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**Citation for published version:**

Banegas, DL 2022, 'Four spheres of student-teachers' professional identity formation through learning about curriculum development', *Journal of Education for Teaching*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2022.2105644>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1080/02607476.2022.2105644](https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2022.2105644)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

**Published In:**

Journal of Education for Teaching

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To cite this article: Darío Luis Banegas (2022): Four spheres of student-teachers' professional identity formation through learning about curriculum development, Journal of Education for Teaching, DOI: [10.1080/02607476.2022.2105644](https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2022.2105644)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2022.2105644>



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Published online: 02 Aug 2022.



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# Four spheres of student-teachers' professional identity formation through learning about curriculum development

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## ABSTRACT

Teachers' professional identity is multifaceted and fluctuating, and while it is formally developed during initial teacher preparation, it is influenced by experiences before and beyond teaching programmes. The aim of this paper is to investigate the extent to which a module on language curriculum development may influence the professional identity formation of international and UK student-teachers enrolled in a master's programme in teaching English to speakers of other languages at a UK university. The study was carried out with 30 student-teachers in 2021, and data were collected from an ecological perspective as data sets came from the regular module delivery. Findings show that the student-teachers articulated four spheres of professional identity. Located in the past, the language learner identity helped them reflect on good practices. Their present student-teacher identity was characterised by their acknowledgement of language education as a research-informed area. Drawing on these two spheres, they displayed two future spheres of professional identity: teacher identity and curriculum developer identity. The latter demonstrates that the module not only enabled the participants to imagine a new career path but also helped them reflect on their anticipatory agency and self-efficacy.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 30 July 2021

Accepted 31 January 2022

## KEYWORDS

student-teacher; identity; TESOL; agency; curriculum development

## Introduction

Before entering formal teacher preparation, student-teachers have already begun their professional identity development. Their beliefs and internal theories on education are influenced by their trajectories as learners and societal expectations about schooling and teachers' role (Beijaard 2019). As they enrol on a teacher education programme, student-teachers' identities as future teachers are shaped by their motivations, emotions (Wolff and De Costa 2017), self-efficacy and teacher agency (Anspal, Leijen, and Löffström 2019) as well as their experienced patterns of teacher learning (Vermunt et al. 2017).

Scholars have acknowledged the importance of understanding the malleable and multifaceted process of identity formation in student-teachers (e.g. Banegas, Pinner, and Larrondo 2022; Beauchamp and Thomas 2009; Chu 2020; Fairley 2020; Flores 2020; Izadinia 2015; Kier and Lee 2017; Timöstšuk and Ugaste 2010). While the literature recognises that initial teacher education is a conducive space to encourage student-teachers to interrogate their professional identity, there is a dearth of studies which

examine what other roles student-teachers imagine they can fulfil while completing their studies. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact that a module on language curriculum development can have on the professional identity development of a group of 30 international and UK student-teachers enrolled in master's programme on teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) interested in TESOL teaching posts in different settings.

## Conceptual framework

### *(Student-) teacher identity development*

According to Esteban-Guitart (2014, 2016), identity is culturally mediated and the combination of a cognitive, individual phenomenon and a social process. From a post-structuralist perspective, researchers add that identity construction is a political activity as individuals may decide to be subjected to or oppose hegemonic discourses (Foucault 2011; Ruohotie-Lyhty, Camargo Aragão and Pitkänen-Huhtaa 2021).

In the field of education, there is consensus that the term identity is dynamic, confusing, complex, temporal, contextual, and influenced by internal and external factors. Teacher identity is an 'ongoing process of integration of the personal and the professional sides of becoming and being a teacher' (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop 2004, 113). In this process, teachers are positioned 'within particular sociocultural contexts embedded with both explicitly and implicitly expressed values' (Golombek 2017, 19). Such values contains personal and societal expectations about what a 'good teacher' should be and act like. According to Richards (2021), factors such as commitment, self-esteem, agency, and self-efficacy define teachers' professional sense and attributes.

In the case of language teacher identity, teachers may teach a language (e.g. English) they have learnt later in life. Usually labelled with the problematic term *non-native speakers*, their professional identity is highly influenced by pernicious notions of nativespeakerism, which entail that a native speaker of English is, by origin, a more efficient teacher even if they do not have any formal preparation (Guerrero and Meadows 2015). This view not only places language teachers in a deficit position but it also exacerbates their interest in developing their linguistic competence, sometimes at the expense of pedagogical knowledge (Aneja 2016; Lowe 2020). Despite this tension, language proficiency is a core element of language teacher identity since a teacher of English is expected to be a proficient user of English and have linguistic (subject-matter) knowledge about English (Richards 2021).

Together with a focus on their identity as proficient second language users, student-teachers undergo transformational processes around their aspired professional identity shaped by interaction with peers, teacher educators, mentors, learners, and the totalising experiences contained in an initial teacher education programme (Richards 2021; Ruohotie-Lyhty, Aragão, and Pitkänen-Huhta 2021; Trent 2013). Different empirical studies have investigated the fundamental role that initial teacher education plays in student-teacher identity development. Given space limitations, only two investigations are reviewed below as they represent contemporary contours of student-teacher identity development research.

In a longitudinal research project, Flores (2020) examined the professional identity development of 20 student-teachers in Portugal. According to comparative and horizontal analysis, the student-teachers revisited their past learning biographies to construct their ‘thinking like a teacher’ while still being students. In their identity construction, they enhanced their awareness of the complexity of the classroom setting and articulated their aspirations and concerns as prospective teachers. The author concludes that teacher identity is (re)shaped in interaction and that student-teachers’ professional sense is moulded by their past and present experiences at the temporo-experiential passage of being students and becoming teachers.

In a study carried out with 121 language student-teachers in Finland and Brazil, Ruohotie-Lyhty, Aragão, and Pitkänen-Huhta (2021) examined their socio-politically situated professional identities and desires by means of visual methods (drawing, editing ready-made pictures). Findings revealed that the participants had status-oriented (i.e. attaining a respected position in society) and nature-oriented (e.g. how meaningful being a teacher can be) perspectives of their future professional identities. Unlike the Flores’ (Flores 2020) study, this investigation concentrated on student-teachers imagined professional identities, which resulted in the combination of desires for social esteem and power and desires for meaningfulness and pleasant emotions as a result of teaching.

While these two studies as well as others (e.g. Banegas, Pinner, and Larrondo 2022; Chu 2020; Trent 2013) provide comprehensive explications of student-teachers grappling with their professional identities in relation to past, present, and imagined social and individual experiences, they are solely focused on their identities as practitioners. This should not be surprising since that is the primary aim of initial teacher education programmes: to prepare teachers for teaching posts. However, this aim can be extended when student-teachers, still as pre-service teachers, complete a master’s programme which includes modules that go beyond teaching itself.

### *Curriculum and language teacher professional identity*

For the purposes of this study, it may suffice to define a curriculum as a socio-political organiser which, with diverse degrees of specificity, delineates what students learn (Graves 2021). Broadly speaking, there are three versions of curriculum: (1) the societal curriculum (what societies expect students should learn), (2) the policy or official curriculum, and (3) the enacted curriculum, i.e. how teaching is operationalised in practice according to teachers’ agency, this latter understood as teachers’ capacity (not) to do something (Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson 2015). Generally, a curriculum envisions teachers and students as implementers, and curriculum development presupposes that teacher education will help teachers become curriculum thinkers.

Recent studies have explored the relationship between curriculum development and language teacher professional identity. For example, Shieh and Reynolds’s (2020) case study showed that while teachers may perceived themselves as agentic professionals, they may recognise that their personal experiences as postgraduate students can enhance their understanding of curriculum development. In a similar study, Zhu and Shu (2017) examined how a teacher’s engagement with curriculum development was boosted through the mediation of teacher cognition and situated practices. In a collection of studies on teachers living with curriculum change, Wedell and Grassick (2018)

underscore the importance of curriculum engagement on teacher identity and professional awareness raising. These findings resonate with Shower's (2010) study in which teachers were identified as curriculum transmitters, curriculum developers, or curriculum makers, these latter being those teachers who adapt the curriculum to respond to context-specific needs (see also Banegas 2019). These studies concur that teachers' engagement with curriculum development in their preparation and practice allows them to hone their sense of agency and self-efficacy. Notwithstanding, there is a dearth of studies which examine the impact of learning about curriculum development at the level of teacher preparation.

Against this backdrop, the following question guided this study: In what ways does learning about language curriculum development influence the professional identity formation of a group of TESOL student-teachers?

## Methodology

Positioned within an interpretivist paradigm (Atkins and Wallace 2012), this study is framed as teacher research, i.e. research carried out by teachers and teacher educators to understand, problematise, and reflect on their own practice (Borg and Sanchez 2015; Gutman 2021). In this study, I adopted an ecological approach to data collection (Arcidiacono, Procentese, and Di Napoli 2009) as the data came from my regular teaching of a module called *Curriculum Development in TESOL*.

## Context and participants

The context of this study is a 12-month full time master's in TESOL at a UK university. The programme is designed for students interested in pursuing a career in primary, secondary, and higher education TESOL regardless of their experience in the field. It offers modules on language teaching and learning, intercultural communication, digital technologies, and educational research. Similarly to other TESOL programmes offered by UK universities, this master's does not provide qualified teacher status, a legal requirement in UK education; but in other countries, a master's in TESOL may grant access to teaching posts. In this master's programme, students, who are mostly international, wish to return to their countries to obtain a teaching post in any educational level, or work in private language schools. The latter usually applies to UK students.

*Curriculum Development in TESOL* was an optional module taught online for eight weeks in the second term of the course (January – March 2021). The module aimed at discussing how TESOL can be organised at different levels of formal education (classroom, institution, official educational policies) and it provided students with professional tools to evaluate, adapt, and design a culturally responsive TESOL curriculum. The module's point of departure was positioning teachers as agents of change who contribute to curriculum design, enactment, and evaluation. The module consisted of eight lectures and seminars and the core contents were: (1) definitions, types, and features of a curriculum, (2) needs analysis, (3) principles, goals, contents, and sequencing, (4) curriculum evaluation, (5) cases of innovation in language curriculum development, (6) curriculum change and the roles of learners and teachers, and (7) researching curriculum development in TESOL. The core reading material included: Macalister and

Nation (2020), Mickan and Wallace (2020), Richards (2017), and Wedell and Grassick (2018). The students completed synchronous (group presentations, analysis of case studies, curricula, and coursebooks, reflective tasks) and asynchronous (forum discussions around cases, questions, quotes, or personal experience) activities.

The participants were 30 students who shared English as their first or additional language. The participants were British, Chinese, Korean, Greek, Indian, Moroccan, Saudi, and Syrian, and their ages ranged between 22 and 25. All of the students wished to pursue a teaching career in TESOL at the start of the module. Only three students had between one and two years of teaching experience.

## Data collection

For ethical purposes, at the start of the module all the students received a participant information sheet and a consent form explaining the aims of the study, my intention to combine pedagogy and research in the module delivery, and their protected rights in terms of anonymity, confidentiality and potential coercion given my dual role as tutor and researcher. All the students agreed to participate by signing the consent form. The names used in the following sections to refer to the participants are pseudonyms.

Data were collected through three sources:

- Students' forum participation (Source 1). Each seminar was followed by a dialogical forum. Students were expected to either post a new comment or reply to someone else's comment, which generated a weekly dialogue among the students and myself. For each forum, the instruction was the following: 'Based on the topic discussed in today's lecture and seminar [Please, see the seven contents mentioned above], reflect on the ways in which the new knowledge has contributed to your understanding of language teaching and your professional identity'. In total, I collected 220 forum entries, with a mean length of 132 words.
- End-of-module discussion (Source 2). In the last seminar, students had to work in groups and answer this question: In what ways has this module contributed to your identity as a TESOL teacher? The groups audio-recorded their discussion and shared the audio files with me. The discussions were orthographically transcribed for data analysis.
- Final assignment (Source 3). Individually, students had to write a 3,500-word essay in which they analysed a curriculum/syllabus from their context (Part 1) and articulated a proposal for curriculum change (Part 2). While the module delivery finished in March 2021, the assignments were submitted between April and June 2021.

## Data analysis

Thematic analysis (Clarke and Braun 2016) was utilised for the analysis of the data gathered through the three sources mentioned above. Data analysis was conceived as an iterative process of reading and re-reading the data for initial and axial coding (Saldaña 2013). The codes led to the setting of a codebook which was used to reanalyse the data. To increase confirmability, trustworthiness and transparency (Lincoln and Guba 1985), a colleague not familiarised with the research acted as a second rater of 50% of the data.

We discussed discrepancies and calculated Krippendorff's alpha-reliability coefficient for multi-valued nominal data (Krippendorff and Craggs 2016). The alpha value was 0.81, which is relatively close to perfect agreement. In addition, five of the participants were randomly selected to confirm that the data analysis and first draft of this manuscript was a clear representation of their experiences. Two of them suggested minor changes pertaining to their identities as language learners.

## Findings

The findings are organised according to the four spheres of professional identity the student-teachers articulated during module delivery. It should be noted that the participants' professional identities as learners and student-teachers dominated the first two months of the module, whereas their identities as future teachers and curriculum developers became prominent towards the end of the module. This demonstrates the developmental and reflective nature of student-teachers' professional identity formation.

### *Identity as language learners*

During the eight forums, 26 student-teachers anchored their reflective comments in their past experiences as language learners in secondary and/or higher education. Their forum contributions, when mapped onto notions of professional identity, gravitated around three themes: (1) teacher-fronted classrooms, (2) coursebook-driven practices, and (3) learning decontextualised discrete items.

In the forums on definitions and dimensions of curriculum development, the learner-centred curriculum, and the tensions between the expected or institutional curriculum and the enacted curriculum (Graves 2021), the participants travelled back to their biographies as language learners. For example, Alan wrote:

When I think about the curriculum waves (Graves 2016) and the transition from linguistic, to communicative to meaning-making informed language teaching curricula, I could say that no matter the wave, what I experienced was a teacher-fronted curriculum. My teachers were the centre and we as learners were there to respond to their stimuli. Every time I read my notes about curriculum development, I realise that in my experience I didn't live anything of that and that's a shame. I don't that my learners go through the same. (Alan, Source 1, Extract 1).

In Extract 1, Alan not only illustrates the difference between the official curriculum and his teachers' practices, he also portrays his imagined identity as a teacher who will provide learners with a different experience from what he underwent. Such tensions and conflicting discourses between curriculum development theory and the lived curriculum encouraged the participants to return to their experiences by emphasising how learners were not agentic actors of the classroom.

Coursebooks featured a central position as the following forum extract reveals:

As a learner, the lessons consisted of completing the coursebooks, page after page. The lessons were monotonous. These were coursebook-driven practices, and as much as I see now how everyone had a rather passive role, I must recognise that I enjoyed it to some extent because the coursebook gave me a sense of progression and structure. Hence, I believe that we can still use coursebooks as part of teaching, coupled with digital tools. (Omar, Source 1, Extract 2).



When we reflected on the centrality of context in language education and some of the principles which guide curriculum development (Macalister and Nation 2020), one student commented:

I think context is crucial. I remember learning about tenses, and vocabulary, and prepositions, or long lists of random nouns or verbs without any context or common topic. When I look back, it was learning decontextualised discrete items without a communicative and meaningful purpose. The curriculum was disengaged from language use. (Noha, Source 1, Extract 3).

Extracts 1–3 represent student-teachers' tendency to reflect on the module content by remembering past learning experiences and how these shaped their beliefs about good practice in language education. In this regard, the student-teachers' point of departure in their professional identity was their language learning experiences.

### *Identity as student-teachers*

As the module progressed, 19 student-teachers' forum contributions exhibited traces of their present professional identity as master's TESOL students. These traces were evidenced in their acknowledgement of language education as a scientific field in its own right. For example, after a session on innovation in curriculum development, Thalia wrote:

As a student-teacher I now see that I am beginning to realise that language education is serious matter. I thought that teaching English was using some strategies and tips. It is not. I think that learning about literacy, educational approaches, and second language acquisition from the perspective of curriculum development helps me understand the profession and the field. I'm happy to be studying a complex subject. (Thalia, Source 2, Extract 4).

Thalia's extract shows that the module, and the rest of the programme, helped her see herself as a student of a 'serious' field that deserved proper examination. Alongside such views, student-teachers developed awareness of the relationship between curriculum enhancement and evaluation in their student-teacher identity:

I think it's important for me as a student-teacher to realise that I contribute to the improvement of a TESOL programme by offering my views. Thanks to this module I've now understood the importance of curriculum evaluation in curriculum development and the betterment of education. As a student-teacher, I am interested in being part of that conversation. (Natalie, Source 1, Extract 5)

Extracts 4 and 5 attest to the influence that the master's had on the student-teachers' professional identity development. Acknowledging the academic nature of language education placed them as students of a 'complex subject'. The student-teachers also remarked how their identity as student-teachers was enhanced in interaction with the linguistic, pedagogical, and curriculum knowledge developed throughout the course and module.

### *Identity as future teachers*

This sphere of professional identity emerged during the last two sessions, in which we discussed the role of teachers in curriculum development and curriculum development research in TESOL. Data gathered through Sources 1 and 2 showed how the 30 student-

teachers began to think like teachers (Flores 2020) in relation to the development and enactment of the language curriculum in their own contexts. Two themes were identified within this imagined teacher identity: (1) continuing professional development, and (2) professional awareness.

In relation to continuing professional development, all the student-teachers concurred that becoming critical language curriculum implementers and makers necessitated subject-matter and pedagogical knowledge. For example, Amira expressed:

If I want to be influential and agentive in curriculum transformation, then I need to have a clear understanding of language as a system, sounding as native as I can, and language pedagogy. I feel that my preparation as a teacher starts here but it needs to keep on developing. There are always new approach and skills to incorporate, adapt, and create. I see myself as a teacher who is capable of always learning. (Amira, Source 2, Extract 6)

Extract 6 also attests to student-teachers' concern with their own English language proficiency and the hegemonic role that the *native speaker* has as a measure of their own confidence in language use (Banegas, Pinner, and Larrondo 2022; Lowe 2020; Richards 2021).

According to 12 of the student-teachers, professional awareness was as important as subject-matter and pedagogical knowledge. The theme 'professional awareness' conflates student-teachers' realisation that as future teachers they would like to be sensitive to their learners' needs as well as oriented towards intercultural and wider social issues. Extracts 7 and 8 corroborate such findings:

Based on what we discussed about teachers' and learners' roles in curriculum development, I wish to be a teacher who is aware and can respond to my learners' needs. By needs I mean academic, cognitive, and affective needs within the context of formal education. (Cecilé, Source 1, Extract 7)

I can see myself as a teacher that considers learners' cultural background when planning my lessons. I think it's important to contextualise my teaching in the community and celebrate diversity and inclusion from an intercultural perspective, also acknowledging wider social issues. As teachers we cannot be technicians. We need to incorporate wider social issues such as inequality among others. (Duo, Source 2, Extract 8)

In their imagined teacher identity, the participants envisaged themselves as teachers who were capable of enacting a critical, inclusive, and socially just curriculum which was not only student-centred but also community-driven.

### *Identity as future curriculum developers*

At the end of the module and particularly through their final assignment, 20 participants articulated a fourth sphere of professional identity in two forms: (1) future teachers as curriculum developers, and (2) future curriculum developers as an independent career. Both forms continued to demonstrate the student-teachers' anticipatory self-efficacy and agency to direct change successfully. It should be clarified that the final assignment question only asked them to analyse a curriculum of their choice following Macalister and Nation's (2020) model of curriculum development and suggest ways in which it

could be improved. The question did not ask the student-teachers to imagine themselves as curriculum developers; they incorporated this issue in different ways themselves.

Out of 20, 16 student-teachers imagined themselves as teachers who, once they had gained experience and expertise, could become curriculum designers for institutions and ministries of education in their home countries. For example, in his final assignment, Omar analysed an English for specific purposes (ESP) curriculum from a university in Syria. The analysis was followed by a reflective section in which he put forward how the official/expected curriculum could be improved. To justify his proposal, he discussed his own future professional identity as a teacher-curriculum developer:

In order to be able to redesign the curriculum and incorporate the suggestions I am making regarding inclusive education as a right, as a curriculum designer, I first need to be an experienced and knowledgeable teacher. I believe that my work as a curriculum developer will be legitimised if I position myself as a teacher who has the opportunity to organise ESP at an institutional level drawing on my knowledge and experience as an ESP tutor myself. (Omar, Source 3, Extract 9)

Extract 9 shows Omar as a political actor aware of social justice education ('inclusive knowledge as a right'). It illustrates how the student-teachers would like to exercise agency and work towards their professional development by becoming curriculum developers who adopt a bottom-up approach to curriculum development.

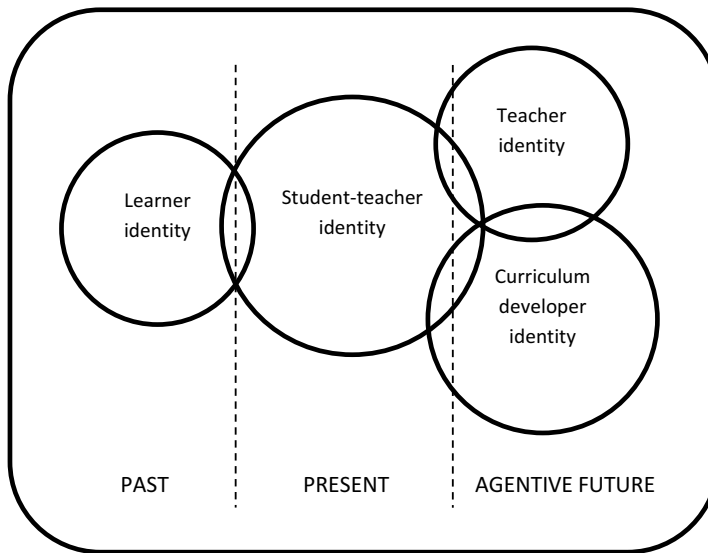
The findings also showed that four student-teachers could see themselves as becoming curriculum developers without working as teachers. For example, at the beginning of Part 2 of her assignment, Kitty wrote:

This proposal for a critical, culturally-sensitive, student-centred curriculum is written from my perspective of being a curriculum designer after I finish my academic studies and carry on studying about curriculum development. This essay has given me the opportunity to consider this as a career path. I am not sure I want to be a teacher, yet I can see myself as a curriculum designer who can develop new programmes for institutions in China. (Kitty, Source 3, Extract 10).

Extract 10 reveals that being a curriculum developer can be identified as a career or specialisation in its own right without teaching experience. To these four participants, being a curriculum developer was another job profile or opportunity that TESOL teacher education offered them.

## Discussion

In line with previous studies, the participants developed their professional identities by recognising the impact of past and present experiences and projecting future scenarios. A module on curriculum development allowed them to imagine themselves as curriculum developers at some point in their career. Their journey, albeit limited to their master's programme revealed four interconnected spheres of professional identity development (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Spheres of student-teacher professional identity.

As discussed in the literature (Fairley 2020; Kier and Lee 2017), student-teacher professional identity formation is dynamic and complex, and in the case of language teacher education, it is influenced by self-perceptions of linguistic competence in the language that is both subject matter and medium of teacher learning and instruction (Richards 2021). Student-teachers' present experiences in language teacher education may act as a pivot from which they navigate to the past and future to make sense of their professional identity development. This finding confirms that past learning biographies and present experiences in teacher learning play a crucial role in their professional identity formation (Flores 2020; Shieh and Reynolds 2020).

As demonstrated in the selected extracts, the student-teachers' past experiences as language learners usually triggered by remembering their teachers' practice show the didactic trace (Banegas, Pinner, and Larrondo 2022) that teachers can leave on student-teachers' understanding of education. In perspective, student-teachers, when they begin to articulate their future teacher self, they may use the sphere of learner identity to create (counter-)narratives by stating the kind of teacher they would (not) like to be. In this study, the new linguistic, curriculum, and pedagogical knowledge developed in the module (and programme) allowed them to move from remembering teacher-centred, coursebook-dominating classrooms to imagining learner-centred, context-driven pedagogies.

The sphere of student-teacher identity may be characterised by the student-teachers' recognition of teaching as an academic field and the exploration of the teaching-research nexus (Gutman 2021). The main fund of student-teacher identity (Banegas, Pinner, and Larrondo 2022) is disciplinary, which derived from the topics discussed in the module(s). This includes tutors' lectures, seminars, and interaction with peers and tutors. In the case of curriculum development, the student-teachers' emphasis on theories and approaches of (language) learning, literacy, and curriculum evaluation among other aspects can

provide them not only with meaningful patterns of teaching learning (Vermunt et al. 2017) but also with a situated, practice-oriented understanding of curriculum development research (Flores 2020; Zhu and Shu 2017).

The sphere of student-teacher identity leads to, within the context of a module on curriculum development, aspirations about teacher identity. The sphere of teacher identity may amalgamate individual and social notions of identity (Esteban-Guitart 2014, 2016) as well as the identity of teachers as political actors (Ruohotie-Lyhty, Aragão, and Pitkänen-Huhta 2021) within specific sociocultural contexts (Golombek 2017). Student-teachers may envisage a teaching self that responds to their own views and individual characteristics, but these are coupled with an awareness of contextual circumstances that include a recognition of wider societal issues perhaps framed in social justice. In this sense, learning about curriculum development may lead student-teachers to assume a socio-political and emancipatory perspective (Ruohotie-Lyhty, Aragão, and Pitkänen-Huhta 2021) as they wish to be teachers who create and deliver meaningful opportunities for learning within a paradigm of inclusion. The module may have contributed to their professional awareness (Wedell and Grassick 2018) of socio-educational systems that seek to include intercultural perspectives and learners' needs within the broader conversation of social justice education in TESOL.

What this study puts forward is a new sphere, that of an identity as curriculum developers, mostly linked to teaching. Perhaps influenced by teachers' identity as curriculum implementers and makers (Shawer 2010), student-teachers may imagine themselves as teachers-cum-curriculum developers or as curriculum developers in their own right. In either case, they may see themselves as engaged in the design of language curricula framed in inclusion and responsive of social issues and community life for institutions and ministries of education. From this perspective, student-teachers may also see teaching and curriculum development as a political activity (Ruohotie-Lyhty, Aragão, and Pitkänen-Huhta 2021) which is culturally situated, practice-oriented, and research-informed.

In the imagined spheres of identity as teachers and curriculum developers, anticipatory self-efficacy and agency play a powerful role in the depiction of these two future professional identities. Student-teachers could see themselves as capable of enacting an inclusive curriculum because, at the same time, they could picture themselves engaged in continuing professional development which would enable them to direct change through regulated actions. As discussed in the literature on teacher identity and agency (Anspal, Leijen, and Löfström 2019; Priestly et al. 2015; Richards 2021), student-teachers can also recognise the importance of agentive decisions that allow them to take control of the curriculum in their own teaching as well as the curriculum at macro-levels of educational organisation.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrated that a module on curriculum development in TESOL allowed a group of student-teachers to aspire to become curriculum developers as another option in their professional career. However, the study is not free from limitations. Data were collected over a short period of time and only online due to Covid-19 restrictions, and it only included the participants' self-reported views. The study did not follow the

participants' trajectories to examine whether the reported future spheres of professional identity shaped their professional choices. In addition, my dual role as tutor and researcher and the assessment element behind Sources 1 and 3 may have conditioned how the participants depicted themselves in writing.

The findings may encourage teacher education programmes to include content on curriculum development to support student-teachers' understanding of how wider organising systems of education operate and how their professional identity can be harnessed on different career paths. Future studies may need to examine (1) student-teachers' perceptions on the immanent connections between being a teacher and being a curriculum developer, and (2) the tensions between imagined and enacted professional identities over time.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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