Professional Identity and Performance of English Language Teacher Trainers in Bangladesh: In Quest of the ‘Self’

*Mohammad Moninoo Roshid, PhD  
**Md. Zulfeqar Haider  
***Md. Abdur Razzaque Mian  

*Associate Professor, Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka  
**Professor, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education in Bangladesh  
***Assistant Director, National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM)

ABSTRACT

The English language teaching (ELT) sector in Bangladesh is expanding rapidly and has undergone huge reforms in the curriculum, textbooks and assessment format in recent years. This has called for developing a cadre of quality English teachers at secondary and higher secondary education sub-sectors through in-service teacher training. As a result, English language teacher training has emerged as a relatively new but an important profession in Bangladesh. However, the recruitment, employment and professional development of young ELT practitioners who serve as English language teacher trainers (ELTT) in government run ELT projects and teacher training institutions are characterised by inconsistency in professional structure, lack of policy formulation and disparities in job status. This paradoxical reality has spawned a rather complex setting for the young ELTTs as they struggle to negotiate and construct their professional identity. This research explores the nature and causes of Bangladeshi ELTTs identity formation and seeks to identify links between identity formation and professional performance of ELTTs who worked in two organisational settings in Bangladesh. It explores and reports how Bangladeshi ELTTs perceive their identity within and out of the professional community and how their professional identity affects their professional performance. Data were collected adopting a mixed method approach through questionnaires and in-depth interviews of selected teacher trainers from two major government training providers in Bangladesh. The findings reveal that identity of ELTTs purports complex, relational and multiples realities underpinned by recruitment process, professional status and job satisfaction. Although same or similar factors
contribute to identity formation of ELTTs, there is inequality, hidden discriminations, identity gaps and crisis among trainers.

**Keywords:** English trainer, identity formation, professional performance

“Identity would seem to be the garment with which one covers the nakedness of the self: in which case, it is best that the garment be loose, a little like the robes of the desert, through which one's nakedness can always be felt, and, sometimes, discerned.”

-- James Baldwin

**1. Introduction**

There has been increasing focus on the issue of professional identity in various disciplines of social science research including teachers’ professional development and learning. Over the last two decades, there have been fundamental changes taking place globally in the broader field of English Language Teaching (ELT), and in order to cater to the needs of the increasing ELT market, professional development of English language teachers became a vibrant field in many English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts including Bangladesh. The importance of teacher training has prompted ongoing investigation into teacher-trainers’ efficacy and performance which is characterised by a growing interest in the negotiation of ELTTs’ identity formation. A number of research focused on the issue of professional identity of both English language teachers and teacher educators from different perspectives such as identity formation and its policy implications (Robinson & McMillan, 2006), teachers’ and teacher educators’ identity as mentors (Robert, 2005), the subject specific nature of teacher identities and passion (Hobbs, 2012), teachers’ identity and professionalism in international
education (Tran & Nguyen, 2015), and non-native TESOL teachers’ identity in teacher education (Aneja, 2016). However, little attention has been paid to English language teacher trainers’ identity formation and its impact on their professional performance. This research seeks to unveil how English language teacher trainers (ELTT) construct their professional identity and how that identity comes to compensate for their professional performance.

Teacher trainers are likely to support and help develop the pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills of practicing teachers, and prepare them to ensure better learner outcomes through effective classroom practices. In addition, teacher trainers keep the teacher community state-of-the-art about ongoing changes and development in the respective discipline as well as the curriculum and policy related reforms in their teaching contexts (Robinson & McMillan, 2006). Since the 1990s, the ELT sector in Bangladesh has undergone a series of reforms and changes. Some of the recent changes were made following the recommendation of the new Education Policy (2010), new curriculum pedagogy, the new English textbooks (2012) and new assessment formats (2013). All these have made it challenging for the English teacher trainers to help the practicing teachers adapt to the novel ideas and updated approaches of teaching English. This challenge is coupled with the archetypal predicament of imbedding the spirits of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach that has already created much tension and confusions for the English Language teachers in Bangladesh. All these have intensified the difficulties encountered by the ELTT in this country. Moreover, in Bangladesh, there is no formal trainer training institutions to provide trainer training education and support, nor is there any authority or accreditation system for the certification and verification of recognised teacher training qualifications.
Against this dismal backdrop, the question of ELTT’s professional identity becomes crucial while considering the potential contributions they can make to the shaping of qualified ELT teaching professionals in the country. The question of ELTTs’ identity may encompass a range of factors including their background, educational and professional qualifications, affiliation to professional groups etc. Grounded on the perceptions of ELTT, who are currently engaged in teacher training in Bangladesh, this mixed method research attempts to explore how ELTTs negotiate with their personal and professional realities in constructing their identity. The research also seeks to explore the factors that the ELTTs consider as important constructs of their identity and the ways the perceived identity of ELTTs affect their professional performance.

2. ELTTS in Bangladesh: Dream, Dilemma and Despair

The spread of English all over the world as a consequence of globalisation, colonisation and technological advancement (Crystal, 1997; Pennycook, 2007) has attracted a huge number of non-native speakers to English language learning. The increasing internationalisation has denoted the importance of English as an International Language (EIL) and escalated the prevalence of English language teaching and learning in most parts of the world (Stroupe, 2011). While there is a long history of English language teaching in Bangladesh, the advent of English language teacher training cannot be traced back too long. In fact, large scale government initiated teacher training programme in Bangladesh was first introduced only in the late 1990s when, in a dramatic move, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was replaced by CLT approach. In order to train the secondary school English teachers on newly imported and hastily introduced CLT approach, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) launched a project called English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) with the financial and
technical assistance of Department for International Development (DFID). The project was managed jointly by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), Bangladesh and The British Council, UK. ELTIP started working with an ambitious target of providing in-service training to 40,000 secondary school teachers all over Bangladesh.

In order to accomplish such a big target 15 English teachers were deputed from the government pool to develop them as teacher trainers. Another 40 English teachers or fresh graduates from English discipline were directly recruited to serve as ‘teacher trainer’ for that project. These newly hired ‘trainers’ were then groomed by the British ELT experts either in the UK and/or in Bangladesh to develop their capacity and competence as teacher trainers. These early trainers developed by ELTIP played a pioneering role in the history of ELTT in Bangladesh who, in fact, delivered in-service teacher training to nearly 40,000 secondary school English teachers at the four Regional Resource Centres (RRC) and 22 Satellite Resource Centres (SRC) located in different district headquarters in Bangladesh. ELTIP virtually stopped operating by 2010, but most of the ELTTS produced by the projects were still delivering training in different capacities and arrangements after undergoing some spectral spells of job uncertainty, financial insecurity and suspension of professional identity. In a recent development, most of those ELTIP-clad ELTTs were absorbed in the government pool of trainers and posted as teacher trainer with National Academy for Education Management (NAEM).

The complexity of identity formation of Bangladeshi ELTTs became even more intense when the government of Bangladesh introduced the Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP), one of the largest projects in Bangladesh with a view to enhancing quality teaching at secondary education sub sector. This project, jointly
funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB) and GoB started training for English teachers along with science and mathematics teachers as part of its Continuous Professional Development (CPD) imitative. The teacher trainers who conduct the training of English teachers in TQI-SEP came from a variety of backgrounds. Some of them are lecturers or assistant professor at different Government Teachers’ Training Colleges. In addition, there are some former ELTIP trainers and other school/college level English teachers who act as teacher trainers within this project. Therefore, the teacher trainers in TQI-SEP do not constitute a common identity in terms of their background, entry qualifications, designation and job status. Thus, the problem of constructing professional identity becomes even more challenging for the trainers of TQI-SEP.

3. Research Aims and Questions

The issue of negotiating and constructing identity of the ELTTs of ELTIP and TQI-SEP purports a lot of complexities which offer a robust context for conducting a systematic inquiry as intended by this research. The aim of this study is to understand the way of identity formation of ELTTs and the way it is linked to their professional performance. This research seeks to address the following questions:

a) What do the Bangladeshi ELTTs think about their professional identity?
b) What factors contribute to the identity-formation of Bangladeshi ELTTs?
c) How does the professional identity of Bangladeshi ELTTs affect their professional performance?

As we proceed to address these questions, it is useful to attempt a brief review of how identity is conceptualised in
research literature and how it is connected to language teachers’ professional development and performance.

4. Identity in Global Literature

4.1 Conceptualisation of Identity

Teachers’ identity has been a matter of interest and concern for the researchers. Before discussing the existing research about identity of teachers, it is necessary to see how identity is conceptualised in academic scholarships. Edwards (2013) defines identity as “the way we conceive ourselves as individuals or as members of groups or, indeed, the way others perceive and categorize us” (p. 1). Edwards focuses on identity both as a self and identity as a member of community which can be perceived by an individual and also by other members and institutions of the community. In an earlier study Norton (1997) refers to identity as people’s understanding of their relationship to the world, and this relationship is constructed across time and space. Norton’s idea about identity indicates that time and space are seen as two important constructs for identity formation. Norton further argues that through identity people understand their future possibilities. Again, some authors claim that identity is an abstract concept which is ‘constructed socially’ (De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002, p. 11). It is argued that the development of identity is closely connected with one’s life activities from one context to the other (Linh, 2013). Overall, identity is invariably a multifaceted (Chong & Low, 2009), relational, ongoing, negotiated process (Hong, 2010) which is shaped and developed with regard to other people and to a given context (Maclure, 1993, p. 312).

According to Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011) the notion of identity comprises value, intellect, social engagement and performance. The relational aspect of identity is seen at two intertwined levels: one is the ‘self’ that is constructed at
individual level. It is understood as “an organised representation of our theories, attitudes, and beliefs about ourselves” (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000, p. 108). The other one is cultural and professional, which is seen at the institutional and society level (Samuel & Stephens, 2000). Both these identities are formed socially. Consequently, it is also claimed that identity does not reside in the concept of oneness, instead, it is a multiple entity that is constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 4, cited in Linh, 2013). Thus, in the discourse of identity it is necessary to know both “who is who” and “how it works in discursive practices” (Hall, 1996, p. 4). From a socio-cultural perspective, identity is seen as an ongoing process of becoming in which context plays an important role (Beijaard et al., 2004). As also observed by Linh (2013, p.27) identity is situated within the social and cultural practice that determines “who I am”.

4.2 Language and Identity

Language is seen as an important factor for identity formation (i.e. native and non-native speakers teachers of English) which reflects a persistent sense of belonging of a particular group of people (Edwards, 2013). Referring to the cultural orientation of the so called native and non-native speaking teachers from a post-structural perspective, Aneja (2016) observes that the “idealized notions of native and non-native speakers are historically grounded as well as constructed over time through the discursive practices of individuals and institutions” (p. 575). According to Kramsch (1998, cited in Phan, 2008) the choice of language governs professional, social or political membership of a speech community and also represents individual’s culture, values and social prestige. Therefore, “learning a language involves not only learning the language system, but also adopting its cultural identities” (Tong & Cheung, 2011, p. 60). For example, when we learn English, we
adopt its cultural identity which is multiple, and is constructed socially.

4.3 Teachers’ Professional Identity

Does identity relate only to the cultural factors or it encompasses more than that? The review of literature so far reveals that identity gives a person professional membership of a community. Therefore, a language teacher or a trainer belongs to a kind of professional identity that is grounded on language and it is constructed socially. While we acknowledge that there are both similarities and differences between teachers’ and trainers’ identity, there is a paucity of research focusing only on teacher trainers’ identity. In given situation, therefore, our discussion of literature is limited within the available research on the concept of identity as a whole and its link with language teachers’ self-efficacy, motivation, and performance with regard to their professional growth and development.

Becoming a teacher is seen as a way of identity formation and transformation (Britzman, 1991). According to Clarke (2008) “learning to teach” involves the process of “taking on a new identity” (p. 20). Mayer (1999) pointed out that developing knowledge and skills about how to teach develops a sense of self as a teacher. Teacher education promotes both the sense of “being a teacher” and “becoming a teacher’. Mayer (1999) further observes that teachers’ identity formation is a “continuous redefinition” (p. 5). Recent studies which focus on teaching and teacher education suggest two aspects of teachers’ professional identity, one is the image of self another one is teachers’ functional role (Linh, 2013). Nevertheless, these aspects are considered intertwined and inseparable (Loughran, 2006). While defining professional identity, Bulei and Dinu (2013) stated that it is a concept and it consists of multiple identities that shape the roles that the individual adopts in
his/her professional domain. According to Bulei, Bulei, & Bunea (2015) professional identity can be seen from two perspectives: one is linked with the economic aspects (the paid work), while the other one is symbolic and social that is derived from the uniqueness of each individual and from its membership to a particular group.

4.4 Professional Identity and Performance

Previous research (e.g. Delima, 2015; Puglia, 2008) shows that there is a strong relationship between professional identity and professional performance. Puglia (2008) reported that weak professional identity may affect individual work that influences the image of the profession. Again, what encourages teachers in their teaching practice is found to be linked with teachers’ motivation and passion which are important ingredients for teachers’ identity. In this respect Day (2004) examines the relationship between teachers’ self-efficacy and its impact on their teaching as he contended that “self-efficacy, which is “the self-belief of teachers that they can exert a positive effect on their students’ success, is a key mediating factor in sustaining a passion for teaching” (p. 59). Based on the above theoretical arguments we look at exploring identity formation of selected Bangladeshi ELTTs and their professional performance which is a largely under-researched area in both local and global literature.

5. Methodology

As mentioned earlier, the aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of the ELTTs about how they perceive their identity, what factors contribute to their professional identity formation, and how their formed identity contributes to their professional performance. This study adopted a mixed methods research approach as data were collected from two groups of ELTTs through online survey and cell-phone interviews. The
participants were former ELTIP trainers (now posted in NAEM), and TTC trainers who also train teachers for TQI-SEP. Twenty participants (10 ELTIP trainers and 10 TTC trainers) were selected for short email survey. Out of these 20 participants, a total of 6 consenting participants were selected for in-depth telephone interviews. While selecting participants for survey background landscapes such as education background, length of experience, type of recruitment, professional affiliation and gender were considered. Educational qualifications of the selected ELTTs range from Masters in English to PhD degrees. All participants received teacher training from a number of organisation or projects. The average year of experience as teacher trainer was 13 years for both TTC and ELTIP trainers. In terms of gender, seven male and three female trainers from TTCs and five male and five female trainers with ELTIP background took part in the survey. On the other hand, three male trainers from TTC and one male and two female trainers from ELTIP were interviewed.

A survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview schedule were used as data collection tools. The instruments were designed on the basis of the theoretical insights generated through literature review and contextual needs. Both open-ended and closed questions were used in the survey questionnaire. For the interviews, an open-ended interview schedule was used to give respondents the freedom to answer the questions spontaneously (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2006). Although the survey questionnaire and interview protocol were written in English, participants were allowed to use their preferred language to answer. The questionnaire was finalised following a small sample piloting process. Quantitative data were analysed and presented using descriptive statistics while digitally recorded interview data were thematically transcribed, analysed and presented (see, Braun & Clarke, 2006).
6. Findings

The findings of both survey and interview are presented below under the thematic umbrella of three subthemes that are aligned with the research questions of the study.

6.1 Complexity in Feelings About Self-Professional Identity

In response to the question about what professional identity the respondents feel most comfortable with, mixed responses were reported by the participants. The quantitative data show that more than one-fourth (6 out of 20) of respondents feel comfortable to express their identity as ‘only a trainer’. It appears that these ELTTs prefer to endorse their sole identity of ‘only a trainer’ than espousing a dual identity (e.g. teacher and trainer). Nevertheless, more than half of the respondents (14) expressed comfortable feeling to have a dual identity with slightly stronger emphasis on either of their ‘teacher’ or ‘trainer’ selves or both. Among them one-fourth of respondents (5) stated they feel comfortable when they consider themselves ‘firstly a trainer, then a teacher’ while the other one-fourth feel comfortable with the identity of ‘both a teacher and trainer equally’. The rest of the respondents (4) reported that they feel comfortable when they think of them ‘firstly a teacher, then a trainer’. It is evident from the responses that, overall, a majority of the respondents retain a very strong sense of identity as a trainer either alongside or bereft of their teacher identity. This sense of identity as a trainer is relatively even stronger among the ELTIP trainers as five out of ten consider them only as trainers compared to one TTC trainer who consider him the same.

The qualitative findings are also aligned with the quantitative results as in the interviews two out of three ELTIP trainers claimed themselves as ‘professional trainers only’.
Unsurprisingly, participants from TTCs expressed their identity as ‘both teacher and trainers’. However, the ‘teacher’ identity of TTC trainers is more strongly grounded than that of the ‘trainer’. The reasons behind such comfortable feeling may be largely embedded in the nature of the more sophisticated recruitment process and more diverse job responsibilities of TTC trainers. The recruitment profiles of both groups of participants indicate that TTC trainers were recruited as mainly teachers of teachers through a rigorous recruitment process under Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC). It is also worth mentioning that the TTC trainers play multiple roles as both trainers and teachers from time to time. On the other hand, the former ELTIP trainers were recruited directly by the Ministry of Education as teacher trainers and their duties are mainly limited to training to teachers. Overall, it is reported that the TTC trainers are more comfortable in carrying dual identities of both ‘trainer’ and ‘teachers’ while the ELTIP trainers are more prejudiced about maintaining their sole identity of ‘teacher trainers’. One of the participants from TTC claimed:

I introduce myself first as a teacher, then as a trainer because I think, firstly I am a teacher. I am in education cadre. … I feel comfortable because of my type of appointment. …and side by side, I am working in teachers training college, so, obviously I am a trainer as well.

However, all the TTC trainers interviewed did not share similar thoughts, rather, some of them revealed different feelings where more particular identity was exposed. One of the relatively young participants working in a TTC recognised himself as an ‘English teacher trainer’ and he said he is comfortable with this identity as he stated, ‘I think I feel comfortable to introduce myself as an English teacher trainer; neither as a teacher, nor as a trainer’. Accordingly, it can be said that the professional identity construction is not always
embedded in the process of recruitment and/or in the activities that a professionals does, it is also embedded in the way a professional senses it.

In the given sensitive context, participants were asked whether they feel comfortable with their identity in the same way when they introduce themselves ‘within’ and ‘out of’ their professional community. The finding reveals that, except one, all participants are more or less comfortable with their identity within their professional community and they do not suffer from identity crisis. Data show that more than half of the respondents (55%) reported they feel ‘largely comfortable’ with their identity in their professional setting while more than one third (42.1%) respondents stated that they feel ‘moderately comfortable’. Only one respondent reported to feel ‘not at all’ comfortable. Again it appears from the data that the ELTIP trainers have a higher level of comfortable feeling with their identity as 7 out of 10 ELTIP trainers reported to feel ‘largely comfortable’ with their identity compared to 4 out of 6 TTC trainers with similar feelings.

However, slightly different scenario was demonstrated when trainers introduced themselves out of their professional community. A good majority of respondents (70%) reported to feel ‘largely comfortable’ while introducing them out of their professional community while less than one third of the respondents (30%) reported ‘moderately comfortable’ feeling in similar contexts. It suggests that both ELTIP and TTC trainers are comfortable with their professional identity when they interact with someone outside their professional territory. It is interesting that the TTC trainers showed a better level of comfortable feeling with their identity compared to their ELTIP counterparts. The data indicated that 8 out of 10 TTC trainers reported to be ‘largely comfortable’ with their identity compared to 6 out of 10 ELTIP trainers having the same feeling. This finding suggests that the comfortable feeling
about identity among TTC trainers is much better recognised in out of professional community compared to their ELTIP colleagues.

As seen earlier, some participants differentiated the identity as a teacher and a trainer. When those participants were asked if they would differentiate between an ‘English teacher’ and ‘an English teacher trainer’, the three-fourths of respondents (out of 20) mentioned that they, in fact, differentiate between the identity of an English teacher and an English teacher trainer. However, there were one-fourth of respondents who said ‘no’ to this questions. It is hard to generalise, yet demographic information of the participants suggests that relatively young respondents with less experience found no differences between the role of teachers and teacher trainers. At that juncture, a query comes in mind: Why the respondents perceived differences or no differences between an English teacher and an English teacher trainer. While responding to the open ended question, the participants who did differentiate between English teachers and trainers reported that the roles of both cohorts is the same and both groups work in similar ways. Again, the participants who recognised differences between teachers and trainers identified several factors which are likely to cause the differences. These factors include the typical roles of a teacher or a trainer, professional competencies, work place, flexibility, contents, focus, and their counterparts. Referring to one of such differences, one of the participants from TTC argued that while a teacher has to teach in classroom with some kind of rigidity, a teacher trainer conducts the training sessions with more flexibility. Another difference between the job of a teacher and a trainer is mentioned by one ELTIP trainer as he said:

Yes, obviously there is a difference. A teacher has to teach his/her fixed students for a whole year, with a fixed syllabus. But a trainer
teaches those teachers using techniques and methods those will help them to make their class more effective. …

The above comment indicates the difference between the role and responsibilities of a teacher and a trainer that requires a number of attributes. This point is further clarified by a TTC participant who acknowledged that although both teachers and trainers need (positive) attitude, fantastic mind, pedagogical techniques and approaches for delivering his thinking, an English teacher trainer should have more qualities than an English teacher.

6.2 Factors Contributing to Constructing Identity of ELTTs

As the participants were asked questions about the attributes and competencies they considered as imperatives for constructing professional identity of an English teacher trainer, they mentioned a wide variety of constructs that are likely to shape their identity. It is also evident that there was close corroboration between qualitative and quantitative findings regarding this question. Both the survey and interview data disclosed that the identity construction of an ELTT is a process that requires a number of attributes and professional competencies. The recognized professional identity construction competencies/attributes as mentioned by the participants have been grouped into three categories: a) Professional attributes that include respect and ownership to the profession, flexibility with trends, motivation, positive attitudes, commitment, self-learning, comfortable feeling, and eagerness to contribute to society; b) pedagogical competencies comprise language skills, professional training, disseminating new teaching techniques, networking, writing relevant articles, books and manuals, ICT skills, attending seminars and workshops; and, c) institutional supports that take account of creating opportunities for trainers, and providing professional environment.
While ‘ownership’ and ‘flexibility with trends’ were highly alluded factors among the identified professional attributes, ‘language skills’ and ‘professional training’ were reported as the two traits of pedagogical competencies mentioned by the highest number of participants. ICT skill was mentioned as another element of competencies by a good percentage of trainers though ICT skill has emerged as a moderately recent pedagogical competency in the arena of teacher training in Bangladesh. It is an important pedagogical construct for identity formation, as indicated by the participants. The importance given on ICT might also be seen as an outcome of strong emphasis on digital technology given by the current government through its ‘Access 2 Information’ (A2I) project. Among institutional support, both ‘opportunity’ and ‘professional environment’ were equally important factors. It was found that the ELTIP trainers gave more emphasis on institutional supports than that of the TTC trainers. The reason might be underpinned by their vulnerable position and job insecurity. The qualitative data also reiterated the fact that the
position of ELTIP trainers in their job placement is relatively complex, stressful, and uncomfortable than that of their TTC counterparts. Demographic data reveal that TTC trainers feel ‘homely’ while they are placed in TTCs. ELTIP trainers, placed in projects like Foreign Language Training Centres (FLTC) and NAEM (recently all are absorbed in NAEM) with lack of opportunities and professional support, have hidden positional clash against BCS cadre colleagues working particularly at NAEM. Though their (the ELTIP trainers) job is much more secured after being absorbed in NAEM as teacher trainers, they are now confronted with the challenge of finding their feet on the soil of NAEM which they have described as ‘an unwelcomed station’.

One of the further queries of the study was how a trainer can construct his/her identity obtaining the above attributes. The finding suggests that identity of an English teacher trainer is a matter of ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’. A trainer needs to achieve a number of attributes such as educational qualification, professional training and experience throughout his/her life. Identity of ELTTs is constructed and reconstructed over years through developing knowledge, skills and understanding about training. Some TTC participants gave lengthy accounts of the journey they had taken towards developing himself as a teacher trainer which include educational qualifications, many short and long term trainings, including foreign trainings. The journey descriptions of the participants about becoming a trainer indicate that becoming a trainer is a lifelong process.

The demographic data show that all respondents have BA (Honours) in English. In addition, some respondents achieved further qualifications form home and abroad. Moreover, they received several pedagogical and relevant trainings. Participants also considered that professional training is essential for professional development and it needs to be
ongoing. All these credentials earned and efforts made confirm the fact that becoming a trainer is an ongoing process.

6.3 Unheard Relational Identity, Agony of Being ‘Nowhere’

As seen earlier, identity is relational and in this consideration both TTC and ELTIP group of trainers were asked about how they compare themselves with the other group of trainers. In particular they were asked to reveal their relational view to the other group of trainers. In response to this quantitative query, both group of trainers expressed positive and respectful attitudes to each other. However, in interviews, two TTC participants had slightly negative observation about the attitude of ELTIP trainers, though, they did not like to generalise this point. On the other hand, one ELTIP trainer felt that TTC trainers considered themselves superior to ELTIP trainers as they were BCS cadres. The view expressed by that participant was re-enforced by a comment made later by a TTC trainer. The ELTIP trainer also argued that although TTC trainers perceive themselves superior to ELTIP trainers, they (TTC trainers) are unlikely to ensure their better professional performance as trainers. Instead, they (ELTIP trainers) strongly believe that ELTIP trainers were no way inferior to TTC trainers, even to some extent they performed better than that of TTC trainers. Participants from ELTIP and TTC made the following remarks:

I think we are the same as TTC trainers. In terms of status, TTC trainers come from BCS cadre, whereas we do not. But I don’t think being a BCS cadre makes someone a better trainer. The practicality is different here. (ELTIP trainer)

Right now, I think, teacher trainers who are working in teacher training colleges have much more qualities and they are very much enriched in training. They are good trainers. … Other trainers [ELTIP] are also skilled but I think English teachers who are working in Teachers Training Colleges are more skilled than ELTIP trainers. (TTC trainer)
This finding indicates a self-comparative analysis between ELTIP and TTC trainers, and it is found that the participants voiced much confidence about themselves and they do not suffer from any sense of inferiority while comparing them to other groups of trainers. It is, however, hard to generalise which group of trainer is better performer. It demands further study on this issue.

Regarding the question whether or not trainers are happy with their respective positions the survey data demonstrated a mixed finding where some of the participants are happy while some are not. More than half of the respondents recorded their high level of satisfaction with the position they hold as more than half of the respondents (55%) said that they are ‘largely’ happy with their position while one third of the respondents (35%) said they are moderately happy. All ELTIP trainers reported that they feel either ‘largely’ or ‘moderately’ happy with their position compared to 8 TTC respondents giving similar responses. However, out of the rest 2 TTC respondents, one each stated to feel ‘slightly’ happy and ‘not at all’ happy with his/her current position. This finding suggests that trainers are not equally happy with their current position and there might be several reasons for such variations in opinions.

The qualitative findings reveal that participants who participated in interviews are mostly happy with their present position. The TTC trainers are happier than ELTIP trainers which actually contradicts the findings of the survey. Again, among ELTIP trainers, female trainers particularly are happier than that of male trainers. One ELTIP female trainer reported that she was happy because she had received placement in a Foreign Language Training Centre (FLTC), where she did not have much workload and she was able to lead her family life easily. Nevertheless, a totally different opinion was recorded by a male trainer, who was also working in another FLTC. He acknowledged that he was not completely happy with his status...
because being an efficient and experienced ELTT, he was not receiving the proper status and honour that he was supposed to enjoy. He, instead, felt that after ELTIP era was over, he could find his professional life as that of a ‘tennis ball’ because the authority was transferring him in different places at random. He stated how often he would find himself in a new workplace where he was not prepared to work in and even how he came to discover the fact that his place was permanently ‘nowhere’. He expressed his frustration over the complexities developed regarding his professional identity. He also added that this situation was not affecting him alone; rather, it was affecting many other ELTIP trainers, who might not disclose it due to the fear of being harassed. As he observed,

Frankly speaking we are in trouble with our placement, job and identity. We are struggling over years to see where we are. ... I guess workplace people consider us outsiders [italic to give emphasis] and they treat us accordingly. We are shocked but cannot protest because if we do that, we will be in trouble. Sometimes I wonder where we are. Actually, we are nowhere.

This comment reflects the frustration and agony of ELTIP trainers that is likely to have impact on their professional performance. However, similar despondent view was echoed by a TTC trainer who had been in that profession for more than 15 years. The reason for his upsetting mind sprung from his self-comparison with the BCS cadre officers working in administration and police sectors. This TTC participant, unhappy with his current position, stated that he is an Associate Professor and his position is equivalent to that of a Joint Secretary but he is not getting due importance in government meetings. He pointed out that as per the Warrant of Precedence of the country his position falls far behind than some other cadre members. This participant noted his grief:

They [other cadre officers] are in 6th grade but we are in 7th grade in the same BCS… when I go to a big national-level workshop, the
chief-guests and others take their seats at the centre and I get my seat aside. ...they introduce us by saying ‘a trainer has come from TTC’. But I am a professor and they do not understand it. Then I feel undervalued and I wonder if I have made a mistake choosing to come to this profession.

This utterance indicates the grief and dissatisfaction of being teachers or trainers and it works as a de-motivational factor. However, the trainers cheer up themselves thinking that they are getting honour from the core of the heart of the people and they believe that they had come to this profession ‘by choice, but not by chance’. Hence, they do not think to the extent of leaving the job of a trainer, instead, they are committed to stay in this profession till rest of the work life.

As the ELTTs were asked to what extent they would encourage their fellows to choose this profession as a choice of career, all respondents reported that they would either ‘largely’ (40%) or ‘moderately’ (60%) encourage their fellow to choose this profession. Therefore, it is evident that 100% respondents expressed either a strong or a moderate feeling about recommending others the profession they belong to. Our qualitative finding is also aligned with quantitative data. One of the participants noted, ‘I would like to encourage my juniors too to enter this profession’. Although participants reported that they would encourage their fellows to choose this profession as a career, they, particularly some ELTIP trainers, did not like to encourage their children to come to this profession. Instead, they would motivate them to choose ‘better’ careers which are more stable, tension free and socially prestigious.

6.4 Professional Identity and Professional Performance

It is assumed that professional identity and professional performance are interconnected. Hence, the participants were
asked to give their views on whether and to what extent their professional identity affects their professional performance. Around two-thirds of the respondents (12) mentioned that their professional identity had ‘largely’ contributed to their professional performance whereas one-third (6) of the respondents reported that their professional identity ‘moderately’ contributed to their performance. Within the group it is seen that among the TTC trainers, a majority (7) reported that their professional identity largely contributes to their professional performance whereas two of them reported moderately and only one saying his performance being affected slightly by his professional identity. On the other hand, among ELTIP trainers, the ratio is moderately quite high. Out of 10 respondents half of the respondents (5) believed that it largely contributes, some (4) reported moderately contributes, and only one trainer viewed it contributes slightly. This finding suggests that professional identity has great positive influence on the professional performance of the teacher trainers.

The interview findings were also aligned with quantitative findings which revealed that participants believed their professional identity ‘obviously’ contributes to their professional performance because they have built their identity gradually over a long journey by acquiring knowledge and skills through academic qualifications, professional training and practical experiences. In addition, the participants also feel confident in performing their professional roles owing to their professional identity. Commenting on the level of confidence, a vast majority of respondents (17) reported to be ‘largely’ confident, a few reported (2) ‘moderately’ and only one reported ‘slightly’ confident in their professional performance. Both TTC and ELTIP trainers stated their high level of confidence as nine and eight respondents from each group respectively stated they were ‘largely’ confident about performing their professional roles. One of the participants from ELTIP reported positively as he said:
I would say in teacher training at every moment my happiness is helping my profession. For example, dealing with teachers, learning new things from them are building my confidence. It is making me more experienced. And it is positively contributing to my profession.

However, some of the participants, particularly, the young participants from TTC feel that they need to go further to develop their identity as an effective ELTT because the knowledge and skills they have now are not enough and they want to learn more skills from senior colleagues.

The above findings suggest that professional identity plays a significant role in professional performance. Their professional identity develops their professional confidence underpinned by their professional practices. It is a continuous process that can be learned from others through a community of practice.

7. Discussion

This research explores the ways the ELTTs construct their identity that is deemed to be central to their professional performance in the workplaces. Findings indicate that the identity of the Bangladeshi ELTTs is problematic, fluid and multi-dimensional in nature. While some of the ELTTs feel comfortable with a single trainer identity, others feel comfortable with a duel identity (i.e. the identity of a trainer as well as a teacher). It is argued in literature that there can be multiple identities which are likely to be hybrid and ongoing (Phan, 2008).

The Bangladeshi ELTTS also reported some core attributes that play a vital role in shaping one’s professional identity which include professional attributes, pedagogical competencies and institutional support. It is evident from the
study that the recruitment process, nature of responsibilities, and social status of ELTTs play significant roles in determining how they perceive their professional identity, which evolves through a social process and is socially constructed (De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002). These findings are in line with the construct of identity constructed from different, overlapping and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 4, cited in Linh, 2013). While talking about the factors that help developing their professional identity both ELTIP and TTC trainers gave emphasis on the contextual factors including the environmental supports which eventually conform to the notion of identity being constructed socially (De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002) which is connected with the context in which an individual’s activities are situated (Linh, 2013).

The findings also reveal a long and continuous process of teachers’ self-development towards ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’ teacher’s trainers which plays important role in their identity formation. It is found that the identity of ELTTs is constructed and reconstructed over years through developing knowledge, skills and understanding about training by taking a series of academic as well as professional programmes. These findings endorse Mayer’s (1999) observation that developing knowledge and skills about how to teach develops a sense of self as a teacher and teachers’ identity formation undergoes a continuous process of ‘redefinition’. This findings also follow the previous research: Teachers’ identity can be developed over an extended period of time through ongoing lifelong activities (Linh, 2013).

It is also revealed that the ELTTs’ perceived identity is relational in nature and it is embedded within the training context where a trainer negotiates with trainees and develops his/her individual trainer position. This finding is in line with the previous research suggesting identity as relational
phenomenon which follows a negotiation process developed in a given context (Hong, 2010). It is found that, as members of the trainer community, the ELLTTs are involved in constantly negotiating their identity through their professional values, intellects, engagement and performance (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011). Thus, the identity of a trainer as perceived by the ELTTs is related with a series of attributes, competencies and qualifications that give the ELTTs a sense of being a trainer and becoming a trainer. It is further reported that the ELTTs’ identity is not only relational to trainees but also to other community that influences the image of the profession which also conforms to the earlier research findings (Puglia, 2008).

This study compares between two groups of trainers: one group’s main role is to work as English teacher trainers (ELTIP) and the other group’s (TTC) role is to work as teacher educators who also occasionally work as teacher trainers. This study revealed that ELTIP participants have relatively stronger beliefs about their identity as teacher trainers than the TTC trainers because they (ELTIP trainers) were originally recruited as trainers and they have a higher degree of confidence about performing the roles of teacher trainers. Hence, ELTIP trainers have more robust sense of belonging to English teacher trainer identity. Overall, both groups of trainers have reported high degree of job satisfaction and they consider themselves better than the other group of trainers. Such feeling are likely to stem from a feeling of ‘complex’ among the two groups of trainers which can be caused by the differences in the way the two groups of trainers were recruited, affiliated to the government run training organisations they belong to.

As seen from the findings, participants are happy with their job but all participants are not equally happy when they compare themselves with others. One of the reasons for dissatisfaction for ELTIP trainers is their identity crisis because, prior to their posting in NAEM, they were working in
the training industry without having proper job placements, specific responsibilities, and status. They were in a floating situation and strategically they could identify themselves nowhere. Liberty in the profession, giving proper time to family, congenial relationship with colleagues, and sound workplace environment are some of the additional reasons for the trainers’ happiness with their teacher trainer positions. But the study also indicates areas to address in order to retain that sense of happiness. It was reflected in the trainers’ beliefs that they enjoy less priority in government programs than some other civil servants, which sometimes demotivates them. Some of the participants consider it as a demoralising factor that need to be addressed at the national policy making and institutional level. These findings have revealed that professional identity is not only economic but also symbolic and social (Ioana Bulei et al., 2015) and particularly can be referred to the notion of the cultural, and professional aspects of identity formation that is seen at the level of the institutes and the society (Samuel & Stephens, 2000).

8. Conclusion

The notion of ‘teacher trainer’ as a profession is relatively new in Bangladesh. As this study tried to address the core questions to investigate what factors and conditions contribute to the making of teachers trainers identity and how that sense of identity affects their professional performances, it can be concluded on the basis of the findings that a number of factors such as language skills, training, ownership, respect, attitude, commitment, networking and disseminating new teaching techniques are considered important for formation of identity. However, it is also revealed that teacher trainers’ identity formation is a lengthy and complex process. As no formal training institute and certification authority exists in Bangladesh to prepare and monitor teacher trainers, there is no
common set of skills or qualifications framework that can be attributed to the professional of EFL teacher training. Simultaneously, the social status of the teacher trainer particularly in government program needs to increase through upgrading the rank in the warrant of precedence.

References


Appendix

**Questionnaire for EFL Trainers**

This questionnaire has been developed for understanding *Identity formation and professional performance* of EFL teacher trainers in Bangladesh. Please note that the information provided in this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purpose of research.

**Section A**

A.1 Name of the trainer: --------------------------------------------

A.2 Name of the training institution/organisation: ---------------

A.3 Name of the current workstation: -----------------------------

A.4 Current designation of respondent: --------------------------

A.5 Sex: ( Male/Female) [ ]

A.6 Academic Qualifications: -------------------------------------

A.7 Length of experience as an English teacher Trainer (in years) [ ]

A.8 What training have you received to be an EFL teacher trainer? (maximum five)

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Section B

[For questions 1 to 8, please encircle the letter before the option that best describes your situation.]

1. How do you consider you professionally?
   a. Firstly a teacher, then a trainer  b. Firstly a trainer, then a teacher
   c. A Professional teacher trainer only  d. A both teacher and trainer equally

2. To what extent do you feel comfortable when you introduce yourself in your professional community?
   a. largely  b. moderately  c. slightly  d. Not at all

3. To what extent do you feel comfortable when you introduce yourself out of your professional community?
   a. largely  b. moderately  c. slightly  d. Not at all

4. To what extent do you feel comfortable when you compare yourself with English trainers working under other projects?
   a. largely  b. moderately  c. slightly  d. Not at all

5. To what extent are you happy with your position?
   a. largely  b. moderately  c. slightly  d. not at all

6. To what extent will you encourage your fellows to choose this profession as a choice of career?
   a. largely  b. moderately  c. slightly  d. not at all

7. To what extent are you confident to perform your professional role?
   a. largely  b. moderately  c. slightly  d. not at all

8. To what extent does your professional identity contribute to professional performance?
   a. largely  b. moderately  c. slightly  d. not at all

Section C

This section has three open ended questions. You may write only key words, phrases, or short sentences to answer each questions.

9. What factors help you construct your identity as a teacher trainer? Please list all the factors below in any order. (Minimum 3, maximum 6)
   a. --------------------------
   b. --------------------------
   c. --------------------------
   d. --------------------------
   e. --------------------------
   f. --------------------------
10. Do you differentiate between your role as an English teacher and an English teacher trainer?

Yes  ☐  No  ☐

11. Please mention why you differentiate / don’t differentiate between your role as an English teacher and an English teacher trainer? (Write 3 to 5 short sentences)
   
12. How have you developed your identity as an English trainer?

Interview schedule

1. How do you introduce yourself in your professional community? How do you consider yourself professionally (either teacher or trainer or both) and why?
2. How do you differentiate between English teacher and English teacher trainer?
3. What characteristics are necessary to be a trainer?
4. How have you become (prepared yourself as) a trainer? What sort of professional training have you received to be an English trainer?
5. How do you compare yourself with English trainers working in other government projects/institutions?
6. How do you compare yourself with teacher trainers of other subjects/projects?
7. What made you to choose this profession?
8. To what extent are you happy with this profession?
9. Will you continue this position in future or switch?
10. What is your career goal in future?
11. How does your professional identity contribute to professional performance?