

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an introduction to this study. In this chapter, I will elaborate on the background of this study. Other studies in the same field are also mentioned in the background. Subsequently, the background is followed by research questions, aims of the research, significance of the research, scope of the study, clarification key terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

Many research in teacher education emphasizes the importance of teacher identity in teacher development and learning process (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Benson et al., 2013; Day et al., 2006; Day & Kington, 2008; Day, 2018; Gee, 2000; Hsieh, 2014; Olsen, 2008a; Sachs, 2005). Teachers invest themselves in their profession, which means their identity takes part as they do their profession (see Day et al., 2006; O'Connor, 2008; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). At the same time, teachers build a relationship between themselves and their surroundings that is a part of the identity construction process (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Benson et al., 2013). In a similar vein, Wenger (1998) argues that participating actively in a community of practice could shape ones' identity as one negotiates within the community. It implies that participating in a community has a role in shaping our identity, be it as a student, teacher, entrepreneur, or any other profession.

Teacher identity is believed to serve as a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of "how to be," "how to act," and "how to understand" their work and their place in society (Sachs, 2005, p. 15). For instance, teacher identity allows a teacher to be a caring teacher who is willing to maintain a meaningful relationship with her students outside the classroom. It happens because her beliefs and perspectives about a teacher's role influence her understanding of the profession (see O'Connor, 2008). The illustration provides us an idea of how teacher identity can influence teachers' actions and decisions in their profession,

which might affect their students. Therefore, teacher identity is essential in the teaching and learning process, since teachers have a massive role in classroom practice (Gandana & Parr, 2013; Hsieh, 2014; Varghese et al., 2005).

To understand teacher identity as a framework, it is essential to scrutinize the term “identity.” The word “identity” is often used in issues related to gender, nationality, ethnicity, and culture (Gee, 2000; Weigert et al., 2006; Wenger, 1998). There is hardly any rule on how to use the word. In general, identity is a label, name, and category used by people to address each other and themselves, produced from humans’ social activities (Weigert et al., 2006). Identity is “a process ‘located’ in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture” (Erikson, 1968, p. 22). He added that the “process” constantly changes and develops from one is born until the time he departs this life.

Similarly, Palmer (2007) defines identity as “a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human” (p. 13). It indicates that identity is formed by one’s interactions with himself and his surroundings. To sum up, identity refers to a dimension that represents oneself, which is addressed by a label. It develops over time and relates to one’s interaction with the society around him.

There are several perspectives in researching identity. Some of them are Eriksonian and neo-Eriksonian, sociocultural, and poststructuralist perspectives (Gray & Morton, 2018; Zembylas, 2003a). Eriksonian and neo-Eriksonian perspectives emphasize the process of identity construction more on an individual role. This perspective also considers the role of social and cultural aspects, but the primary focus is on individual choices in utilizing the cultural elements (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Zembylas, 2003a). In contrast, the sociocultural perspective highlights the role of social and cultural aspects in the process of constructing identity. Social interactions, signs, and tools are the primary focus of the sociocultural perspective. It is mentioned that an individual’s mental functioning is obtained from social interaction with others (Park, 2015; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Zembylas, 2003a). Finally, the poststructuralist perspective views identity as “both individual and social” complex and develops over time within contexts (Benson et

al., 2013, p. 18). Poststructuralist perspective frames identity as a “process of intersubjective discourses, experiences, and emotions” (Zembylas, 2003a, p. 221). In other words, the poststructuralist perspective considers individual and social roles in constructing identity as equally important. The poststructuralist perspective also allows researchers to go beyond the search and make several claims on identity and the aspects that construct it (Block, 2007; Zembylas, 2003a). Thus, I decide to see teacher identity construction from the poststructuralist perspective.

In the realm of teaching and learning, an explicit definition of teacher identity is not yet well established in research on teacher identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Gray & Morton, 2018). However, the term ‘identity’ is often closely related to teachers’ professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Izadinia, 2013; Olsen, 2013). Teacher identity links with teachers’ interpretations of their professional knowledge, selves, perspectives, and practices development (Olsen, 2013). Teacher identity is constructed as teachers connect their individual and the profession’s characteristics (Pennington & Richards, 2016). It is formed within context, which involves social, cultural, political, and historical forces. Context refers to a place or community that holds several norms with a group of participants who upheld the norms. The norms, traditions, and rules of one’s society, culture, politics, and history take part in their identity constructions (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

Nevertheless, Rodgers and Scott (2008) did not clearly address what they referred to as social, cultural, and historical forces. Some researchers used the terms and addressed some elements that relate to the forces in the context of teaching and learning. Wenger (1998) emphasizes that active participation and membership in social communities are vital in identity formation. It implies the importance of social force, which relates to one’s interaction and relationship with the community that he involves in. In terms of cultural forces, Flores and Day (2006) associate it with the school’s norms and values.

Similarly, Dale and Peterson (2016) state that school culture comprises traditions, expectations as well as written and unwritten rules within the school. Regarding political forces, Lasky (2005) points out that it relates to the

government's mandates on teaching and learning. She also states that some teachers felt powerless in dealing with new policy mandates that relate to teaching and learning. It draws a line between power relations and political aspects of the teaching. Similarly, Johnston (2003) and Zembylas (2003a) mention that power relation links with political aspects of teaching. Power relations can happen between government-teachers or school stakeholders-teachers and between teachers-students (Johnston, 2003). In terms of historical forces, Olsen (2008b) relates it with teachers' experiences in teaching and learning. Years later, Pennington and Richards (2016) mention some elements that relate to historical forces: preferences and personalities, beliefs and knowledge about the world and other people, and intuitive and automatized behaviors.

Various factors can be experienced along the process of teacher identity construction. It is crucial to figure out the factors that shape teacher identity since they can influence teachers' teaching practice and teaching quality (Hsieh, 2014). Teachers' teaching practice and their professional identity construction are intertwined. It is also said that teaching practice is a factor that constructs teacher identity (Day & Kington, 2008; Flores & Day, 2006). Therefore, teacher identity and teaching practice could be influencing one another. The process of identity construction might affect the teachers' teaching practices. Likewise, their teaching practice could also affect their identity constructions. In other words, teacher identity plays a significant role in classroom practices.

Constructing teacher identity could be challenging, especially for novice teachers (Alsup, 2006; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Chong et al., 2011; Flores & Day, 2006; Pietsch & Williamson, 2010; Pillen et al., 2013). Novice teachers often find a mismatch between expectation and the reality of being a teacher (Chong et al., 2011; Flores & Day, 2006). They might experience some confusion about their roles and others' expectations of them as teachers because they experience the transition from being a student to teacher (Alsup, 2006; Beijaard et al., 2004; Pillen et al., 2013). The rapid transition of the role and environment could make novice teachers feel anxious, hindering teacher identity construction (see also Erikson, 1968; Izadinia, 2014). Therefore, the teacher identity construction could be

demanding for novice teachers. Exploring novice teachers' professional identity construction shall contribute insights into how they grow in their profession. It allows us to see the novice teachers' perspective of their profession and themselves as teachers, which is valuable to be researched. Thus, this study focuses on exploring novice teachers' identity constructions.

For years, teacher identity has been a research focus in the educational field (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006; Day & Kington, 2008; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Indonesian researchers have also researched on this topic (e.g. Cendra, 2019; Diasti, 2021; Florida & Mbato, 2020; Hapsari & Ena, 2019; Hidayati, 2018; Lomi & Mbato, 2020; Upa & Mbato, 2020). Some research on teacher identity in Indonesia focused on tensions experienced by novice teachers, one of the research has been conducted by Cendra (2019). She had researched novice teachers' tensions in constructing teacher identity and how they cope with both the tensions they experienced. The result of the study showed that the tensions were various and complex. Some tensions were related to image building and dependency (e.g., being a caring teacher vs. a tough teacher, and depending on/following colleagues vs. going on own way). Other tensions were more dependent on cultural bound (e.g., expressing opinions vs. being in total obedience, and own integrity vs. toxic school culture). Some other tensions had to do with professional and pedagogical problems. The participants showed various coping strategies. They were looking for solutions by themselves (by negotiating, choosing one among two streams, and learning more about something), accepting the situation as it is, receiving help without asking, and sharing with significant others.

Similar research on novice teachers' struggles and coping strategies in constructing teacher identity was conducted by Lomi and Mbato (2020). Internal and external struggles were identified in this research. Internal struggles consisted of controlling emotion, maintaining self-efficacy, teacher's language ability, and dealing with job dissatisfaction. The teachers cope with the problems by doing reflections, enhancing their professional knowledge by browsing something related to their subject, and having support from their surroundings (students, environment,

and family). External struggles consisted of classroom management, overcoming the lack of teaching resources and facilities, dealing with hostile relations with colleagues, handling students' competencies, and issues about salary. The teachers overcame the external struggles by applying rules in the classroom, being creative teachers, trying to help their colleagues maintain relationships with them, and making an extra class for the students.

Subsequently, Diasti (2021) conducted research related to stress factors experienced by novice teachers. Three stress factors were found as the result of the research: personal, interpersonal, and organizational. Personal factors relate to the teachers' view of their students and themselves as teachers. It is also related to their capability in classroom management. The interpersonal factor is related to the teachers' relationship with parents, colleagues, and students. Organizational factors have to do with school culture and management, and administrative works. The coping strategies done by novice teachers were: seeking social support (from friends), having some time to be alone, and doing reflection. However, one of the participants planned to quit the teaching profession due to her inability to cope with the stress that she experienced. It is also mentioned that writing a reflection journal helps the teachers be aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

Three previous research in the Indonesian context that had been mentioned shared a similar focus, and thus, the result also had similar points. It can be stated that novice teachers' struggles come from emotions, professional knowledge, and the school environment, including students, colleagues, parents, facilities, and policies. Some other researchers also explored teacher identity in Indonesia with some different focuses. One of the research is written by Florida and Mbato (2020). They compared novice and experienced teachers' strategies to transform vulnerability into professional identity and figured out how they affect their teacher identity construction. It was found that a novice teacher and an experienced teacher had different situations that made them feel vulnerable. It was mentioned that the novice teacher was more concerned about how people judge her, while the experienced teacher was overwhelmed due to the overwork. The novice teacher coped with her vulnerability by upgrading her pedagogical knowledge or

professional knowledge, while the experienced teacher coped with her problem by seeking help from colleagues.

Hapsari and Ena (2019) researched teacher identity in the Indonesian context. They researched how pre-service teachers position themselves to the students and construct their teacher identity. Participants of this research faced similar problems: classroom management and students' behavior. However, they did different positioning to face the problem. One of them turned out to be a firm teacher, while one turned out to be a powerless teacher in the class. The author emphasized that contexts or school environments greatly impacted the participants' different positioning. The participants were teaching in different schools with different students and environments. They also mentioned that positioning helped the teachers form new identities since it could be seen as teachers' response toward the situation they were facing.

Finally, research that focused on factors that affect experienced teachers' motivation in developing their teacher identity had been conducted by Upa and Mbato (2020). The authors also tried to figure out the teachers' strategy in teaching students with special needs. The result showed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were found. Intrinsic motivation comes from their desires to help the students, and extrinsic motivation comes from family, students, and colleagues. As for the strategy used by the teachers, they mentioned that audio-visual media were effective in teaching EFL for students with special needs.

All in all, research on teacher identity conducted in Indonesia was related to teachers' struggles, vulnerability, positioning, and motivation. However, out of six research on teacher identity in Indonesia mentioned in this section, only three showed how the factors affected the teachers' teaching practices (Cendra, 2019; Hapsari & Ena, 2019; Lomi & Mbato, 2020). Additionally, research on teacher identity in the Indonesian context mainly focuses on one side of situations, e.g., positive or negative. Meanwhile, considering both the positive and negative sides of being a novice teacher is necessary to explore the factors that construct teacher identity (see also Erikson, 1968).

Thus, to enrich the discussion on teacher identity in Indonesia, I explore the factors that construct teacher identity from both positive and negative situations experienced by novice teachers. Identity is formed within contexts that involve social, cultural, political, and historical elements (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). This study explores the factors that construct teacher identity based on those four elements in the context of teaching and learning. How the factors that construct teacher identity affect teaching is also explored. It is worthy of investigation since it can also affect the teaching quality. It is expected that this research could reveal the novice teachers' experiences and needs in their early time of becoming a teacher.

1.2 Research Questions

This research is framed by the following research questions:

1. How do novice teachers construct their teacher identity?
 - a. What factors do novice teachers find influential in their teaching practices?
 - b. How do these factors, as the teachers see, influence their teaching practices?

1.3 Aims of the Study

Based on the research questions, the aims of the study can be stated as follows:

1. To identify the factors experienced by novice teachers as they become teachers.
2. To explore how the factors affect their teaching practices.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to contribute insights for teachers, institutions, and researchers regarding social, cultural, political, and historical factors that construct teacher identity and how it affects their teaching practice. It is also expected that this research can be a reference for further researchers in researching similar fields.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is qualitative research that strives to identify the social, cultural, political, and historical factors experienced by novice teachers during their early teaching time. Seeing how the factors experienced by novice teachers construct their teacher identity and affect their teaching practice are also the objectives of this study. Two novice teachers participated in this research. Novice teachers are chosen in this study because they might be struggling to construct their teacher identity (Pillen et al., 2013). This study collected data related to novice teachers' experiences and stories. Thus, narrative inquiry is the most suitable method (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) because it provides opportunities to collect stories related to the novice teachers' experiences of teaching and learning the language and their professional development. The data is collected from interviews and written teaching reflections of the participants.

1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

a. Teacher identity

Teacher identity is shifting over time and is shaped by several factors, including context, experiences, emotions, and stories (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

b. Factors

Factors contributing to the teacher identity construction are the focus of this study. The factors are related to social, cultural, and historical forces within contexts (Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Weigert et al., 2006). I focus on social, cultural, and historical factors involved in teaching and learning. First, social factor refers to teachers' interactions and relationships with people in the context of teaching and learning, e.g., students, colleagues, students' parents, family (Erikson, 1968; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Wenger, 1998). Second, the cultural factor involves norms, values, rules, traditions in school settings (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Flores & Day, 2006). Third, political factors involve the government's mandates and power relations (Johnston, 2003; Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2003a). Finally, the historical

factor in this study focuses on preferences and personalities, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences (Olsen, 2008b; Pennington & Richards, 2016).

c. Vulnerability

Vulnerability is a term related to teachers' emotions and their actions to respond to the emotions. There are two types of vulnerability: open vulnerability and protective vulnerability. However, open vulnerability is also related to positive emotions. It occurs when the teachers feel secure in their environment. When teachers are being openly vulnerable, they will build trust, respect, and be responsible for helping the students academically, socially, and emotionally.

In contrast, protective vulnerability is related to negative emotions; it occurs when teachers feel insecure in their environment. Teachers with protective vulnerability will have feelings of defensiveness, anger, or fear. This protective vulnerability will lead someone to take no risk or take a risk that can harm himself or others (Lasky, 2005)

d. Novice Teachers

Novice teachers in this research followed the term used by Kim and Roth (2011). They described novice teachers as teachers with less than five years of teaching experience.

1.7 Thesis Organization

Chapter I provides a background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, significance of the research, scope of the study, clarification of key terms, and the paper organization.

Chapter II explains related theories and literature. It consists of several parts: the definition of teacher identity, factors that construct teacher identity, and the relation of teacher identity and teaching practices.

Chapter III discusses the methodology in conducting the research. It contains the method and design of the research, site, data collection, and data analysis that describe how the data would be presented and analyzed in chapter IV.

Chapter IV presents findings from the data collection and discussions related to the findings. The research questions are answered in this chapter. This chapter has three major parts: 'Tania's story,' 'Dita's story,' and 'Discussion. The research questions are answered within the participants' stories.

Chapter V contains the conclusion of the research. This chapter also consists of the implications and limitations of the study. Several suggestions for novice teachers, institutions, and future researchers in similar fields are also mentioned in this chapter.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented the background of the research, research questions, aims of the research, significance of the research, scope of the study, clarification key terms, and organization of the paper. This chapter already mentions that this research focuses on the social, cultural, political, and historical factors in identity constructions of novice teachers. Furthermore, how the factors affect their teaching practices is investigated in this research. In that regard, theories related to teacher identity, factors that construct identity, the relations of teacher identity and teaching practice, and previous studies are elaborated on in Chapter II.