

## Pre-Service Teachers' Integration into Teachers' Community during Teaching Practicum

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**Abstract:** Teaching practicum is a strategic place where pre-service teachers transform themselves from being pre-service teachers (PSTs) to become novice teachers. Data from a case study on how a group of PSTs experience integrate into teachers' community during teaching practicum in Indonesian context shows that their journey is not linear; it encompasses a complex process, enriched by tension and conflict before some of them hold a sense of belonging to teachers community in their placement schools. Their ample engagement and participation with members of school community during teaching practicum program have effectively played as a significant factor behind their integration and identity transition.

**Keywords:** *teaching practicum, pre-service teachers, identity construction, teachers community, integration, identity in transition*

### INTRODUCTION

This paper examines how pre-service (English) teachers experience identity in transition from being university students to become novice teachers during teaching practicum in the context of teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Specifically, this paper aims to answer these two research questions: *First*, what are the patterns of pre-service teachers' integration into teachers' community during teaching practicum?; *Second*, what kinds of tensions and challenges do they experience along their integration and transitional process to become the novice teachers?

This study was situated with a teaching practicum program as a part of a pre-service teacher training program in Riau University, Indonesia. The practicum in this university is called as *Program Pengalaman Lapangan/PPL* (Field Experience Program). However, the term 'practicum' is going to be consistently used along this paper. The practicum is scheduled for four months (sixteen weeks). According to the guidance book for the practicum in Riau University, this program is regarded as an 'estuary' from the whole teaching and learning process during the teacher education program (*Panduan Pelaksanaan PPL Mahasiswa FKIP Universitas Riau* 2013). Along the program, the students are not only expected to experience the real life of being a teacher – handling a class and teaching students, but also to be able to socialise with all school environments and or with all members of the school as a community of practice.

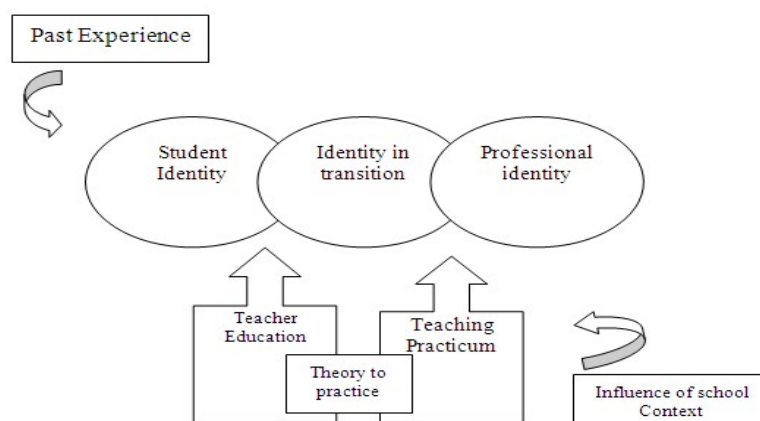
The PSTs are also required to participate in other non-teaching activities, like “attending at morning flag ceremony, being on duty, participating at students’ extracurricular activities, and even helping some office works in administration office” (translated from *Panduan Pelaksanaan PPL Mahasiswa FKIP Universitas Riau* 2013, p. 7). The main goal of these activities is to enable the PSTs to have a holistic learning experience as well as to engage with the whole context of school community which would later strengthen and enrich their experiences on becoming novice-teachers. This also implies that they are not only expected to work with their mentor teachers, but also with students, with other teachers, with school administrator, as well as with students' parents. This present study, among others, seeks to explore how the PSTs experience the complexity of their interaction with all school members during the practicum in relation to their early professional identity construction.

### Theoretical Frameworks

The teaching practicum is central in a pre-service teacher education program due to its strategic roles in preparing prospective teachers. It is, therefore, no wonder that there are a lot of studies conducted to investigate the teaching practicum (see Lawson, Çakmak, Gündüz, & Busher, 2015 for a recent systematic review of 114 research studies on teaching practicum published between 2000 and 2012). The teaching practicum is considered important as it is the time “when theory meets practice and goodism meets reality” (Fallin and Royse, 2000 in Pungur, 2007, p. 267). It is here that the PSTs experience the real world of being a teacher, and the ‘real ground of knowledge production’ (Johnston, 1994), where they bring theory into practice including having opportunities to develop skills for designing lesson plans, delivering the lessons and classroom management.

It does not only function as the first practical site where PSTs meet a real school atmosphere, but more importantly is because it provides PSTs to work with a school community, a place where they construct a new identity – teachers’ identity. It is through this teaching practicum, that PSTs' identities are further reshaped as they gradually assume and define the role of a teacher through practice teaching as well as develop their conception of teaching (Danielewicz, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2011). At the same time, it also functions as *a place of socialisation* for the PSTs where they undergo ‘a process of becoming a member of a specific group, the teaching profession’ (Farrell, 2001, p. 49). It is a place where those PSTs engage and collaborate with their mentors, incumbent teachers, and other members of school community along the the transition. It is also a period when the PSTs construct, deconstructs and reconstruct their understanding on what it means to be an English teacher. As Britzman’s(2003) maintains that learning to teach “is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation” (p. 31).

The process of this professional identity (trans)formation within the context of teaching could be illustrated by the following Figure 1:



**Figure 1. Development of professional identity in pre-service teachers**

The transition for *crossing the border* from being a student-teacher to a novice-teacher is a complex process and could be marked by the PSTs' 'struggle for voice' (Britzman, 2003, p.3). The PSTs may be struggling to find meaning or to make sense their journey to become new teachers. Indeed, studies have shown that many PSTs experience 'transition shock' during this period when they feel of having not adequately prepared for dealing with the complexities of problems they face during teaching practicum (see for instance Achinstein, 2006; Britzman, 2003; Korthagen, 2001). As Britzman (2003) states, "The first culture shock may well occur with the realization of the overwhelming complexity of teachers' works and myriad ways the complexity is masked and understood" (p.27). Similarly, Achinstein(2006) also calls this stage as a *practice shock* in which these beginning teachers found a conflict between their ideal view of what it means to be a teacher and the reality they experience when starting their first job.

Wenger's (1998) *social theory of learning* and her concept of *community of practice* were used as the central theoretical frameworks in analysing and interpreting the data. The essence of this social theory of learning is on the belief that the genesis of learning lies in the social interaction between people rather than in individuals' minds. It does not only emphasis that learning to teach is indeed a form of teacher identity construction process, but also highlights the importance of social participation and community membership in the process of becoming a teacher. In addition, some other theories which emphasis the significant influence of context in shaping and reshaping teachers' identities, such as the works of Day and Flores (2006), Sachs (2001), and Walshaw and Savell (2001) were also used to develop the epistemological frameworks of this study. The analysis and discussion are also informed by the works of Britzman (2003), Alsup (2006), and Danielwicz (2001) which particularly concerns issues on critical analyses of PSTs' struggles to negotiate their professional identities during their teaching practices.

## STUDY DESIGN

I chose ten pre-service English teachers from the Bachelor Degree program of Faculty of Education of Riau University, Indonesia as my research participants. The participants were 21 to 22 years old and nine of them had never taught in formal public schools. They were about to conduct their teaching practicum before being selected. The participants' selection was both random and purposeful in the sense that all 40 PSTs who were in the same cohort were invited into the study and those who responded and agreed to participate first became the participants. For confidentiality reason, all participants are reported in the forms of their pseudonyms.

A method of data collection, two rounds of in-depth interviews with each pre-service teacher were conducted before and after teaching practicum. Fortnightly reflective journals were collected during teaching practicum and a one-hour Focused Group Discussion (FGD) was also conducted to see the dynamic and breadth of ideas across participants in answering the research questions. However, for this paper, most of the data were generated from their reflective journals and Focused Group Discussion (FGD).

To study the data, I first translated and analysed each of reflective journal submitted simultaneously. Data from the FGD were transcribed and analysed in order to get a general picture of the data from all ten participants. With the assistance of data management tool, NVivo 10, I coded and categorised data based on themes, and then analysed the patterns and themes produced from the data by referring to several kinds of literature on teaching practicum as a *community of practice* and or professional identity construction as cited throughout this paper. Together, these phases of analysis generated the findings discussed here.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

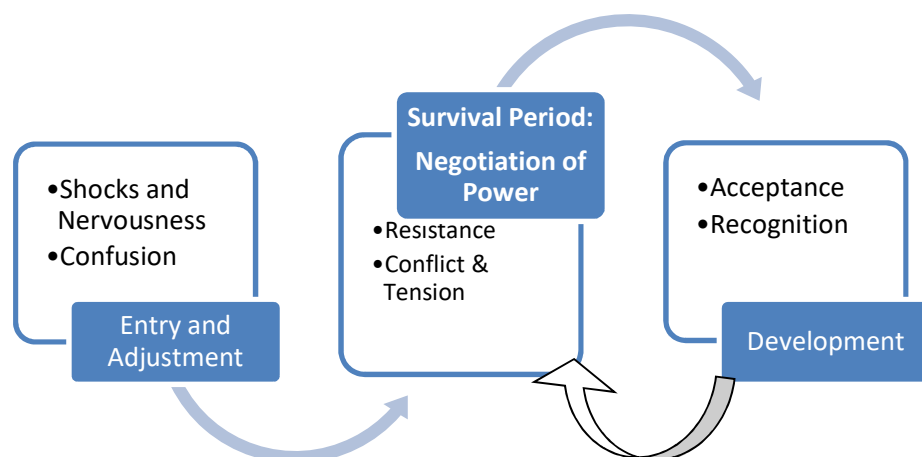
### The metamorphosis: from student teachers to “novice” teachers

*... and at night [before another class], I was wishing the night and the world could rotate faster; the morning could come earlier, so I could immediately meet them [the students]. I want to cheer them up, like the rain removing the dust on the road. For me, their laughter, joy, and even their 'naughty' could magically erase the pain, the fatigue I feel...*  
(Maya, Reflective Journal)

This section discusses in detail one of research questions - how the PSTs integrate into teachers' community and how they experience their metamorphosis from being university students to becoming a novice teacher by the end of practicum. To be more specific, the section explores how

they develop their sense of belonging to teachers' community during practicum and explore what factors have contributed to the development.

Having analysed the data, it revealed that the PSTs experienced the following “stages of development” in their journey of the integration and to becoming a new teacher during practicum, as displayed in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 02. Stages of Development of PSTs during Teaching Practicum in Riau University**

The figure captures three important “stages of development” with their specific prominent affective dimensions that characterise each of these three stages. Yet, it is important to note that although the “stages” in the figure above look linear, the real process in the field may not as linear as it looks, depending on each school’s context and individual’s unique experience.

### Entry and Adjustment

Nine participants reported that they experienced some degree of shock, nervousness, and confusion in the early weeks of adjustment with their teaching practicum. They articulated that they were anxious and did not have enough confidence if they could play their roles and responsibilities as new arriving PSTs; or they simply did not have clear ideas on what they should do after their arrival at their host schools.

Indeed, I was initially nervous when my mentor teacher asked me to teach grade 8 and handled the class by myself. I was nervous because I was worried about making mistakes in saying and doing something in front of the class.

(Ayu, reflective journal 1)

Being nervous and feeling anxious were also reported by some other PSTs, such as Rika, Biyan, and Icha during these early weeks. They were generally concerned with their lack of efficacies on how to handle a lesson and manage a class. Some of them were even shocked of knowing that they had to immediately deliver a lesson in the class once they arrived at their placement schools. They indeed felt under pressure during this period.

This kind of emotional pressures during their first weeks of adjustment process was “normal”, because nine participants of this study were truly new to teaching life. The literature on pre-service teachers education indicates that these anxious feelings are a common phenomenon in many new teachers classroom where many PSTs experience “*transition shock*” (Achinstein, 2006, my italic) during this period. They frequently feel of having not adequately prepared and being overwhelmed with the complexities of teachers’ works and problems they face during teaching practicum (see Britzman, 2003; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Korthagen, 2001). Entering to teachers’ life is definitely a new challenging journey for these university students with no prior teaching experience. The most common first culture shock may well occur with “the realization of the overwhelming complexity of teachers' works and myriad ways the complexity is masked and understood” (Britzman, 2003, p.27). This complexity has led these new teachers (to be) to have a sense of lack of efficacy; that they feel vulnerable because of their limit of competence, as previously mentioned.

In the case of this study, this state of shock was exacerbated by insufficient supports they received from both their university supervisors and school mentor teachers. As previously indicated, some mentor teachers, for example, immediately asked the PSTs to teach and handle the class independently just after they arrived in their placement schools. As narrated by Biyan, Dedi, and Ayu, they were promptly instructed to write lesson plans, design teaching materials without having proper assistance and supervision from the mentor teachers. Their mentor teachers just left them with the school students in the class soon after the mentor teachers introduced them to the class.

Drawing on the guidance book of the practicum in Riau University, the PSTs are required to “first observe their mentor teachers teaching in the classroom” for some times before they could handle a class by themselves (translated from *Panduan Pelaksanaan PPL Mahasiswa FKIP Universitas Riau* 2013, p. 6). This means what mentor teachers should do in the first two weeks was to provide an induction program for the PSTs. So, what had happened to Biyan and some other PSTs in this study was basically contradicting with the agreed standard procedures mentioned in the guidance book.

These findings are similar to the findings of a qualitative case study by Bonavidi (2013) investigating the relationship between the Bachelor of English Education (BEEd) coursework and practicum in an Indonesian teacher education program. His in-depth interviews with 29 PSTs, 12 teacher educators, the Practicum Unit manager from an Indonesian private university, and six mentors from six different secondary schools reveals that there are some central issues related to PSTs' learning during the practicum. Some of them are that there seemed to have no effective pre-practicum sessions; the PSTs experienced difficult situations during the practicum, with inadequate support and PSTs being unprepared to act independently as agentic learners; and there were no after-practicum activities to encourage reflection on the practicum experience and long term learning.

Yet, such lack of support problem during practicum was found not only in the context of this study (Indonesia), but also in many practicum programs in some other parts of the world, such as in Singapore (Farrell, 2001); in Vietnam (Hudson, Nguyen, & Hudson, 2008); Kenya (Ong'ondo, 2009); and Iran (Humaidi, Al-Shara, Aroui, & Awwad, 2014). The insufficient support has, in

turn, led many PSTs to undergo considerable emotional and psychological stress during practicum, as what happened at participants of this study.

While some mentors did not appear to provide sufficient guidance and support in the early weeks of the practicum, as previously discussed, stories from some other participants indicated that other mentor teachers did support the PSTs quite well during this adjustment process. Five participants reported that they received sufficient supervision from their mentor teachers during the first and the second weeks of their practicum experience. The PSTs were taken by their mentor teachers to their classes and asked the PSTs to observe the class. Mentor teachers also guided the PSTs in writing lesson plans, designing syllabus, and preparing teaching materials.

### **Survival Period: Negotiation of Power**

Passing through the adjustment stage, it was found that PSTs had to deal with “survival period”. This happened when they had to deal with some challenges and were struggling to *cross the borders* from being university students to becoming novice teachers holding a sense of belonging to teachers’ community (Danielewicz, 2001, my italics). Looking at the nature of each phase, I would argue that this is the most complex intricate of the three stages. This stage was marked by challenges, conflicts, and tension during their transition.

The challenges they faced emanated from their interactions with school students, incumbent teachers, their own mentor teachers, as well as with the school authorities. Tension also appeared in dealing with some intangible challenges, such as society and cultural expectation on the teaching profession as well as some standardised requirements to be professional English teachers currently set up by the Indonesian government.

Naming this milestone of PST’s learning trajectory as the *survival period* indicated that those kinds of challenges, conflicts, and tensions could lead the PSTs to a state where they sometimes lose their hopes and motivation to be professional teachers; or when they thought that teaching profession was probably not their lives; or when they felt shocked to find teaching world is just beyond their imagination.

The findings of this study indicated that the driving sources of this survival stage were complex. It related to some resistances shown by both school students and existing teachers for their presence and authority as PSTs; by the feeling of incompetence in organising and managing the class; and by a lack of supervision they get from their mentor teachers and supervising lecturers during their practicum.

However, I would argue that the conflicts and tension were basically originated from a dynamic intangible power relation between the PSTs as practicing teacher with their students as well as with their mentor teachers and some school administrators. It was apparent from the data that in many conditions, the PSTs had to negotiate their power as PSTs with their students who frequently resisted their authority and with their mentor teachers who considered them as university students learning to teach *per se*; rather than their colleagues with relatively similar power and authorities.

Indeed, the point that they were in identity in transition made many of them experienced a fragmented identity; that they were like 'in the middle of nowhere' and were fragile in terms of emotional, cognitive, and psychological development.

In regard to power-relation dynamic, there was a strong tendency from some school students as well as some incumbent teachers in their placement school not to really accept the PSTs as 'real teachers' and/or 'real colleagues'. In other words, they regarded these PSTs as 'only' student teachers with limited power and authority. The PSTs were indeed still university students, learning how to become teachers during this practicum. They were not as powerful as incumbent teachers.

The resistance shown by the school students had frequently created problems and even conflicts between PSTs and their students. It does not only create mental conflicts and dilemma within the PSTs' inner selves, but also appear in the form of physical and personal relationship between the PSTs and their school students. Biyan, for instance, recalled a story in her post-practicum interview that once she reminded one of her students to behave well during her class. Biyan tried to manage one particular noisy student in the class by reminding the student to keep silent and sit in her seat. However, Biyan just could not believe to the student's unexpected rude reaction and harsh statement.

You are only a practicing teacher, aren't you? Why are you acting like a real teacher, advising me, blabla." Then, my other fellow pre-service teachers also experienced the same thing. "you are only a student teacher, practicing here to get a good score. Please, no need to talk much".

(Biyan, post-practicum interview)

This state of rejection had changed the classroom into uncomfortable sites for these PSTs. They were just feeling in the point of 'no-where' and were unable to fully define themselves as real teachers yet. They understood that they were in the process of becoming a teacher. Yet, knowing the fact that they were *professionally rejected* by some students had led them to have a sense of *identity in crisis*. In one hand, they did teaching activities just like other 'established' and accepted professional teachers; on the other hand, they also felt that they were not having a sense of *collective identity* as a real teacher yet (Danielewicz, 2001).

From a different perspective, what these PSTs felt and experienced in responding the state of resistance could be considered as a part of their 'struggle for voice' (Britzman, 2003) which was established in their everyday interaction during the practicum. They were shaping their new teacher's identity through their interactions with the school members (in this case with the school students), especially by thinking and interpreting how their students reacted to their presence in the classroom. Some of them felt that their teachers' selves were emerging when their students and their mentor teachers positively responded to them. Yet, some others did not get the sense yet as they were being resisted. They were in dilemma and felt vulnerable with a fragmented identity, instead.

Furthermore, this dilemma was exacerbated by the fact that the symptoms of the denial were not only rooted from some school students' resistance, but also from some incumbent senior teachers'. Three participants reported that they were not really feeling happy interacting with some senior



teachers at school as the seniors had been *excluded* from the teachers' community in the school. In other words, the senior teachers seemed to be reluctant to accept those PSTs as their colleagues.

I feel a bit unhappy with some of my experiences interacting with some teachers at school lately. I feel that some of the teachers have underestimated us as student teachers. They frequently acted as if we were not really important for the school.

(Ayu, Reflective Journal 4)

The feeling of being resisted was also triggered by some kinds of discrimination in their placement schools. The PSTs, for instance, were physically separated from other incumbent teachers in the school where they usually had a separate shared office. In Biyan's host school, for instance, the PSTs were posted in language laboratory room which was relatively far from common teachers' room. As a result, the PSTs seldom interacted with other senior teachers in the school. Consequently, they might have felt to be *socially excluded* in the community. The state of this 'social exclusion' from the incumbent senior teachers seemed to build a strong psychological barrier between PSTs and the incumbent teachers in their daily communication. This isolation could also limit the opportunity for allowing the identity of a larger group (incumbent teachers) to become part of the identity of the individual participants (student teachers).

Additionally, this feeling was exacerbated by the way these senior teachers treated them as PSTs in the school. As previously mentioned by Ayu, some senior teachers could just easily instruct her as a PST to do some non-teaching activities. She was sometimes assigned by her school principal, for instance, to pick up something outside schools or to copy some paper-works to a copy centre located outside her school. Some senior incumbent teachers even asked her to prepare tea or coffee for the senior teachers in their office.

What these incumbent teachers did to some PSTs could be considered as a 'power abuse'. This was likely to happen as there was a crystal clear power-relation issue here where PSTs were usually positioned as someone powerless in dealing with their mentor teachers (and some other incumbent teachers) who might be seen as being more powerful. The mentor teachers were indeed powerful in front of PSTs' eyes for, at least, two reasons. *First*, mentor teachers were those who would assess the PSTs' practice during the practicum. In other words, they had an authority to decide if a PST 'passes or fails' the teaching practicum. *Second*, it refers to the cultural issues in Indonesia where seniors (in whatever context) usually expect to be more respected by a new comer. It is not 'allowable' for the junior ones to speak against the seniors, including in the case of different views on particular issued during teaching practicum. The respect, however, sometimes leads to bullying as well as such a power abuse phenomenon.

The powerful nature of mentor teacher during the practicum in Indonesian education practice is reflected from the official term used in Bahasa Indonesia to call the mentor teachers by *guru pamong* (*pamong* teacher). This word is derived from the Javanese language – *omong* or *momong* – which basically mean *to look after, to nurture, or to raise a child* (Nuridin, 2010). Therefore, what is implied from the word '*pamong*' is the nature of the parent-child relationship in which parents is culturally perceived as being more experienced and powerful than their growing kids. In other words, as the ones being nurtured, kids are positioned in a non-equal relationship during

their dynamic interaction. This perception also exists in the context of mentor and mentee relationship in Indonesia.

The power relation generated conflict also appeared in the pedagogical issues. This sometimes happened when mentor teachers advised the PSTs to do things that were actually conflicting with the PSTs' beliefs on teaching and learning principles. Because of the power-relation issue, however, many PSTs just followed what their mentor teachers said, regardless their disagreement.

Maybe because we are still juniors, some of them overuse us, assigning us to do some activities which are not really related to our teaching responsibilities. I just accept that, no other choice. Just go with the flow.

(Ayu, post-practicum interview)

What Ayu did was a kind of *conflict avoidance* behaviour. She deliberately chose not to challenge what her mentor teachers asked her to do. It did not mean that she just accepted the realities as it was. She was in a dilemmatic situation. She had to negotiate between her pride as an independent self, holding some values and beliefs with the fact that she was culturally in the weak position. She sometimes also had to carefully negotiate if she would employ her own teaching values, some of which contradicted with the values that her mentor teacher tried to impose on her. In terms of building a relationship with students outside the class, for example, her mentor teacher suggested her to keep a clear distance with her school students. However, she thought that having a close friendship with students was necessary to enable teachers to communicate learning problems with particular students more easily.

Further interpretation of this phenomenon is that kind of *conflict escaping behaviour* might relate to some parts of Javanese cultural philosophy – as the dominant culture in Indonesia – which puts social harmony in above everything else. The social harmony becomes the first priority for many people to consider, so any kind of social and personal conflict can be minimized. (Geerts, 1989 in Kuswandono, Gandana, Rohani, & Zulfikar, 2011). Although only one student (Maya) was originally from Java, the Javanese culture has been dominantly practicing in many parts of Indonesia since the Soeharto regime. The prevalent meaning of the social harmony philosophy is evident in some educational practices and discourses in Indonesia, such as in the collectivist oriented learning, charismatic bond between teachers and students (obedience), and conflict avoidance (Bjork, 2004). Specific to the conflict avoidance behaviours, Dardjowidjojo (2001) argues that this might have been influenced by a trait of Javanese culture, which is called “*manut lan miturut*” – a cultural value which states that the yardstick for judging whether a child is good or bad is the degree of obedience shown to h(is/er) parents. The more obedient (s)he is, the better (s)he is considered” (p.314).

### **Acceptance: Belonging to Teachers Community**

As reflected from the journal entries, in about four weeks or so, most PSTs were observed to undergo the adjustment and the survival phase quite well. They were getting more familiar with how the school system worked, and they understood better how to handle the class. In the context

of belonging to teachers community, participants claimed that they could feel and see that they had been *fully accepted* by the students in their class as their ‘real teacher’, like other existing teachers. Some degrees of this acceptance were also evident in relation to PST’s engagement with the existing senior teachers. In other words, the professional resistance phenomenon as previously discussed had already significantly diminished by this point.

... from the side of the students, I can see that they have accepted me as their teacher, and they really appreciate me. You know one day they came to see me and requested me to come to their class, because one of the teachers who was supposed to teach them didn’t come. It was really unforgettable for me.

(Rika, post-practicum interview)

This kind of *professional acceptance* could also be seen from the way the students treated the PSTs at schools. As narrated by Rika above, she felt to be accepted and acknowledged when the students deliberately requested her to teach them again in their class. This was significantly different compared to the first weeks of Rika’s placement when she was worried and uncomfortable with her students’ resistance.

Another instance of this acceptance was expressed by Elvi reporting that her students loved studying with her as a practicing teacher more than with their own ‘normal teacher’. Elvi was certainly happy to know this. Elvi considered this as the way the students welcome her as their teacher in the school community. This positive response also made her self-confident as well as self-efficacy grows. In other words, this had led the PSTs to feel secured and hold a sense of being a ‘new teacher’.

This acceptance could also be seen from the way the students respected the PSTs, such as by calling them ‘*pak*’ or ‘*buk*’ nicely and respectfully. These are terms used as a part of the culture in Indonesia to respectfully address their teachers. Shaking and kissing the teachers’ hand are also the way Indonesian children respect the elders, including their teachers. For the PSTs, this two-way show of respect strengthened their emerging sense of being a teacher. They felt to be honoured, recognised, valued, and accepted. Most PSTs reported that they were really impressed with the way the students addressed them and they thought that this calling was a symbol of students’ recognition of their presence and authority.

On another occasion, they were also impressed when the students presented them with a bunch flower in teachers’ day celebration, or when the students kissed their hands before they entered the classroom, as described by Ayu and Dedi. All of these instances contributed to strengthen their self-confidence as PSTs and at the same time all of these had nurtured their sense of a being a teacher to grow.

The flower played as an important language for the practicing teachers which symbolised the school students’ recognition and acceptance for their existence at schools. For these PSTs, these little informal acts acted like an ‘official inauguration’ for them to be officially welcome as one member of school community – being a recognised teacher. Although Ayu and Dedi clearly stated that they both had dreamt to be teachers since before they joined with Riau University, they also had to struggle for meaning making during the practicum. They did experience the survival period

as well until they got the feeling of the recognition and acceptance from both students and incumbent teachers after that 'magic flower'.

These warm acts of acceptance by the students subsequently led the PSTs to have a stronger motivation to be a teacher. Most of the PSTs reported that they felt the beautiful life of being a teacher by the end of practicum. As Dewi wrote in her last journal, her interest to be a teacher was starting to grow stronger. She started to enjoy her days of teaching practicum and interacting with the cheerful students. She claimed to have got 'the feel' of being a teacher. And at the same time, she could see that her students' interest to study was growing better as well. A similar story was also narrated by Ayu, expressing the feeling of being accepted by the school community, "Meeting and getting along with the students at school is just like a 'medicine' for my sickness. I really enjoy that moment." Other positive expressions were also beautifully articulated by Maya as written at the beginning of this chapter. All of these clearly indicated how well they transformed themselves from the 'new comers' to 'old timers' with a sense of belonging to the school community.

Although nine participants reported that they were happy by the end of the practicum, there was one participant (Dimar) who claimed to be disappointed. He kept saying that he did not want to be a teacher as his personal career choice. He claimed that he did not get what he dreamed on the practicum. His mentors did not support him much during the practicum. Apart from being unhappy with the school culture which he thought to be too rigid and unfriendly with a PST like him, he also mentioned that he had to run a business to earn more money to support his family. Being the first boy in his family, he had to help his mom to back up their family financially. He loved teaching, yet he thought that teaching as a job would not be rewarding enough for him to earn more money.

Referring to the *social theory of learning* by Wenger (Wenger, 1998) which stresses on the notion of identity as a learning trajectory and a community membership, what was experienced by these participating teachers were clear instances of these trajectories and membership in their journey to become a teacher. Participants have been going through some stages in their struggles for finding out their voices (Britzman, 2003) as new teachers until they were feeling emotionally secured following some states of professional acceptance.

At the same time, they were also passing through situations when they used to be *outsiders* of the teachers' community and became the *insiders* (community membership). At this stage, their new teachers' identities were well nurtured and constructed. In other words, it could also be claimed that they had already passed the boundaries and embraced some degrees of *collective identities* as new teachers (Danielewicz, 2001). Leave and Wenger's (1991) concept of community of practice argues that learning involves the whole person – which implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person. In the case of this study, these PSTs transformed themselves through the participation of being the newcomer's at first which was legitimately peripheral, but over time was centripetally drawn inwards and becomes more engaged and more complex – full participation. The newcomers' participation took place from the time they entered their practicum until they were in the survival period; and the full participation happened after they found themselves to have been professionally accepted and acknowledged. However, as it was a continuum, the identity would keep constructing and being reconstructed in the future time. Identity is not a fixed object, but a constant becoming and something that we need to revisit and redefine along the journey of our lives (Wenger, 1998).

Based on participant's stories, what brought the PSTs to feel being professionally acknowledged was stemming from various and unique tangible and intangible sources. Students' positive responses on their presence and performance as practicing teachers appeared to be the most important factor which had fostered this feeling. This finding asserts the idea of symbolic interactionism coined by Blumer (1969) saying that individuals respond to the meaning they construct as they interact with one another. It is through their interactions in various settings (in the case of this study, teaching practicum setting) they are actively constructing meaning. Although they are basically active agents in their social worlds, they are also influenced, to be sure, by culture, social organisation and their social interaction. In this case, the way their students treated them during their teaching practicum, among other interaction, appeared to be an important factor in shaping their early teachers' self and identity.

Furthermore, the feeling of being accepted as a part of school community also originates from PST's *engagement* and involvement in some extracurricular activities and some other non-teaching roles in their placement schools. The extracurricular activities are some optional activities conducted by schools as part of their school curriculum in which students are encouraged to join one program they love most depending on their interests. The programs range from music, sport, scout, to journalism and religious activities.

When participating in the extracurricular activities, some of them acted as the supervisor of students' English club; some others supervised the students in running their students' union; and some others led them in arts and music club activity. In her proposition about learning and identity as two interconnected elements in a community of practice, Wenger (1998) emphasised learning process should be viewed in the context of our live experience of participation in the world. Participation here not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to more encompassing process of "being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities" (p.4). Therefore, participating actively in those extracurricular activities was an instance of engagement which played both in the level of active participants in the practices and identity construction.

Despite most PSTs reported that they had got wonderful experience during the practicum program; two other participants – Arul and Dimar – still clearly stated that they did not want to be a professional English teacher when they graduate as they were already mentioned in the first round interviews. The former kept saying that he wanted to be a policeman, and the latter said that he would prefer to be a businessman. This finding indicates that the emerging sense of being a novice teacher which has been nurtured during practicum was not always powerful enough to drive some participants to change their initial career plan. In the case of these two participants, what drove them in their career choice were non-educational factors, such as financial need and family influences.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that there are some interrelated factors which nourished the emergence of the sense of belonging and the development of the PST's professional identity. These factors have significantly contributed to the success of the PSTs' integration into teachers' community. The factors ranged from the school's students' responses to the PSTs, their interaction with their mentor teachers, with their fellow student teachers, the mentor teachers' acceptances, and intense cares and supports, to some non-teaching activities that the PST did during teaching practicum. These factors worked simultaneously in boosting the emergence of PST's new teacher identities.

This study demonstrated similar findings with other studies (Humaidi et al., 2014; Merseth, Sommer, & Dickstein, 2008; Trent, 2010; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005) that PSTs journey to become a member of teachers' community during practicum is not a linear journey; it encompasses conflicts, challenges, and tensions before they were accepted to be part of the school community. Their sense of belonging to the teachers' community was built through participation in the form of complex engagement with existing members and with practices during the practicum. It was also apparent that PSTs sometimes had to negotiate and reconcile their multi-membership identity within their social relationship to become an English teacher.

This study has enriched other studies' findings in relation to the importance of practicum for PST's vocational development, professional and institutional socialisation, and learning and professional development (see Caires & Almeida, 2005; Grootenboer, 2005; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2006). However, this study addressed special emphasis on the phenomenon of power relation issue during the PSTs' social interaction and participation in school community during teaching practicum. It was apparent from the data that in many conditions, the PSTs had to negotiate their power as PSTs with their students who frequently resisted their authority and with their mentor teachers who considered them as university students learning to teach *per se*; rather than their colleagues with relatively similar power and authorities. This issue of power led to conflicts and tension between the PSTs and their school students. It brought about a crisis in identity in the side of PSTs. However, by the end of practicum program, it was found that most of the PST could integrate quite well into the school environment by showing some senses community membership the school teachers' community.

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