



P-ISSN 2355-2794
E-ISSN 2461-0275

The Construction and Reconstruction of ESL Student Teachers' Professional Identity

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Abstract

This study explores the construction and reconstruction of ESL student teachers' professional identity at a teacher education university in Malaysia. A number of 23 student teachers were required to upload a journal entry in the e-portfolio to reflect upon themselves as prospective teachers when they were doing a pedagogical course in semester 5. Upon completing their teaching practice in semester 7 and while doing seminar reflective as a course in their final semester, the student teachers were asked to revisit their journal entry on their identity and to compare and contrast if their views have changed or remained the same after their teaching practice experiences. A content analysis was used to study the transformation of identity through journal entries. The study reveals that the student teachers were more realistic and practical as opposed to being idealistic in forming their professional identities after the teaching practice. There were many situational factors which have affected such changes. This study implicates the need for teacher education programs to provide platforms and learning to teach experience that would assist the student teachers formation of professional identity as prospective teachers.

Keywords: Language teachers' professional identity, ESL student teachers, e-portfolio.

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Citation in APA style: Harun, R. N. S. R. (2019). The construction and reconstruction of ESL student teachers' professional identity. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 6(1), 1-12.

Received December 16, 2018; Revised February 10, 2019; Accepted February 16, 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v6i1.13073>

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing interest in the studies of teachers' professional identities in research on language teacher education and teacher development for the last decade (Kano & Stuart, 2011, as cited in Jurkunas, 2015; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Duff & Uchida, 1997, as cited in Varghese et al., 2005). This is partly due to the focus that researchers have given to the teachers' beliefs in conceptualizing their practices. In addition, the shifts from prescriptive to transformative kinds of pedagogies in teaching have eventually changed the teaching landscape and provide more space and autonomy for teachers to relate their self-concept with their teaching practices. The early work of Beijaard et al. (2004) on teachers' professional identity has identified three categories of studies: teachers' professional identity formation, identification of characteristics of teachers' professional identity, and studies in which professional identities have represented.

Professional identity is not fixed and evolving in nature. Firstly, it is influenced by many factors involving the tension between agency (the personal dimension in teaching) and structure (the socially given) (Beijaard et al., 2004). Secondly, it is vitally connected to the social, cultural and political contexts (Duff & Uchida, 1997, as cited in Varghese et al., 2005). Many scholars have indicated the importance of professional identity as a basis for teachers to be viewing themselves and others by creating a sense of belonging within the professional development and recognition (Komba et al., 2013).

The study of teacher identity is seen as of paramount importance as it informs teacher educators in assisting their student teachers in learning how to teach and what it means to be a teacher. White and Lemieux (2015) propagate the idea that self-identity should be given focus on the component of teacher preparation. The construction of teacher identity develops through the understanding of professional practices coupled with values, skills, and knowledge (Chong et al., 2011; Olsen, 2008, as cited in Harlow & Cobb, 2014). A study carried out by Chong et al. (2011) have proven that the lack of alignment between pre-service teachers' perceptions and emerging professional identities can have a negative impact on their early years of teaching. Early acquisition of teacher identity can help student teachers to understand the meaning of becoming a teacher and assist them in their early years of the teaching profession (Chong et al., 2011; Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012). Although there is a growing interest in the study of teachers' identity while they are undergoing training, there are still limited numbers of this study, particularly in the Malaysian context. Therefore, the aim of this study is to primarily investigate the construction and reconstruction of TESL student teachers' professional identity while learning how to teach.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers have always played a major role in composing classroom practices and thus, studies on teachers' identity have been seen as necessary to understand what goes on in a classroom. Studies that are rooted from the sociocultural and socio-political landscape of teaching (such as Kubota, 2001; Pennycook, 1997, 2001, as cited in Varghese et al., 2005) have outlined many aspects of identity and gave focus on the

importance in the language classroom. [Varghese et al. \(2005\)](#) further explain that studies on language teachers' identity are perceived as inherently important due to several factors such as the development of studies between what goes on in the classrooms and beyond classrooms, the rising numbers of non-native speakers as English language teachers and the status of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) which lead to the interest in what teachers' know and their teacher preparation programs, and finally, there has been a growing concern on teacher-student relation.

In our attempts to understand language teacher's identity, [Varghese et al. \(2005\)](#) juxtapose the need to take into consideration, firstly, the social identity theory ([Tajfel, 1978, as cited in Varghese et al., 2005](#)) which requires us to realise the emergence of multiple identities which are shaped by social context, social identity and social groups. Secondly, the notion of situated learning ([Wenger, 1998](#)) which proposes the idea that learning is not primarily the cognitive acquisition of knowledge but also a process of identification of acquiring an identity. Finally, the notion of image-text ([Simon, 1995](#)) which assists us in understanding the multiple facets of identity based on social contexts and their transformational power which are both revealed in and constituted by language. [Vasquez \(2011\)](#) in her study has found that identity is always situated in the sense that it is both contingent and relational. According to her, this can be represented in small stories which inform how identities are formed on site. Thus, teachers' professional identity can largely be influenced by the level of training in pedagogy, academic training and practical experiences ([Komba et al., 2013](#)).

Studies have shown that professional identity does not only develop when the teacher has resumed her responsibility as a teacher. [Harlow and Cobb \(2014\)](#) claim that pre-service teachers develop their understanding as early as in their initial teacher training. Their study has revealed that teacher identity has gradually assimilated throughout their teaching practice through their active involvement in the roles and responsibilities of teaching and learning process. In addition, the confidence of what they were practicing together with the collaborative learning support seemed to help them to develop their teacher identity.

In support of the above, [Kanno and Stuart \(2011\)](#) have extensively reviewed the novice teachers' long term development and found two studies which have particularly addressed the development of teacher identity. Firstly, [Tsui \(2007\)](#) has found a complex negotiation of her language teacher identity and professionalization. Secondly, the study by [Liu and Fisher \(2006\)](#) reveal that although the student teachers at the beginning did not see themselves as teachers, they began to learn to have a good rapport with their learners and started to act as teachers. [Kanno and Stuart \(2011\)](#) in their study have proposed the notion of identities in practice through sustained language in practice which can be in the form of practice shaping identity and will later develop into identity shaping the practice. Their study points out the importance of developing the second language (L2) student teachers' identity in learning how to teach.

A study carried out by [Grow \(2011\)](#) on pre-service teachers on literacy has found that their identity was influenced by a fluid central habitus that can be inferred in varying degree of development and growth in their field experiences. In addition, her findings also revealed that prior pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) plays a role in identity development and therefore, assessing their PCK via standardized setting and conversations has helped them to understand their identity.

A study carried out by [Jurkunas \(2015\)](#) on her experience of volunteering in the ESL classroom has helped her to explore her identity as a teacher. She has developed to become confident of her teaching and being resourceful. She admitted also she has discovered some identity as a teacher but she acknowledged the fact that it is an ongoing process as the dynamic aspect of a teacher identity development is partly due to the social factors as well as social institutions and the discourses that emerged within it ([Harlow & Cobb, 2014](#)). In addition, a study by [White and Lemieux \(2015\)](#) has identified that student teachers' identity can be developed through actual material culture and the world they live in by incorporating arts in teacher education programs. The use of identity box has revealed significant information on how the student teacher develops her identity. In addition, [Noonan \(2018\)](#) has revealed three learning affinities of teacher identity and teacher learning: for the what (who), the who (facilitation) and the with whom (community). This learning affinity framework can be used as a tool in aiding teachers' professional development.

3. METHOD

This study employs a case study of 23 Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) student teachers in a teacher education university, Sultan Idris Education University, in Malaysia. The participants included six males and seventeen female student teachers who were in their final semester (eighth semester).

While the student teachers were in semester 5, they were required to have an e-portfolio in which one of the tasks was to reflect on how they see themselves as a prospective teacher. This was the onset for student teachers to explore pedagogical principles of teaching and learning, developing scheme of work, lesson plans and designing appropriate assessments. This course is called Instruction, Technology and Assessment 1. This was followed with a course entitled Instruction, Technology and Assessment 2 while they were in semester 6. This course focuses on developing student teachers pedagogical skills through micro and macro teaching. In semester 7, the student teachers had their teaching practice for 16 weeks. In semester 8, they have to register for 'Seminar Reflective', which is a course that requires them to reflect on their experiences during teaching practice and to share these experiences as part of the community of practice ([Wenger, 1998](#)).

During the first week of their 'Seminar Reflective', the student teachers were required to revisit their entry in the e-portfolio on how they see themselves as prospective teachers which they have reflected while they were in semester 5. They were then asked to reflect on how they see themselves as prospective teachers after having their teaching practice experiences. They have to reflect to see if their identity has changed or remain the same and they were to provide reasons as well as examples when reflecting on their identity as a teacher.

A content analysis ([Burnard, 1995 as cited in Bengtson, 2016](#)) was carried out on both entries, before and after teaching practice. The analysis was categorised as a reflection on the construction of identity before the teaching practice (RBTP) and reflection on the reconstruction of identity after the teaching practice (RATP). From these two broad categories, several themes have emerged and they serve as the basis for the findings of this study. Some ethical considerations such as the anonymity of

the participants are taken into consideration when reporting this study to protect them from any harm and discomfort.

4. RESULTS

The discussion and findings focus on two aspects which are the construction of identity before the teaching practice (BTP) and the reconstruction of identity after the teaching practice (ATP). The findings are supported by excerpts from the student teachers journal entries.

4.1 Construction of the Identity

From the student teachers' journal entries, it was found that the construction of their identity can be influenced by their backgrounds of past and current images either involving an image of teachers whom they admired or based on images of their parents who are successful teachers. MJ, for instance, was truly inspired by her kindergarten teacher who had good classroom control and who had introduced her to what she perceived as 'learning'. She wrote (E refers to excerpts and the number refers to the numbering of excerpts presented in this paper):

E1 *Since I was in kindergarten, I always dream to be a teacher, just like my kindergarten teacher. She influenced my choice of career so much because I was mesmerized and impressed with her teaching, how she can control us and at the same time, introduce me to what I call 'learning'. (MJ, RBTP)*

Such influence as in MJ experience can be perceived as a positive image. Nevertheless, there are also instances in which negatives images of the past tainted student teachers perceptions. MF stated in his entry that he will not become a fierce teacher as he had a bad experience with such a teacher. He exclaimed in his entry:

E2 *I have experienced learning with a fierce teacher. It was like learning in hell. It does not make us become cleverer and it killed our passion to participate in class. The teacher usually condemns us saying that we cannot be what we like. (MF, RBTP)*

Many of these student teachers came from a family background in which both parents are teachers or either one of their parents is teachers. In their journal entries, some of them indicated that all their lives they have been watching their parents teaching in schools and the discourses which often dominate the family's conversations are on teaching and learning, about learners and school environment. To some extent, some of these student teachers are being influenced by their parents to be teachers as in to continue the family's tradition such as in the case of MI. In addition, some student teachers are trying to fulfil their parents' dream to become a teacher although it has never been one of their dreams.

E3 *My entire life I have always live in a teacher environment. My father, late mother, sister, stepmother and uncle are all successful teachers. Living in their shadow had made me witness all their work as a teacher being done up close. The closest is probably my father who is my idol. As a child, I often follow him to school and monitor him teaching his class passionately. Myself, I would say the passion is still hidden somewhere waiting to be ignited. My father leads me to this path in hoping*

that I could follow on his footstep and continue the family tradition of living as an educator. (MI, RBTP)

- E4 *Frankly speaking, I never see myself as a teacher when I was younger. I never thought about becoming a teacher, an English teacher to be precise. I am a really, really shy person and could never see myself teaching. But today, I am studying to become an English teacher because while I have not been able to see it in myself, other people did, my mother. I am here right now because one of my mother's dreams is to have one of her children becoming a teacher. (HH, RBTP)*

Secondly, the construction of their professional identity is very much influenced by how they see themselves as a person. Many characteristics in which the student teachers have stated are based on their personal identities. HS, as an example, describes herself as a cheerful, humorous, creative patient and friendly person. With her understanding of her own characteristics, she foresees her teaching and learning are in line with those characteristics.

- E5 *I am a cheerful person...I am dexterous in drawing and making crafts. This allows me to produce attractive and creative teaching aids. With these two strengths in me, I want to make my lesson fun and interesting...I am patient, as well as a good listener...I am not a strict teacher. I am very soft hearted and understanding, to the extent that I can understand why my students misbehave...Even if I am not strict enough, they can still listen to me and follow my instructions because they respect me and appreciate me for being kind to them...I see myself as a friendly teacher who plays and have fun together with students in the class. (HS, RBTP)*

Thirdly, the construction of student teachers can be influenced by how they believe the teaching and learning should be. These factors are highly influenced by their pedagogical orientations, their preferred ways of teaching and the classroom climate that they want to create. These actually vary from a student teacher to the others. Some student teachers are very much into using technologies, some prefer to create their own materials or use authentic materials. For example, R acknowledged that different teachers would have different styles of teaching and due to that she has chosen to create a classroom which is full of entertainment. In addition, SZ prefers to use acting to make her lessons memorable.

- E6 *Not all teachers have the same style of teaching. Some teachers may conduct their class with lots of fun and some may conduct their lesson in a very formal way. It all depends on the teachers on how they deliver their lesson. As I'm being a fun person, I will conduct my class full of entertainment, perhaps by using games. Besides that, I am good at making jokes. Therefore, I can take it as my strength in conducting lesson for students. I can keep my students entertained and will not let them feel bored. I believe that I am always excited about trying new activities. (R, RBTP)*
- E7 *One of my metaphors is teaching is not telling. I plan to be a classroom clown. Classroom clown is when the teacher puts on funny clothes or act out certain roles just to make the lessons memorable. As a student here I love to act. I can act like a man and I can imitate people. I would like to show off my skills in acting that other teachers might not have. For example, in a literature class, I will act out one of the characters in the novel. I would probably be fanning myself as if I am a Victorian lady or wear a mustache and act out as the hero in the story. (SZ, RBTP).*

The student teachers construction of identity is also clouded with a lot of uncertainties, especially to those who have never imagined becoming a teacher. For student teachers such as RG who could not anticipate what kind of teacher's identity she would have, she indicated that it all depends on the contextual situations that she will be in.

- E8 *First of all, I really don't know how I look as an English teacher and what kind of teacher will I be one day. It all depends on the situation of where and whom I am teaching. Since small, I always adored my teachers because of their personality and dedication. But, I didn't expect myself to be an English language teacher. When I entered this university to continue my Degree...my expectation on teaching profession started to change. But, I was still not sure of being a teacher. (RG, RBTP)*
- E9 *Honestly, it took me quite some time to write this as for me it is the most difficult question for me to encounter. Frankly speaking, I have never seen myself as a future English teacher. But being a TESL student, and after participating in an English camp during semester 4, I know that some students need help with the English language. (SR, RBTP)*

Some of the student teachers have indicated that they were not sure if they would still stick to the same identity after their teaching practice as they were quite sure that they have to face all sorts of challenges. The fact that they would have to teach in the classroom and handling their own class has given them a lot of anxieties.

- E10 *There is no doubt that I am very nervous by thinking that I will go for my teaching practice soon and I certainly do not know what to expect. So, I am just preparing myself for the worst situation and hopefully, I can face all of the obstacles and not end up crying somewhere at the corner. I wish to be a teacher that inspired students to learn and perhaps ending the stigma of afraid learning English especially for the students in the rural area. I am certainly not judging the students from the rural area by saying they are not fluent in English but somehow I find that speaking or conversing in English around that area can be somewhat taboo for them. (IA, RBTB)*
- E11 *In just a few months, I will go for my teaching practicum. To be honest, I am nervous and excited at the same time. I can never expect what the students and the teachers would be like, or the school which I will be posted to. I am nervous because I am scared that I might not be able to be a good English teacher and do all the things that I have said above. Plus, I think I still need to learn more about teaching methods because the idea of teaching a group of students is still surreal to me. I hope that I can teach them well and I really hope that I can change my students' mind that English is a very fun and easy to learn. I really hope that I will pass my teaching practicum and I hope that after teaching practicum I can see the path that I am going, whether I still want to be an English teacher or something else. (AI, RBTB)*

In contrast to the above, the male student teachers were quite positive on their identity as a teacher despite acknowledging the fact that there were still some rooms for improvements as they pursue their teaching career.

Although SA was contemplating his future as an English teacher, the preparation courses have given him the confidence of his identity as a teacher to be. In addition, SRM self-believe of wanting to become an educator and his faith has led him to try and give his best in teaching.

- E12 *To be or not to be an English teacher? This question really bothers me to the extent that I really feel stressful in my daily life as a TESL student. I know that to be an English teacher in the 21st century will require a lot of knowledge, skills and also creativity in handling the classroom and carry out lessons which make the students understand. That was before I enter my third year of studies and now I am in semester 6, I strongly believe that I am fit enough to be an English teacher as long as I work hard and equip myself with all the necessary knowledge. (SA, RBTP)*
- E13 *I believe I can be a good teacher. All the knowledge and information that I have obtained through 6 semesters here, I will use it as a weapon to kill the student's perception of the English language. The English language is the lingua franca of this world. Like it or not, we must find a way to acquire it. One thing for sure, I want to be an educator, to educate the students and lead them to*

a better life. Here and hereafter. Teaching is a respectful career in Islam. What we deliver to our students, it will be the bounty in the judgment day. Insyallah I will do my best in teaching, and I believe, there is nothing we can't do, as long as we put all our heart and soul to it. (SRM, RBTP)

4.2 Reconstruction of the Identity

Most of the student teachers reconstruction of identity were situational, while and after the teaching practice. The student teachers were more receptive towards classroom situations, particularly concerning their learners. For RV, although in her earlier entry she had mentioned that she wanted to be an adventurous teacher, however, she found that it was difficult to do so as her learners level of proficiency were of mixed ability. The weak learners require a lot of guidance from her and, yet, the smarter ones gave her a boring look as when they had finished their work. Having to juggle with learners of mixed ability she had to change her pedagogical styles to suit the learners in her class.

E14 *I wrote in my reflection that I wanted to be an adventurous teacher and I did. The level of the students was just two far ends that I had to prepare different task and activity for them. I had problems in which the weaker student needed more guidance and the smart students would just finish the activity and look bored. I wanted more of a student centred learning but at the same time cater to the different levels of students in the class. (RV, RATP)*

Some of the student teachers have reflected that the teaching practice has taught them a lot more than just being a teacher. They learned how to be compassionate and were able to change their own attitudes in certain ways. SA, as an example, has always regarded himself as a rigid person and would just do things according to his ways. His perceptions of problematic learners have changed when he had to deal with them.

E15 *The practicum has ended and I would say that the song Hero by Mariah Carey explains some of the feelings that I had gone through during my journey of finding my passion and hidden identity which was the practicum. I have changed in so many ways after enduring 4 months of blessed sufferings...I used to be a person that believes problematic students are not worth teaching but once I...my experiences with 4 Dahlia students as I think this class really changed my perceptions and also trained me on how to tackle problematic students. Firstly, they became problematic because the school did not assign a teacher to teach the students for months when Puan Julaila, their previous beloved English teacher moved to another school. This is one of the reasons why the students love to sleep and roam around during the English period. They have developed these habits because of the school management and I knew that I cannot expect sudden changes from them after so many months being neglected by the school. I became more patient and I managed to control my anger even though before this I was a person who is rigid and if there is something to be done, it is going to be my way of doing it. This situation made me realised that a teacher is a person who guides and aids in changing the student's behaviour but it is a long process and we have to be patient. (SA, RATP)*

The reconstruction of some of the student teachers was reaffirmed through their experiences during the teaching practice. Some of them were able to confirm their identity by being able to become the kinds of teachers that they aspire. TC wrote that she always wanted to become an approachable teacher and she was glad that she was able to do so with her open concept. More importantly, she was able to witness the change of attitudes among her learners. This experience has given her more confidence and stability on how she sees herself as a prospective English teacher.

- E16 *One of my key aims was to be an approachable teacher and I reasonably succeeded in doing so. I always practiced the open door concept allowing students to approach me and clarify their doubts where topics or subjects are concerned. This concept proved to be a major success as I witnessed students coming forth and breaking the ice with me, followed by academic questions. This concept also went the extra mile in enhancing students' communication skills, not to mention their self-confidence and self-esteem. ...This invaluable experience has made me more matured and focused. I understand the students' needs and their areas of weakness in the English language. (TC, RATP)*

Apart from TC's experience, some of the student teachers have also built their confidence when the methods that they used seemed to work successfully with their learners. This is of paramount importance as student teachers identity as prospective teachers are not decontextualized from their own pedagogical understandings.

- E17 *As a teacher in this 21st century, I tried my best to incorporate technology in my lessons. Almost every day, I brought my laptop, speakers, and projectors into the classroom. The students even claimed that Miss TSY brought the TV into the classroom. Even though it was quite troublesome and time-consuming preparing and designing suitable materials, the satisfaction of seeing the students enjoying and participating actively in the lesson makes me feel that everything is worth it. I think I had successfully kept the students engaged in my lessons through all the videos, pictures, songs and PowerPoint slides shown to them. During my time, my teachers had never taught English using this method. I was keen on preparing these because I prefer learning via this method, and it was proven that the students like it, too. I can never forget the facial expression of the Form 1 little boy, seeing me walking into the class. (TSY, RATP)*

In addition, student teachers also had the tendency to realise that their professional identity can also be affected by many other factors in the context that they were teaching. A supportive collaborative environment with mentor teachers and colleagues made them felt comfortable with what they were doing. HS, for instance, felt that she was very lucky to have an understanding teacher advisor who supported her teaching beliefs. She reflected in her journal:

- E18 *Nevertheless, the lessons designed by me were not exam-oriented. Listening and speaking skill is not emphasized in SPM examination, lessons focus on such skill were time-consuming. Some of the senior teachers in the school suggested me to spend less time polishing these skills as they felt that it wouldn't help much in their examination. However, I am lucky to have an understanding teacher advisor who supported my teaching belief and let me carry out the lessons as I liked. I wanted to help my students to have a holistic development rather than only doing better in the exam. I am aware that carrying this belief will be a challenge in my future teaching life as the school authority might not agree with this. Hence, I need to find a balance between these two aspects. (HS, RATP)*

Most of the students were technology savvy in terms of coming up with materials and using them in the classroom. However, the beliefs that technology could be the best assistance to the teachers have got to be compromised as some schools have lack of facilities that would enable them to carry out teaching and learning using technology at all times. RG, for instance, acknowledged that the lack of facilities has disabled her to carry out activities although she knew that the learners were motivated with her approach.

- E19 *Limitations in the facilities was also a problem when comes to teaching. My school has very fewer technology facilities in the classroom. For Form 1 classes, only one classroom is equipped with an LCD projector and speakers. I needed to use technology in my lessons because I noticed my*

students were excited when I showed short videos to them. They were attentive and interested in watching the videos. So, I thought using technology in their lessons would be a great way to motivate them in learning. But, when there was only one room with LCD projectors and speakers, the only thing that we can do was to wait and take turns!

5. DISCUSSION

The findings above revealed that the construction and reconstruction of professional identity among the student teachers can be due to many situational and contextual factors before and after they had undergone the teaching practice. This is in line with the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978, as cited in Varghese et al., 2005), which acknowledges the facts that identities are shaped by the social context, social identity, and social groups that student teachers had encountered while doing their training as well as during teaching practice. The evolving nature of the student teachers professional development should be seen as a positive element to shape them in becoming prospective teachers. The idealistic nature of positive images of people who inspire them and their personal backgrounds can be perceived as the first step in the understanding of who the student teachers as teachers while learning how to teach. Their earlier understanding and beliefs on how teaching should be have shaped the student teachers way of approaching their teaching styles. Despite these facts, the construction of professional identity was still clouded with all sorts of uncertainties particularly to those who had never imagined becoming teachers. In support of this, Tsui (2007), as cited in Kanno and Stuart (2011), has found that there is a complex negotiation between teacher identity and professionalism.

One important aspect highlighted from the reconstruction of professional identity after the teaching practice was the student teachers' ability to be adaptive to the situational and contextual contexts of the learners in schools which they were teaching. There were evidence of student teachers negotiating their personal identities and teaching styles to accommodate the learners' abilities in schools. Being on site and dealing with learners have helped the student teachers to affirm and reaffirmed their beliefs on teaching which indirectly has influenced the reconstruction of their professional identities. This is predominant as student teachers identity as prospective teachers should not be decontextualized from their own pedagogical understandings on how teaching should be which can be influenced by the kinds of training they had gone through. In agreement to this, Komba et al. (2013) have also highlighted the fact that teachers' professional identity can largely be influenced by the level of training in pedagogy, academic training, and practical experiences.

No doubt that the reconstruction of professional identity is a personal endeavor and developed differently among the student teachers, there are a lot of insights from their enriching experiences which can help improve teacher preparation program. This is also supported by findings from Jurkunas (2015) who found that discovering teacher identity is a dynamic ongoing process for teacher development. A supportive environment in their placement schools played an important factor in shaping their professional identity as prospective teachers. This is influenced by the social factors including social institutions and the engagement with the discourses within it (Harlow & Cobb, 2014).

6. CONCLUSION

The student teachers reflection on the construction and reconstruction of identity has shown a more positive transformation in terms of understanding their professional roles as prospective teachers. There was also some transformation of attitudes which addresses their ability to adapt to situational context and to address the needs of their learners. In addition, some of the reconstruction of the professional identity reaffirmed and gave them confidence in how they see themselves as prospective teachers. Nevertheless, many of the student teachers see their professional identity as an evolving process and their teaching practice experiences have given them the opportunity to reflect on their professional identity. Many of them believe that there were still a lot more improvements that can be done when they embark into their teaching profession. More importantly, student teachers who were struggling to accept seeing themselves as teachers in their fifth semester did not totally attest to the idea of becoming English teachers although they are still facing with uncertainties whether they would eventually be one.

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