





Exploring Novice Teachers' Professional Identity in the Indonesian EFL Context

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Abstract. The professional identity of the teacher is formed from habitus, capital, and field, and that formation is important but not easy, especially for novice teachers who are low-skill, inadequate, or even with different interest backgrounds. In discussing the field, the environment and community also have a shaping role, and this study reports on it. It explains the process of forming the professional identity of a new English teacher in Indonesia, and one of the cities becomes the object by using interviews from sources as data with analysis using the framework of Bourdieu and Gee theories. The purpose of this study is to find out how new English teachers can become ideal teachers in a small town where English teachers are underperforming. The results of the study reported that the teacher's background, religion, community, training, and peer sharing helped the development and formation of professional identity.

Keywords: Identity, teachers' professional, Novice Teacher, Field, Community.

1. Introduction

Teaching English is not easy, especially for novice teachers. [1] reported that there is no clear definition of a novice teacher, but later defined as someone who teaches students for the first time without explaining how many years the designation is attached. In one study, it was stated that the experience of novice teachers was less than two years [2], and another study stated that the experience of new teachers was three years [3], this is in line with previous research, which stated that novice teachers have experience of 5 years or less [4].

The term identity is prevalent in many fields of study. As [5] state that the term 'identity' is ubiquitous in contemporary social science, psychoanalysis, psychology, political science, sociology and history. In the field of education itself, in recent years a lot of research has been carried out on teachers' professional identity [6], [7]. Researchers in the field of education have studied the topic of identity for several reasons. In [8] research, there are three reasons for their work on the professional identity of teachers, namely to recognize identity stories of non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), to create a space to enlighten

NNEST candidates. about the professional identity of teachers and this research provides an initial framework for teaching English to non-natives (TESOL) in the future. The study of the professional identity of teachers has been divided into three categories. According to [8], the first category is how teachers form their professional identity. The second focuses on identifying the features and characteristics of teachers' professional identities, while the third classification explores how teachers represent themselves through the narrative of their life stories.

In a number of studies, the identity of native and non-native-speaking teachers is discussed [9]. Like [10] research, which emphasizes the hegemony of a language, explains the idea of native speakers to describe the difference between native and non-native in teaching and learning English. Teachers who are not native speakers will feel less appropriate or less confident in conveying the language and cultural material that will be delivered, especially if they have a deficiency in English or teaching skills so that it becomes an obstacle in forming their identity [9]. Besides that, new non-native teachers also feel less taken into account, as well as English-speaking teachers who teach other languages will experience similar isolation [11].

More than that, teachers have a big role, so new teachers are required and must pursue achievements as good teachers and have good character in teaching. Teachers are required to be knowledgeable, have creativity, good teaching methods, varied techniques, enthusiasm, good communication, facilitate student understanding, provide logical analogies, entertain, humor, interest students, never give up, be democratic, provide freedom of opinion, motivating, friendly, fair, supportive and attractive appearance [12]–[14]. The process or journey of a new teacher in obtaining their professional identity is interesting to study, so researchers try to explore the journey of several teachers in Indonesia. The construction of a teacher's professional identity is the process of becoming a teacher. The meaning of being a teacher is seen from two different views, namely the process of becoming and being a teacher [15]–[17].

Undeniably, there is a possibility of stress, lack of appropriate support, and a sense of not being ready to handle students' behavioral and academic problems at the beginning of the teaching year [18]. Several previous studies have identified that novice teachers will find several challenges, lack of ability in pedagogical knowledge, and developing effective and planned lessons, in addition to the different characteristics and abilities of students and the unavailability of their accompanying mentors are also a problem [3]; it becomes a cognitive, physical, and emotional challenge to become a professional teacher [19].

This research combines theory from Bourdieu's notion of *field*, modal and disposition [20]–[22]. The learning process in this context means the formation of identity, where this process involves many parties. Little by little, through participation in social practice, the individual develops abilities and understanding. [23] state that the environment also plays a role in forming professional identity. For example, a healthy and inclusive environment can help produce appropriate behavior, while a conflicting or negative environment can produce unacceptable behavioral norms [23].

Identity is analogous to a track or path taken to reach a central point, harmony and full role in a community [20], using various practical paths and investigations that differ according to the community from the field, then adapting it according to its values and procedures [24]. Using imagination as a point of view to assess themselves in the

community and try to align local to national policies such as curriculum. The word 'identity' is ubiquitous in contemporary social science, across psychoanalysis, psychology, political science, sociology, and history, where psychological and sociological influences influence the construction of identity [5], [25].

Some experts offer two types of community concepts, namely the small type and the broad type. Small type is defined as a narrow entity, or small and coherent scope [26], such as a community between English teachers, as well as teachers and students, where they are in the same sphere with similar routines or experiences [27]. While the broad type is a community context that overlaps in various aspects as it is known as a *field* in Bourdieu's theory [26]. According to [22], fields are like markets or games, in which agents position themselves among different species of capital. The form of modal will be interesting if it is used in interpreting the description of the construction of the professional identity of the novice teacher, it is important to know what capital provides value or which is not known.

Cultural capital consists of; institutionalized, realized and objectified. The institutionalized form is of interest to this study, as a continuation of the formal academic qualifications. The form contained as the lens of analysis. The cultural capital contained is an integral part of a person, where habitus [28] is a dispositional system that is fundamental to individual orientation, action and thought [21] which means it is closely related to identity and language is one of them. Language skills for language teachers can affect how someone views their social values. It comes down to regulating one's relationships through various fields and social positions [29].

2. Method

This research is a narrative inquiry where the focus is to explore and investigate what kind of narratives that have been collected from new teachers about their decision to enter their career and the problems they face in shaping their professional identity. Five novice English teachers were participants in this study, and they worked for less than five years. The purposive method was used in selecting participants in this study. Each of the novice teachers who participated as participants was a graduate of the English department.

The research data was obtained through an interview process, which was conducted via WhatsApp and cellular calls, considering that the time for data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic had not yet ended to comply with health protocols. This interview consists of four main parts that allow exploration of the direct experiences of novice teachers who are also non-native, namely life and personal stories; past experiences; learn a language and become a language teacher; current teaching experience and self-description; and challenges, self-perception, and future plans (expected identity).

Interview files were shared via WhatsApp Messenger and each participant was asked to answer within a week. Calls are made only to clarify answers that are still ambiguous or unclear in written answers. The collected interviews were analyzed using

thematic analysis and identities were suggested by Pierre Bourdieu professional identity [21], [22], [28]–[34].

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Results

The entire interview is saved and will be displayed in a presentation that is tailored to the flow and needs. The findings of the data are interesting to study and reveal one by one, where the background and motivation for the formation of the professional identity of each teacher is very varied.

Teacher 1: A teacher from a middle-class and well-known family, both parents are state teachers. Interested in reading and sports activities, such as cycling and futsal. He started his education from a small school in a village, and last studied at a state university for four years.

Teacher 2: A teacher from a middle-class family with a family background is not an educator. He is interested in things related to phonology. He studied at one of the best universities in Indonesia, and had a doctoral degree, although he did not complete it.

Teacher 3: A teacher from the background of a soldier's father and a teacher's mother. Since school days, he has been very interested in English and teaching activities. Take 4 years of college English education.

Teacher 4: A teacher who comes from a poor family in a small village, the village where he passed the nine years of compulsory education. Had full hopes of becoming a police or army. After graduating from high school he studied at a local campus not far from where he lived.

Teacher 5: A teacher who comes from a lower middle class family, but is not poor. His family who moved frequently made him interested in foreign cultures outside his community. He took a bachelor's degree, as the beginning of his career in the world of teaching.

Some teachers have a good heritage and education from families that make them feel confident and the nature and behavior that are naturally formed from families where the majority of educators are educators have an effect on the formation of their professional and personal identities, such as in teacher 1 whose family has a good economy and is also an employee. educator. In addition to getting sufficient economic support, the upbringing of the teaching family also makes him imagine his identity in the future, which is to become the best teacher for his students. A respected family also became one of the encouragement for him. Then he became more enthusiastic in his career after getting married and having children. Teacher 1 expressed his strong motivation:

“I am amazed by my parents, many people feel that they are a helper for their children, their positive energy and enthusiasm in teaching stimulates each student to continue to grow and learn. I feel that I must be like them and maybe with more methods, so that many generations can be

relied on, help a lot in the world of education and of course will be very blessed and blessed by God, because teaching is a noble duty and sunnah.”

Then, the interesting background of a teacher is where the career being carried out is not the main goal, a situation or thing is the turning point. As in teacher 2 who really loves linguistics, and phonology became his choice, so he studied up to a master's degree, then decided to become an English teacher. The family economy was not the problem, it was his sense of responsibility and maturity that became the turning point, because at that time he was a husband and father to his small family. He felt unworthy to continue to depend on his parents, and now he had to bear the life of his own family, so he had to apply for jobs to several destinations. The teaching profession turned out to be the initial announcement that was received and of course he took the definite one, because other goals were a long process. The responsibilities of his new family became a great motivation to continue learning and improve his new identity, on the other hand he is a graduate of a master's degree in phonology, teaching techniques are not in it. Teacher 2 shares his story:

"Right now, I have a big responsibility, and I may not be young anymore. I have been accepted for a doctoral degree and that is at a well-known university in Indonesia. That's a wonderful thing, but is it still appropriate for a father to still depend on him? That's my thought, as soon as possible I have to make them happy with my sweat, even though at this time I have been *dropped out* because of my difficulty in dividing my time, this is a new environment and community for me, a lot of time is needed for that. Hmm. Thank God God still gave me a good place, maybe there are many out there who want a position like me, I have to be grateful for it”.

Not infrequently a teacher who inspires his students, and indeed should be an example or role model. That is what is in teacher 3, he is very involved in the field of teaching and teaching because he has been inspired by the English teacher at his school, especially at high school who always teaches with enthusiasm and in a fun way. His interest in English has made him learn a lot about English, as well as how to teach it. His parents never pushed for a certain thing, just a message that as a Muslim he must serve and make people around him happy, or at least share good and useful things. Then he asserted:

“That is what strengthens my desire and aspiration to teach, yes, to share good things and hope that it can benefit the nation's generation. I use it as a means of seeking reward, apart from earning a living, I am sure it will have a good impact on me, both in this world and in the hereafter. My mother, who is a teacher, also told me the same thing, which made me more confident and my teacher became my reference for teaching English in a fun and motivating way.”

There is no career ambition, continuing what is there, school and college are just a formality, maybe that's what can be described in the condition of someone who lives in a small and poor village. As experienced by teacher 4, who lives in a small village where the primary school teaching profession is the best. He tried to be bigger than that by dreaming of becoming a soldier or policeman, so that he seemed prestigious

in society according to Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power and social capital. The learning environment in high school does not seem to provide inspiration and a picture of the future, so he does not get a picture of the future and only adds a negative impact on his personal identity. Until he looked for a scholarship to study at university, and it changed his mindset drastically. A lecture in his class got a question that seemed inappropriate after his good explanation to the students. He describes:

"That day after the lecture gave a good presentation on the presentation, several students asked things that might be a joke, then the lecture's words were like lightning that grabbed the students' laughter. "Please listen to me, I am a devout Muslim, and I left my father who was very ill, I prefer to come to lectures which I consider a responsibility on something bigger, is this the only joke you can do?" That seems to give a message that basically lectures are not very restrictive, but the main thing is to make sure you understand and appreciate the content, jokes are only part of the relief, not the main thing. So that someone's sacrifice for something is not in vain. Incredible. That day suddenly I really admire a teacher, wherever they teach".

Since that day, his mindset changed and he pursued his career as a teacher, he continued his teacher education to a master's degree. The teacher's low salary is not a problem, in his small village it will look high, apart from that the government gives more if he is able to pass the ministry selection, the most important is the role behind it. In addition, teachers have their own symbolic power and social capital in the community, with great honor and respect in society, especially in their community, their religion (Islam) also provides respect and a good place for educators.

Unlike the experiences of a number of previous teachers who were inspired by someone, both parents and teachers, teacher 5 said that he was interested in teaching English because he likes to learn and share things related to culture outside his community. His family, who often moved between cities, made his childhood aware of new cultures, new interesting things, especially Indonesia as one country, different from other countries, such as the Middle East for example, which is like a country divided into 20 countries. British accent from the United Kingdom that attracted him. His enthusiasm made him very proficient in English complete with a British accent. The lack of family finances did not prevent him from continuing to higher education, participating in the selection and scholarship facilities that he took. Then he narrates:

"My enthusiasm in school which only started with a unique British accent is now higher, my academic environment is more significant, yes, when I was on campus I often joined scholarship friends who always talked about education, whether it's the teaching system and so on. It may have shaped me to deepen my education and my realm of English. Besides that, I like to talk about new things that I know and that other people listen to, I think I was born a teacher, and God planned this noble goal."

From the starting point where they determine their career, there is a continuation where they have to develop themselves to become full and ideal teachers. There are many ways that teachers do in developing themselves, as in teacher 1 who tells:

"I used to imagine something else, but yeah... this is my identity now, the mandate that is imposed is to try my best, God knows everything. I can start by sharing with colleagues. Training, training, books and so on will be the next stage."

The attention that needs to be emphasized from the above expression may be experience as the best teacher, where sharing stories, experiences, knowledge with colleagues or colleagues who are senior or new, is a first step and it is important. Then training and insight from reading, for example, will be a construction booster. Reading journals is also possible with teacher 1 reading a book, as well as training, teacher 2 said:

"There are many ways to go; journals and government training, for example. Journals gave me significant technical references, training gave me knowledge in the field, motivation and confidence, as well as other formal training."

Journals available on various platforms and publishers are also not just a review of research literature, teacher 2 tells that he is able to apply a number of methods that are considered relevant to his class. It may be a new insight for teachers. Formal activities and training provided to teachers are external factors that can be used as references and new insights. Non-formal training is also good, and that helps. Teacher 3 tells:

"I watched a number of videos, how sometimes boring material actually gets a lot of viewers on their channel, non-formal training also helps me, both free and paid".

The expression above also explains that commercial videos are not just entertainment or new things, but are used as reference materials and fun teaching techniques can be adopted. Videos on a number of channels do sometimes convey something boring, but the way they are distributed is able to bring in a lot of viewers, as explained by teacher 3.

"After attending government training, I opened my horizons a little, and started looking for references related to teaching through various media, whatever it is, I consider it a science." Teacher 4

"There are many experts and researchers in the field of education, their findings will definitely help us, the English teacher community is also another supporter."

It seems that teacher 4 uses research as a reference, which is then integrated with discussions with fellow teachers at the school where he teaches and the social community. Basically, research conducted by experts and researchers is intended to be applied, so that teachers do not need to take risks with new techniques.

Identity construction will take place more quickly if the environment or community is positive. That means a synergistic environment for the common good in the future, such as sharing and discussing teaching activities, helping each other with agendas and so on. A number of institutions implement regular discussions between teachers of related material, teacher 5 explains:

"The group functions for several things such as materials, curriculum, teaching activities, problems, difficulties, which we also discuss in the monthly agenda".

3.2 Discussion

Identity is a complex, multifaceted, multilayer, construct, progressive reconstruction, in which a person learns and claims membership that is influenced by power relations [35]–[37]. It was also stated that identity is a complex concept, multifaceted, and socially forms the process of interpreting the situation, and together, identity, social and relationships form a professional identity gradually [38], [39]. Moreover, identity is considered as a psychological, as well as social conception [40]. The effect is on the agreement of social experts that the identity of the teacher is formed and developed due to internal and social factors. A significant role in the formation of teacher identity is from internal and environmental (time, interaction, and space) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). According to [41], professional identity involves a complex interrelationship between the personal, professional and situational aspects of a teacher's life. According to constructivists [42], [43], teacher professional identity is defined as teachers' understanding of their roles and commitments to various aspects of teaching practice that can be changed as a result of psychological and socio-cultural factors. The teacher's professional identity must be studied and understood holistically through personal, social, and situational perspectives. In this study, teachers recognize their professional identity from life experiences, so that it becomes important, the socio-cultural aspect becomes another view of the teacher's reflection through space and time.

One of the factors that shape the life and professional identity of teachers is religion, which has an impact on career choice, relationships and motivation for students and instructional practice. For other motivations behind career choice, you can review previous studies [44]–[46]. Although from the findings of this study there are many sociocultural and sociological aspects that become the reasons and their career decisions, unconsciously every teacher interviewed revealed things related to religion and divinity, unexpected, but it happened and was true. The professional identity of the teacher is firmly embedded in the individual's early life, beliefs, and social environment, and it is shown in the findings of this study. In another study, it was also shown that religion, which is closely related to teaching, has a large influence on teachers' decisions to choose a career [47]. The identity affinity expressed by [36] directs how religious identity forms professional identity. The same religious associations between teachers and students can add value to teachers, and [30] describes this motivation as a process of acquiring cultural capital.

After the starting point of career selection, the next professional identity maker is the teacher development program. Teacher training or development is important, [40] explain that the professional identity of teachers is an important element of the sociocultural and sociopolitical aspects of the classroom and in the professional development of teachers. The teachers said that they developed their teaching through journal reviews, government training programs, sharing with colleagues, browsing on video

platforms related to fun teaching to non-formal courses and it had a big impact on construction [48]. Reviewing journals or research related to teaching is important, where it becomes a part or role taken by the university [49].

[50] argue that teachers are the main change agents to implement the new curriculum. The professional development and education of teachers and the role of teacher training are very important in the basic education curriculum innovation program. In addition, alignment between curriculum standards and instructional pedagogy can contribute to improving the quality of education while addressing equity and inclusion issues [51]. Advanced development for teacher professionalism is categorized in three main areas, namely short training courses, support systems and peer networks [51].

In improving the professional competence of teachers not only through training in postgraduate educational institutions or teacher training institutions, independent education, participation in pedagogical methodological activities and informal education need to be carried out and have a big impact. Informal education is understood as an organized educational activity outside the formal system with results that are certainly method dependent, and can be better [52], and training does not mean receiving valuable documents or papers [53]. The precise definition of the term informal training in ISO 29990:2010 is based on the principle of 'a contrario' [54], which then gives the conclusion that from a scientific point of view it is not distinguished from formal training.

Based on the analysis of scientific studies, some of which are described in the [55]; [52], [56]; [54] and others, and identified the benefits of non-formal education, namely: voluntary participation; various contents and forms; no prior education is required; much depends on the experience of the participants. Characteristics and comprehensive studies related to informal training have been carried out [57]–[59].

Then work accompanied by advice, sharing, and discussion with colleagues will be more effective in developing professionalism, research has also shown that it can increase self-confidence and greater abilities with different perspectives, experiences and knowledge [60], [61] and supported research that reported that successful development was related to the professional community of teachers [62]. This is corroborated by other works, which found that community discourse is important for every teacher to adopt new instructional strategies and change ideas [63]. Moreover, through participation in the discourse community, teachers can increase their confidence in the value of their own practical knowledge to other teachers and increase the willingness to experiment with ideas [64]. Every teacher interviewed realized the importance of developing professional skills. Related research also has consistent results that support this study [65]–[67]. So that the development of materials, skills and techniques can be seen changes in each semester.

In addition to internal efforts, there are external factors that are revealed by each teacher, such as a positive environment, as in [68]. Several teachers were involved with English language activities and organizations at school, thus encouraging them to learn more. The English teacher discussion group is at least a first step, each teacher gets it, as a sharing of teaching techniques, knowledge, problems and related discussions. In some schools there are special sessions or schedules related to this discussion,

as told by teachers 1, 4 and 5. This is in accordance with the suggestions of [69] and [70]. In line with this, Mockler (2011) asserts, the identity of the teacher intersects with personal experience, professional context, and the external environment that is formed through the time in which he works [71], [72]. Other research adds that the identity of novice English teachers develops as individuals who take part in social life, or as members of a group that is built, continues to evolve and is contextualized [17], [73].

4. Conclusion

This study has improved our understanding of the novice teacher's identity construction. This adds to our knowledge of how aspects of religion, background, environment, community, training and sharing of colleagues impact the development and formation of teachers' professional identities. Further studies on the formation of teacher identity can be carried out in other Indonesian schools to add references to teacher formation in this country, to see how teachers, as reflective agents, construct their identities. In the era of globalization, such cross-regional, personal, background and cultural comparative studies will provide important information for educational institutions or school institutions and policy makers, enabling them to improve the quality of education and keep up with international developments. An environmental support network for English teachers to share experiences, ideas, suggestions and information will be useful. Future studies would do well to investigate the area, context and other lens of the formation of a new teacher professional identity in Indonesia so that it would provide further valuable insight into the construction of teacher identity.

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