

**Beginning Teachers' Professional Self-Image: Reconciliation between
Teachers and Head Teachers**

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ABSTRACT

The head teachers play a vital role in the effective professional socialization of beginning teachers. This study was conducted to know the level of harmony and understanding between the Head teachers (HTs) and beginning English teachers (BETs) at college level regarding the latter's professional self-image in teaching profession. The study followed a mixed method survey approach collecting both kinds of data through open ended inquiries and closed ended questions. The data were collected from 295 BETs of 55 colleges, and the HTs from 23 colleges, sampled randomly from different strata including gender, institution type and nature of job. Rated responses Likert scale questionnaires were prepared for BETs and open ended and conceptually open questionnaire for HTs. The descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 16 and the qualitative interpretations were made for open ended inquiries. Overall, the study has found the harmony between the perceptions of BETs and HTs. However, the HTs perceived differently the BETs' professional self-image related to their task mastery of teaching skills and classroom management, smooth working relationship with senior colleagues and Head teachers, freedom of expression and the presence of a democratic environment. The study suggests that more attention towards the mentoring role of Head teachers in promoting a strong self-image among the beginning teachers.

Keywords: Beginning teachers, professional socialization, head teachers, professional self-image

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Introduction

The global expansion of English language has created a lot of space for English language teaching (ELT), with the emergence of new roles and abilities of English teachers worldwide especially in the non-English Asian countries like Pakistan. Further to it, the dissatisfaction from the nonutility of the traditional off-the-job training of beginning English teachers, the new shift in the professional learning approach towards workplace learning and professional socialization is strengthening (Siddiqui, 2002; Tahir & Qadir, 2012). In this changing milieu, many state funded projects and organizational initiatives are being planned for enhancing teachers' workplace professional learning, teaching skill capacity, and self-image of professional identity. However, the teachers are not found much satisfied when their voice does not find the proper space in the decisions, programs, policies made for them. Even, the image of professional identity of teachers sometimes appears as quite different from that of their Head teachers, administrators and other educational authorities.

The heads play multidimensional role in the teachers' grooming as ELT professional: leader, guide, inspirer, facilitator, motivator and many more (Fedricks, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). In this background, the main objective of this study was to know the level of harmony and understanding between the Head teachers and beginning English teachers regarding the latter's professional identity and effective professionalization into their jobs. The study remained significant as it highlighted the concerns of beginning teachers regarding their professional identity and the points where disharmony and misunderstanding were found between beginning teachers and their Head teachers. Accordingly, the appropriate recommendations can be considered for improvements and further researches may solidify them to deal with the professional learning concerns appropriately.

Literature Review

Vital Role of Head Teachers in Teacher Professional Socialization

According to Danziger (1971), teacher professional socialization is a long-term, complicated, communicative development whereby the individual teacher gradually and candidly adapts to the norms, values and practices of teaching profession over a period of time, particularly the institutions where they work. Further, the effectiveness of socialization process may be indicated by the rate of success of individual teachers throughout the organizational learning program and stable professional learning (Anakwe & Greenhaus, 1999). Professional identity of the teachers develops gradually over a long period of employment time with every step taken for the professional growth of teachers (Ganser, 2000). The studies conducted in the late 1990s shifted their emphasis and discussed the prominent and significant role of principals and Head teachers along with administrators and

educational authorities of the organizations in developing professional identity and institutional socialization of teachers (e.g., Fedricks, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Similarly, Stombus and Chodzinski (1998) strengthened the related viewpoint by highlighting the mentoring role of administrators and Head teachers in successfully contributing to effective enculturation of beginning teachers. In the academic environment of Pakistani institutions, the voices for highlighting the importance of workplace real-life professional learning with the effective role of senior colleagues, the principals and the campus administration are increasing their volume and worth (Jumani, 2007; Siddiqui, 2002; Tahir & Qadir, 2012).

Head Teachers Specifying the Beginning Teachers' Professional Needs

Beginning English teachers in Pakistani institutions, especially at college (higher secondary) level, are not required to pass through a rigorous practicum or in-service professional learning programs which could make them able to cope with the latest pedagogical approaches and technological advancements, particularly in their real classroom (Bashiruddin & Qayyum, 2014; Jumani, 2007). English teachers lack badly the proficiency in handling with the latest technological equipment to facilitate the language learning and teaching process (Abbas & Asif, 2012). Many studies in the context of ELT in Pakistan have pointed out a big gap between the emerging ELT trends the current practices of English teachers (Ahmad, 2016; Khan, 2011; Jumani, 2007; Tahir & Qadir, 2012; Warsi, 2004). Usually, it is the principal or Head teachers in colleges in Pakistan who are responsible for all academic and administrative activities within the institutions. In a detailed literature review in this field, Gimbert and Fultz (2009) have identified major themes discussing the significant role of principals in specifying the professional learning needs of (beginning) teachers for improving them professionally and thus enhancing their professional identity. Likewise, Youngs (2007) and Menchaca (2003) signify the role of principals to recommend those professional learning programs which should address the real classroom and workplace needs of teachers. Furthering to this role, Amoroso (2005) and Renwick (2007) have identified various needs of beginning teachers emphasizing the classroom management, curriculum implementation, and compliance with organizational policies.

Mentoring Role of Head Teachers

The studies in the area of teacher socialization have revealed that beginning teachers rely more on their senior colleagues and Head teachers for academic guidance and prefer to follow the institutional practices as advised to them (e.g., Southwell, 1970). They seek assistance from their seniors for problem shooting in their professional and personal life (Taylor & Dale, 1971). These senior colleagues are also the source of inspiration for them (Fair, 1973). Most studies emphasize the need of developing a positive working association between the beginning teachers and the senior colleagues,

especially the principals or Head teachers (e.g., Angelle, 2006; Fedricks, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) have identified mentoring as a successful strategy for promoting strong professionalism among beginning teachers. They directly relate the mentoring influences on shaping teachers' professional identity. Carter (2000), in his comprehensive review of literature on mentoring as an effective workplace strategy has endorsed these findings.

Development of Theoretical Perspective

The fundamental assumption which led this study was the idea that the smooth and trustable working relationship between novice teachers and their heads ultimately promotes effective professionalization of beginning teachers in their profession and institutions. From the extensive study of literature pertaining to beginning teacher socialization, the following variables were identified for conducting this investigation (Figure 1):

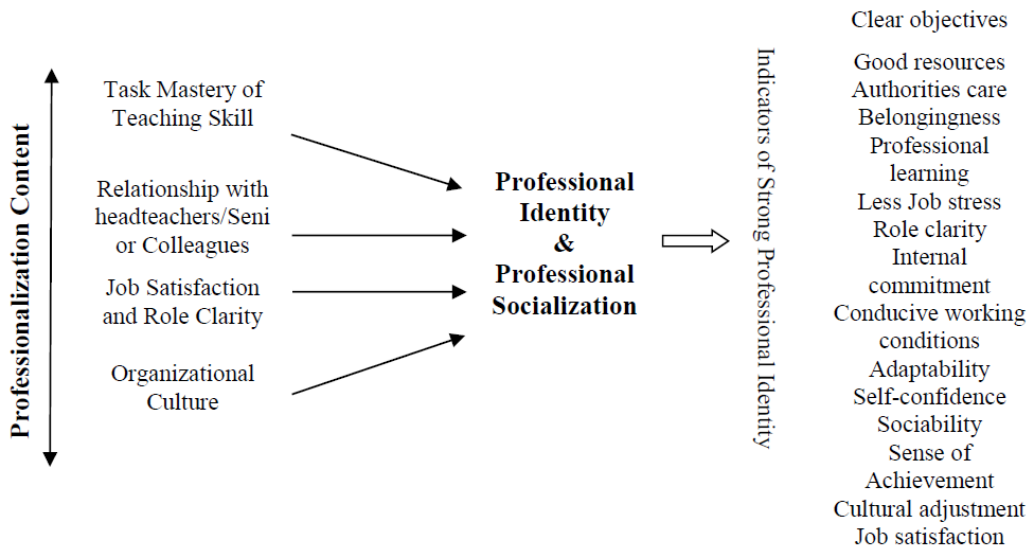


Figure 1. Perception of professional identity variable criteria

Methodology

Sampling

This survey study followed random stratified sampling technique and a mixed method approach for collecting data through closed ended questions from teachers and open-ended inquiries from Head teachers. The term *Beginning English Teachers* (BETs) was confined to the teachers having less than five years of teaching experience as regular faculty members in the colleges affiliated with Board of Intermediate and

Secondary Education in Punjab or capital Islamabad. In total, 295 beginning English teachers and 23 Head teachers 55 colleges participated in this survey study, sampled randomly from different strata to ensure the true representation of the population of beginning English teachers. The strata included: (1) gender; (2) institution type, i.e., public or private, rural or urban; (3) nature of job, i.e., permanent or contractual.

Questionnaire for Beginning English Teachers (BETs)

The questionnaire was used as a quantitative data collection tool. The beginning English teachers were contacted to express their opinions about their professionalization process. The questions were of mixed types: dichotomous, closed ended Likert scale based, and mixed with hints options. Questionnaire was mainly divided into four sections: section one seeking the demographic information; section two seeking the professional socialization related information through 15 item Likert scale; section three seeking the information on task mastery of teaching skill through 10 item Likert scale; section four seeking the information on relationship with Head teachers and senior colleagues through 16 item Likert scale.

Open-ended Questionnaire for Head Teachers (HTs)

The qualitative data in the form of opinions of Head teachers were obtained through open ended questionnaires to encourage a full, meaningful answer using the Head teachers' own knowledge and/or feelings. These open-ended questions, as Worley (2015) says, were grammatically as well as conceptually open in their responses and tended to be more objective and less leading so that they truly represent the opinions. The questionnaire was meant to discover if there were any differences between the self-perception of beginning English teachers and the viewpoints of their heads about the professional image. The questionnaire was designed to validate and compare the findings already obtained from the beginning English teachers. The following areas related to the construct of professional identity were included: (1) Job satisfaction; (2) Roles and duties; (3) Teaching skill; (4) Relationship with others; and (5) Organizational culture.

Piloting the Questionnaires

The statements and questions were either generated by the researchers or borrowed and molded from the previous studies conducted for the same purposes (Hudson, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Rees, 2015; Tahir & Qadir, 2012). After developing, the questionnaires were presented to 20 beginning teachers and two Head teachers so that the suggestions from respondents could be incorporated to improve the validity of the instrument. For reliability check, Cronbach's alpha was checked for the closed-ended questionnaire for teachers which resulted as 0.83, confirming the questionnaire tool as statistically reliable.

Results and Discussion

Description of Data: Univariate Analysis

Table 1

Univariate analysis for variable of effective socialization

	Clear objectives	Resource management	Belongingness	Professional Growth	Job stress	Role clarity & adjustment	Internal commitment	Adaptation	Conducive working conditions	Confidence	Sociability	Sense of Achievement	Cultural adjustment	Job satisfaction
N Valid	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295
Mean	1.9	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.8	1.8	2.2	2.6	2.7	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1
Median	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.2	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Mode	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Std. Deviation	.70	.96	.72	1.01	1.0	.83	.69	.97	1.09	.87	.82	.77	.72	.74
Skewness	.58	.64	.25	.81	.28	1.0	1.7	.34	.16	.78	.33	.26	.59	.50
Std. Error of Skewness	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4
Percentile 25	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Percentile 50	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	3.0
Percentile 75	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	2.0	2.2	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0

Table 2

Univariate analysis for variable of task mastery of teaching skill

		Individual concentration	Disciplinary measures	Students' interests	Subject knowledge	Individual attention for subject	Material preparation	Different teaching activities	Using new teaching ideas	Realization of Successful teaching	Self confidence
N	Valid	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295
Mean		2.4	2.5	1.8	1.9	3.0	2.4	2.1	1.9	1.9	2.3
Median		2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Mode		2	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	2
Std. Deviation		.93	.97	.85	.74	1.1	1.0	.84	.78	.70	1.0
Skewness		.28	.01	1.4	1.0	-.06	.46	.56	1.2	.28	.35
Std. Error of Skewness		.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5
Percentiles	25	2.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0
	50	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
	75	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.0

Table 3

*Univariate analysis for variable of relationship with senior colleagues (RSC):
frequency and quality of advice*

		Organizing Classroom activities (Frequency)	(Quality)	Getting new ideas (Frequency)	(Quality)	Disciplinary problems (Frequency)	(Quality)	Administration rules (Frequency)	(Quality)	Personal problems (Frequency)	(Quality)	Head teacher's support	Head teacher's role model	Head teacher's attention	Head teacher's acknowledgement	Head teacher's tolerance	Head teacher's public recognition
N	Valid	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295	295
Mean		2.2	2.2	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.7	2.7	2.3	2.8	2.7
Median		2.0	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00
Mode		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3
Std. Deviation		.60	.59	.67	.73	.59	.65	.69	.63	.69	.63	.88	1.4	1.0	.95	1.1	.89
Skewness		-.1	-.1	.1	.1	.0	-.0	-.0	-.1	-.4	-.5	.83	.31	.34	.60	.06	-.2
Std. Skewness		.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14	.14
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	4
Percentil	25	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.00	
	50	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	3.00	
	75	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.00	

The results in the Table 1, 2 & 3 present the results of all the items which collectively form the composite variable of professional socialization content comprising the factors: (1) Job satisfaction; (2) Roles and duties; (3) Teaching skill; (4) Relationship with others; and (5) Organizational culture. The descriptive statistics presented in the tables are the amount of cases or subjects (*N*) of valid, average or *Mean* for the every single item, the *Median* (or middle) for all the items, *Mode* (or the frequently occurring) for all the items, *Std. Deviation* (standard deviation), and *Skewness* statistic and the *Std. Error* of the skewness, *Minimum* (smallest) and *Maximum* (largest) scores, and Percentile (in quartile fashion). The last row of the results demonstrates that the *Valid N* is 295, which is the total amount of the respondents in this file of data. All the items (*Modes*, *Means*, *Medians*) in the tables were found reasonable or according to the standards required by the normality.

Varied Perceptions of BETs and HTs

The main objective of this study was to know the level of harmony and understanding between the Head teachers and beginning English teachers regarding the latter's professional identity and effective professionalization into their jobs. Overall, the study has found that the BETs and HTs have similar perception about the professional identity of beginning English teachers. The heads, however, had some points of differences about their beginning teachers. Some tasks and areas were found where the beginning teacher had a better self-image about their professionalism whereas their heads were thinking differently, rather expressing an improvised image.

Varied Perceptions on Teaching Skills

As the study has investigated the points of differences between the BETs and HTs, the dissimilarity was found in their opinions related to the task mastery of teaching skills of BETs. The results indicate that 70% of the BETs held a very positive self-image of their teaching skills and perceived themselves as performing their best in implementing the appropriate teaching methods, completing the syllabi in time, initiating interesting classroom activities and managing pupil discipline during lectures (Table 1, 2 & 3). However, the HTs thought differently and perceived a rather weak perception about their BETs. About 63% of HTs (15 out of 23) expressed in their open ended responses that the BETs were *not good* in their classroom teaching and management skills. They thought that the BETs were not successful in paying the individual attentions to the learners and thus were not able to maintain interests of students in learning process. Similarly, they were not found happy with the beginning teachers' ability to maintain discipline in classes, which most of them defined in terms of silence in the class. There were only four HTs who were found satisfied with the performance of their BETs. The biggest problem highlighted by the HTs was of maintaining the classroom discipline and that was associated with the lack of confidence in the BETs.

Varied Perceptions on Relationship with Senior Colleagues

Another area where a wide gap was observed between the opinion of BETs and HTs was the smooth working relationship between the BETs and their senior colleagues including their HTs. Most of the HTs (N=20) were of the view that their BETs frequently consulted them to seek advice and guidance for their personal and professional matters. The HTs strongly affirmed that they inspired their beginning teachers in various capacities, e.g., enhancing motivation, creating new ideas and dealing with their personal problems even the family issues. These HTs also affirmed that they provided the best quality of advice and guidance to their junior teachers whenever they needed it. Conversely, the BETs were found hesitant in acknowledging the leading and inspiring role of their senior colleagues and HTs.

Most of the BETs did not show their agreement with the idea that they ever contacted their HTs for discussing their personal occupational problems like *feeling unsuccessful* or *workload* etc. Further to it, even those who sought the advice and guidance of their HTs were of the opinion that the quality of advice was not *so good* as could practically help them for dealing with real life encounters (Table 1, 2 & 3).

Varied Perceptions on Freedom of Expression and Disagreement

Another significant difference was found related to the freedom of expression and disagreement. The HTs presented themselves very liberal and accommodating for the BETs and their viewpoints. They thought they listened to the disagreements of the BETs openly and promoted a friendly environment of free talk. Some HTs also complained of the *reserved* behavior of BETs, however, they attributed it not to their arrogance but to their shyness and lack of confidence. Contrary to this, the BETs held the opinions unlikely as they didn't approve the inspiring and leadership role of the heads. Most of them didn't acknowledge their HTs as their role model. The HTs didn't tolerate their opposition on any issue and this affected their confidence and socialization process. The BETs also expressed their concerns related to public recognitions, attention and care from HTs, and tolerance of mistakes (Table 1, 2 & 3).

Varied Perceptions on Problems of Beginning Teachers

The HTs indicated various problems associated with the socialization process of BETs which the latter didn't realize themselves. The biggest problem was of the institutional micro-politics with which, according to HTs, the BETs were unaware to deal with. The BETs were unsuccessful in showing the befitting behavior in coping with the administrative and institutional policy guidelines imparted by the authorities time to time. Due to the lack of inner confidence the BETs always remain worried about the job security and thus tend to go for frequent job-switching. This confidence is shared by the institution head and administrators (Carter, 2000). Another problem highlighted by the HTs about BETs was of their belongingness to different cultural and linguistic backgrounds which affected their socialization process. Some common issues were also pointed out by the HTs related to the lack of resources, inadequate libraries and laboratories, less opportunities of professional learning and other similar issues.

Mentoring Role of Head Teachers: Need to Do More

The study suggests that more attention is required to enhance the mentoring role of Head teachers in promoting a strong self-image of professional identity among the beginning teachers, which could effectively contribute to the successful professional socialization process of novice teachers. The previous studies also affirm the similar findings that the Head teachers performing their role effectively can organize formal and informal mentoring events for establishing a healthy

professional relationship between them and their junior teachers (e.g., Malderez & Bodoczky, 1999). The institutional administration, as also suggested by Calderhead and Shorrocks (1997), can initiate many socialization programs for lessening the differences and distance between the beginning teachers and their heads, for instance, planning mentoring agendas both a formal and informal levels, arranging informal parties where both HTs and BETs could talk freely in free social environment, designing some co-adventures where both of them can accomplish and achieve some targets jointly. Such measures should help improving this healthy working relationship between the beginning teachers and their Head teachers.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the gaps between the perceptions of beginning English teachers and their Head teachers may be bridged by promoting a friendly culture in the institutions and encouraging the new teachers to question and share their viewpoint on different institutional issues. However, the present study highlights a gap in this area in Pakistani educational institutions and the role of Head teachers needs to be redefined with the perspective that beginning teachers require their help and patronization instead of simply orders and commands. This communication gap blurs their perception to see the Head teachers as their role models. Such feelings, if sustain longer, ultimately, develop a weak self-image of beginning teachers about their social and professional prestige. This poor perception, however, can be enriched by recurring reassurance to the beginning teachers of their important position and it is necessary that all the members of teacher socialization process including, principal, senior colleagues, administrator, fellows and students participate in this course of development. It is very imperative to empower the beginning teachers in their real life classroom to strengthen their professional self-image.

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