

Understanding Muslim English-Language Teachers' Professional Identity and Emotions during Curriculum Change

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0367>

Received: 19 June 2025; Accepted: 26 June 2025; Published: 29 July 2025

ABSTRACT

ELT curriculum reform has revealed a lot about English-language teachers' emotions and their professional identity. This study explores Muslim English-language teachers' professional identity and emotional experience focusing on Kelchtermans' (1993, 2009) three components of professional self: self-image, self-esteem and job motivation. The findings extend on the dynamics of teachers' personal biographies and emotions in the construction of their professional identity. As teachers' professional identity construction depends on the interplay between their past and current school contexts, this study provides new perspectives on the unexplored relationship between teacher identities and religion plus how understanding of these could benefit during curriculum change.

Keywords: professional identity; Muslim teachers; teacher emotions; curriculum reform; ELT

INTRODUCTION

Within the context of English language curriculum reform, English-language teachers are expected to adapt and make changes that meet the demand of the new curricula. This may involve comprehending complex ideas embedded in curriculum policy (Priestley & Philippou, 2018), acquiring new pedagogical knowledge and skills (Jiang & Zhang, 2021), negotiating emotional responses (Lee & Yin, 2011) as well as conceptualising identity and agency (Tao & Gao, 2017). As language teaching and learning is a complex process that is not merely confined in a classroom, understanding, and knowing who the teachers are, their professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they represent or which are assigned to them is important (Varghese et al., 2005). Investigating how a language teacher identity is developed over time is therefore significant since it provides insight into how language teaching is carried out (Aghaei et al., 2020).

The language teacher identity includes teachers' knowledge about the field of language teaching, which they acquired through their education and experience, thus helping them to create a connection towards their own profession (Pennington & Richards, 2016). However, it is important to note that teachers' experience in their profession can be either motivating or demotivating to the development of their identity. As term by Pennington & Richards (2016), "favouring" and "disfavouring" conditions can motivate or put constraints on teacher identity development. For instance, a supportive school culture to implementation of change in the classroom may promote positive identity while lack of training to the new curriculum reform may hinder the development of positive identity towards their profession.

Studies have illustrated language teacher identities focusing on multiple educational issues and contexts. Among the most researched areas are L2 teacher education (Zhu et al., 2020; Gu & Benson, 2015), native and non-native teachers (Huang & Varghese, 2015; Ilieva, 2010) as well as theoretical landscapes in identity formation (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Kayi-Aydar, 2015). Meanwhile, there have also been studies done to expand the ideas of teacher identity in a time of change. In Lu's and Xu's (2011) study on teacher identity in the context of reform, they illustrated that language teachers need to shift their identities to survive change. They believed that in the time of change, identity is not static and fixed, but negotiated and shifting. In another recent example, Jiang and Zhang (2021) in their study focusing on how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers learn and change their identities in the reform context provided a significant finding on the

complexities of teacher beliefs, emotions, and identities. They indicated that emerging and transitioning teacher identities are the result of teachers' motivation to learn new knowledge and skills that come with the reform.

Despite a growing interest in the study of language teacher identity during educational reform, little attention, however, has been given to the complex relationship between professional identity and the role of English-language teachers' emotions (Lemarchand-Chauvin & Tardieu, 2018), particularly in the time of change. Additionally, identities of Muslim English-language teachers have been scarcely under-researched. Besides, as studies on teacher identity in Asian countries are mostly on new or pre-service teachers (Yip et al., 2019; Nagamine, 2012; Nagatomo, 2011) and native or non-native teachers (Howard, 2019; Le, 2013), there is a need to fill the gap for future research in this current notion. This study contributes not only to the field of language teacher identities in reform enactment, but also to the role of emotions in their professional identity development. To gain greater insight into the situation, the two following research questions formed the basis of this study.

- (1) How has the Muslim English-language teachers' professional identity changed during curriculum reform?
- (2) What are the impacts of emotions on English-language teachers' professional identity?

BACKGROUND

Religion and Teacher Identity

Religion is among the most important aspect of identity (Yayli, 2015) and should not be isolated from teaching and learning. According to Wong (2018), teachers' religious faith provides a sense of guidance, support and motivation for teachers to do their job with excellence and integrity. Regardless of different religious backgrounds, teachers find satisfaction in teaching when it is aligned to their spiritual identity (Mahboob & Courtney, 2018). In the scope of this study, the spiritual identity takes a Muslim identity because all the teacher participants in this study are Muslim. When it comes to teaching and learning, religion is intertwined in how teachers view their role as teachers. In a study done by Boraie et al., (2018), Muslim teachers viewed teaching of English language as an encouragement from the Prophet Mohamed (messenger of God) for people to learn different languages. Teachers perceived themselves as role models for the students to learn more about different people and different cultures. As islamic identity formation is dependent upon the individual's level of religious commitment (Azmi et al., 2020), some teachers with strong religious commitment believed that they should teach students good behaviour instead of just the language (Boraie et al., 2018).

In defining Muslim teachers, Mogra (2011) highlighted three concepts which are philosophical, literal and functional. The philosophical understanding of Muslim teachers lies across religious and secular lines, in which teachers who are teaching religious school are considered more "Muslim" because of the training they receive to teach in religious schools. Whereas the literal understanding of a Muslim teacher is someone who practises Islam and keeps the faith to God. At a functional level, a Muslim teacher is understood to be playing a crucial role both in school and in the community. A Muslim teacher is expected to use their beliefs and understanding of the religion to be a good role model for all Muslim children, particularly within schools. In this study, the definition of a Muslim teacher takes the third concept.

Professional identity and curriculum change

The concept of professional identity in language teachers relies on their capacity to convert the knowledge they gained from formal education and training, as well as experiential learning to professional practice (Leung, 2012). In second language teaching, teachers should have the necessary knowledge and professional expertise including the disciplinary knowledge, knowledge of students' needs, pedagogic content knowledge, and authority management (Leung, 2012). This knowledge is important for language teachers because they work in different educational contexts and systems. For example, teachers who work in a rural area, with strict religious teachings should have some knowledge of the students' language expectation and be sensitive to their

religion. In the context of ELT reform, language teachers must possess knowledge of the recent change, and this includes, for example, specific classroom activities or particular teaching strategies.

The process of developing a teacher identity begins long before a new teacher enters a preparation program or a classroom and continues to develop throughout their careers (Buchanan, 2015). For example, as teachers becoming more experienced, the identity they initially developed based on their personal beliefs and experience may change professionally, depending on how they view their professional role in present time. This is because teacher professional identity is formed and re-formed constantly over the course of a career and mediated by a complex interplay of personal, professional, and political dimensions of teachers' lives (Mockler, 2011). This professional dimension reflects social and policy expectations of what a good teacher is and the educational ideals of the teacher (Day & Kington, 2008). For some, this is what teacher's perception of their professional responsibilities are (Qoyyimah et al., 2020). As such it is crucial to note that research on teachers' professional identity formation contributes to the understanding and acknowledgment of what it feels like to be a teacher in today's schools, where many things are changing rapidly, and how teachers cope with these changes (Beijaard et al., 2004).

In the curriculum change literature, teachers' identities are reformed and remade as they use their pre-existing identities while confronting new policies (Buchanan, 2015). To further clarify the term, there have been various interpretations documented by different scholars and researchers. One interpretation identifies professional identity as what teachers themselves perceive as important in their prioritisation of their teaching experiences based on their frontline practices (Lee et al., 2013). Another interpretation of teachers' professional identity is a set of identity elements containing their self-images, job motivation, core responsibilities, self-esteem, and perceptions of teaching, subject and subject pedagogy, and teaching as work (Veen & Slegers, 2006), which are constantly transformed by many factors in a large scale educational reform. Teachers' self-identities and educational ideologies are powerful mediators in terms of their interpretations of and responses to imposed changes (Vulliamy et al., 2010). Teachers may have their own values prior to the change, but as they are experiencing imposed changes in practice, some teachers begin to question their previously held assumptions and changing their beliefs.

In fact, professional identity development is one of the many challenges TESOL teachers encounter during their first years of teaching (Farrell, 2011). The formation and transformation of teachers' professional identity begins when one chooses one's educational and professional objectives and this process unfolds consistently throughout life (Han, 2017). In addition to that, professional identity can be reformed when a teacher is negotiating with the changes brought along by the organisation they are working in and required for their profession. Therefore, for the development of a comprehensive and feasible curriculum, consideration of the teachers' professional identity and its meaning systems is essential in curriculum design as well as implementation processes (Han, 2017).

Professional identity and emotions

One of the most important factors that influences teacher's professional identity is teacher's emotions (Cheng, 2021). This is because teachers often possess a strong personal commitment towards their profession, and teachers' emotions guide the formation of their identities (Zembylas, 2003). For example, if teachers perceive a situation as a threat to their identity, they may react with negative emotions, which in turn acts as a barrier to their identity constructions (Esmaeili et al., 2019). In contrast, positive emotional responses may facilitate identity constructions that portray professional self-image as teachers. Similarly, teachers can manage the emotional labour faced to promote their individual teaching goals (De Costa and Nazari 2024). In addition, teachers' professional identity is negotiated by teachers' experiences in and out of schools as well as their own principles and beliefs of what it means to be a teacher (Sachs, 2001). For all teachers involved in change implementation, their professional identities will be affected by external factor including policy requirements and features of school organization, and teachers' internal and personal experiences including their emotions as well as their beliefs, values, and biography (Lee & Yin, 2011). As professional identity of language teachers depends on their knowledge (Leung, 2012), if teachers feel they are not competent to teach using the new curriculum, this may evoke negative emotions like frustration or disappointment. In a study done by Esmaeili et al., (2019) on EFL teachers' emotions and their identity, they found that the negative emotions

experienced by the participants not only blocked the teachers' identity development, but also put them in a confusing state of holding the appropriate conception about their role as a teacher. In their study, teachers' negative emotions such as anger, anxiety and frustration due to their lack of skills in classroom management, affected their teaching practice, which eventually resulted in identity shift. Following Pennington & Richards (2016), "favouring" and "disfavouring" conditions, their experience with misbehaved students was an example of a "disfavouring" condition that demotivate the development of their professional identity. Teachers' positive emotions can be a result of emotion labour, when teachers feel they are responsible to give support and nurturing actions to the students (Miller & Gkonou, 2018). Therefore, it can be said that teachers find emotional rewards when they experience emotion labour for the benefit of their students and for their emotional well-being (Benesch, 2017). In other words, it can be concluded that teachers undertake emotion labour to produce positive teaching experience.

English language curriculum reform in Malaysia

Malaysia is currently experiencing a major ELT-reform, which purpose is to align the English language curriculum to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The reform commenced in 2013 with the initiation of English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC), that assisted in the development of CEFR in Malaysia through three phases. The first phase was implemented between the year 2013 and 2015, focusing on analysing the English proficiency of English teachers in Malaysia. It was within these two years that teachers who belong to B1 and B2 levels, were sent to courses such as Professional Up-Skilling of English Language Teachers (Pro-ELT), to improve their English command and classroom methodology. The second wave started in 2016 and was scheduled to end in 2020, with a focus on aligning the syllabus to the CEFR descriptors and implementing the new curriculum. While the third phase, which is the assessment phase, starts from 2021 and will end in 2025. It is the target of MOE for Malaysian students to achieve at least an A2 (basic user) after primary school, a B2 (independent user) after secondary school and a B2 or C1 (proficient user) after tertiary education, therefore, making it a responsibility of the teachers to make sure students achieve those levels upon graduating.

The CEFR promotes learner-centeredness in line with its action-oriented approach emphasizing learners' communicative capacity (Sahib & Stapa, 2021), whereby students are expected to develop their listening and speaking skills, instead of focusing solely on reading and writing. It incorporates two types of lesson, which are textbook-based lessons and non-textbook-based lessons. All lessons in the scheme of work are textbook-based lessons, except for literature, making it an important document that represents the curriculum. All teachers are expected to use *Close-up*, a B1-level textbook prescribed for secondary 3 students in class. It is published by Cengage - Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) in collaboration with National Geographic Learning. It is the only textbook, approved by the MOE. For each unit, there are lessons on vocabulary, reading, listening, speaking, writing and grammar, within one textbook. The book comes with a Teacher's Book which provides additional support for teachers. However, teachers reportedly mentioned this non-local based textbook as one of the main challenges they faced in this new curriculum (Kok & Aziz, 2019).

Theoretical Frameworks

The analytical approach to the data collected in this study is based on a theoretical framework on professional identity. Kelchterman (2009, p. 261) proposed the idea of identity as "self-understanding" by emphasizing that teachers' personal and professional self are intertwined. He asserted that teachers' personal self-understanding of teaching as a job started when they observed and interacted with teachers as students in their early lives. This understanding intensifies as they enrol in teacher education, do their teaching practical, and start their teaching career. Professional self-understanding, on the other hand is about the way teachers perceive, give meaning to and act to their work situation in the school (Kelchterman, 2018). It is the result of teachers' interactions with their social, cultural, and structural working conditions constituting their job. This professional self can be understood as an interplay between self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception, and future perspective (Kelchtermans', 1993, 2009). For the purpose of this paper, only three components of Kelchtermans' professional self are applied to see in what ways teachers may or may not change their professional identity. Teachers' professional identity is an important factor in understanding their professional lives and career decision making.

Kelchtermans' notions of professional identity

Kelchtermans (1993) coined five components in the analysis of teacher professional selves, which are self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception and future perspective. However, for the purpose of this paper, only three components below are focused on because the second part of the paper looks at emotions and past experience which are closely related to the other two components of Kelchtermans' views.

- *Self-image*: This is an understanding how teachers describe themselves as teachers. The image that these teachers portray is not solely based on self-perception but also on how others look at them.
- *Self-esteem*: When teachers ask themselves how well they are as teachers, they are evaluating themselves professionally. Again, this does not come in isolation because how well others (e.g., the schools, the students, the parents) evaluate them as teachers may affect their self-esteem positively or negatively.
- *Job motivation*: This refers to the motives someone has to choose the job, stay in the job or leave the job (Kelchtermans, 2009). This motivation is not a static element as it may develop throughout their careers, again considering external factors like workload, curriculum change and others.

To understand teachers' professional identity development and the impact of emotions on their professional identity during curriculum reform, the next part of this paper describes the methods of data collection and analysis.

METHODS

The present study was designed as a qualitative inquiry to explore Malaysian English- language teachers' professional identity and the role of emotions in the construction of this identity during curriculum reform. It was conducted in 3 different secondary schools in the southern part of Malaysia, while the country is experimenting with a new CEFR-aligned syllabus for English language teaching (ELT). To provide an extensive and in-depth description of the social phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2014), three English teachers from each school were purposefully recruited based on their teaching experience, educational background, and whether they are teaching using the new curriculum in January 2018. In total nine teachers participated in the study. These teachers are English-language teachers who are responsible in implementing the CEFR document in their classrooms. Therefore, they were the informants who can supply the data required to answer the research questions (Crowley, 1994). Following Patton's (2002) maximum variation sampling, the participants varied in age, years of teaching experience, gender and their qualifications. The use of maximum variation sampling helps give insights about the topic without having to obtain a massive sample. The 9 teacher participants gave a sense of diversity in terms of age, gender, years of teaching experience, background histories, and educational background. The list of participants are as follows:

Table 1 : Details of teacher participants

Participants	Age	Years of Teaching Experience	Qualification	School
Lina	30	5	Degree - overseas	A
Mahira	37	11	Degree - local	A
Hud	30	6	Degree - overseas	A
Umar	27	3	Degree - local	B
Zarul	35	12	Degree - local	B
Aiman	51	25	Degree - local	B
Marsya	49	20	Degree - local	C
Fatin	42	18	Degree - local	C
Sofia	50	23	Degree - local	C

This study incorporated the use of semistructured interviews to gain useful insights from the teacher participants about the shifts in their professional identity. Kelchtermans' (1993, 2009) conceptualization of

teacher identity was chosen as the basis of the interview, as well as questions about teachers' life histories and career biography, due to its significance to professional identity construction (Beijaard et al., 2004). In the interview teachers were asked to describe themselves as teachers, what they believe make good teachers, their professional experiences, and their job motivation. The questions were constructed based on the objectives of the study, to find out how their professional identity is affected by the reform. The interview was done in a private space within each school, and each lasted for almost one hour for each participant. In total, 520 minutes of interviews were recorded from the 9 teacher participants. All interviews were carried out in English, despite Malay language being the national language and the native language of all teachers, because the teachers expressed their preference as such.

In addition to the interview, narrative inquiry of teachers' self-reflective journals was collected. Narrative inquiry can serve as an effective research tool that can shed light on the various identities derived from people's social practice (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2013) while reflective journal is a valuable source of documenting practices, thoughts, and experience (Bashan & Holsblat, 2017). Two writing prompts were distributed to the teachers participating in the study. One was on their personal biographies, and another was about their current teaching practice, including their emotional experience. They were allowed to write their stories and answers to both prompts at their preferred time and submit within a month so that they would have ample time to reflect without being pressured. In total, each teacher had 2 different entries and each entry was more than 200 words.

The study used thematic analysis which focuses on the content of a text rather than how it is said. First, all interview data was transcribed verbatim, as the main concern of the study was on the content rather than speech pattern, as in the conventional way of Jefferson system. The different sources of the data were categorized according to the 9 teacher participants, so that each teacher had 2 different sources of data from the interview and journals. The professional identity construct was analysed using Kelchterman's concept of professional self, which is classified into self-image, self-esteem, and job motivation. Then, teachers' self-reflective journals were analysed to code positive and negative emotions teachers experienced throughout their teaching career. After the codes were identified, they were organized into different themes, in relation to the research questions constructed at the beginning of this study. The themes emerged from repetitive structures and key-word-in-context emphasized on the dynamic interaction between teachers' emotions and their professional identity. Each theme was carefully revised and examined to gain a complete understanding of the phenomena being studied. In doing this, close reference to the theoretical framework read is made.

FINDINGS

The findings are structured into two sections, following the research questions developed at the beginning of the study. The first part of the findings deals with teachers' professional identity construction, while the second reports on emotions that shape teachers' professional identity.

The professional self-understanding

Based on the three components of professional selves discussed earlier, teachers' professional identity before and after the curriculum reform makes significant change on teachers' professional identity in terms of self-image, self-esteem and job motivation. However, it is crucial to note that each teacher's professional identity is constructed or re-constructed based on his/her personal interactions with past experience as students, early career experience within the context of the previous curriculum and the current working context.

Self-image

From the 9 teachers interviewed, only 1 teacher (Lina) experienced construction and re-construction of her self-image as a teacher throughout her 5 years of teaching experience. Lina's case is an example how a curriculum reform affected a teacher's identity formation and development. While Lina was a student at the university, she described herself as 'creative and loveable'. She mentioned her intended pedagogical approach was supposed to be 'fun and engaging' and her 'bubbly character' made it easy for her course mates to connect with her. However, this changed when she started her teaching career. The objectives of the English

curriculum were too 'exam-oriented' that she felt there was a conflict between what she learnt during her teacher education, abroad, and the demand of her classrooms and the society. The way she defined herself as a teacher was also influenced by how the parents and the principal expected her to. Lina's commitment to her teaching career is based on how many students managed to get A in exams and how well the performance of her students in quarterly school meetings was.

When the reform began, Lina started to revisit her identity. She felt there was a connection between the new curriculum and her previous identity, the one she constructed when she was a student. For example, Lina felt 'satisfied' that now she can 'give more room' for her students to talk. Following Farrell's (2011) professional role identities, Lina began to see herself as an 'entertainer' who at times 'jokes and tells stories' to her students. Despite her students' 'limited use of language', Lina was 'positive that the curriculum is better' and will make her a 'better teacher'. Additionally, she admitted that she received 'no pressure' from parents because it is a new curriculum, and the society is 'still lost' about what it entails. The following excerpt reveals Lina's definition of her professional self as a teacher before and during the reform.

When I was a secondary school student, I always had problem communicating because my main strength was reading and writing (that was what school taught you more). I thought it was all going to change when I became a teacher, but it did not and it was demotivating. Now that this new curriculum has more listening and speaking components, I feel thrilled. (Lina- interview)

Self-esteem

Data from the interview revealed that 5 teachers (Lina, Mahira, Umar, Sofia, Marsya) believed that they were improving their self-esteem while the other 4 (Fatin, Hud, Zarul, Aiman) felt that their self-esteem remained the same. The 5 teachers recalled their language proficiency and pedagogical knowledge as the main constructs that make them better and effective language teachers after the reform. Sofia, for example, illustrated how her confidence level develops throughout her 23 years of teaching experience. Despite wanting to be a teacher since high school, she was not so lucky to be offered a teacher training course at university. Instead, she enrolled in an accountancy course and ended up working at a bank for 3 years. It was then that the Ministry of Education (MOE) had a scheme for graduates who were interested to be teachers, whereby they were offered to study for a year in teacher training colleges to become teachers. So, unlike most of her course mates who had been there for 2-3 years, she was considered 'fresh and less of a teacher'. She recalled being 'scared and alienated' because her English was not as good as the other teacher trainers. She 'struggled' understanding some literary works and almost 'gave up'. Even when she first started teaching at the age of 27, she felt that it was a 'challenge to teach writing and grammar'. Sofia called herself 'inexperienced' and preferred not to be assigned 'important post' in the school English panel.

Sofia recalled having trouble 'fitting in' when she started teaching because of how her colleagues looked at her. As she was coming from the industry (banking background), her 'style was considered a bit too much'. Her dressings were not like 'typical teachers' and this affected her self-esteem badly. Her 'high-heel, matching outfits, bags and jewellery' became the centre of attention, and she knew 'people were talking' about her. Sofia's confidence, however, has improved professionally throughout her career, especially now after the new reform. Before the reform, Sofia had started to develop more confidence with her language proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and teaching materials than during her early teaching years. She was 'highly organised' and 'experienced', a lesson she took working at the bank. With the new curriculum, she just needs to 'reconsider' her 'teaching methods' and keep on 'improving' her confidence level by 'revising each lesson before class time'.

Job motivation

This component of professional identity has shown a complex relationship on teachers in this study. Teachers can be categorised into having a constructive motivation throughout their teaching career, regardless of the reform (Sofia, Hud, Umar); becoming hostile after the reform was introduced (Aiman) and reconstruct hostile intentions to a more constructive motivation after the reform (Marsya, Mahira, Zarul, Lina, Fatin). In Aiman's case, the motivation he had to becoming a teacher developed when he first started to enrol in a university. Born

and raised in a small village, Aiman had never thought he would become an English teacher. However, he started to love the course because most of his lecturers were from Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Aiman was inspired by the foreign lecturers, their stories, cultures and accents and he admitted that he fell in love with the language almost immediately. His interest sustained even when he was first posted as an English teacher to a 'very rural area' in Sibu, Sarawak, thousand kilometres away from home. Again, he was able to learn a different culture from his own because his students were mostly Iban (indigenous Borneo ethnic). Despite teaching in a rural school, Aiman was positive that he loved teaching and would do fine.

He was still developing a positive motivation, even after he was assigned to a rural school in his hometown, because his prior teaching experience was 'worse' and able to mediate his current situation. After teaching for 25 years, at the age of 51, the reform was introduced. Aiman admitted that he 'could not wait to retire now'. He considered the curriculum as 'too demanding' but 'lacking guidance' for teachers. His professional commitments, for example, 'teaching workload', writing up 'lengthy lesson plans' and 'studying the new curriculum' interacted with his personal goals in teaching and age, created a conflict for an ongoing motivation to teach. For Aiman, when the school board instructed him to be the discipline teacher in the same year the curriculum was introduced, this additional professional role was 'too much for me to take', thus resulting in a hostile response from his part.

The analysis of these three stories demonstrates that personal biographies before becoming a teacher, school values, early teaching career, prior working experience and curriculum reform have significant impacts on teachers' construction or re-construction of their professional identity.

Emotions that influence teachers' professional identity

This part of the findings explains the positive and negative emotions that affect teachers' professional identity during curriculum reform.

A sense of pride and contentment

Teachers' positive emotions evidently found in their life histories before they started their teaching career throughout their early career experiences, had influenced the way they perceived themselves as professional teachers. Hud, for example, reported how his 'positivity' to stay 'motivated' in the new curriculum is the result of his teenage and university years. Hud felt that the new curriculum fits the identity of his 'younger self'. Growing up, Hud had always been inspired by many TV programs which featured English-spoken hosts travelling from one country to another, showing interesting places overseas. Because of his growing interest, he always took part in competitions when he was in school, involving the use of English, for example debate, storytelling, drama and choral speaking. He felt that these competitions helped him develop his confidence when using the language in public, at least to communicate. As such, to meet the outcome of the curriculum, which emphasises on communicative ability, he set up a debate club with the support of his principal. Through this debate club, he trains students to use English to talk about current issues, which are relevant to the topics in the new curriculum. He felt 'proud' and 'happy' when his students were able to compete among each other in the club. He was 'confident' that his students could compete in the district level with enough training. Hud's story is an example how a language teacher converts his experience as a student to understand his students' needs.

Feeling lost and unhappy

Unlike Hud whose identity was influenced by positive emotions, Marsya's professional identity is shaped by her negative experience in her first professional career, an assistant accountant in a factory. Marsya admitted that when she was in secondary school, her English was 'bad'. She 'struggled' with English not just in high school but also in university, where the medium of instruction was English. Eventually, she graduated with an accounting diploma and secured a job as an assistant accountant. At the beginning, she 'loved' her job but as time passed, she started to feel 'bored' with late hour work, frequent meetings, overtime and unfair treatment for promotion. She started looking for a new job and came across an advertisement looking for graduates for the teacher training college. She tried applying and was accepted to do Geography. However, because there

was a dire need for English teachers at that time, she was asked by the principal to teach English and it was very challenging for her. She felt 'lost' when she had to teach literature. She did a lot of homework, sought help from her colleagues and later applied to do a TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) degree part time, which finally gained her to be a permanent English teacher. These challenges she faced prior to the new reform 'motivated' her to reconsider her professional knowledge and pedagogical approach for the successful implementation of the curriculum. She felt 'positive' because she had 'gone through worst' before. She feels that her life now is 'far more less miserable' than when she worked at the factory. Marsya's story is an example how a language teacher experiential learning is converted to the development of her professional identity.

Faithful God servants

Teachers' professional identity and responsibility to continue getting knowledge of the new reform was proven by their positive emotions of being a Muslim and a 'good' teacher. These 7 teachers (Lina, Mahira, Umar, Zarul, Fatin, Marsya and Aiman) held similar positive emotions about their Muslim identity, that is not to 'rebel against' the Ministry who they claimed to be 'paying our salaries'. Mahira, for example, showed how being a Muslim helped her strategized her 'classroom instructions' and 'comfort' her when she felt down. Mahira taught an urban school right after she graduated but when she got married, she had to follow her husband to his hometown, and got transferred to a rural school. The students' level of English was 'poor', so she had to 'simplify' her vocabulary, 'code-switch to Malay language' and even 'learn some Mandarin' to improve her classroom practice. When the reform took place, she felt 'terrible, lost and demotivated' because the difficulty level of the new content 'did not suit' her students' proficiency. However, she was more 'calm' and 'relieved' when she prayed to God. She admitted having 'good relationships' with the students and this provoked her to organise free additional classes after school to help the students. Mahira believed 'God will bless me in other ways' because of her kind deeds.

Similar to Mahira, Zarul's 'gratitude' towards God has encouraged him to exercise his professional identity on the basis of what he believes to be a good, Muslim teacher. Since his early teaching career, Zarul has been assigned many posts on top of his teaching duty. Zarul recalled training students for football tournament, taking students for camping trips and organising various school events. When the reform was introduced, Zarul was having a lot 'on my plate'. He was 'dissatisfied with the school management' for giving him no end of 'responsibilities'. However, his belief that a good Muslim teacher should always 'put the students' needs above anything else'. For him, teaching profession is a 'noble job' because he is 'the second parent' to the students. These ideas he has about teaching role encouraged him to be 'energetic' in his work and 'love' what he is doing. Zarul admitted that knowing how difficult the new curriculum is for his rural students, he set up a 'Facebook page' and 'WhatsApp group' for his students to ask questions after school. He was 'excited' when students showed interest in his Facebook page. Here, Zarul portrayed what Farrell (2011) mentioned as a juggler (his multi-tasking roles) and socializer (he socializes with students using the social media channels).

A sense of joy and satisfaction

Changes in the curriculum have also triggered teachers' positive emotions in developing their professional, pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge as language teachers. Umar, for example, collaborated with his ex-course mates from university to produce and share materials that are 'relevant' and 'interesting' for his students. His 'professional background', from all the professional development courses he joined, combined with his 'computer skills', motivated him to create a telegram group as a channel to 'exchange ideas', 'discuss textbook tasks' and 'share students' feedback'. His approach to learn and collaborate during this curriculum reform depicts the strategies he took for his own professional growth. Umar explained that even with the lack of materials and support by the school, he 'enjoys' sharing ideas with his friends. In his case, the decision he made to 'develop additional materials' was a projective, long-term decision affected by the school environment, the current curriculum reform and his future goals as a teacher. His 'love' towards his job changes the "disfavouring" situations (lack of materials and support) into a "favouring" situation that develops his language teacher identity.

Unlike Umar who was willing to develop his own materials and share them with other teachers for his own professional growth, Fatin projected her 'pleasure' and 'satisfaction' when she developed materials for 'students' benefits'. Even before the new curriculum was introduced, Fatin was known as a 'fun teacher' and students 'loved my class'. She refused to let her students 'give up' as the new textbook is more difficult. Therefore, she ended up 'restructuring', 'simplifying' and 'changing' most of the contents in the textbook. Her professional identity as a language teacher developed when she used her positive emotions to understand her students' needs. With 'weak students', she considered the available materials to be a 'constraint' that may 'affect student' motivation to learn the language. Although she was supposed to use the textbook prescribed by the ministry, she 'reconsidered' the materials she chose, based on her interpretations of her current situations.

DISCUSSION

This study examines Muslim English-language teachers' professional identity and their emotions during curriculum reform. From the analysis of the interview and teachers' reflective journals, some insights can be added to previous studies. The first part of the findings looks at teachers' professional identity, focusing on self-image, self-esteem and job motivation. Teachers in this study formed their identity with close reference to their past experience, early career practice, school culture and age. According to Day et al. (2006), teachers' definition of themselves is not only influenced by their past and current identities but also through their beliefs and values about the kind of teacher they hope to be in the inevitably changing political, social, institutional and personal circumstances. In this study, Lina's self-image was constructed and re-constructed based on her past experience as a student and the changing of English policy in the country. Supporting the change that is in favour of her personal identity when she was a student gives Lina a positive self-image even after the reform was introduced.

In addition to Lina, Sofia's early professional career working in a banking sector, had affected her self-esteem in a very unstable way. This supports Beijaard's et al. (2004) findings when they mentioned identity will be affected by external (policy) and internal (organisational) and personal experiences past and present, which makes it not always stable. In Sofia's case, her self-esteem changed or developed depending on two things. One is how the school community valued her personal self (the way she dressed and behaved). Another is on how her personal goals were related to the changes in the policy. The findings illustrate that the teacher identity is transformed by external forces at the same time as the teacher contributes to the transformation of her/himself (Colliander, 2019). It is also interesting to see how age can demotivate a teacher from staying in the job. Aiman's motivation shrunk when the reform was introduced because of his old age. This is opposite to Kelchtermans' (2009) view that a teacher's motivation in the job may develop over time, particularly when their presence becomes meaningful to their students.

The significance of emotions in shaping language teachers' professional identity is evident in this study. Unlike Pennington's and Richards' (2016) conceptualization of favouring and disavouring situations that influence language teacher identity formation, the results of this study proved something else. Teachers' past histories which resulted in both positive and negative emotions have influenced language teachers' identity formation in a positive way. In addition to that, teachers' emotional responses (loving the job, having strong, faith in God) throughout their teaching career have influenced the construction of their professional role identity. Teachers acted as entertainer, juggler and socializer (Farrell, 2011) when they made choices to enhance their pedagogical approach for the benefits of the students despite not having enough support from the schools. This is also parallel to Leung's (2012) definition of a professional language teacher because these teachers attempted to gain pedagogical knowledge to develop their professional expertise during curriculum reform.

It is also interesting to note how teacher positive emotions of being a Muslim shaped their professional identity. Parallel to White's (2009) view that religion can be a component of a teacher's professional identity, if it is an aspect of a teacher's personal experience, this study has proven similar views. Teachers carried along religious values that affect their decisions to stay professional despite the challenge they faced with the content of the curriculum. Despite the lack of support from schools, teachers continued to make professional choices for the benefit of the students, such as having free additional lessons and setting up school WhatsApp group influenced by the emotions to be good Muslim teachers. Additionally, this study revealed that the reform has

encouraged teachers' collaborative learning to develop materials that work for low level students, even without the schools' assistance. These findings contradicted Esmaeili's (2019) views that threatening situations can provoke negative emotions that affect teachers' professional identity construction.

CONCLUSION

This study has looked at English teachers' professional identity in various phases of their lives, and the influence of emotions on the construction of language teachers' professional identity, during the transition of the new curriculum. The findings extend teachers' knowledge on the dynamics of teachers' personal biographies and the construction of their professional identity. In addition, the findings revealed some understanding on the complexity of emotions in negotiation of teacher professional role identities. The discussions on teacher emotions in pedagogical practices have given some useful insights why teachers may struggle, resist, or accept curriculum change. As teachers' professional identity construction depends on the interplay between their past and current school contexts, this study provides a fresh perspective how the construction of professional identity and teacher emotions could benefit teachers, students, and schools during curriculum change, as well as the unexplored relationship between teacher identities and religion.

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