

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the phenomenon that motivated this research study. It consists of five main sections. The first section delves into the background, explaining the issue and detailing the researcher's rationale for selecting this particular topic and conducting the study. The second section addresses the problem formulation, outlining the research question that will be tackled in Chapter Four. The third section introduces operational definitions, clarifying specific terms used throughout this thesis to ensure an understanding of terminology within the context of this research. The fourth section presents the research aim, detailing the intended outcomes once the problem formulation is comprehensively addressed. The final section discusses the study's significance, highlighting the research findings' practical implications and real-world relevance.

1.1 Background of the Study

The formation of a professional identity represents an essential component in the growth of student teachers within the field of English Language Teacher (ELT). This development is detailed in contexts of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, where student teachers encounter the dual demands of acquiring pedagogical expertise and understanding cultural subtleties in the language (Hall et al., 2010; Jeongyeon & Hye Young, 2020).

A significant issue facing many English education graduates is their reluctance to enter the teaching profession, because they feel unpreparedness and dissatisfaction with their educational experience (Rinekso et al., 2020; Trent, 2019). This highlights the importance of understanding how professional identity is formed among English student teachers, as it plays a crucial role in supporting their growth and effectiveness in diverse educational settings (Motallebzadeh & Kazemi, 2018). One major challenge in this process is the lack of commitment displayed by some student teachers during their training. In the teaching practicum program, for instance, certain student teachers treat the experience as a mere formality, focusing primarily on preparing for exams rather than engaging deeply with the teaching

process. Tasks such as completing teaching journals become just another requirement, rather than an opportunity for meaningful reflection. This lack of engagement not only diminishes the value of their training but also hinders the development of their professional identity. Without active involvement and reflection, student teachers miss critical opportunities to shape their understanding of what it means to be a teacher. Developing a strong professional identity requires more than just completing tasks it necessitates ongoing self-reflection, meaningful interaction with teaching practices, and a commitment to growth. Without this, student teachers may struggle to build the confidence and skills needed to succeed in the teaching profession.

The role of mentors is also essential in shaping student teachers' understanding of their professional identity. Mentors can influence pre-service teachers' identities, covering teaching methods and cultural diversity (Rodrigues et al., 2018). Therefore, there is a need for empirical studies to explore student teachers' professional identity, as it guides educators in defining their roles and understanding their place in society (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

The practicum process is vital for fostering student teachers' professional identity, as it provides a platform for continuous interaction to develop teaching professionalism (Hendriwanto, 2021). EFL student teachers who take the training in the English Education Department and are enrolled in the PLP II program are directed toward shaping their professional identity.

Despite the considerable focus on building teacher identities, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, there still needs to be a significant gap in the literature. Examining this issue offers essential insights into this group's distinct challenges and experiences, which help shape more focused teacher education programs and support systems. This research aims to fill this gap and enhance our understanding of how professional identity is developed among individuals entering the teaching field within the EFL context, focusing on Tasikmalaya. By examining the experiences, challenges, and perceptions of student teachers, this study intends to reveal valuable insights that can guide the creation of

effective teacher education programs designed to meet the needs of student teachers in EFL.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the researcher addresses the following question, — How do English education student teachers in an EFL context construct their teacher professional identity?

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misinterpretation, here are the operational definitions of each keyword

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| 1. Professional Teacher Identity construction | : Teachers' professional identity is constructed Through process of social identification, Social Comparison and Social categorization. |
| 2. EFL Student Teachers | : Refers to English Education Department students who consider English as a foreign language and have experienced pedagogical and professional courses at university. |

1.4 Aim of the Study

The study aims to unveil EFL student teacher professional identity construction in Teachers' Education Program

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Use

This research will enrich the literature on student professional teacher identity construction in English as a foreign language (EFL).

1.5.2 Practical Use

This study enhances student-teacher education, promotes culturally responsive teaching, bolsters teacher well-being, strengthens teacher-student relationships, enriches professional development, contributes to EFL teaching methodologies, and nurtures contextually relevant educators.

1.5.3 Empirical Use

This research will provide empirical insights for Student teachers to understand their identity construction processes better.