Copyright © 2025 The Author(s)
Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan, Vol. 14 No. 2 May 2025

How Beliefs and Performance Influence Professional Identity Formation: Insight from Indonesian ELT Graduate Student

Sintia Marlina Urbaq[1], Ngadiso[2], Dewi Rochsantiningsih[3]
[1,2,3]Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia

[1]S892202016@student.uns.ac.id

Abstract

Master's programs present a unique challenge to professional identity development. Students concurrently engage in academic pursuits, research activities, and frequently part-time employment. This confluence of responsibilities creates a dynamic environment where role conflict can disrupt the clarity and coherence of their developing professional identity. The purpose of this research was to explore the development of professional identity among Master's students, focusing on the interplay between their beliefs about their identity image and their actual performance in identity development activities. This study explored two key aspects of ELT graduate student development: How do ELT graduate students envision themselves as future educators? and What strategies do ELT graduate students employ to develop their professional competence? This study utilized a qualitative approach to amplify the data derived from participants' own words through in-depth descriptions of their experiences. The data for this study was ELT graduate students who actively pursued master's programs. Moreover, the researchers s used interactive model analysis to analyze the data. This study revealed two key findings related to the research question: 1) Students envision themselves as effective teacher: 2) Professional identity development through academic and non-academic activities. This study implies that PID is a continuous process requiring ongoing learning and growth. ELT graduate students should actively engage in professional development and utilize structured self-reflection (e.g., journals, portfolios) to identify strengths and weaknesses.
Keywords: *Professional Identity, Identity development, English language teacher, Graduate Students*

Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, Professional Identity (PI) emerges as a multifaceted construct, shaped by various experiences and influences, such as personal beliefs, pedagogical approaches, and the evolving educational landscape (Norton, 2016; Richardson & Watt, 2018; Şenel, 2021; Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017). For graduate students, this identity is shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including academic experiences, personal values, societal expectations, and career aspirations (Safari, 2018; 2020; Wijaya, 2021). By participating in master's programs, graduate students frequently juggle multiple roles, such as student, researcher, and part-time employee. This balancing act can create confusion regarding their priorities and sense of identity. Furthermore, future EFL teachers should focus on self-awareness and reflection to understand their goals and identities as educators. Therefore, an ongoing process of self-understanding and evaluation is essential for developing a strong sense of "who they are" (Barkhuizen, 2017) as future language educators.

In the Indonesian context, the diverse linguistic landscape and the global significance of English underscore the importance of effective language teaching. Recent shifts in Indonesian English Language Teaching (ELT) underscore the growing importance of professional identity development for postgraduate students (Zein et al., 2020). Besides, during the initial phase of

their professional trajectory, novice educators may experience a period of disillusionment characterized by a decline in intrinsic motivation and the onset of self-doubt regarding their competence and commitment to the teaching profession, potentially culminating in attrition (Dewi & Fajri, 2023). Additionally, EFL teachers are constrained by the academic policies, objectivities, and attitudes that are deeply embedded in their educational institutions (Wijaya, 2021). As a result, they have to follow those stated rules while also developing their appropriate agency activities. Concerning this matter, modern EFL teachers are expected to continuously enhance their professional growth, not only through institutional engagement but also by proactively transforming education. Hence, the influence of teacher education programs, supervising teachers, culture-environment, personal beliefs, and performance on PI development is significant. Understanding these factors is essential in improving the quality of teacher education and ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to meet the challenges of the ELT profession.

Relating to the current professional identities of educators can exert a profound influence on the nature of their learning encounters (Banegas, Pinner, & Larrondo, 2022; Yuan & Zhang, 2017). Non-native Future English teachers, including Indonesian ELT graduate students, should prioritize developing a strong professional identity to create positive and effective learning environments for their students. To teach English effectively, ELT students need to be proficient in the language and possess both pedagogical skills and cultural knowledge to foster cross-cultural understanding (Ortaçtepe, 2015; Qoyyimah, Singh, Exley, Doherty, & Agustiawan, 2023). These competencies, grounded in language teaching theories, have served as a foundation for developing literature on professional identity in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) (Qoyyimah, Singh, Exley, Doherty, & Agustiawan, 2023). In other words, it is necessary to investigate how and to what extent the professional identity of English teachers aligns with general standards and specific professional competencies among current ELT graduate students.

The existing literature on professional identity development (PID) related to this topic underscores the multifaceted nature of professional identity (PI) development. For higher education (HE) students, developing a strong Professional Identity (PI) is essential, as it significantly contributes to enhanced learning, sustained confidence, and consistent motivation (Jensen & Jetten, 2016). Educational programs (e.g. teaching assignments, coursework) and external support (e.g. positive student-teacher relationships, educational experiences) contribute to the formation of professional identity and overall professional growth (Banegas, Pinner, & Larrondo, 2022; Flores, 2020; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2021). Besides, internal support (e.g. teaching practice, research, and community service) and external support (e.g. motivation, support, value) will ultimately contribute to the development of English Language Teaching (ELT), creating a transformative, safe, and enjoyable learning environment for all learners (Dewi & Fajri, 2023; Mbato & Wijaya, 2020; Wijaya, 2021). Moreover, PI can categorized (high, medium, low) based on competence, self-efficacy, and engagement (Tan, Molen, & Schmidt, 2017; Hanna, Oostdam, Severiens, & Zijlstra, 2020). This categorization helps understand role perception and its impact on job satisfaction and performance. Hence, a robust professional identity serves as a fundamental element for both achieving career success and experiencing vocational fulfillment, yielding positive impacts not only for the individual but also for the broader professional community (Richardson & Watt, 2018). In this particular educational context, investigating the distinct combinations of elements that influence their PI as well as the particular results linked to different levels of PI is needed.

The existing research on Professional Identity (PI) in Higher Education has not adequately acknowledged the significance of individuals' prior experiences as crucial elements in shaping

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s)

the development of a Professional Identity in the English Language Teaching (ELT) field among graduate students (Banegas, Pinner, & Larrondo, 2022; Dewi & Fajri, 2023; Mbato & Wijaya, 2020; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2021). Moreover, current research on Professional identity development tends to concentrate on a single incident or multiple factors simultaneously within a specific pedagogical value (Flores, 2020; Urbaq, 2024; Wijaya, 2021). This limited scope of research has hindered a comprehensive understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of PI development in the ELT field. Therefore, this research focuses on enhancing the existing knowledge of Professional Identity Development (PID) among ELT graduate students by examining students' beliefs and performance in developing their PI through their experiences in their academic and non-academic journeys.

Drawing upon existing literature and research concerning professional identity (PI) development in English Language Teaching (ELT), a research gap exists in specific of the intricate relationship between their evolving professional identities and key aspects of their graduate experience, including academic performance and non-academic performance. Therefore, a more in-depth investigation is necessary to unravel the specific factors shaping the professional identities of Indonesian ELT graduate students. This includes exploring potential influences such as their prior educational backgrounds, exposure to diverse levels of their PI, engagement with local and international ELT communities, perceptions of teacher status and roles within the Indonesian context, and their aspirations for future careers in English language education. A comprehensive understanding of these unique interactions and the subsequent outcomes associated with varying levels of PI within this specific educational setting is vital. Such insights can inform the design of more culturally responsive and contextually relevant teacher education programs, mentorship initiatives, and professional development opportunities tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of Indonesian ELT graduate students, thereby contributing to the cultivation of effective and well-integrated future educators within the Indonesian educational system (Zein, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating these aspects and contributing to the overall understanding of professional identity development in the Indonesian ELT context.

Drawing on existing research and recognizing the identified research gap, this study aims to answer the following two questions: 1) How do ELT graduate students envision themselves as future educators? 2) What strategies do ELT graduate students employ to develop their professional competence? These research questions are designed to explore the interplay between how ELT graduate students perceived professional identities as future educators and their selected approaches to professional development. This internal representation of their desired future role can serve as a point of reference for informed decision-making regarding their professional growth. It assists them in determining which education and training options will best enable them to develop into the type of teachers they aspire to be. Furthermore, examining future imagine role and strategies collectively provides a comprehensive and dynamic view of how future teachers are actively creating their professional identities. It illuminates the inner motivations, the tangible behaviors, and the vital connection between their desired self and their actions to achieve it. This comprehensive perspective is crucial for assisting them in becoming excellent educators who take pride in their work.

Method

Grounded in a qualitative research framework, this study sought to delve deeply into the beliefs and performance related to developing professional identities among graduate students specializing in English Language Teaching (ELT) from Indonesia. This approach aims to

investigate and comprehend how people or groups interpret a phenomenon, experience, or event (Creswell, 2009). In this way, the researchers s can build a rich, in-depth, and contextual understanding of how Indonesian ELT graduate students develop their professional identities, how their beliefs influence their performance, and the unique factors in the Indonesian context that play a role in this process. Moreover, by utilizing this approach, the researchers s endeavored to comprehend the phenomenon through the lenses of individuals with firsthand experience (Bonyadi, 2023). Integrating qualitative methodologies will enable a more thorough comprehension of this service's intricate and often ambiguous procedures and results.

The subject of this study consisted of 20 ELT graduate students in the class of 2024 at an Indonesian University. However, only 6 of these students were recruited for in-depth interviews. This selection process involved choosing two individuals from each of the identified professional identity levels: high, medium, and low. The data were collected through close-ended questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and participant's self-reflection document analysis. To address RQ1 and RQ2, closed-ended surveys were developed based on Norton's (Imagined Communities) and Barbara-i-Molireno et al.'s (2017) professional identity indicators and distributed to the participants through Google Forms and WhatsApp. Furthermore, The researchers conducted in-depth interviews to confirm their survey responses, explored participants' educational histories, and professional backgrounds, and dug deeper into convictions regarding teaching professionalism, alongside the approaches they utilized to cultivate their professional identities. Additionally, participants were requested to submit their self-reflection documents to the researchers s via WhatsApp. These documents supplemented and enhanced the gathered data by presenting students' personal insights into their identity formation. To establish data validity and reliability, the researchers s employed strategies such as data source triangulation, and member checks. These measures were intended to strengthen the credibility of the data obtained (Rossa, Suharmi, & Indra, 2024).

In analyzing the data, the authors conducted an interactive analysis model that involved the cyclical nature of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). For that purpose, the researchers s performed activities such as data collection, data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions. By following the process, the researchers s coded and categorized all of the data gathered based on the identified themes. Then, the researchers s interpreted the result in a simple calculation table, and text. Furthermore, the classification of participant groups based on their Professional Identity was conducted through an analytical process that leveraged questionnaire data. In this process, the researchers s followed Hanna, Oostdam, Severiens, & Zijlstra's (2020) indicators for assessing Professional Identity guiding framework for defining the characteristics of different identity levels. Specifically, the elicited perspectives of the participants, as reflected in their responses to the questionnaire items, were subsequently coded and categorized following the meaning and sentiment expressed. A high level of PI is Characterized by high self-confidence, deep commitment to the profession, a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, and integration of professional values into practice. A medium level of PI demonstrated awareness of professional identity but was still in the process of formation, perhaps marked by uncertainty, role exploration, or strong influence from experience or mentors. A low level of PI Identity is characterized by a lack of coherence or conflict between aspects of professional identity.

Results

ELT Graduate Students' Envision Their Identity as Teachers

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s)

The following table summarized the questionnaire survey results concerning students' perceptions of their identity as future teachers. Subsequently, the themes that emerged from the data analysis were explained in greater detail, supported by direct quotes from the interviews and findings from the self-reflection analysis. Furthermore, the researchers provided a key to interpret the data, outlining the following priority levels: a) priority 1 is the most important, b) priority 2 is very important, c) priority 3 is important, d) priority 4 is fairly important, e) priority 5 is less important, f) priority 6 is very less important, and g) priority 7 is not important.

Table 1 ELT Graduate Student Perception of Their Teacher Identity

Perception	Priority	Total of Participants	Percentage
Expert Teachers In Their Fields	1	19	95%
Innovative Teachers	1	1	5%
Expert Teachers In Their Fields	2	1	5%
Innovative Teachers	2	17	85%
Inspirational Teachers	2	2	10%
Innovative Teachers	3	2	10%
Inspirational Teachers	3	13	65%

Drawing from Table 1, it could be observed that the "**Expert teacher in their fields"** criterion emerged as the highest priority (95%) among participants and was the most essential feature. The "**Innovative teachers**" criterion followed as the second priority (85%), deemed a very important feature. Meanwhile, the "**Inspirational teachers**" criterion occupied the third priority (65%), indicating a considerable level of importance for the participants. These results indicated that ELT graduate students had the perception of developing themselves as effective teachers. Interview data provided support for this finding, such as follows;

> *"I believed innovation was crucial for fostering engaging and relevant learning experiences. I aspired to become an inspiring educator who motivated students to learn. I recognized that mastering English was a fundamental skill that all teachers must possess."* **(Student 1, representing the high-level group in terms of PID)**
>
> *"As educators, we had to serve as role models for our students, demonstrating a commitment to continuous learning. Then, mastery of effective learning methodologies fostered creativity in teaching practice. Moreover, a thorough understanding of the subject matter was essential before embarking on the process of instruction."* **(Student 3, representing the mid-level group in terms of PID)**
>
> *"Teachers had to serve as role models for their students, inspiring them through innovative and engaging teaching practices. Adapting teaching methods to align with contemporary educational developments was crucial. Furthermore, a strong command of the subject matter was fundamental for effective instruction."* **(Student 5, representing the low-level group in terms of PID)**

The results presented above demonstrated that, across all levels of Professional Identity Development (PID), participants consistently emphasized the importance of innovation in teaching, serving as an inspiring role model for students, and subject matter mastery. This indicated a shared perception of future teacher identity among participants, irrespective of their PID level. Moreover, they acknowledged that by striving to embody the qualities of an effective educator, they would enhance their skills, confidence, and overall personal development,

ultimately benefiting both themselves and their future students. Further, this claim was consistent with the findings from the self-reflection analysis.

The analysis of students' self-reflection documents revealed a significant theme related to the development of Professional Identity through class activity. For instance, students wrote:

> *"I feel motivated to work hard like them and follow in their footsteps."* (Student 1)
> *"I also learned from what the lecturer and the seniors said that it is really important to get much other knowledge about writing outside the classroom."* (Student 2)
> *"I hope to become a truly capable/competent writer and teacher"*. (Student 3)

Based on findings above, ELT graduate student reflections demonstrated that learning under the guidance of experienced and competent lecturers significantly motivated them to enhance both their writing and teaching abilities. These lecturers served as inspiring role models, fostering a desire to emulate their expertise. The role of advisors and mentors is crucial in facilitating the development of professional identity (Choe & Borrego, 2019). The data indicated that the concept of imagined communities underpinned their perceptions of their future professional roles. Furthermore, reflections revealed a strong inclination among students not only to become effective teachers but also to establish themselves as competent writers.

Given the results above, the interview data provided detailed insights into how students articulated and understood their roles as successful teachers. A positive picture of the teacher education process was also painted by the self-reflections taken as a whole, emphasizing a strong emphasis on professional and personal development, the development of excellent writing abilities, and group learning. The dominant cultural context and personal experiences had a significant influence on these self-perceptions and self-descriptions. A constant and dynamic interaction between the individual and their surrounding cultural context was reflected in this identity development process, which involved negotiation (Park & Schallert, 2020).

ELT Graduate Students' Strategy in Developing Professional Identity

The following table summarizes the key experiences and activities identified through questionnaire responses as contributing to the development of professional identity among ELT graduate students. Subsequently, an in-depth discussion of these themes was presented, supported by direct quotations from the interview transcripts and the findings from the self-reflection analyses. Furthermore, the researchers provided a key to interpret the data, outlining the following priority levels: a) priority 1 is the most important, b) priority 2 is very important, c) priority 3 is important, d) priority 4 is fairly important, e) priority 5 is less important, f) priority 6 is very less important, and g) priority 7 is not important.

Table 2 Activities cultivated by ELT Graduate Students to Support their PID

Activities	Priority	Total of Participants	Percentage
Workshop & seminars	1	13	65%
Social activities	1	7	35%
Workshop & seminars	2	5	25%
Social activities	2	13	65%
Internships	2	1	5%
Class activities	2	1	5%
Class activities	3	15	75%
Internships	3	3	15%
Workshop & seminar	3	1	5%
Education program	3	1	5%
Class activities	4	4	20%

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s)

Education programs	4	4	20%
Internships	4	6	30%
Organization	4	3	15%
Research and publication	4	2	10%
Education programs	5	8	40%
Internships	5	2	10%
Organization	5	3	15%
Competitions	5	1	5%
Research and publication	5	1	5%
Education programs	6	3	15%
Research and publication	6	6	30%
Internships	6	1	5%
Organization	6	1	5%
Competitions	6	1	5%
Research and publication	7	1	5%
Organization	7	2	10%
Internships	7	1	5%

Analysis of the reduced data revealed that "**workshops and seminars**" were ranked as the most important activity (Priority 1) by 65% of participants, followed by "**social activities**" deemed very important (Priority 2) by 70% of participants. "**Class activities**" were also considered important (Priority 3) by 70% of participants, while "**internships**" were considered fairly important (Priority 4) by 30% of participants. Conversely, "**educational programs**" were considered less important (Priority 5) by 40% of participants. Besides, "**research and publication**" were considered of less importance (Priority 6) by 35% of participants, and "**organization**" was ranked as not important (Priority 7) by 10% of participants. However, "**Competition"** exhibited minimal salience in participants' professional identity formation. Data revealed a preference for diverse experiential activities, including academic and extracurricular engagements, as primary drivers of professional growth.

Moreover, despite high, medium, and low-proficiency ELT graduate students shared commonalities in their engagement with Professional Identity Development (PID), their participation in formal and informal PID activities varied considerably. This diverse engagement underscores the multifaceted nature of their experiences as they navigated the complexities of professional identity formation through diverse avenues. The following excerpts illustrate this claim.

> *"To prepare for my future teaching career, I was pursuing a Master's degree and planned to continue my education at the doctoral level. During my Master's program, I actively participated in academic activities like seminars, workshops, and conferences to enhance my knowledge and skills. I also believed in the importance of social involvement, so I actively participated in various communities and engaged in both academic and non-academic volunteer work."* **(Student 2, representing the high-level group in terms of PID)**
>
> *"My primary focus for becoming a successful teacher had been on excelling in my Master's studies and thoroughly mastering the course material. I actively participated in academic activities at the university, including joining my lecturer's research project. Furthermore, I dedicated my time during educational holidays to teaching at my former Islamic boarding school."* **(Student 3, representing the mid-level group in terms of PID)**

> *"In the process of developing myself to become a teacher in the future, I was currently concentrating solely on my Master's studies and material mastery as I worked to prepare to become a teacher in the future. As a result, I only went to classes, made an effort to participate, and avoided getting involved in any extracurricular activities. Additionally, though I had little experience, I taught private lessons on my own at home without the help of an institution."* **(Student 5, representing the low-level group in terms of PID)**

The findings indicated that Participants' professional identity development (PID) correlated positively with engagement in diverse academic, organizational, and experiential activities. High-PID participants exhibited robust engagement, mid-PID participants showed moderate engagement, and low-PID participants demonstrated limited engagement. This suggests active participation directly influences PID development. While experiential activities generally aligned with self-reflection studies, minor variations were noted. For instance, students echoed;

> *"We were asked to read each other's work that was presented and provide feedback and suggestions to each other."* (Student 4)
> *"In groups, we did collaborative learning activities as a time to read, to understand, and to find important information."* (Student 5)
> *"I thought that our group had a deeper understanding than before in terms of writing articles using systematic review*." (Student 6)

According to the findings, Classroom activities, such as presentations and discussions, provided opportunities for students to exchange ideas and experiences, thereby developing crucial communication and presentation skills necessary for future teachers. Collaborative exercises, involving group work, fostered peer learning and support, cultivating a positive and encouraging learning environment that strengthened their sense of belonging and significantly contributed to professional identity development. Furthermore, the ELT graduate students acknowledged that research and literature reviews promoted a commitment to lifelong learning and encouraged them to remain abreast of current developments in education. These findings suggested that professional identity development was cultivated through the accumulation of experiences during graduate studies (Park & Schallert, 2020).

The interview data, considered in light of the preceding findings, illuminated various academic and non-academic activities that significantly contributed to the development of ELT graduate students' professional identities. Furthermore, analysis of collective self-reflections revealed positive perceptions of their educational journeys, characterized by a strong emphasis on academic engagement and the crucial role of reflection and supportive feedback from lecturers and peers in facilitating professional growth. These diverse activities fostered the development of students' professional identities by providing opportunities to enact professional roles within community settings and to cultivate disciplinary discourse practices through interaction (Park & Schallert, 2020).

Discussion

Students' perception of their Professional Identity as Effective Teachers

Regarding their future identities as teachers, ELT graduate students stated that they believed in becoming effective educators. This assumption was derived from the data's three main depictions: first, the desire to be innovative and creative teachers who employ fresh methods in their instruction; second, the desire to be motivating teachers who engage and inspire their students, fostering a love of learning; and third, the aim to become teachers renowned for their deep knowledge and expertise in their domains, guaranteeing that they can offer their students

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s)

insightful advice. These participants' visions of their future roles were significantly shaped by their engagement with imagined communities. Imagined communities played a significant role in shaping individuals' imagined identities, subsequently influencing their academic engagement and performance (Norton, 2001). This statement was supported by self-reflection document analysis findings, for instance, the first student wrote: *"I feel motivated to work hard like them and follow in their footsteps."* The second student echoed this sentiment, stating, *"I also learned from what the lecturer and the seniors said that it is really important to get much other knowledge about writing outside the classroom."* Another student wrote, *"I hope to become a truly capable/competent writer and teacher"*. These excerpts illustrated how hands-on experience contributed to a growing sense of self-efficacy. Experiences during their studies, encompassing practicum, lecturer interactions, and theoretical exposure, influenced the evolution of their imagined futures. This led to refinements in aspirations, the emergence of new interests, and occasional resistance to initial perceptions of the professional community.

Drawing on the concept of possible selves (Wurf & Markus, 1991; Park & Schallert, 2020), this study detailed how graduate students constructed possible future selves' students created possible future selves through interactions within graduate school communities. The findings of this process aligned with Wenger's (1998) theory that identity formation is shaped by the connection between past experiences, present circumstances, and future aspirations. This process of envisioning themselves within these communities played a crucial role in shaping their aspirations and motivating their engagement in professional development activities. This result, in line with studies such as Urbaq (2024), indicating that the professional environment significantly shaped the participants' development of individual professional identity (PI). In summary, the collective aspirations of ELT graduate students reflect a commitment to becoming effective teachers, which includes being innovative, inspirational, and knowledgeable educators dedicated to making a meaningful impact on their students' lives.

Professional Identity Formation through Academic and Non-Academic Activities

According to the findings in the previous section, all participants participated in both academic and non-academic activities. These activities include social interaction, workshops and seminars, class activities, participation in organizations, educational initiatives, research and publication projects, internships, and contests. Fullan's (1995) theory that teachers' professional development (TPD) was derived from all of their formal and informal learning experiences was supported by this finding. Overall, these results indicated that graduate students studying ELT were able to develop their professional identities as teachers through the different activities they engaged in. These exercises helped build the abilities and understanding required to become a successful teacher. This claim was an example of self-directed learning activities intended to promote professional development (Widayati, MacCallum, & & Woods-McConney, 2021).

The information from the ELT graduate students also showed differences in the activities that participants with varying levels of professional identity Development (PID) engaged in. To promote their PID, those with higher PID levels actively engaged in extracurricular activities, organizations, and academic pursuits. Besides, participants with a medium level of PID showed satisfactory engagement and looked for additional development opportunities. On the other hand, participants with low levels of PID demonstrated little interest and needed more help to improve their abilities and self-assurance. This study showed that the different levels of professional identities among the participants had a variety of effects on the development of their professional identities. Individuals with higher levels of PID tend to cultivate positive self-perceptions about their profession, which in turn, increases their inclination to participate in activities that strengthen these identities (Wang, Zhu, Liu, Chen, & Huo, 2018). As a result, consolidation time was essentially required for people to grow.

Furthermore, engaging in professional activities provided individuals with experiences and feedback that they internalized, shaping their self-perception as professionals. Positive and meaningful engagement in these activities could lead to the development of positive self-schemas related to their profession (Wang, Zhu, Liu, Chen, & Huo, 2018). This perspective reinforced their professional identity, making them more likely to engage in similar activities and further solidify their sense of self as a competent and engaged professional. For instance, student 6 wrote; *"I thought that our group had a deeper understanding than before in terms of writing articles using systematic review."* While this quote focused on the outcome of collaborative writing activity, it implied that engaging in the complex process of writing a systematic review article led to a significant increase in their understanding and skills related to academic writing, a core aspect of a researcher's or academic professional identity.

Furthermore, the process of developing a professional identity is dynamic and ongoing, influenced by many different elements. ELT graduate students must actively participate in continuing professional development activities and stay up to date on industry advancements. Moreover, self-reflection must be regular and structured to support this important process. It can help students identify their strengths, weaknesses, and developmental trajectories as future teachers with the help of tools like reflective journals, portfolios, or group discussions. Furthermore, it is essential to acquire additional competencies pertinent to professional practice in addition to pedagogical skills. Therefore, it is important for students to proactively identify these necessary skills and look for opportunities to improve them. The results of this study will empower students to recognize and address potential obstacles in their professional identity development, fostering a deeper understanding of their self-development and the challenges they may encounter as prospective teachers.

The results of this research will help educators and policymakers understand the need to offer students undergoing this process more individualized and contextually relevant support and guidance. Educators are expected to actively foster students' professional identities by sharing experiences, offering feedback, and providing reflection opportunities on teaching roles and ethics. Moreover, integrating self-reflection and ethical discussions into the curriculum can help students internalize professional values and see themselves as responsible educators. Moreover, Policymakers are expected to develop policies that support ongoing professional growth for teachers, including master's students, by offering scholarships, targeted training, and access to relevant resources.

Conclusion

Regarding our first research question, we found that ELT graduate students self-identify as effective educators, a self-conceptualization demonstrably influenced by the theoretical construct of imagined communities. This suggests their professional aspirations and identities are significantly shaped by desired affiliations within professional networks. Consequently, students' self-perceptions and narratives regarding their teaching competence are not formed in isolation but are substantially mediated by prevailing sociocultural contexts and individual lived experiences. In response to our second research question, the findings and discussion revealed that ELT graduate student professional identity development is significantly fostered by engaging in diverse academic and non-academic activities like social interaction, seminars, research, and internships. These experiences support their growth as future teachers by offering opportunities to enact professional roles and develop disciplinary discourse within community settings.

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s)

The researchers s realizes that the scope of this research has certain limitations. This study may not have fully captured the dynamic evolution of these perceptions throughout their academic and practical experiences. Therefore, this study suggests that further research is warranted to explore the articulation of pedagogical perceptions among ELT graduate students, specifically the evolution of their conceptualizations of teacher roles and responsibilities, and how these perceptions evolve in conjunction with their academic coursework and practical field experiences.

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors for their invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support throughout this research. Their expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping this study. I am also immensely grateful to all the participants who generously contributed their time and shared their experiences. Without their willingness to participate, this research would not have been possible. Thank you for your invaluable contributions

References

Banegas, D., Pinner, R., & Larrondo, I. (2022, 6). Funds of Professional Identity in Language Teacher Education: A Longitudinal Study on Student-Teachers. *TESOL Quarterly, 56*(2), 445-473. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3060 .

Barkhuizen, G. (2017). *Reflections on language teacher identity research.* Routledge.

Bonyadi, A. (2023, 4). Phenomenology as a research methodology in teaching English as a foreign language. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education, 8*(1), 11. http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s40862-022-00184-z.

Choe, N., & Borrego, M. (2019, 8). Prediction of Engineering Identity in Engineering Graduate Students. *IEEE Transactions on Education, 62*(3), 181-187. http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/TE.2019.2901777.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Qualitative ınquıry and research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mix methods* (3 ed.). Sage Publication.

Dewi, S., & Fajri, M. (2023, 10). Investigating Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Initial Motivations and Identity Formation: Evidence From an Indonesian University. *Sage Open, 13*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/-21582440231209123.

Flores, M. (2020, 3). Feeling Like A Student But Thinking Like A Teacher: A Study Of The Development Of Professional Identity In Initial Teacher Education. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 46*(2), 145-158. https://doi.org/10.1080/-02607476.2020.1724659.

Fullan, M. (1995). The Limits and the Potential of Professional Development. Dalam G. R. Guskey, & M. Huberman, *Professional Development in Education: New Paradigms and Practices* (hal. 253-267). Teacher College Press.

Mbato, C., & Wijaya, K. (2020, 6). Undergraduate Students' Perceptions on their Identity as Future EFL Teachers. *JET (Journal of English Teaching), 6*(2), 96-110. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1266045.

Miles, M., Huberman, A., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis, A. Methods Sourcebook* (3 ed.). Sage Publications.

Norton, B. (2001). Non-participation, imagined communites, and the language classroom. Dalam M. Breen, *Learner contributions to language learning new direction in research* (hal. 159-171). Pearson Education Limited.

Norton, B. (2016). *Identity, innovation, and learning to teach a foreign/second language* (1 ed.). Routledge.

Ortaçtepe, D. (2015). EFL Teachers' Identity (Re)Construction as Teachers of Intercultural Competence: A Language Socialization Approach. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 14*(2), 96-112. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2015.1019785

Park, J. J., & Schallert, D. L. (2020). Reciprocity between doctoral students' emerging professional identity and their envisionment of a possible future self in real and imagine communities of practice. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction, 26*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2020.100434

Qoyyimah, U., Singh, P., Exley, B., Doherty, C., & Agustiawan, Y. (2023, 3). *Professional Identity and Imagined Student Identity of EIL Teachers in Islamic Schools* (Vol. 22). https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2020.1833726

Richardson, P., & Watt, H. (2018). Teacher Professional Identity and Career Motivation: A Lifespan Perspective. *Research on Teacher Identity*, 37-48. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93836-3_4.

Safari, P. (2018, 10). A critical reflection on (re)construction of my identity as an English language learner and English teacher. *Professional Development in Education, 44*(5), 704-720. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2017.1387866

Safari, P. (2020, 3). *Iranian ELT Student Teachers' Portrayal of Their Identities as an English Language Teacher: Drawings Speak Louder than Words*, 19(2). https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2019.1650279.

Şenel, M. (2021, 4). Exploring ELT Students' Professional Identity Formation through the Perspectives of Critical Incidents. *European Journal of Educational Research, 10*(22), 629-640. https://doi.org/10.12973/Eu-Jer.10.2.629.

Sinha, S., & Hanuscin, D. (2017, 4). Development of teacher leadership identity: A multiple case study. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 63*, 356-371. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.01.004.

Tomlinson, M., & Jackson, D. (2021, 4). Professional identity formation in contemporary higher education students. *Studies in Higher Education, 46*(4), 885-900. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1659763.

Urbaq, S. M. (2024). Contextual Dynamics of Professional Identity Development in ELT Indonesian Graduate Students: A Grounded Theory Method. *Pedagogy: Journal of English Language Teaching, 12*(2), 228-249. https://doi.org/10.32332/joelt.v12i2.9566

Wenger, E. (1998). *communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity.* Cambridge University Press.

Widayati, A., MacCallum, J., & & Woods-McConney, A. (2021). Teachers' perceptions of continuing professional development: a study of vocational high school teachers in Indonesia. *Teacher Development*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2021.1933159

Wijaya, K. (2021). English education master students' perceptions on their professional identity as future EFL teachers. *Journal of English Language and Pedagogy, 4*(2), 35-48. http://dx.doi.org/10.36597-/jelp.v4i2.10773

Wurf, E., & Markus, H. (1991). Possible selves and the psychology of personal growth. Dalam D. J. Ozer, J. J. Healy, & A. J. Steawart, *Perspective in Personality Vol 3: part A: Self and Emotion; part B: approaches to understanding lives* (hal. 39-62). Jessica Kingsley Publisher.

Yuan, R., & Zhang, L. (2017). Exploring student teachers' motivation change in initial teacher education: A Chinese perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 61*, 142-152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.10.010

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s)

Zein, S. (2020). English Language Education in Indonesia: A Review of Research. *Journal of Language Teaching*, 1-33. https://doi.org./10.1017/S026144482000020.

Hanna, F., Oostdam, R., Severiens, S. E., & Zijlstra, B. J. (2020). Assessing the professional identity of primary student teachers: Design and validation of the Teacher Identity Measurement Scale. *Journal od Studies in Education Evaluation, 64*(3). doi:DOI:10.1016/j.stueduc.2019.100822

Jensen, D., & Jetten, J. (2016). The Importance of Developing Students' Academic and Professional Identities in Higher Education. *Journal of College Student Development, 57*(8), 1027-42. doi:https://doi.org/10.1353/CSD.2016.0097

Rossa, A., Suharmi, & Indra, N. (2024). Persepsi Mahasiswa Terhadap Pelaksanaan Program Kampus Mengajar Dalam Meningkatkan Soft Skill Mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Ekonomi Fkip Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. *EDUNOMIA: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Ekonomi, 4*(2).

Tan, C. P., Molen, V. D., & Schmidt, H. G. (2017). Levels and Differences in Professional Identity in Engineering Undergraduates. *A measure of Professional Identity Development for Professional Education*. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1111322

Wang, X., Zhu, J., Liu, L., Chen, X.-Y., & Huo, J.-Y. (2018). Active Construction of Profession-Related Events: The Priming Effect among Pre-service Teachers with Different Professional Identity. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*, 233. doi: https://doi.org/10.3389/FPSYG.2018.00233

Barbara-i-Molireno, A., Cascon-pereira, R., & Hernandez-Lara, A. (2017). Professional Identity Development in Higher Education: Influencing Factors. *International Journal of Management, 31*(2). doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-05-2015-0058

--- This page is intentionally left blank---