

## Exploring Indonesian EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Professional Identity: Why should be Civil Servant?

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### Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the professional identity of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) pre-service teachers in Indonesia after the government announced that no new public servants would be accepted for lecturer and teacher positions starting in 2022. The study involved 153 students from an English language education program at a public university in North Sumatra province. Data was collected through closed-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The information was analyzed using statistical methods for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data. The findings revealed that 48% of the respondents had chosen to become civil servant teachers, and 76.60% of those intending to be civil servant teachers preferred to work as Government Employees with Work Agreements (PPKK) teachers in the future. Numerous rationales and suggestions to remain being professional teachers are then discussed and established.

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## INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of recent Indonesian university graduates continue to aspire to work in certain position in the public sector as civil servants (Hidayati, 2020: p.67; Winda, 2020:p.161). This is evidenced by the consistently high level of interest shown by applicants in the process of selecting new civil servants year after year. Recently, the State Civil Service Agency (in Bahasa Indonesia: BKN) of Indonesia through its official portal ([www.bkn.go.id](http://www.bkn.go.id)) in 2021 reported a total number of civil servant candidate (in Bahasa Indonesia: CPNS) applicants of 3,772,420 people with various formations, such as doctors, computer administrators, nurses, administrators, judges and prosecutors, guards, prisoners, lecturers, and most of all teachers. These

applicants were seeking positions in a variety of professions, including but not limited to the most applicable position: teacher.

On the other hand, the Indonesian government recently announced by way of the Ministry of Bureaucratic Reform State Apparatus Empowerment (PAN-RB), that beginning in the year 2022, there will be no acceptance of new public servants for the establishment of lecturer and teacher positions. This declaration was communicated by the Minister of PAN-RB through the Letter of the Minister of PANRB dated July 27, 2021 No. B/1161/M.SM.01.00/2021 designation. Lecturers and teachers will only be accepted as state civil apparatus through the mechanism for the appointment of Government Employees with Work Agreements (hereinafter: PPPK). According to Law of Republic of Indonesia number 5-year 2014, PPPK is also part of the State Civil Apparatus, although there are some differences in several aspects. This is a program that recruit Indonesian citizens who meet certain requirements, who are appointed based on a work agreement for a certain period of time in order to carry out government duties, and by rights have the same rights as civil servants, such as: salary and benefits, leave, protection, and competency development, and has one exception: pension funds. Therefore, in accordance with the legislation, it is possible to assert that PNS and PPK are the same, with the sole distinction being that PPPK are obligated by a work agreement contract, whilst civil servants serve for life without a contract.

Consequently, there are both positive and negative consequences to this policy. The benefit of this is that it frees up human resources to explore other areas that foster innovation and entrepreneurship. Because every task is carried out in accordance with predetermined guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), working as a civil servant is derided as a dull profession with little room for creativity. This also has a severe effect on long-serving educators who have worked hard and dedicatedly for many years, as well as those who have been appointed honorary positions in the education institutions. For teachers, becoming a public servant teacher is the pinnacle of success. In addition, reducing the number of educators has had a detrimental influence, despite the fact that having an adequate number of educators is the most important factor in the success of the educational process (Andina & Arifa, 2021). The decision to stop hiring civil servant teachers raises questions about how educators see their role and status in the education system now that the usual way to become a civil servant teacher has changed.

When this reality is taken into consideration, it becomes apparent that there is a pressing need to conduct a thorough overview of the professional identities of those preservice teachers who will one day work as educators in Indonesian schools. Preservice educators who are millennials need to make some adjustments to their professional identities. This identity needs to be reconfigured in order to reassess the responsibility in the preparation of quality teachers in order to prepare for global changes that are moving very fast (Tang et al, 2020), in case the quality of the education is strongly affected by the quality teachers ((Jennifer & Mbato, 2020), particularly in the current global twenty first century which stimulates the teacher as the main key to success in education (Yan et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have examined the connection between teachers' professional identities, motivations, and beliefs, including those of language teachers and EFL teachers, both in global context (eg: Motallebzadeh & Kazemi, 2018; Ostad et al., 2019; Pinho & Andrade, 2015; Wang, 2021) as well as in the Indonesian context (eg: Iswandari, 2017; Rachmajanti et al., 2021; Weran & Kuswandono, 2021). However, specifically, the professional identity of prospective English teachers with the motivation to become PNS teachers has not been carried out. Besides which, a new policy from the government which abolishes civil servant candidate (hereinafter: CPNS) teachers for 2022 has been issued, which is predicted to affect the perspective of what preservice teachers want to become after completing their studies.

In addition, in the meantime, there is a growing perception that millennials should not give any consideration to working in the public sector as civil servant. The findings of a number of studies indicate that individuals of the millennial generation prefer work to play a less significant role in their lives, place a higher importance on leisure, and seek greater personal autonomy while living a consistent work-life balance ((Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Twenge, 2010). This is in contrast to individuals of earlier generations, who preferred work to contribute a more significant role in their lives. Being a civil servant is an interest for Gen-X and baby boomers' generations. Civil servants are perceived as being resistant to change, so millennials should not expect to become civil servants. Even though millennials do not work for the government, it is still possible for them to develop their teaching skills to become competent and innovative.

The concept of a teacher's professional identity has developed into a rather widespread concern, including in Indonesia, both in the context of education in

general (eg: Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016; Zembylas, 2018), and in the context of EFL in particular (eg: (Rudolph et al., 2019; Widodo et al., 2020). Various definitions have been established for the concept of the professional identity of teachers, and these meanings are predicated on the perspective from which identity is defined ((Valdés-Sánchez & Espinet, 2020). In this context, it is defined as the view that teachers have of the obligations that coincide with their profession ((Qoyyimah et al., 2020). Moreover, identity is also outlined as comprised of the teachers' work, their ability to learn and evolve their mistakes, problems, challenges, and reflections ((Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Moreover, identity is also associated with the idea of 'how to be' and 'how to comprehend' teachers' profession and place in society is influenced by identity construction ((Barkhuizen, 2019; Rudolph et al., 2019), as well as the preservice teachers' perspectives on "who we are and who we believe others to be" (Danielewicz, 2014). To that extent, in Indonesian context, the recent policy change regarding the recruitment of civil servant teachers adds a new layer to the discussion of professional identity, where becoming a civil servant teacher has long been seen as a mark of professional success, so the policy change may lead to shifts in how pre-service teachers perceive their role and status in society.

In short, professional identity in this context is how these EFL teachers' future is prepared. Iswandari (2017) noted that it is very important for teachers to comprehend their professional identities since doing so can assist them in becoming more conscious of who they are as educators and the types of educators they aspire to become in the foreseeable future. They need to review their volition, as professional identity is a continual process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences that answers the question 'who am I now?' ((Kalaja et al., 2015). In sum, Jennifer & Mbato (2020), following the study of Botha & Onwu (2013), concluded that the construction of a teacher's identity is a process that continues throughout a teacher's career, but it begins during professional studies.

To a similar extent, the context of identity has a strong relationship to belief and motivation. This is due to the fact that studying the identity of persons entails also studying their fundamental beliefs, experiences, and motivations (Botha & Onwu, 2013), which is in this context, the images and discourses about education that are commonplace within this particular culture have a considerable amount of weight on these beliefs and help to shape them. In this shaped issue, among the three types of motivation for pursuing a career in education that Yüce et al., (2013) identified are:

(1) extrinsic motivation, such as the promise of a job with benefits or monetary compensation; (2) intrinsic motivation, such as a passion for teaching or the desire to work in the field; and (3) altruistic motivation, such as a desire to serve the community and country.

Reflect to those facts and construction, as prospective human resources of education in Indonesia, the intentions and direction of the identity of EFL preservice teachers need to be re-examined. As the teacher identity possesses the fundamental characteristics of identity, which are that it is numerous, dynamic, and contextual (Prabandari, 2020), these EFL preservice teachers as millennials are required to be dynamic with the times. With the elimination of CPNS acquiescence for teachers, it is necessary to reconsider the gap between the expectations and personal identity of the pre-service teachers in one of English education department in Medan: do they still want to be a civil servant teacher, or a private school teacher, or even in other fields that are more a priority for them?

## **METHODS**

### **Design**

In base of qualitative, this study employs case study: in case, researcher in this study is attempting to elucidate the participants' views on the subject matter under consideration in order to better understand their own behaviors, experiences, and the underlying motivations that motivate them, as explained by Stake (1996). The students of bachelor degree of English Education at one of the State Universities in North Sumatera Medan, Indonesia, who were majoring in English language education, participated in the study. The data was gathered through the use of closed-ended questionnaires, as well as a semi-structured interview with the participants. In order to gather information about students' and their beliefs and behaviors in taking the English Language Education Department program, a questionnaire was distributed online through a Google Survey link, and a semi-structured interview was conducted in order to gather information about their future professional job preference. The information gathered in this study was then examined using two methods: statistical count for quantitative information related to students' beliefs and behavior related to their future professional preference, and particular substances analysis for qualitative data pertaining to students' perspective on their future professional career.

## Participants

This study enrolled 153 students of the English language education study program at one public universities in North Sumatra province. Voluntary response sampling was firstly used in collecting the basis data related to the students professional preference after finishing their study. 153 students from various intake years voluntary filled up the questionnaire sheet. After that, purposive sampling was used, to gather the information about their personal professional identity in exception being a civil servant teacher. These purposive sampling was also determined as the interviewee to gather the data for particular substance analysis. 74 students then were enrolled on this phase.

## Procedure of Data Analysis

Calculation based on percentages was used to examine the results of the survey. After the participants had finished filling out the survey, the information that was collected was sorted into different categories according to where it originated from. The results of the survey were interpreted by the computing tool in the form of a table on a real-time basis. After that proceeded the narration of the interview results, which was followed by an expansion and clarification of the understanding.

## FINDINGS

For the first step, a survey was distributed to all students in this study program to identify what professions they would like to pursue after finishing their Bachelor of English Education studies. At this level, 153 students voluntarily participated. The following outcomes were acquired from the 153 students:

Table 1. Kind of Profession the Respondents Choose

Kind of Profession	Number	Percentage
Private School Teacher	12	7.84
Translator	4	2.61
Civil Servant Teacher	74	48.37
Tourist Guide	8	5.23
Youtuber	2	1.31
Businessman/Entrepreneur	16	10.46
Private Sector Staff/Employee	23	15.03
Others	14	19.15
Total	153	100

According to the survey results, the majority of respondents ended up choosing to become civil servant teachers as their future professional life, where 48 percent of

them answering that they chose to become civil servant teachers. This result is followed by 10.46% students chose to become businesspersons or entrepreneurs, and only 7.84% students who chose to become private sector teachers as their main job.

Furthermore, 48 percent of these respondents (74 in total) who chose to remain become civil servant teachers were directly surveyed to complete the next survey, and some of them were questioned utilizing the semi-structured interview technique. These 74 students then have been given following survey with more detailed questions:

*"The government through the Decree of the Minister of PANRB declared that in 2022 onwards there will be no civil servant candidates' recruitment for the teacher formation. Teachers will only be recruited to become Government Employees with a Work Agreement (PPPK). In light of the abolition of civil servant recruitment, what career would you prefer to pursue after completing your bachelor's degree in English Language Education?"*

With a fairly significant comparative presentation, it was discovered that the majority of them still selected to become teachers based on their survey responses.

Table 2. Kind of Profession the Respondents Choose after Devoid of CPNS for Teachers

Kind of Profession	Amount	Percentage
Private School Teacher	1	2.12
PPPK Teacher	36	76.60
Businessperson	3	6.38
Private Sector Staff/Employee	3	6.38
Others	3	6.38
Total	47	100

A total of 76.60 percent of those who participated in the survey said that they intended to keep working as PPKK teachers in the future. In the meantime, there are a total of 9 respondents, which accounts for 19 percent of them, who have decided to transition to other employment. These positions include working in business, the private sector, and other fields. According to the follow-up interviews that were carried out, the factors and considerations that led them to continue working as teachers in PPPK as well as in the private sector are quite varied and include the following:

*"In essence, becoming a teacher has become my aspiration. Regardless of the compensation, I will perform the duties to the best of my ability. The elimination of civil servants does not diminish my desire to become a teacher. After completing my bachelor degree, I will endeavor with the name PPPK. In addition to being a teacher, I want to create an English tutoring service. Since, in my perspective, success is not simply success; it should be a noble success that benefits many others." (Student 1)*

*"The reason I opted to become a PPK teacher is that I have wanted to become an ASN since I was a youngster, although via the PPPK way rather than the CPNS one. This is not a problem for me, since I wish to serve my country. There is also a greater career path for first PPPK teachers than for private teachers. Indonesian government scholarships for ASN PPPK personnel to pursue master's and doctoral degrees are also available to help teachers become more qualified to teach and better serve their students."* **(Student 2)**

*"Since I was a child, I've always had the goal of one day being a teacher. Despite the fact that I am not employed by the government, I still intend to pursue a career in teaching as my primary occupation. I want to be someone who is helpful, not only to myself but also to the others in my immediate environment. I am confident that through passing on one's knowledge, the information that I have acquired throughout the course of my education will not only continue to be remembered and put to good use, but will also be capable of going on to other individuals. Because I am reminded that the most admirable people are those who make a positive contribution to the lives of others. Consequently, one of my primary goals is to put the education I have received throughout the course of my life to good use, specifically in the field of teaching. Not only can I pass on my knowledge to others through teaching, but I also have the opportunity to contribute my own unique perspective to the process of teaching and subsequent learning."* **(Student 3)**

*"I have always wanted to become a teacher because those that play such a significant part in the development of others. Another reason I want to become a teacher is that I want to be of service to others and help impoverished youngsters maintain an interest in learning. I am unconcerned with the teacher's compensation because my primary objective is to be of service to others. The elimination of CPNS does not cause me to give up. However, after completing bachelor degree, I will enroll in PPPK and, God willing, I will create an English tutoring service for children who wish to learn the language, as I want all children to be able to speak at least the most fundamental English. Because PPPK applies a work agreement or work contract for a limited period of time, which prevents me from working full-time, I open an English tutoring business on the side in order to continue sharing the knowledge I have in order to continue contributing as a useful teacher, as the best of humans are those who are useful to others."* **(Student 4)**

*"Since childhood, I had desired to become a teacher. For me, being a teacher is not about the income, but rather about genuine commitment to educating the nation's young and imparting religious values. Because it is evident that the knowledge and skills I acquire are inextricably linked to the wonderful profession of teaching. Therefore, the abolition of CPNS does not alter my plan to become a teacher; God willing, I will continue to be a teacher, as teaching is a wonderful*



*profession, and I am pleased to be able to impart the knowledge I possess. As taught, the best individuals are those who benefit others." (Student 5)*

## **DISCUSSION**

The immense majority of respondents indicated that they still intend to work as state servants in the capacity of teaching, even though they are in a PPPK status, as evidenced by the findings acquired from the surveys and interviews which have been carried out. They do not consider financial gain to be the most important factor because teaching is their true calling; therefore, they do not rank it as the primary reason. Their primary motivation is that teaching is their passion, and their secondary motivation is that they want to devote themselves to society in order to impart knowledge, so that irrespective of their income, they will continue to choose teaching as their primary job. Aside from the two main motives, the status as a PPPK is a supplementary bonus. This fits with the three main reasons why people choose to become teachers, according to Yüce et al., (2013) : (1) the promise of a job with benefits or income; (2) a passion for teaching or a desire to work in the field; and (3) a willingness to serve the community and nation. This notion is consistent with all three of these reasons, although in the reverse order: respondents ranked their mission to serve the community as the second most important thing in their lives after their passion for teaching. "Becoming a teacher is my dream," "I want to serve my country," "I will be able to bring my own different insight to the process of teaching and learning," "I want to help others and keep poor kids interested in learning," and "being a teacher is not about money, but about a genuine commitment to educating the nation's youth and passing on religious values", are the statements which strengthen this notion.

These findings has answered the Iswandari's (2017) assertion that it is critical for teachers to understand their professional identities because doing so can help them become more constantly aware of who they are as educators and the types of instructors they endeavor to become in the foreseeable future. Moreover, their responses also support Kalaja et al., (2015) suggestion that they should overview their volition, as professional identity is a continuous process of interpretation and reconceptualization of experiences that answers the question who they are. These EFL pre-service teachers have an understanding of their roles in the society as evidenced by the fact that they want to serve the country by contributing their unique perspectives to the process of teaching and learning, as well as by assisting the

communities and keeping low-income children interested in education. This demonstrates that they have an understanding of their roles.

In addition, the findings of the study provide support for the theory of identity proposed by Barkhuizen (2019), Yazan (2019), and Danielewicz (2014)). This theory represented the frame of reference of identity with the idea of 'how to be' and 'how to comprehend' teachers' profession and role in society, both of which are influenced by identity construction, as well as the preservice teachers' perspectives on "who we are and who we believe others to be." In this context, the preservice teachers have grasped their identity in terms of what they will evolve into, as well as a full understanding of their function in relation to the profession that they will engage after completing their bachelor's degree studies. Not only that, they have also understood their role in society as evidenced by their will to take on the function of providing knowledge in society as a social construction and real contribution as their biggest motivation to become professional teachers, according to the responses they mentioned in the interview.

Otherwise, consider the implications: this study contradicts Twenge (2010) and Lyons & Kuron (2014) studies, which necessitate that individuals of the millennial generation favor work to play a lesser role in their lives, place a higher value on leisure, and encourage increased personal autonomy while maintaining a consistent work-life balance. In contrast, as civil servant, this millennial generation will be subjected to a large number of predetermined norms, limiting their working independence. Within the scope of civil servants' responsibilities, each task is performed in accordance with specified principles and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). All components of the work should adhere to the defined guidelines. Obviously, this directly contradicts contrast to the notion that these prospective millennial educators should be able to explore themselves by working in their profession, but by applying the principle of autonomy to their lives, i.e., by discovering modifications and innovations in every element of their work. Moreover, in the realm of education, dynamic shifts occur much more rapidly. Therefore, new teaching methods and problem-solving approaches should be adapted to comply with the requirements of the times.

## **CONCLUSION**

The majority of the 153 students who voluntarily participated in this study opted to become civil servant teachers as their future vocation, with 48% of them indicating

that they chose to become civil servant teachers. This is followed by 10.46% of students who decided to become businesspeople or entrepreneurs, and 7.84% who chose to become private sector educators as their primary occupation.

In addition, 48 percent of these respondents (a total of 74) who preferred to remain as public servant teachers were then questioned for the subsequent survey. According to this survey, 76.60 percent of respondents intend to continue working as PPKK teachers in the future. In the meantime, there have been a total of 9 responders, or 19% of the total, who have elected to shift to a new line of work. "Becoming a teacher is my dream," "I want to serve my country," "I will be able to bring my own unique perspective to the process of teaching and learning," "I want to help others and keep poor children interested in learning," and "being a teacher is not about money, but about a genuine commitment to educating the nation's youth and passing on religious values" are the main reasons why they continue to recognize as teachers.

It is advised, on the basis of the findings of this study, to policy makers from relevant agencies that they need to give special attention to the professional identity of these EFL pre-service teachers. Taking into consideration the fact that a large number of millennials who are idealistic still have an interest in becoming educators, with the primary motive for teaching being a passion and another motivation being to serve oneself and the country in some capacity, in order to strike a reasonable balance in the millennial generation's human resource bonus, it is essential that this motivation be carried out in conjunction with appropriate compensation.

However, this study, which focused on the professional identity of EFL pre-service teachers in Indonesia after the government's policy change, should be interpreted with caution due to its limitations. The research sample consisted of only 153 students from a single university in North Sumatra province, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to all teachers in Indonesia. Therefore, the findings may not be representative of the entire population of EFL pre-service teachers in Indonesia. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the professional identity and preferences of EFL pre-service teachers in the country, further research with a larger and more diverse sample size is necessary.

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