

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the points of introduction of this study which compiles the background issue, research gap, purpose, and also the significances of conducting this study.

1.1 Background

Teaching practicum is an important phase for pre-service teachers to gain more experience. It creates a chance for them to begin solid teacher's identity that would help in the future profession (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010). In addition, Izadinia (2015) research articulates that teaching practicum program can offer students an opportunity to develop an understanding of the teacher's role and a sense of self-efficacy in their ability to cope with future challenges. Moreover, in particular, pre-service teachers have a unique chance to "try" on some of the professional roles and explore what it means to be a teacher in real practice (Meyer, 2009, p.27). Therefore, during this phase, it is necessary for pre-service teachers to start creating an identity as a teacher.

In line with this issue, pre-service teachers must build their teacher professional identity as a way to be a professional teacher. Trent (2013) states that pre-service teachers' professional identity construction is the uniting of past experiences of teachers and teaching and imagined future as a full-time teacher. In other words, it is a process of learning which means the realignment of "experience" and "competence" (p.437). Apparently, many pre-service teachers are less attention to this process of forming a professional identity. For instance,

based on researcher experience, pre-service teachers do not carried out seriously in teaching practices, such as teaching without lesson plans, did not observe the situation of class, and did not prepare the materials. They are only carrying out seriously when the examination will be held. It shows that they do not realize that teaching practicum is one of the most influential components of teacher education to create their professionalism ((Ferrier-kerr, 2009).

Moreover, the role of teacher educators is also important to build pre-service teachers'-awareness of their professional identity. Same as Rodrigues' (2018) findings that experienced teachers have a considerable impact on the development of pre-service teachers' identity that embodies the pedagogical, technical and ethnical dimensions of teaching, and responds to social and cultural diversity. Hence, the professional identity of pre-service teachers needs to be explored to get the empirical study of forming teacher identity. It is necessary because teacher identity provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of "how to be", "how to act" and "how to understand" their work and place in society (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p.178).

In the last decade, pre-service teachers' identity construction has become a focus of much empirical discussion (Yuan & Lee, 2015, p.469). While some researchers have found that pre-service teacher identity is constructed by sociohistorical, social and emotional processes, few studies have tracked the social factors which help the identity construction such as teacher educator, school-based supporting teachers, and students. Some researchers have focused on emotional processes and explored how emotion plays a role in pre-service teachers' identity construction (e.g. Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Yuan & Lee,

2015, 2016). Meanwhile, another research draws on the sociohistorical perspective and explores how the identity of pre-service teachers emerges out by their participation in teaching practicum programs (e.g. Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010). Further, some researchers have investigated how pre-service teachers' identity is constructed and helped by teacher educator and position of themselves in the social context (e.g. Trent, 2013; Rodrigues, de Pietri, Sanchez, & Kuchah, 2018).

Given the significance of the pre-service teachers' identity, the present study investigates the professional identity of pre-service teachers who had passed the teaching practicum program in one of the universities in Tasikmalaya. This study investigates the pre-service teachers' professional identity viewed from sociocultural perspective. Sociocultural means the situation of learning belongs to place and society. In other words, it is the interaction between people to people and people to the environment.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Drawing on the aforementioned discussion, in this study I addressed the following question, "How do pre-service teachers describe and understand their professional identity viewed from a sociocultural perspective?"

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to this study, as follow:

- 1.3.1 Teaching Practicum** : It is the internship teaching program for 7th-semester undergraduate students for experience as teachers in Indonesia.

- 1.3.2 Pre-Service Teacher** : It is the undergraduate students who join in a teaching practicum program.
- 1.3.3 EFL Context** : It is the situation of English teaching practice by and to non-native speakers in countries whereas English is generally not a local medium of communication.
- 1.3.4 Professional Identity** : It is the formation process of learning and a person's self-knowledge about teaching related to situations and relationships that manifest them in practical activities.
- 1.3.5 Sociocultural Perspective** : It is the view of identity based on the interaction between people to people and people to environment.

1.4 Aims of the Study

The present study aims at investigating how pre-service teachers describe and understand their professional identities.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The finding of this study can contribute to the evidence of how pre-service teachers understand their professional identity in terms of knowledge understanding viewed from a sociocultural perspective. This research will offer empirical insights into how pre-service teachers created the professional identity that would support and sustain them in their future profession.