Iranian Female EFL Student-Teachers' Conceptions of Their Future Professional Self-Images

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: **Research Article** **Received:** **07/09/2020** **Accepted:** **20/11/2020**	Teacher training programs play a vital role in developing student-teachers' understanding of their professional selves as an effective factor in successful teaching. Though the number of studies regarding the effects of teacher education on foreign language teachers' self-images continues to proliferate, little attention has been paid to Iranian EFL student-teachers, particularly females, in terms of future images of professional selves being developed during their training at Teacher Education University. Using the Possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the present qualitative study explores and compares the future professional self-images of EFL student-teachers at Iranian Teacher Education University. Eight female student-teachers in the first, third, and last year of their studies from several female teacher education colleges around the country accepted to participate in the interviews. They were asked to discuss their desired and feared selves, as well as their plans for achieving or avoiding these selves, respectively. In-depth phenomenological interviewing was adopted to collect the data. Before fieldwork experience, student-teachers' hopes and fears were mostly geared to classroom routines, while by the end, their statements were predominantly theory-based and sophisticated. Most student-teachers made reference to some plans for attaining their desired professional self-images and avoiding feared ones. The study put forward some implications for teacher training and education programs. ***Keywords:*** *Desired Selves, Feared Selves, Professional Self-Image, Student-Teachers, Teacher Education*

1. Introduction

Continuous evolution in teacher education research has led to an interest in (student) teachers' development. Development occurs when individuals realize positive images of themselves or prevent some negative images to happen (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Conceptions of self or self-images pertain to what an individual was, is, and wants to be (Oyserman & James, 2011). When these images are linked to the future time, it is defined as possible selves (Markus & Nurius 1986) that mirror the individuals' potentials including their desired and feared selves (Knox, 2006; Markus, 2006; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman & James, 2011). Possible selves as Markus and Nurius (1986) introduced are "the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. It also includes the selves we could become, and the selves we are afraid of becoming" (p. 954). They play a vital role in adult development (Cross & Markus, 1991) as they "are the generative, dynamic, and contextually sensitive personal embodiment of self-development" (Frazier & Hooker, 2006, p. 43).

In spite of the fact that the number of studies on how teacher training programs affect Student Teachers' (STs) perception of their self-images continues to proliferate, very few studies have examined the effects of Iranian Teacher Education University programs on female EFL STs, on their future images of professional selves. As self-images are influenced by social (Markus, 2006; Markus & Nurius, 1986), contextual, and cultural factors (Fraizer & Hooker, 2006; Hamman, et al., 2010; Oyserman & James, 2011), this study was conducted to investigate conceptions of professional self-images among three groups of female STs at Iranian Teacher Education University: first-year, beginning third-year, and last-year STs, using the Possible selves theory (PST). Knox (2006) believes males and females' conceptions of their selves are different and that females portray more detailed images of selves. Therefore, only female subjects were considered for the current work.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Student-Teachers' Self-Images

Images of teacher selves is considered as one feature of STs' professional identity (Kelchtermans, 2009; Sutherland et al., 2010) which may undergo changes (Liu & Fisher, 2006; Slavin, 2019). Kelchtermans' (2009) defined teachers' professional self-image as "the way teachers typify themselves as teachers" (p. 261). Since the present study has a future-oriented nature benefited from the PST, therefore, the concept of self-image is defined as STs' desired and feared images of selves as well as their

intention to realize or avoid these images, respectively (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

The STs' perceptions of themselves as language teachers are profoundly affected by theoretical and practical teacher training in a positive and/or negative way (Bernat, 2008). Ward and McCotter (2004) determined how STs' levels of thinking changed during their training. After examining 13 STs' reflective texts, they identified "Routine, Technical, Dialogical" and "Transformative" as four levels of thinking (p.251). At routine level, the lowest level of thinking, STs are worried about their own selves and routines. Beginning STs' thinking is generally at this level. At technical level, STs reflect on their teaching practice, without problematizing the existing pedagogical practices. After routine level, STs reached this level. At dialogical level, they can integrate different ideas and insights to bring about new ideas. Reaching this level by the end of their training is vital for STs. At transformative level, STs are able to criticize the existing theories and ideas and generate new ideas. According to Ward and McCotter, STs rarely demonstrate this ability. The last two levels are the most fruitful levels of thinking.

With regard to changes in STs' perceptions and knowledge during their studies at teacher training universities, Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite (2010) examined 270 first-year STs' perceptions of their teacher selves in online discussions during their preservice education. They found that, initially, STs often discussed theoretical knowledge without contextualization; while by the end, they frequently discussed practical uses of their theoretical knowledge. According to Borg (2003), not only teacher training affects STs' perceptions but also their schooling experiences have everlasting effects on their cognition. Miller and Shifflet (2016) investigated 69 elementary school STs' desired and feared selves to see how schooling experiences affected their images of teacher selves. They provided evidence that such experiences have profound and lasting effects on STs' hopes for and fears of their future selves as teachers.

Regarding language teachers, Conway and Clark (2003) examined six STs' patterns of hopes and fears from the beginning to the end of their training, considering Fullers' (1969) model of teacher development. They realized that STs' patterns of hopes and fears not only shift from self to task and then to students (according to the Fullers' model), but also from management to quality teaching issues. They called the first phenomenon "a journey outward" and the second one "a journey inward" (p. 465).

Notwithstanding the broad use of PST to investigate configuration of hopes and fears, Erikson (2007) remarked that all statements about future hopes and fears could not be included in possible selves' definition; it only

includes cases in which the individuals see themselves as agents who can create or change the future possibilities. This future may be near or distant (Hamman et al., 2013; Oyserman & James, 2011). According to Oyserman et al. (2004), the nearer future selves appear to have more influence on the current behaviors especially for youths. They made a distinction between "self-enhancing" and "self-regulatory" possible selves (p. 132). Self-enhancing possible selves foster good feelings, nonetheless it is the "self-regulatory" possible selves that persuades individuals to follow their dreams or overcome their fears. They indicated that thinking of specific goals and developing plans to achieve them is evidence of self-regulatory possible selves.

Hamman et al. (2013) exploited the PST to develop and validate two questionnaires to measure what STs expected and/or feared to become. These questionnaires as well as interviews were later used by Mahmoudi-Gahrouei et al. (2016) to investigate 102 Iranian preservice, beginning, and experienced teachers' conceptions of their professional identity. They found preservice teachers, mostly affected by theoretical knowledge, perceived their professional identity not only as their tasks as English teachers but also in terms of quality of their work. Beginning teachers concerned about their routine tasks and duties, while experienced teachers defined their professional identity in terms of quality teaching but not routine activities. One limitation of their study is that their preservice participants were not selected from Teacher Education University, hence they are not allowed to teach as public high school teachers who experience high levels of difficulties regarding English teaching and learning in Iran. Furthermore, these two latter studies' primary focus on actual expectations rather than hopes of their participants, have narrowed their findings (Erikson, 2007).

2.2. Iranian Teacher Education University

Teacher education universities' programs generally offer two types of education: one includes formal instructions that STs receive at university and the other incorporates practical courses that provide STs with real teaching experiences (Sutherland et al., 2010; Tang et al., 2019). These programs afford STs the opportunity to broaden their theoretical and pedagogical knowledge as well as fieldwork experience (Sutherland et al., 2010). This is also the case with Iranian Teacher Education University (Daneshgah-e-Farhangian).

This university with at least two separate (male and female) colleges in each province has the sole authority to train STs to teach in public schools in the country (Aliakbari & Tabatabaei, 2019; Azimi et al., 2019; Safari, 2019) and offers STs a B.A degree after four years of study. Based on "Iranian Teacher Education University Statute" (Asasnameh-e-Daneshgah-e-

Farhangian) recognized by the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council in 2012, STs have to pass 150 credits including general education, Islamic education, pedagogical, and specialized theoretical courses. Eight of these credits are practical ones incorporated in the third- and fourth-year curriculum.

Among very few studies in the context of Iranian Teacher Education, Safari (2019) examined the professional identity formation of EFL STs by analyzing their drawing of themselves as English teachers. STs expressed their concerns about authority over students, collaboration with others, class arrangement, teaching facilitation skills, traditional and alternative views on their roles, and different types of class activities. She concluded that STs' self-images were mostly opposed to traditional teachers as the sole authority in the classroom. Likewise, Azimi et al. (2019) examined the reflective processes STs underwent through fieldwork experience. They noted that at the beginning of fieldwork, STs often reflected on the classroom routines. However, during the fieldwork process, they increasingly focused on dealing with technical matters related to well-established teaching approaches. STs seldom expressed concerns about others' viewpoints and rarely employed critical thinking. Azimi et al. (2019) limited their investigation to STs' narratives in a pre-planned structured form. Accordingly, some issues might be ignored either in the form or by STs. In addition, not differentiating between male and female participants' conceptions in the above-mentioned studies is considered disadvantageous (Knox, 2006).

2.3. Theoretical Framework

The PST (Markus and Nurius, 1986) establishes "how individuals may change from how they are now to what they will become" (p. 961). Future-oriented self-images or possible selves guide people when they undergo changes throughout their lives (Cross & Markus, 1991; Oyserman et al., 2004). The advantage of using future-oriented self-images in studies on (student) teachers' cognition is that it casts light on past and present behaviors, as well as their future potentials (Hamman et al., 2010). Regarding the complexity of transition from students to STs and full teachers and because of STs' active imagination to create professional images of themselves (Sutherland et al., 2010), The PST provides a well-suited framework to investigate changes in STs' conceptions of professional selves including patterns of their hopes and fears during training programs (Hamman et al., 2010; Frazier & Hooker, 2006) that makes comparisons between STs' at different stages of their education feasible (Hamman et al., 2013).

Markus (2006) strongly believed "knowing how people think about themselves currently is of some help but knowing what they hope and fear should refine this understanding" (Markus, 2006, xii). Possible selves'

functions are not limited to the reflection of individuals' hopes and fears, but they may also motivate individuals to plan for their activities in order to realize their desired selves or avoid feared ones (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman et al., 2004). Oyserman et al. (2004) asserted that, in order to regulate current behaviors, possible selves must fulfill the second function. Additionally, Erikson (2007) made it clear that possible selves are individuals' imaginations about their future that are under their control. This definition excludes unrealistic hopes and fears from possible selves.

Most research studies that made use of the PST to investigate (student) teachers' feared or desired self-images, ignored to consider their plans for achieving or avoiding particular kinds of selves. Considering this aspect of the PST, the current study lends greater breadth to the present findings.

2.4. The Present Study

As existing problems concerning English language learning in Iranian public high schools are self-evident and cannot be denied, the first step to deal with these serious problems is to change the English language teaching process. Teachers' understanding of their professional self-images enables them to cope well with change (Beijaard et al., 2000); hence it is as effective in successful teaching as good knowledge and skills (Beijaard et al., 2000). Moreover, considering the significance of teacher education programs in developing such an understanding (Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010), the process of moving toward change might start from these programs. Therefore, the present study aims at filling a gap in the literature by exploring and comparing the images that Iranian female EFL STs' create of their future professional selves at different stages of training programs at Teacher Education University.

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the female EFL student-teachers' desired and feared professional self-images that evolve over their training period at Teacher Education University?
2. What are their plans for attaining their desired professional self-images and avoiding feared ones?

3. Method

The current study employed a descriptive qualitative design to answer research questions.

3.1. Participants

Qualitative studies usually focus on a small number of participants to gain a comprehensive account of participants' understanding of their experiences and perspectives (Richards, 2014). As participants of this study, eight female EFL STs accepted the invitation to take part in the interviews. They were between 18 to 23 years of age from Teacher Education colleges located in four provinces of Iran. Three participants were at the beginning of their education programs (first-year STs), two were beginning third-year STs with no fieldwork experience, and finally three participants were last-year STs.

3.2. Data Collection

In-depth phenomenological interviewing approach (Seidman, 2006) was employed to collect data from participants to explore how their conceptions of desired and feared professional selves evolve over years of teacher preparation. Based on Markus and Nurius (1986), people are able to formulate numerous possible selves; however, the focus of the current study is on female STs' professional selves.

Data collection procedures began at the beginning of 2018-2019 academic year, and continued for approximately one educational year. Ethical issues were considered during, the data collection and analysis. The interviewees participated voluntarily and they were informed about the purpose of the current investigation.

There was also no compensation for participation. Participants were ensured that their privacy and confidentiality of their responses would be guaranteed. They were assured that they were free to withdraw from the research study if they wish. During the interviews, the female author tried to create a trustworthy environment. She also tried not to intrude on the interviewees' life and time. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at interviewees' colleges or in dormitories. Seidman (2006) suggested three interview sessions for in-depth phenomenological interviewing; however, he allowed the researchers to be flexible in this regard, especially when the interviewees do not have time.

In our study, two-session interviews were conducted. STs elaborated on their desires and fears regarding their future professional selves. Furthermore, the interviewer persuaded them to describe their plans for attaining their desired professional selves or avoiding feared ones. The first interview sessions lasted approximately 20 to 35 minutes and the second ones 30 to 45 minutes. In this study, pseudonyms were used for interviewees. The interviews were conducted in Persian and had been audio-recorded with

interviewees' permissions. Then they were transcribed verbatim and translated into English.

3.3. Data Analysis Procedure

In order to find themes or repeated patterns, the data were analyzed and subsequent interpretations were developed based on the analyses. Following Richards' (2014) recommendations for analyzing qualitative data, two authors as coders added annotations and comments to the data. Then their memos as emerging thoughts and ideas were stored. Next, three types of qualitative data coding, namely descriptive, topic, and analytical coding were applied (Richards, 2014; Richards & Morse, 2013).

In descriptive coding, the data were labeled according to some useful information such as age and setting. Topic coding assigned topics to selected texts. The last type of coding, i.e. analytical coding, is the most fruitful and tough part of analysis, since it includes interpretation of results. There are three purposes for analytical coding: a) "to alert you to messages or themes"; b) "to allow you to explore and develop new categories or concepts"; and c) "to allow you to pursue comparisons" (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 158).

In data analysis process, coded data were reviewed and revised several times by the authors to find themes as "a common thread that runs through the data" (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 151). For example, we found that some interviewees stressed the significance of their relationships at work. This is the result of topic coding. After more consideration of this topic, such themes as responding to comments from others, authority over students, and fair treatment to students were found as well. These are the results of interpretation of texts or analytical coding. The identified topics and themes were put into three main categories: desired and feared possible selves, as well as STs' plans to attain or avoid these selves as three features of PST (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The average interrater agreement between the first and second authors as coders were 0.93 and 0.87 for topic coding and for analytical coding, respectively that confirmed high levels of agreement between coders.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Student-Teachers' Self-Images

The research findings are organized based on STs' hopes, fears, and plans (separated for each group of respondents). The emerging themes are presented as well. Plans were extracted from STs' responses to the question: 'What are you going to do to become the English teacher you like or not to

become the one you dislike?'. These plans were categorized in relation to the hopes and fears emerged from the data.

4.1.1.1. First-Year Student-Teachers' Hopes, Fears, and Plans. Anita and Neda stressed the importance of others' viewpoints.

"I'm a kind of person who welcomes others' opinions…." (Neda)

They declared how they will consider their colleagues' ideas and comments (see Table 1).

Nonetheless, Elena had a different idea:

"Because I am going to adapt new language teaching approaches that are more effective than those of my experienced colleagues, I prefer not to follow their opinions."

Establishing authority and effective class management were great hopes as well as big worries for this group. They expressed their concerns about how to remain respectable and authoritative to manage the classroom more easily. Neda described her plans for adhering to the pre-specified schedule.

Creating attractive learning environment was among Anita and Elena's hopes and failing to do so was their fear. They also proposed their pertinent plans:

"I had an English teacher …. I want to teach like him, to increase students' interest in English learning." (Anita)

Treating students fairly was critical for this group. Anita recalled memories of her English teachers that paid more attention to her and other students were annoyed by this behavior. Anita declared she will treat high and low achievers equitably. Table 1 shows the results for the first-year STs.

Anita and Neda, nevertheless, wished to emulate their distinguished teachers and indicated that they will adopt their teaching strategies.

"Actually one of my teachers is a role model for me, I try to become like her…." (Neda)

Neda and Elena expressed their hopes and related plans to increase their knowledge to be proficient language users. In their viewpoint, knowledge was equal to language skills.

To depict their future selves, Anita and Elena, used the general positive term of 'a successful teacher'. They did not express any worries or plans associated with this hope.

Table 1

First-Year Student-Teachers Hopes, Fears, and Plans

Hopes	Fears	Plans	Theme
Anita and Neda: being able to take advantage of colleagues' expertise Elena: not being affected by others' opinions		Neda: considering students and parents' opinions in her plans Anita and Neda: exploiting experienced colleagues' opinions	1. Comments from others
Elena: having absolute authority over the students Neda: improving management skills	Elena and Neda: losing authority Elena: students' interference with authority	Neda: not being ahead of or behind the schedule	2. Authority and management issues
Anita, Elena: stimulating interest among students	Anita and Elena: failing to provide an appealing learning environment	Anita: adopting her former English teacher's way of teaching Elena: using songs and movies…	3. Students' interest in language learning
Anita, Elena, and Neda: treating students impartially		Anita: not paying more attention to high achievers	4. Fair treatment to all students
Anita and Neda: to be similar to their own distinguished teachers		Anita and Neda: following their teachers' behaviors and ways of teaching	5. (Lack of) Desire to become like their teachers
Neda and Elena: improving language skills Anita and Elena: a successful teacher		Neda and Elena: trying hard to be fluent in English	6. Knowledge-related issues 7. General positive terms
All three members: being friendly and strict. Neda: talking to students, exchanging ideas, and guiding them	Elena and Neda: being friendly toward students while preserving the professional manner	Neda: treating students friendly and familiarizing them with real life	8. Different aspects of their relationships
Elena: applying new approaches to English teaching		Elena: learning and employing different teaching methods	9. To be different from other teachers

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Neda wished to be more than an English teacher (like one of her teachers), she wanted to be a consultant who will be attentive to students' needs. She described how she will discuss different aspects of life with her students in order to establish an ideal relationship with them.

Elena hoped to change the traditional approaches to teaching by employing new teaching methods to be different from traditional teachers; however, she did not go into details about these methods.

4.1.1.2. Beginning Third-Year Student-Teachers' Hopes, Fears, and Plans.
The results for the beginning third-year STs are given in Table 2. Elazn and Atefeh viewed comments from others as opportunities for development. They also considered how to benefit from these opportunities in their future career.

Similar to the first-year STs, members of this group hoped to be authoritative and friendly toward students and classroom management was a big worry for Elnaz. They did not suggest any plans in this regard.

They hoped to promote students' interest in language learning and expressed fears on this matter as well.

"I don't know how to treat students at different proficiency levels in a way that those who are at low levels develop and those who are at high levels don't lose their interest." (Elnaz)

"I don't want to be boring…." (Atefeh)

They proposed that in order to develop pleasant learning environment, students should participate in learning process enthusiastically.

This group had a strong desire for fair treatment to all students. They believed that showing favoritism towards students discouraged them from engaging in learning activities. They declared they, as teachers, will attend to all students equally. Elnaz stated she will use supplementary materials for students at different proficiency levels to provide them with equal learning opportunities.

They decided not to behave like their teachers, but they did not say how this might happen.

"I don't want to be like many of my teachers who were indifferent to the students." (Elnaz)

In addition, having adequate knowledge was desirable for them.

Using following statements, they showed their worries:

"I usually think that how I can respond to students' questions if I do not know the exact answer." (Elnaz)

"My great worry is that I may not be able to explain the subject to the students…" (Atefeh)

They also maintained how they might reach their desirable future selves and avoid undesirable ones in this respect.

Table 2

Beginning Third-Year Student-Teachers Hopes, Fears, and Plans

Hopes	Fears	Plans	Theme
Elnaz, Atefeh: caring about opinions of others		Atefeh: considering students' opinions while planning; examining viewpoints of colleagues, students and parents; drawing on her future colleagues' expertise during fieldwork Elnaz: taking advantage of experienced colleagues' ideas	*1.* Comments *from* others
Elnaz, and Atefeh: being both friendly and strict	Elnaz: low level of confidence in class management skills		*2. Authority and management issues*
Elnaz, and Atefeh: involving students in active learning	Atefeh: being a boring teacher Elnaz: failing to attract students' interest	Both of them: students' full participation in class activities	*3. Students' interest in language learning*
Elnaz and Atefeh: treating student fairly and impartially		Elnaz and Atefeh: not paying more attention to high achieving students Elnaz: using supplementary materials	*4. Fair treatment to all students*
Elnaz and Atefeh: recalling negative memories of their teachers' behaviors			*5. (Lack of) Desire to become like their teachers*
Atefeh and Elnaz: acquiring knowledge (without having any clear ideas of what kind of knowledge they meant.	Atefeh: inability to convey content knowledge to the students Elnaz: not knowing answers to students' questions	Elnaz and Atefeh: seeking to increase knowledge in order to answer all students' questions correctly Atefeh: developing ability to convey the content clearly	*6. Knowledge-related issues*

4.1.1.3.Last-Year Student-Teachers' Hopes, Fears, and Plans. Dina stressed the value of comments from colleagues in teachers' growth and development:

> "If one accepts others' comments that criticize her/him, s/he will develop. Those who ignore them and continue doing their previous jobs, will not see any improvement in their profession."

She planned to trust and respect her colleagues' opinions in a cooperative context. Nevertheless, Mitra and Lida believed their own innovative approaches to teaching will be more effective than those of traditional teachers. They wished not to be affected by others' opinions. Lida declared she will adhere to her own standards in her professional duties.

> "If a teacher wants to do her/his job well, s/he should not allow others to interfere in her/his affairs. S/he may face oppositions from principal, assistant principal, colleagues… it is important to resist them."

The results for the last-year STs are presented in Table 3.

As Table 3 shows, similar to participants in other groups, these participants' hopes included effective authority and classroom management. Lida was worried about students' misbehaviors that may interfere with her normal classroom management:

> "I don't know how to respond to students' misbehaviors in a way that on the one hand it doesn't have damaging effects on the students, on the other hand it doesn't impede classroom discipline."

They had some plans in accordance with their hopes and fears (see Table 3).

Making students interested in English learning was among these STs' expressed hopes. As the Table shows they proposed different plans to fulfill their wishes in this respect.

Mitra described her wish to treat students fairly. She believed it would not be always the case that low achievers were ignored. Teachers, sometimes, pay no attention to high achievers:

> "…therefore, the strong student will lose her/his interest, s/he will complain that I know everything and nobody cares about me, so why do I be here in the class?"

Table 3

Last-Year Student-Teachers' Hopes, Fears, and Plans

Hopes	Fears	Plans	Themes
Dina: cooperation and collaboration with colleagues Mitra, and Lida: not caring about others' viewpoints in her teaching		Dina: cooperation with colleagues and accepting constructive criticisms Lida: adhering to her own views	1. *Comments* from others
Dina: authoritative and friendly approach in her teaching. Lida and Dina:having authority, good class management and time management	Lida: students' misbehaviors	Dina: imparting knowledge appropriately will result in better management…, Lida and Dina: being on time, being accessible according to the school timetable All three members: good lesson plans	2. *Authority* and management issues
Mitra, Lida, and Dina : developing interesting learning experiences		Lida and Dina: using different teaching approaches and methodologies Mitra: preparing learners psychologically, fair treatment	3. Students' interest in language *learning* and appealing learning environment
Mitra: providing equal learning opportunities for high and low achievers		Mitra: preparing supplementary materials for high achievers	4. Fair treatment to all *students*
All three members: acquiring more knowledge		Lida: learning continuously and acquiring broad experience and knowledge Dina: gaining experience to put her knowledge into practice Mitra: collaboration with colleagues to gain more knowledge For them knowledge included methodological, linguistic, psychological, ... awareness	5. Knowledge-related issues

Lida: a well-prepared teacher Dina: a knowledgeable good teacher Mitra: a confident teacher			6. *General* positive terms
All three members: establishing a good relationship with their students Dina and Mitra: having a good relationship with colleagues, students, and parents Lida: teaching ethics and social relationships to the students		All three members: talking about students' psychological, social, and emotional problems Dina and Mitra: being polite and respectful toward all school staff, students, and parents Lida: reading widely in psychology to gain a proper understanding of different aspects of teacher-student relationships	7. different aspects of *their* relationships
All three members: departing from traditional teaching		All three members: implementing innovative approaches in language teaching	8. To be different from other teachers
Mitra: being able to guarantee students' development.		Mitra: continuous evaluation of students	9. Effective teaching outcomes
	Dina: unpre-dictability of teaching context; Mitra: putting her knowledge into practice in an unknown context. Lida: students' unpredictable misbehaviors	Dina: grasping opportunities to gain experience Lida: expanding psychological knowledge	10. Unpredicta-bility of teaching

She decided to have specific plans for high-achieving students. Last-year STs claimed they have gained considerable knowledge of teaching and language at University; moreover, they intended to expand and update their knowledge in different ways. They offered clear explanations of what they meant by knowledge.

"I'm going to be a good teacher who has enough teaching and linguistic knowledge, … I try not to remain at my current level of qualification." (Dina)

They used terms with positive connotations (see Table 3) to describe their future professional selves. They did not mention their plans to fulfill these desired feelings about themselves.

Regarding their relationships, the last-year STs stressed that they hope to foster a decent relationship with their students. Mitra, Dina, and Lida expanded their vision to include psychological, social, and emotional considerations in their relationships. They also proposed some strategies to achieve their goals on this matter (see Table 3).

"It is of vital importance that we give the children an opportunity to learn ethics and social relationships…. to have communication." (Lida)

This group hoped to be different from traditional teachers.

"I should not be like strict traditional teachers who made students afraid of English." (Dina)

"I can see a young teacher that her teaching approaches are different from previous teachers… and will use new teaching techniques." (Mitra)

They described how they will be innovative by using language teaching approaches (e.g. task-based, CLT, discovery-learning) and strategies they have learned at University and employed in fieldwork.

Mitra was the only ST who stated that she wanted her teaching contributes to the students' higher achievements.

"My students' learning should be guaranteed; I want to see my students' development…."

She suggested that using different assessment techniques will help her to evaluate the extent to which students learn what they are supposed to learn.

Unfamiliarity with teaching context and other unpredictable events that may happen under unknown circumstances became a big worry for this group.

"I should have different plans for different contexts, this will be a tough and time-consuming job… especially in the first years of my teaching that I don't have sufficient teaching experience." (Mitra)

Dina admitted that her worries have almost disappeared when she experienced real teaching during fieldwork sessions. Therefore, she planned

for gaining more teaching experience in order connect new situations with familiar ones. Correspondingly Lida intended to develop her psychological knowledge to respond effectively to students' misbehaviors.

4.2. Discussion

The study aimed at shedding light on Iranian female EFL STs' conceptions of their future professional self-images based on PST (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The results show that STs, at different levels of their training, develop different desired and feared images of their future professional selves that may be influenced by different factors that are discussed in the following section.

4.2.1. Desired Professional Self-Images

The following categories show what STs hoped to attain or not in their future profession.

4.2.1.1. Responding to Comments from Others. Responding to comments from others is important for most STs. Dina (last-year ST) saw collaboration with others as a way of professional development. Based on Ward and McCotter (2004), others' opinions are important to STs at "dialogic" level as a higher level of thinking that usually does not appear among beginning STs. However, other last-year STs as well as Elena (first-year ST) regarded their own opinions as informed and professional. One reasonable interpretation is that these STs reached the goal of Iranian EFL teacher training programs to prepare postmodern teachers who are apt to determine their own ways of teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Safari, 2019).

A likely alternative interpretation is that STs were affected by their personality dispositions as women rather than training and education. Teaching like many other careers is competitive in Iran. Each year, teachers compete to become the best teacher of their own city, province, and country. Chesler (2009) indicated that when careers are competitive, less experienced females are jealous of their skilled female colleagues. Likewise, Mancl and Penington (2011) indicated that feeling of professional jealousy among females in workplace makes them use different strategies, including undermining their successful female colleagues, to secure their own standings in the organisation.

This feeling was more pronounced among the last-year STs who thought, in the near future, they would be lower in their standings compared with more experienced teachers. This interpretation becomes more probable because these STs stated that their future colleagues might feel envy of them. These statements may show that these STs themselves experienced feelings of professional rivalry.

Another likely interpretation is that due to an oversimplified view of teaching they thought they know everything (Younger, Brindley, Pedder, & Hagger, 2004).

4.2.1.2. Authority over Students and Management Issues. Being identified as an authoritative figure is one important aspect of these STs' desired professional self-images. Authority is a concept usually used by those who prefer traditional teaching models (Safari, 2019). Traditional teaching is usually adopted by new teachers because it enables them to face less difficulties in maintaining the classroom order and avoiding disruptive behaviors (Pennington & Richards, 2016). The results support Borg's (2003) notion that occasionally STs, after completing or during their training, revert to the way they were taught as students. In addition, Yuan and Lee (2014) concluded that English STs portray themselves as authoritative figures in the classroom. However, Balçıkanlı (2010) believed teacher training programs that support student-teachers' autonomy, encourage them to have less concerns about their authority and give their students more autonomy.

4.2.1.3. Creating an Appealing Learning Environment. As the results show promoting students' interest in language learning is important for STs specifically beginners. Correspondingly, some STs expressed their concerns about students' boredom in the classroom. Increasing students' interest is a matter of concern for beginning STs due to their idealistic view of teaching along with strong sense of moral duty. This idealistic view might pose difficulty for STs' professional activities in the future (Younger et al., 2004). However, as our results show, increasing students' interest is only among last-year STs' wishes but not among their fears. It reveals that STs' beliefs underwent changes during fieldwork experience. Last-year STs provided refined strategies which enable them to arouse students' interest. The results are consistent with Yuan and Lee (2014) who observed considerable changes in English STs' cognition after fieldwork experience.

4.2.1.4. Providing Fair Treatment to All Students. It was critical for STs, noticeably the first-and third-year ones to treat all students equitably. Last-year STs reported that before experiencing teaching practice, they had believed slow learners were ignored by teachers; nevertheless, when they experienced real classroom context during fieldwork, they found teachers struggling to attract low achievers' attention. In other words, it seems that fair treatment to students is a must for teachers and those STs who have teaching experiences especially during fieldwork. Likewise, Han (2016a) found that Korean students considered fair treatment as the most important characteristic of a qualified teacher. However, examining Korean English teachers' professional identity (Han, 2016b), she realized that teachers underscored the importance of meeting the needs of students at different academic levels rather than treating students fairly. In our study, first-and

third-year STs' opinions on this issue were closer to students in Hans' study. The last-year STs, analogues to teachers in her study, did not talk about fairness.

4.2.1.5. (Lack of) Desire to Become like Their Teachers. The first-year and the third-year STs made reference to positive and negative schooling experiences. Lortie (1975) specified this effect as "apprenticeship of observation". STs' perceptions of their future selves are affected by schooling experiences and simplistic images they portrayed of teaching practice (Borg, 2003; Miller & Shifflet, 2016). The results are in agreement with Miller and Shifflet (2016) who argued that what preservice teachers remember from their teachers' personality traits and ways of teaching have deep-seated effects on their desired and feared self-images. Some of these images modified during years of training (Sutherland, et al., 2010). Consequently, in this study, the last-year STs made no reference to the memories of their schooling experiences.

4.2.1.6. Knowledge-Related Issues. Though all STs wished to be knowledgeable teachers; their conceptions of knowledge are different. For the firs-year STs, knowledge is equal to language skills and for the third-year STs, to be knowledgeable means to be able to answer students' questions. For the last-year STs knowledge has broader implications. They discussed knowledge of teaching methodology and psychology, besides linguistic knowledge. This result support Conway and Clark's (2003) findings that STs' conception of knowledge changed over training years in an "inward-oriented pattern" (p. 478) from thinking about having reasonable knowledge at basic levels (e.g. answer students' questions) to professional development. However, all STs put emphasis on linguistic knowledge due to the priority that teacher trainers and programs have given to this issue (Li, 2020).

4.2.1.7. Using Positive Terms to Describe Their Future Selves. Two first-year and all last-year STs employed terms with positive connotations such as successful and confident. These terms (see Table 1 and 3) implied that beginning STs portray themselves as ideal teachers (Younger et al., 2004), while near the end of their training they consider themselves reasonably ready and qualified (Liu & Fisher, 2006). Similarly, Ruohotie-Lyhty and Pitkänen-Huhta (2020) concluded that at the beginning of teacher education, many English STs ignore the negative sides of teaching and are too optimistic about their future profession.

4.2.1.8. Psychological, Social, and Emotional Issues in Relationships. The results show that STs approached the issue of their future relationships from different angles. First-year STs wished to establish friendly relationship with students; however, they were worried about their authority. They are not confident about their teaching abilities, hence they fear to build a close

relationship with their students (Liu & Fisher, 2006). The beginning third-year STs remained relatively silent in this regard. Neda (first-year ST) stated she wished to deal with different aspects of students' lives and the last-year STs viewed their professional relationships from social, psychological, and affective dimensions.

Ward and McCotter (2004) indicated, concern for others appears when STs reach dialogic level of thinking. The last-year STs went further and expressed their hopes to deal with moral and ethical issues and even their focus of attention has been broadened to include the impact of their teaching on students. These are characteristics of transformative thinking (Ward and McCotter, 2004).

4.2.1.9. To Be Different from Other Teachers. STs, especially the last-year ones believed that they have access to a resource of innovative approaches to language teaching that makes them unwilling to be guided by other teachers whose knowledge may not be up-to-date. They hoped to depart from traditional teaching which they considered inefficient. Safari (2019) indicated that Iranian STs imagine themselves as postmodern teachers (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) who seek change in the system including their roles as teachers.

4.2.1.10. Satisfactory Teaching Outcomes for Students. Only one ST (last-year) considered contribution to the students' higher achievements important. This is one of STs' concerns at dialogic level of thinking as one of the objectives of teacher preparation that develops through fieldwork experience (Conway & Clark, 2003; Korkko, Kyro-Ammala, & Turunen, 2016; Ward & McCotter, 2004). At this level, the self-related issues are, to a great extent, replaced by the ones related to students and the influence of teaching on students' learning (Conway & Clark, 2003).

4.2.2. Feared Professional Self-Images

The following categories were extracted from STs' statements of fears about their future professional selves.

4.2.2.1. Challenges to Their Authority and Management. First-and third-year participants were worried about routine matters because they were not confident about their management skills (Liu & Fisher, 2006). Our results are in line with Azimi et al. (2019), Conway and Clark (2003), and Ward and McCotter (2004) who stated that beginning STs are worried mainly about management issues and self-related matters. These worries decrease as they go through training process.

4.2.2.2. Failing to Provide an Interesting Learning Environment. To be unsuccessful in motivating students to learn English was a great fear for the first-and third-year STs. This situation emerged from naïve images of

teaching held by beginning STs (Brindley et al., 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006). As our results revealed, it was not considered as a source of concern for the last-year STs. After fieldwork experience their ideas resemble knowledge-based thinking (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

4.2.2.3. Inability to Convey Content to Students. Beginning third-year STs were worried about their failure to impart content knowledge or to answer the students' questions appropriately. At the beginning of their training, STs mostly emphasize on tangible parts of teaching like imparting knowledge that they had observed as students (Korkko et al., 2016). Similarly, Younger et al. (2004) noted that the required knowledge to answer students' questions was a matter of concern to beginning STs due to high standards STs thought should be fulfilled. First-year STs did not mention this issue, probably due to simplified images they hold of teaching process (Younger et al., 2004) and last-year STs were confident enough not to worry about these basic level skills (Liu & Fisher, 2006).

4.2.2.4. Unpredictability of Teaching The last-year group expressed their worries about unpredictability of what may occur in the classroom. This group were worried about events that may not be anticipated; however, other STs were worried about different matters, both predictable and unpredictable ones. Last-year participants stated that during the fieldwork, they were capable of taking advantage of their repertoire of theoretical knowledge to promote students' learning and solve problems (Korkko et al., 2016). It is an outward turn in STs' attention (Conway & Clark, 2003) that helps STs confine their worries to issues over which they have little control.

4.2.3. Their Plans for Achieving Their Desired English Teacher Selves or Avoiding Feared Ones

STs articulated some plans for attaining their desired selves and/or avoiding feared ones. However, no statements of plans were made by the first-year (except Neda) and third-year STs relating to one of their biggest wishes and worries: authority and class management. The first-and last-year STs did not describe how they want to fulfill their ambitions to be successful, well-prepared…, and the third-year participants did not say how they want to behave differently from their own teachers. The stated plans were mostly focused on self at the beginning and on the impact of instruction by the end that is an outward change (Conway & Clark 2003) or a change from routine level to dialogic level of thinking (Ward & McCotter 2004).

Moreover, the first-and third-year STs' plans were not elaborate and sometimes were separated from real-world situations (Younger et al., 2004). Nonetheless, the last-year STs had more theory-based well-informed plans regarding their desires and fears. This is probably pertaining to fieldwork experience that enables STs to integrate their theoretical and practical

knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Regardless of differences in their scopes, STs' plans have the potential to regulate their current behaviors (Hamman et al., 2010; Oyserman et al., 2004) as well as their future selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

5. Conclusion and Implications

The aim of this study was to explore Iranian female EFL STs perceptions of their professional self-images during training at Teacher Education University. The following conclusions can be drawn from the study.

Before fieldwork experience, STs' self-images are principally influenced by their schooling experiences. Some STs tend to be similar to their teachers while others fear that this will happen to them. By the end of their education, STs portray a relatively perfect image of their professional self. The results demonstrate that the trend of concern for opinions of others' does not follow a consistent pattern, that may result from different factors other than teacher training, such as self-determination, personality disposition, or simplistic view of teaching.

Basic teaching skills like classroom and time management, authority, and fair treatment are the most challenging issues for STs. Nevertheless, these matters do not seem daunting near the end of training period. Apparently STs become aware of the importance of quality teaching, relationships with others, and the effects of teaching on students' learning that show a higher level thinking (Ward & McCotter, 2004). Making students interested in language learning is more essential for beginning STs as a result of their idealistic view (Younger et al., 2004) of teaching that is modified during fieldwork (Sutherland et al., 2010; Yuan & Lee, 2014).

For STs, one important aspect of desired self-image is being a knowledgeable teacher, however what they mean by knowledge evolve over years of education. STs particularly near the end of their education demonstrate concerns regarding "humanizing pedagogy" (Bartolome, 1994, p. 181), they intend to treat students as determining agents in their learning process not as objects under teacher's control. They consider themselves teachers who can and must make a difference in students' learning outcomes. This is an attribute of postmodern teacher (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

These findings support the notion that relationship with students, other trainees, mentor teachers, etc., and its sentimental function have the capability to alter and mature the self-images, that in turn, can affect STs' communication (Li, 2020). These self-images have the potential to regulate STs' current and future behaviors (Oyserman et al. 2004) insofar as STs have certain plans for dealing with their concerns.

The evidence from the present study suggests that Iranian Teacher Education programs, particularly fieldwork courses, can modify STs' perspectives on teaching as well as their conceptions of professional self-images. This is consistent with Newell, Gingrich, and Johnson (2001) who argued that STs can revise their thinking if teacher training programs equip them with appropriate capacities to do so.

One implication of the findings for teacher education programs is that these programs should assist their trainees to identify professional self-images that they hope or fear to become (Malderez, 2007) since these images construct STs' future behaviors (Hong, 2010; Hamman et al., 2013) and their professional development (Bernat, 2008).

Moreover, because STs are uncertain about their future selves and the reality of teaching (Hong, 2010), this is the teacher trainers' responsibility to broaden STs' understanding from the beginning of training programs. In addition, Bernat (2008) shed light on the fact that almost all non-native STs of English experience a sense of ineffectiveness in English teaching; however, training programs can raise STs' awareness of this fallacy; such awareness has a vital role in their empowerment. Administrators can persuade STs from various levels of training to have constant emotional and professional communication with each other in order to exchange their experiences, emotions, knowledge, etc., owing to the fact that such interactions will shape and develop STs' professional identity including their professional self-images (Van Huizen et al., 2005) and will improve their self-esteem (Knox, 2006).

In summary, just as declared by Tang et al. (2019) it is the teacher education programs that are accountable for equipping STs with sufficient theoretical knowledge and giving them opportunities to put their knowledge into practice. These programs should support STs to develop realistic images of teaching contexts and their roles in order to have reasonable plans for pursuing their educational goals.

Further research regarding other aspects of male and female STs' self-images would be of great help in understanding the dynamic nature of teacher education and its influence on STs' practice. One interesting finding of the study was that some STs were eager to receive their colleagues' suggestions; while others were reluctant to keep their minds on such recommendations. Further work needs to be done to investigate factors that might contribute to their unwillingness to seek professional advice from their colleagues.

This study had several limitations. Most importantly, like other qualitative research studies, the results may not be generalizable to other situations and further studies should be conducted to support them. Second, a longitudinal investigation might give a more realistic picture of STs'

construction of professional self-images. Next, the researchers relied on interviews data; however, observations of actual performance of teaching may reveal more fruitful results. Finally, it is possible that our reliance on collected data from volunteer participants resulted in biased data sets that decreases generalizability of findings, since volunteers may have a range of different motives for their participation.

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