis as Grounded Theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967) "let the ideas (the theory) emerge from your immersion in a situation rather than going in with fixed ideas (with theory) about what is happening" (as cited in Thomas, 2013, p. 239).

In the present study, the stages of coding included "open coding, which requires cracking the data and creating general themes and categories, axial coding, which means relating the codes to each other, and selective coding, which is relating the codes to a core code (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

Following the principles of grounded theory, the data analysis adopted thematic content analysis. Thematic Content Analysis is "a process of working with raw data to identify and interpret key ideas or themes" (Matthews & Ross, 2010). It also requires creating initial

categories and themes from the data through constant comparison within each case and across the cases, which helps to describe the categories within each case and to identify the similarities and differences across the cases.

After completing coding, categorizing and creating overarching themes, some parts of the data were reanalyzed by two other researchers in order to have "intercoder agreement" (Creswell, 2014, p. 203) to increase the reliability of the study. The intercoders were holding MA degrees, and they were familiar with the process of qualitative data analysis. Besides having data triangulation, that is having multiple data collection instruments, and intercoders during the analysis stage, to ensure more validity, the study also employed member checking which requires "checking the data with the people who are being studied" (Punch, 2005, p. 255) after collecting and analyzing the data.

The data collection and analysis procedures employed in the study are summarized in Table 1 below, which also provides information about the form of analysis and the rationale behind adopting such data collection instruments.

Table 1. *The summary of data collection and analysis*

Source	Rationale	Form of Analysis
Reflection Journals	To gather data about participants' roles, teaching philosophies and experiences	Thematic content analysis
In-class Observations	To explore teaching practices of participants in the classrooms	Thematic content analysis
Semi-structured Interviews & Focus Group Interview	To explore the experiences, perceptions and understandings of participants' about their professional identities.	Thematic content analysis

4. Results

The purpose of the research question was to explore and describe the contributing factors that affect the professional identity development (PID) of ACELTs through data obtained from reflections, observations and interviews. Upon analyzing the data, the emerging and the most salient themes were categorized as the external and internal factors. As the category names are res ipsa loquitur, external factors are the factors which are not directly related to the participants himself or herself while internal factors are the factors which are directly related to the participant himself or herself. External factors were further grouped under five main and 15 sub-categories whereas internal factors were only grouped under four main categories, which implies that external factors make up the majority of the factors affecting the PID of ACELTs. The Table 2 below presents the categorization and the summary of the results.

Table 2. *The categorization of the themes*

External Factors			
I. Institutional (Workplace) Factors		**II. Contextual Factors**	
a.	Administration	a.	Student Profile
b.	Colleagues	b.	Classroom Dynamics
c.	Teacher Development Unit	c.	Program / Curriculum
d.	In-service Training	**IV. Professional Events**	
III. Educational Factors		a.	Workshops
a.	K-12 Level	b.	Conferences
b.	University	**V. Other Factors**	
c.	Pedagogical Formation	a.	Role Models
d.	MA /PhD	b.	Research studies
Internal Factors			
I. Personality		**III.** Teaching Experience	
II. Motivation		**IV.** Intuition	

4.1. External Factors

4.1.1. Institutional (workplace) factors

All participants agreed that the institution one works for plays a great role in shaping their professional identities. "The place or school where you work shapes who you are as a teacher because what you are doing is what that place requires from you" (Burçin, SI 1). Although the emphasis in the given quote is on the requirements of the institution, the data analysis revealed that administration, colleagues, teacher development unit and in-service training programs are the main institutional factors that have an influence on the professional identity (development) of ACELTs. In terms of institutional factors, there was an emphasis on the colleagues and how they affect their professional identity (development). It was clear from the data that there is a community of practice atmosphere in the institution. Toprak, for instance, explained the issue in the following way: "Everybody at SFL is helpful when you ask for something. I have learned many things from them in terms of teaching" (RJ 1). In addition to this, it was obvious that ACELTs try to benefit from the experiences of their colleagues who are ELT graduates. They think that ELT graduates can help them to cover the gap in their theoretical knowledge; therefore, they place much importance on the interaction and communication with ELT graduates. One of the participants talked about this issue as follows: "I talk to my ELT graduate colleagues a lot. I mean, if I don't know something, I definitely try to learn it from them, so this is one way of tackling the problems I face" (Derin, SI 2).

Another institutional factor mentioned by the participants was the teacher development unit (TDU). Since SFL was the first workplace for many participants they stated that the activities, workshops and the induction organized by TDU taught them many things related to their profession. For example, in one of the interviews, one participant emphasized the acculturator role of TDU in the following way: "The induction held by the TDU guided us. It was very helpful while adjusting ourselves to the new teaching environment. I learned the very basic elements of conducting a lesson or reading exam papers" Ada (SI 2).

Finally, in-service teacher training programs, which is In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) for SFL, emerged as a key institutional factor affecting the professional identity (development) of ACELTs. ICELT includes both theoretical and

practical aspects of teaching. Hence, it is quite beneficial for ACELTs in terms of both theory and practice of English language teaching, which is explained as "in my teaching career, ICELT is the best thing I have ever had. With ICELT, I had a chance to learn the English terms related to teaching" (Ada, SI 1). ICELT seems to play a great role in the professional development ACELTs at SFL because it is a training program in alignment with the requirements and policies of SFL; therefore, it is perceived not only as a training program in which theories and practical elements are introduced, but also as an acculturation and accommodation program serving the needs and expectations of the institution. Participants think that ICELT has contributed a lot to their professional identity (development) which is explained as follows: ICELT has a big impact on my teaching. I can even say that it was a corner stone in my professional development. Thanks to it, I observed my own teaching. This gave me an insight into my teaching style. I diagnosed my weaknesses and tried to overcome them. The training program was useful for me in my first year. It guided me through our system (Olcay, RJ 2).

To sum up, institutional factors are important in different aspects of PID. Administration, for instance, is influential on the professional identity (development) of ACELTs in terms of providing the professional development opportunities whereas TDU contributes to theory formation and practical experience of these teachers through organizing workshops, observing them and providing feedback. For many of the participants, ICELT is the equivalent of a formal ELT education. That is the platform where they seem to become familiar with the concepts and theories in ELT, and where they have the chance to practice what they learn and receive feedback based on that. Colleagues outstand as one of the most influential factors since they act as immediate guide or mentor, and they are ready to share their experiences with ACELTs.

4.1.2. Contextual factors

The second external factor emerged from the data was contextual factors such as student profile, program or curriculum and classroom dynamics. Devrim pointed out that "context is everything, you learn for and from the context. It shapes you as a teacher in the way it wants to" (RJ 1; SI 1)

Student profile assumes an important role in shaping participants' professional identity as it is claimed by the participants that it affects their motivation, teaching style and classroom management which is pointed out as follows:

> Students who are more conscious are generally motivated, which affects my motivation as well. With a motivated student profile, you become more willing to prepare and implement different lessons. (Kayra, SI 1).

Another contextual factor that influences the professional identity (development) of ACELTs is classroom dynamics. The fact that each and every class has a different dynamic requires teachers to act and teach in different ways. Devrim illustrates the issue as follows:

> When you enter a class that is what you have. You need to follow the rules and dynamics that are valid in that class. You cannot bring elements from another class and try to use them there. Of course, you can do the same activity you did in another class, but the ingredients or the way you do the activity will be different. (SI 1.)

The last contextual factor that affects the professional identity development of ACELTs is the program/curriculum they are teaching. The fact that SFL has two programs, namely, preparatory school program and modern languages program, makes a difference in terms of the student profile, requirements of the programs and the content of the syllabus. Participants

asserted that teaching at those different programs changes the way they perceive themselves as teachers Derin who taught in both programs explains the situation as follows:

> I have taught in both programs. Prep is more structured and direct, so it does not leave much space to the teacher either to arrange his/her own schedule or to seek outer professional development activities. At MLP, I feel more flexible, which increases my motivation as a teacher. (SI 1).

To conclude, the student profile, classroom dynamics and the program or curriculum are the contextual factors that influence the professional identity (development) of ACELTs in terms of shaping their lesson plans, their teaching approaches and motivation.

4.1.3. Educational factors

The third factor categorized under the external factors is educational factors. By the term educational factors, it is referred to the educational background of the participants when they were students or participants at a school, in a certificate or training program.

The data revealed that in the course of PID, education that participants receive or have received plays an important role, and five main sub-categories were defined for the educational factors which are K-12 level education, university education, pedagogical formation and MA/PhD.

They claim that although it is not easy to trace back and see how their K-12 education affected them, they believe that there are some subconscious traces of those years they have in their professional identities. It was asserted by the participants that sometimes they feel like they are imitating their (English language) teachers or copying what they were doing in their classes. These traces can include their way of starting a lesson, the way they introduce a topic, the way they lead and manage a class or the way they treat students. One of the participants commented on the issue as indicated below:

> My English language teachers in primary and high school influenced me immensely. My primary school teacher was quite strict and an only-English policy advocate. While the latter, however, was more approachable and understanding. As to me, I am a perfect blend of these two ladies, a disciplined but approachable and friendly teacher (Derin, RJ 1).

Another factor categorized under educational factors is the university education of the participants. Participants agreed on the fact their university education has an influence on their professional identities and PID in terms of classroom management, the topics they like to teach or the way they lecture some topics. It was revealed that the departments that ACELTs graduated have an effect on the preferences of those teachers with regards to the skill they think they teach best or they enjoy teaching more compared to the other skills. Graduates of culture and literature departments are fond of teaching reading and writing in the classroom. They link this to their undergraduate studies where they used to read stories and novels and do textual analyses. Graduates of linguistics and translation studies, on the other hand, enjoy teaching grammar more than the others, which they associate with the linguistic analyses they did in their undergraduate studies.

The third educational factor the pedagogical formation (PDF) or the certificate of teaching (CoT). Although not every participant thinks that PDF was beneficial or helpful in shaping their professional identity, it was important since this was the first time for many of them to feel being or becoming a language teacher. Some of the participants argued that it was just beneficial in terms of having such a feeling. For the others, however, it was the first time that

they were exposed to ELT terminology, pedagogy, approaches and methods; therefore, it served as an introduction to teaching.

The last factor listed under the educational factors is MA/PhD. Among 12 participants, five completed an MA degree while three of them completed a PhD degree. One motive behind doing an MA degree, especially in ELT, was learning more about language teaching and the ELT field. The participants who held MA degree agreed that MA was quite beneficial for their theory formation and becoming more familiar with the ELT terminology, which is illustrated by Deniz as follows "I felt that I needed to learn more to be more confident in teaching. I wanted to learn more about the theory of my job basically" (SI 1).

Another aspect of doing MA with respect to PID was keeping up with recent trends and novelties in the field. Participants believe that it is important to follow and keep updated with what is going on in the field to be able to do your job better. Olcay argues that "As a teacher, you need to be aware of what is happening in the field. That is what MA offers to you. You read intensively about a wide variety of issues and become familiar with the trends in the field" (SI 1).

Devrim regards PhD as specializing and being an expert in the field. S/he stated that "as I said, I want to be an expert, let's say, in my field, in my area. Yeah, that's why I'm doing it. I also want to improve myself as teacher" (SI 1).

To conclude, K-12 level education, university education, pedagogical formation and MA/PhD are among the educational factors that have an impact on the PID of ACELTs. The impact can be traced in the areas such as classroom management, approaches and methods in the teaching, theory learning and formation along with specialization in the field and keeping updated with the recent trends.

4.1.4. Professional events

In this study, the term professional events refer to any activity or event including professional development elements such as workshops, seminars and conferences in which teachers or people in the field participate, collaborate, share ideas and experiences. It was acknowledged from the data that workshop and conferences are two main themes that have an influence on the professional identity development (PID) of ACELTs.

Firstly, participants of the study think that attending either seminars or workshops or conferences on ELT is an indispensable part of professional development and keeping updated with the very recent trends in the field. They emphasize that such platforms are a good common ground to come together with the colleagues who graduated from ELT departments and to interact and share experiences with them. Bircan expresses his/her ideas and feelings about the workshops as "I love workshops and conferences. I learn a lot during these events. It is a great opportunity to meet people and benefit from their experiences, especially when you attend those held in other institutions." (SI 1).

To sum up, attending workshops or conferences and presenting papers or sharing experiences during these activities and events are factors that play important roles in the PID of ACELTs regarding theory learning, keeping updated and socialization.

4.1.5. Other factors

The last factor categorized under the external factors that affect the PID of ACELTs is called as other factors, and it includes role models and research studies. For every participant in the study, there were role models who inspired, guided and motivated them during their journey of becoming teachers or while they are teaching. The profiles of these role models vary including primary school teachers, high school teachers, teacher trainers, university

teachers and Dr. Keatings from the movie Dead Poets' Society. Each participant has a reason why they have those people as their role models. Some think that they were great in terms of their relationship with their students, some think that they were very good at classroom management, and some think that they were inspiring just because of who they were.

The second and the last factor categorized under other factors and the last factor under external factors is the research studies which the participants take part in. They stated that participating in studies like this one gives them a chance to reflect back on their practices and think about their profession. Therefore, when they are asked to take part in such studies they get involved not only to help the researchers, but also to benefit from the course of the research study. Kayra explains it as follows:

> Taking part in such studies might not have a direct effect on your professional identity or development. However, they give you a chance to look back on what you did as a teacher. You become more aware. For example, this study increased my self-awareness in a way through writing reflections (SI 2).

To sum up, role models and taking part in research studies have an impact on the professional identity (development) of ACELTs in terms different aspects such as classroom management, teaching style, personality and reflecting back on your practices. Reflecting on the teaching beliefs and practices is perceived as one essential element of professional identity development.

4.2. Internal Factors

4.2.1. Personality

Participants argue that personality is a key factor which has a significant role in the professional identity development (PID) of a teacher, including themselves. They regard personality as the basis for almost any aspect of professional identity (development). They assert that personality is quite influential regarding a teacher's teaching philosophy, classroom management and relationship with his/her students and colleagues. Burçin clarifies the issue as below:

> A teacher's personality is very important for his/her professional identity. You act according to your personality. For example, believe that I have good communication and empathizing skills; therefore, when I talk to my students, when I criticize them, I also try to look at the things from their point of view, which shows them my personality affects the relationship between me, as a teacher, and my students (SI 1).

Participants also consider personality as an important factor with respect to teaching philosophy. They think that a teacher's personality is a determiner in terms of the interpretation and application of methods and techniques. Moreover, they agreed that personality affects how a teacher organizes activities and conducts his/her classroom.

4.2.2. Motivation

The second internal factor that emerged out of the research data is the motivation that teachers have. The participants commented on the fact that motivation plays the driving force for their teaching and their search for professional development. They emphasized that without having the motivation, it is hard to achieve something as a teacher and to develop themselves professionally. Devrim confirms this as follows: "You can equip a teacher with the best and recent methods, techniques and materials; however, if s/he lacks the very basic motivation to teach, they are useless" (SI 1).

Motivation is also regarded essential for the desire to seek for professional development. Participants stated that teachers can develop themselves as long as they want to do so. Forcing them or creating external motivational instruments can only create temporary change or development. Burçin underlines the importance of motivation for professional development as follows:

> It is a teacher's choice to develop himself/herself. If s/he does not have the motivation to follow or attend professional activities, workshops or conferences, you cannot force them. However, boosting their motivation and finding ways to make them more motivated might help because motivation is the core of development (SI 1).

4.2.3. Teaching Experience

"When it is teaching, everything comes with experience" (SI 2) stated Derya, signaling the importance of experience for the ACELTs. This study consists of both novice and experienced teachers as the participants, and both groups underlined the fact that experience matters for their professional identity (development). They stated that experience is effective in the way they manage their classrooms, they interact with their students, they deal with a topic or the way they perceive and interpret the things. They think that a novice ACELT who lacks many theoretical and practical aspects of teaching may feel himself/herself weak and less confident as a teacher whereas an experienced ACELT perceives himself/herself component and confident. Ada indicated this issue as follows:

> I believe that teachers develop by experience. There is always something that everyone teaches the other. This is a mutual teaching process between the teachers, colleagues and students. A teacher becomes a better teacher by trying and seeing the results. This is my third year in teaching. I feel more confident as I experience more" (RJ 1 & SI 1).

The participants think that although ACELTs are not graduates of ELT departments, they do not find it hard to catch up with their colleagues who are ELT graduates because they think that the important thing is the experience. Kayra clarified it as "I am an ACELT, and this does not mean that an ELT graduate will do better than me. A more experienced ACELT does better than a novice or an inexperienced teacher. What is important is the experience" (SI 1).

Participants view teaching and PID as trial and error process, in which they try things, reflect on them and decide to further make use of them or not. This trial and error process is directly related to experience contributing to the professional (identity) development of ACELTs. Moreover, the participants argue that experience is contributive to one's professional identity, and the more experience one has the more changes they undergo.

Although there is a consensus on the positive effect of experience in terms PID, there seem to be some concerns about the definition of experience and someone experienced. The participants in the study do not consider experience only as a matter of teaching English for many years; rather, their comments on the issue creates a new term which can be called as contextual experience, which means having experience related to a place, a topic, a skill or a system. Toprak explains it as follows:

> Experience cannot be limited to the years one teaches. A novice teacher who has just two years of experience in an institution can be regarded as more experienced than a newly-employed teacher who has 15 years of experience in teaching. The novice will know more about the system and how the things work (SI 1).

All in all, experience is identified as a core factor affecting the PID of ACELTs. The participants value experience and what it brings. They all believe that experience has a positive impact on their professional identity.

4.2.4. Intuition

It was revealed that participants also related the rationale behind their actions to their intuitions. They asserted that sometimes they just follow their intuitions to do something in the way do. They rely on their common sense and take and implement decisions based on them. Güneş stated in the interviews that "sometimes, I do things without thinking about them much. I do it just because I think so. I think that is the intuition part. If that thing works, I do it again later." (SI)

Another participant, Umut, who thinks that intuition has an impact on a teacher's beliefs and actions expressed his/her thought on the issue as follows:

> When I first started teaching, I almost did not know anything about teaching. I was following my intuitions. Maybe, I was doing something resulting from my past experiences, but for me, it was intuition. It helps a lot, especially when you need to take instant decisions (SI 1).

Although experiences might be the reference to ACELTs' intuitions, it is obvious that they also play roles in their actions and decisions. Sometimes ACELTs rely on their intuitions to do certain things, and if the things work, they use this knowledge later on. This can be perceived as a trial and error process, intuition leading to experience, which affects the PID of ACELTs.

4.3. Summary of the Findings

It seems clear that the professional identity of ACELTs is a combination of effects of the external and the internal factors. Each category and the type of the factor have an important effect on the professional identity (development) of those teachers. However, considering the roles of those factors, it can be concluded that, in a broader sense, the external factors assume re(shaping) roles whereas the internal ones act as lenses through which the enforcements of the external factors are filtered. Another conclusion which can be drawn from the results is that both the external and internal factors directly affect the professional identity (development) of ACELTs while external factors have the potential to influence the internal factors as well. The figure below is illustrative:

Figure 1. *The roles of the factors*
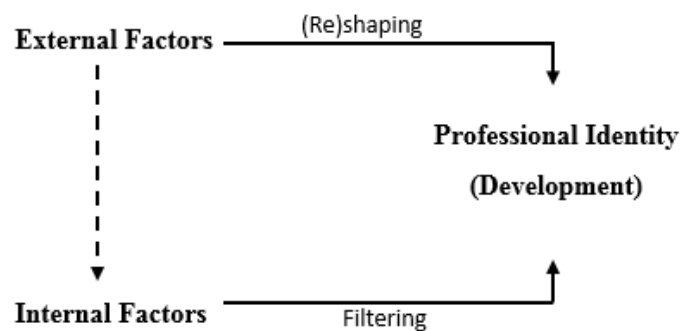
Upon looking at the figure above the conclusions below can be drawn from data results:

1. The external factors, which influence not only professional development, but also the internal factors to some extent, assume a greater role than internal factors.

2. External factors and internal factors directly influence the professional identity of ACELTs, and external factors might also affect internal factors which again impose an indirect effect on the professional identity of ACELTs.

3. External factors assume a (re)shaper role while internal factors assume filter or lens roles. In another metaphorical sense, external factors can be seen as the skeleton whereas the internal ones are flesh and blood.

On the whole, the results reveal the existence of a context-bound professional identity of ACELTs which is in search of professional development to break the routines created by the context and the enforcement of the administration.

5. Discussion

The first significant finding of the study is the systematic, comprehensive and well-framed categorization of the factors that are influential in the professional identity (development) of ACELTs. Despite touching upon some factors, the previous studies conducted (on the professional identity (development) of English language teachers (e.g., Flores & Day, 2006; Goos, 2005; Johnson, 2009; Varghese, 2006; Walkington, 2005) did not provide such systematic categorization of those factors regarding alternatively certified English language teachers.

The findings of this study are aligned with the results of some studies such as Flores and Day (2006), Timoštšuk and Ugaste (2010) which included context as one of the main factors affecting the professional identity development of English language teachers. However, such studies did not tap into the details, and further categorization was not employed in these studies.

The present study revealed that ICELT, the in-service teacher training program, is one of the most influential factors affecting the professional identity (development) of ACELTs in terms of theory formation and acquiring the practical aspects of language teaching which is supported by the findings of the studies conducted by Urzua and Vazquez (2008) and Walkington (2005).

The findings pointed out that for the majority of the ACELTs, pedagogical formation or the certificate of teaching was not beneficial in closing the gap and it was not motivating for them. This was a finding that contrasted with what is claimed by Altınkurt, Yılmaz and Erol (2014).

In alignment with the principles of Socio-Cultural Theory and the results of the studies conducted within this theoretical framework (e.g., Dam, 2006; Goos, 2005; Johnson, 2009; Lave & Wegner, 1991; Scotland, 2013), the findings of the present study indicated that community of practice is an essential key in the professional identity development of ACELTs.

ACELTs have the motivation to seek for professional development which contradicts with the results of the study conducted by Seferoğlu (2004) in which participants argued that the teachers coming from an alternative certificate program will lack commitment and motivation for teaching.

Furthermore, the present study revealed that educational factors such as K-12 level, university education and MA/PhD are quite influential in the professional identity (development) of ACELTs. K-12 level education seems to affect how ACELTs perceive

teaching and manage their classrooms. The seeds of their professional identity can be traced back to those years where they unintentionally gained insights about conducting a lesson and managing a classroom through observing their teachers and/or role models. In addition to these, their university years contributed to this insight. Therefore, it can be argued that when ACELTs started teaching, they had preconceptions about teaching and a repertoire to deploy and test during their practices, which complies with Miller (2009).

Completing an MA and/or a PhD degree helped participants to become more familiar with the ELT field, to learn and adopt ELT terminology along with keeping updated about the recent trends and changes in the field.

Another influential factor emerged from the findings is the institution where ACELTs work. It is clear that the requirements, implementations and regulations of the institution affected their professional identity (development). The workplace was seen both as facilitating and hindering in terms of the professional identity development, which was also previously reported by Flores and Day (2006) and Kang and Cheng (2014).

Lastly, different from the results of other studies, the present study reported that intuition surfaced as a factor influencing the professional identity development of ACELTs as they sometimes rely on their common sense to take decisions and implement them.

6. Implications and Suggestions of the Study

The present study cast light upon the professional identity development of alternatively certified English language teachers and it has some pedagogical implications.

First of all, it is obvious from the results that alternative teaching certificate programs or pedagogical formation must be restructured, and a new more practical curriculum should be adopted as ACELTs criticized the structure of the programs and the way they are implemented.

Secondly, as the study revealed that the context has a key role in professional identity (development), it is important to organize structured and systematic induction programs to acculturate newly-employed ACELTs.

Thirdly, since some ACELTs, especially the novice teachers, lack some theoretical and practical aspects of language teaching, providing INSET opportunities in coherent with the needs and principles of the institutional curriculum might help ACELTs remediate the gap and facilitate their adaptation process to the working environment and the conditions. In addition to INSET opportunities, organizing focused mini-seminars and mini-workshops for ACELTs might help them compensate for such gap and provide a chance for them to voice themselves.

Finally, a reflective feedback system can be integrated into such programs so that ACELTs can inform the program coordinators or managers about their concerns, needs and thoughts on the program which can lead to improvement in the organization and implementation of such programs and courses.

7. Conclusions

The present study aimed to provide insights into the professional identity development alternatively certified English language teachers (ACELTs). More specifically, it was concerned with exploring, describing and understanding the factors which affect the professional identity development of ACELTs.

The results showed that there are external (e.g. institutional, contextual and educational) and internal (e.g. personality, motivation and teaching experience) factors that influence the

professional identity (development) of ACELTs. It was revealed that external factors assume (re)shaping roles with regard to classroom management, theory learning and creation, teaching styles and approaches and socialization while the internal factors act as filters and are effective in building teaching philosophy, belief systems and teaching styles.

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