

ELESP GRADUATE TEACHER IDENTITY: WHY SOME CHOSE NON-TEACHING JOB?

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<https://doi.org/10.37147/eltr.v4i1.53>

received 5 January 2019; accepted 3 December 2019

Abstract

This paper investigates English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) graduates' teacher identity construction. This paper focuses on the reason why ELESP graduates prefer non-teaching job instead of being a teacher. This paper employs qualitative study and focuses deeper on the phenomena. In gathering the data, questionnaire and deep interview was conducted as the research instrument. The result shows that economic reason becomes one factor why ELESP graduate leave the teaching job.

Keywords: ELESP graduate, non-teaching job, teacher identity construction.

Introduction

English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) graduates have undergone the Teaching Field Practice known as PPL, which is the compulsory course in ELESP department. The course is aimed to give the real teaching practice and experience for ELESP students in the real context such as in a high or secondary school. After graduating from ELESP, the graduates are supposed as ready to teach. However, some ELESP graduates choose to work in the non-teaching field. In PPL, which is considered as the real field, ELESP students face the very different things compared with what they have practice in micro teaching class. Some researchers agree that reality shock attacks newly teachers, regarding to their full responsibility they take as a teacher (Huberman, 1991; Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975; Veenman, 1984; Vonk, 1993; Flores & Day, 2006). Newly teacher may face the slightly different things from what they learn in college and what they face in real teaching environment. What they face in college is nothing compared to what they expect they will have in school environment.

Mostly, recent researches talk about the teacher identity construction, teacher professional identity, motivation, and demotivation of teacher. The writer made the research about the cause of teacher identity deconstruction, specifically about the reason behind why teacher candidate choose the non-teaching job, which is hopefully can full fill the research gap and have further benefits.

Literature Review

In general, this literature review part discusses about the teacher identity construction, career choice, teacher demotivating factors, and reasons, which make teacher leaves the teaching job.

Teacher identity construction

Teacher identity is something that turns out to be who a teacher is, what the reasons behind are, and the existence of a teacher's soul. Castañeda (2011) points out that teacher identity is formed through what it is 'known, believed, and thought' by a teacher (p. 2). Moreover, it is also formed by the two complicated layers such as 'knowledge and roles' that consist of large 'characteristic and meanings' (p. 23). Meaning to say that a teacher who has not pursued teacher education performs different compared to those who study in teacher education department. In education department teacher candidate learn the teaching technique, and pedagogical knowledge.

Varghese et al., (2005) states that "identity-in-discourse" and "identity-in-practice" can be considered as the stage of identity construction. Identity-in-practice can be considered as the identity understanding approach through the real practice in order to investigate the identity construction as a social context. While identity-in-discourse is when identities are "discursively constituted, mainly through language" (p. 39). Identity is shaped by process and learned through experience in the different situation, such as in field practice.

Based on Flores & Day (2006) the beginning years of teaching draws the 'less negative and less traumatic experience' (p. 220). Experiences during pre-service teacher training, including the influence of school environment and personal pre-existing experiences are considered as crucial element, which influence the teaching career (p. 220). In early years, the newly teacher face the culture and reality shock when they face the slightly different things in the field practice, compared to what they face in 'field model' in college's micro teaching class. However, through experience, newly teacher can learn and see the students' pattern to anticipate and build the strategy for the next day of teaching practice.

Alsup (2008) points out that, identity development gives effect and based on experience (p. 78). Identity is formed due to the experience that ones have. Good experience leads to good perception about teacher, which smooth somebody's identity formation. Based on Alsup (2008) somebody who experienced discursive feeling and borderland discourse were those who more likely having the successful learning to become a teacher, and the most convinced in deciding their life as a teacher (p. 123). Somebody who has experience both up and down is the one who have the greater convince in deciding his or her career choice. Teacher identity grows time by time, and develops through experience. Identity is formed through process, struggle, and experience. Somebody can become an expert only if he or she gets along with the process and experience. Based on Iswandari (2017) teacher construct their identity through their rich imagination of real

picture they observe and few experiences they undergo, instead of the “real engagement in the practices where practiced identity is formed” (p. 61).

Hebert & Worthy (2001) presents the influential factors of ‘first year survive’, namely (i) a match between expectations, personality and workplace realities; (ii) evidence of impact; and (iii) using successful strategies to manage student behavior and enter the social and political culture of the school. Heber’s and Worthy’s points are more about strategy and adaptation toward the new challenges. The adaptation happens in about one first year of teaching. It is in line with Day’s (1999) statement that the beginning years of teacher seems as ‘two-way struggle’ where teacher make effort to create their work to be suitable with they expect, and adapt with the school culture (p. 59). As a teacher, creates a matched style with the ideal vision is important to lead to satisfaction. Meanwhile, it should be suitable to the school culture where a teacher works in.

Career choice

As mentioned before, the researcher is interested in exploring the teachers’ Career choice becomes one big consideration for everyone, thus, not all teacher graduates decide to be a teacher, and so do people who graduated from any study programs. Many proposed reasons indeed, such as happiness, seniority, workload, salary, bossy boss, etc. Löfström & Poom-Valickis (2013) states that the factors affect the choice of teaching job are “extrinsic motives and material reasons, such as job security; intrinsic motives and professional reasons, such as love of a subject; and altruistic motives or reasons, such as feelings of responsibility for children” (p. 105) (Rinke, 2008; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Bastick 2000; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Material reason becomes one big consideration because money is the main purpose of working and pursuing career. Job security includes the health and safety insurance, and pension money. Responsibility toward children is one of the “big task” of teacher, because their main task is “teaching” the attitude and behavior, instead the subject.

Teacher demotivating factors

Based on Kiziltepe (2008) demotivated teacher is a teacher who was motivated, but later has lost the motivation because of certain causes regarded with teaching condition (p. 520). Teacher could have the various reasons to be demotivated, based on the experience they have and their ability to build their self-endurance to overcome the negative impact. Good experience and self-regulation can lead a teacher to a highly motivated teacher, in the vice versa, the bad experience could ruin the motivation, called by demotivation process.

Kiziltepe (2008) in his research toward 300 teachers in a public university of Istanbul, found five demotivating factors of teacher, namely *students, economics, structural and physical characteristics, research, and working condition* (p. 515). Sugino (2010) also conducted the study on teacher demotivation factors toward

the university and academy teacher in Japan. Sugino (2010) stated four demotivating factors, namely *students' attitudes, students' abilities and school facilities, working condition, and human relationship*. Bennell (2004) found that state schoolteachers in sub-Sahara Africa and Asia have low motivation, which comes from the mixture of *low morale and job satisfaction, poor incentives and inadequate controls and other behavioral sanctions*.

Kim & Kim (2015) investigated the Korean EFL teacher regarding to the initial career motives and demotivation in teaching English. There they presented four detrimental factors on ELF teacher motivation; they are *obstacles to communicative language teaching, inadequate administrative support, and lack of social recognition*. Besides, the initial career motives also presented, such as Global orientation, Job security, Altruism, and Ought-to-self.

Reasons of leaving the teaching job

Some previous research found the reasons of why teachers leave their teaching profession after some years teaching. Karsenti & Collin (2013) presents 4 factors for teacher who leave the profession, namely, *task-related factors, individual factors, social environment factors, and socioeconomic condition* (p. 142). Workload and administrative stuff of teacher are considered as burdening task for teacher. Workload which are related toward the students are still tolerable, such as making the question sheet for test and assignment, correcting the test, marking, and writing the report book. However, the administrative stuff which are related to the government are more burdening one, such as making one year teaching plan and program, etc. Social environmental factor can be linked to the seniority between the teacher and school culture. Socioeconomic absolutely related toward the salary and security of the job. Howes & Goodman-delahunty (2015) found three reasons of teachers for leaving the teaching job namely, *issues with teaching, need for change, and practical consideration* (p. 26).

Method

This paper was a qualitative study. Based on Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen (2010) qualitative study is a study that concerns on “getting an absolute picture and deeper understanding rather than the analysis of data which presented in numeric form” (p. 29). Moreover, in qualitative study, the writers also pointed on understanding the social phenomena from the perspective of a human participant in a natural setting (p. 21). Qualitative study used by the writer to explore the phenomena happened among ELESP graduate.

The participant was four ELESP graduates who are working not as teachers. Two were female and the other two are male. All of the participants were graduated from ELESP in 2016. The writer wanted to compare between female's and male's decision making and consideration related to their career, considering male will be the head of the family someday.

The participants were given the open-ended and close-ended questionnaire via Google form. The questionnaire is used to gain the basic information about their feeling and action when they taught both in their teaching experience of their own job, and in PPL. Moreover, the questionnaire is also used to give them the pre-existing knowledge about teacher identity and to find the cause why they chose non-teaching job. Then, it followed with the deep interview via *e-mail*. The deep interview is used to gain further information from the questionnaire. The data gathering are conducted by electronic device due to the time limitation because all participants are working and having the working hours.

In analyzing the data, the writer used coding to analyze the data and narrative analysis to elaborate the reflective answer. Based on Creswell (2012) coding is a process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and board themes in the data (p. 243).” After coding process was done, the writer continued with narrative analysis. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2011) state that narrative analysis used to analyze the data which is gathered based on personal experience or observation. The narrative analysis is one of discourse analysis technique.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1 presents the record of participants’ background information including their personal information, working period, current occupation, range of salary, and working experience.

Table 1. Overview of participants’ background information

Participant	Sex/ age	Working Period	Current Occupation	Range of Salary	Working Experience
Bobby	M/24	1 year	Content writer, financial manager, and freelancer (translator) in Jakarta	Rp. 5.000.000 – Rp. 7.000.000 (CW) (translator: Rp. 300/ word, or Rp. 100.000,-/ page)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English Teacher ▪ Private teacher ▪ Part time shopkeeper
Tom	M/25		Teaching job seeker	Rp. 4.000.000 –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English teacher in 2 English courses,

Participant	Sex/ age	Working Period	Current Occupation	Range of Salary	Working Experience
			in Semarang	Rp. 5.000.000	a primary school, and a secondary school
		6 months	(he just quit his previous job as a marketing officer in an airlines company, Bali)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Customer service of a department store ▪ Waiter ▪ Marketing officer of an Airlines company
Mary	F/23	4 months	Customer service in a foreign Telecommunication company, in Yogyakarta	Rp. 3.000.000 – Rp. 4.000.000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English teacher in an English course, and a secondary school ▪ Private teacher
Thea	F/23	2 months	Customer service in a foreign Telecommunication company, in Yogyakarta	Rp. 3.000.000 – Rp. 4.000.000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English teacher in a secondary school ▪ Private teacher ▪ Modern dance instructor ▪ Liason officer ▪ Wedding dancer

1. Participants' background

a. Influence of others

None of the participants' parents works as a teacher. The absence of teacher family, especially parents influence the decision making of the participant's career choice. Thea's aunty and aunt are teachers, so do Mary's aunty who works as a teacher in Jakarta. None of Bobby's and Tom's family works as a teacher. The family and surroundings of one's influence the "social class, ethnicity, race, and ideological frameworks or foundation beliefs" (Alsup, 2008, p. 107). Those factors influence somebody's ideology, which shape the identity (p. 107). None of the participants' family and surroundings influences them to life the teaching job.

b. Reasons of choosing ELESP

The reason why participants chose ELESP becomes important point, because ELESP is a place for a teacher candidate to study, although all participants chose not to be a teacher after they have graduated from ELESP.

When being asked about the reason of choosing ELESP, the participants have various reasons. Tom wants to learn the science of teaching.

“I wanted to learn the science of teaching, so I could help people develop their understanding and way of thinking.” (Tom)

Thea’s reason shows her interest in teaching when she decided to study in ELESP.

“At the beginning, I was interested of becoming a teacher. However, as I occupied the responsibility as a teacher, I started to question myself, ‘Am I ready?’. I found out that I have less ability to adapt with the school environment, which in my opinion is monotone. My problem is more on the school environment and the relationship among teacher.” (Thea)

Similarly, Mary’s reason shows her interest to become a teacher in the beginning.

“I want to learn the English subject only. At the beginning, I want to work as a teacher, but as the time goes by, I see that a teacher in Indonesia is being underestimated.” (Mary)

Bobby has the unique reason of choosing ELESP as his study program in University. Similar to Mary, he entered ELESP because he wanted to learn English subject.

“Actually, this was my stupidity. I did not know what is ELESP. I thought it was all about studying English subject only. Recently, in the inisiation day I knew that ELESP is a place to study if you want to become a teacher. My destiny should be English Literature.” (Bobby)

Although Bobby entered to the wrong study program, he did not mind to study about Education. However, nowadays, after he has the desire to become a businessman, he regrets his choice of entering ELESP, he should had entered business major.

2. Experience in teaching

Experiences influence the teaching career. Good experience leads to happiness and job satisfaction, while bad experience leads to demotivation, based on how a person regulate themselves. Thea and Mary, as the female participant stated that the unpleasant experience they face in the classroom is the students’ behavior. While outside the classroom, the relationship among teachers makes them feel inconvenient.

“The unpleasant thing is when I was teaching and there were some sleeping or noisy students. Outside the classroom, the relationship among teachers sometimes

applied the seniority. There was a tendency of giving more tasks to the novice teacher.” (Thea)

“It was when I found a student who is hard to manage. Also, when the other teacher’s work is given to me. In my PPL, sometimes I was asked to teach other classes, which are not my part/ responsibility to do. They asked me in sudden, so I was unable to make any preparation and taught not maximally.” (Mary)

Tom felt that the administrative stuffs are the problem instead of students and school environment. Besides, he also has the positive unforgettable experience in teaching.

“The administrative stuff takes my time. In my PPL, I found many problematic students, they were unmanageable, and had low understanding toward the materials. I found that they have lost their motivation. Then, I tried to touch their heart, I made their heart become calm, so they could understand the materials so the teaching targets are completed. I concluded that, actually all people can do the good things that they have/ want to do, they just have to use their heart to do that.” (Tom)

In the other hand, Bobby has the good experience in teaching. He could make his students show some improvement in English subject.

“My PPL teacher told me that I have the teaching talent because I had successfully made some of the students got better mark and fall in love with English. One of the student is now studying in Medical Faculty.” (Bobby)

However, all of the participants stated that they have no such traumatic or unforgettable teaching experience. Thus, they consider what they have faced are still the normal problem in teaching life.

3. Career choice

a. Reason of choosing non-teaching job

Two participants, Bobby and Mary consider the economic reason as their main reason of choosing non-teaching job. The salary of teacher is not good for them.

“I have no passion at all. As a fresh graduate in Jogja, somebody will need a long time to be a rich if he/she does not open up his/ her own business.” (Bobby)

“The salary of a teacher is not equal compared with the responsibility that a teacher should carry on.” (Mary)

Tom underlines the administrative stuff and workload of teaching job, which he did not receive when he worked in non-teaching job. Besides, Thea has the more personal reason, specifically related with the school environment.

“I want to experience working in the business world as an employee. The non-teaching job has no administrative stuff such as test marking, and lesson plan making. And, I have no more work that I should bring home.” (Tom)

“I am an active person, who is interested more in creativity and the always-new things. Teaching is my passion, but I am not comfortable with the school teaching environment, which is monotonous, and the seniority, which usually colored the relationship among teachers. I also do not like to be considered as the role model for my students, in which I have the limitation in expressing myself. Those things limit me to develop my hobbies and creativities.” (Thea)

b. Reason of working in current occupation

There is one similar reason of four participants why they work in their current occupation, which is they could make the benefit of their current occupation, namely learning. Bobby, has one strong reason that he really wants to learn how to manage a business in IT.

“I use this chance to learn. I want to learn a lot about information technology (IT) such as making website, etc. In the future I plan to set up my own business in IT (web developer).” (Bobby)

Tom, Mary, and Thea use their job to improve their English competency, considering that their jobs are related with the spoken English subject. Thus, their English proficiency still becomes their strength.

“I want to look for challenges, experiences and learn to work on team. It was not about salary. When I became a teacher, I never got payment under the ‘Regional Minimum Wage’. When I worked as the marketing officer in an airline company, I could improve my English competency because I communicate with foreigners.” (Tom)

Thea also highlights that working in her job now, she does not need to bring some workload home.

“The salary is good and equal with the workload. My job is still related with English, so I could use my English competency from my study in ELESP. Also, there is no more work I have to bring home.” (Mary)

Besides, she learns new things and trains her English proficiency, Thea consider her happiness as important. Thus, she pays a lot attention to the working environment and benefits.

“I am happy when I give some instruction, guidance, and solution to people. Moreover, this job is related to information technology (IT). I work for Malaysian Telecommunication Company, whose customer are Malaysian. While working, I use English to engage with Malaysian customer who come from various background, which make me find many English variety. The challenge is, I can improve my English competency through listening and communicate with various English variety. The salary is also good. In my office, mostly the employees are in the youngsters, so we are working dynamically. There is no certain uniform, and we can wear the casual uniform in certain days. They are also some enjoyable office’s activity such as dancing, hiking, practicing yoga, etc.” (Thea)

c. Teaching job vs. current job

Three out of four participants choose their current job because they are more comfortable with it compared to teaching job. Thea considers herself as she is still learning and adapting herself with her new job because there are some challenges that she should face.

“I choose my current job” (Thea)

“In my job now, the challenges are quite big, because I learn new things every day and I have to be more patient than teacher. The ‘Standard Operating Procedure’ (SOP) is difficult. As a customer service, I handled some customer whose problem took time to be solved. They were angry for hours that make me having the bad mood. Compared to teacher, I choose my current job. I consider that I am still learning and adapting myself with the challenges.” (Thea)

Mary keeps the economic reason as her main reason, besides; student is also her stress factor.

“Current Job”

“The salary is equal with the workload. I have no more work that I have to bring home. Students are my stress factor.” (Mary)

Bobby uses his chance well to learn many things, he considers that he learns a lot to prepare himself for his future plan.

“Current Job”

“I insist that I want to learn IT. My company that I am working now inspires me a lot. It is a small company, with only a laptop as the very beginning main capital tools; however, it could receive hundreds of million Rupiah per month.” (Bobby)

Tom prefers the teaching job because he has found his calling in teaching.

“Teaching Job”

“I got the satisfaction when I teach people. Teaching is my calling. Make somebody who does not know becomes know, is a great thing” (Tom)

d. Passion

From four of the participants, Mary have no passion in teaching, while Bobby has not found his passion. Both of them are working in their current occupation with no passion, but they are comfortable in doing that, compared to teaching. Surprisingly, although the two other participants namely Thea and Tom are also comfortable in working in the non-teaching job, they still passionate in teaching.

4. Future Plan

a. Possibility to come back teaching

Thea has the passion in teaching, but does not comfortable with the school environment. However, she still has desire to continue her study and become a lecturer.

“Perhaps. I have the desire to teach, although there is no calling inside me yet. I want to continue my study and become a lecturer.” (Thea)

Bobby stays with his desire to become a business man and considers economic condition as important.

“No. Only if the chance is becoming a Bahasa Indonesia teacher in Australia, I would be.” (Bobby)

Mary canceled her desire to become a teacher.

“No, because I don’t like to be a teacher.” (Mary)

Contrastingly, Tom, who had leaved his non-teaching job, is becoming the teaching job seeker to answer his calling in teaching.

“Of course. I am a teaching job seeker now.” (Tom)

b. Future plan

Three of the participants, Bobby, Tom, and Mary have the similar future plan, which is opening their own business. Specifically, Bobby, who wants to set up his own business in web developer. Tom, besides teaching, he wants to open up his own business in trading. Mary plans to set up her business with her boyfriend. While Thea plans to continue her study in master program and becomes a lecturer.

Discussion

The discussion focuses on each participant teacher identity on how they construct or deconstruct it. The writer tries to relate it with the participants' reason and opinion about teaching job.

Bobby focuses on his economic orientation when he works. It can be seen from his view that working in his hometown will not make him, who is a fresh graduate becomes rich in shorter time. Thus, he went to capital city to work and get the better salary. He also uses his chance working in a company to learn a lot how to manage an IT based company. Besides working as a content writer, Bobby also becomes the financial manager and freelancer (translator). The restaurants he is working as the financial manager are also his restaurants he builds with some of his friends. Therefore, he is one of the owner of that restaurants which is now located in four different places. It can be concluded that Bobby has deconstructed his teacher identity because he has no interest in teaching. Although Bobby has no such unpleasant experience, but the pleasant one when he could make some of his students successfully showed better performance and fell in love with English subject. His study in ELESP was also such a mistake for him, because he was willing to learn the English subject, which now he regretted. However, his study period in ELESP ran smoothly and gave him good result. The reason he deconstructed his teacher identity is because of the economic factor. Now, Bobby builds his identity as the businessman, although he has not found what he have been through as his passion.

Mary also highlights the economic factor as her reason in choosing the non-teaching job. In addition, she considers the students, teacher-teacher relationship, and workload as her reason of losing her interest to be a teacher. Since the beginning, Mary went to ELESP to study the English subject only. Nowadays, Mary works in a foreign telecommunication company, which she considers better than teaching job. With his current job, Mary can improve her English competency. Her salary now is equal with the workload that she has. She lost her interest in teaching also because she thought that nowadays teacher is being underestimated. It can be concluded that Mary has deconstructed her teacher identity. During her beginning period of teaching in PPL, he has faced less negative experience which made her teacher identity construction was ruined.

Thea is the unique one, she is passionate in teaching, but she does not like the monotone school environment, relationship among teachers, and her personal intention, which makes her choose the non-teaching job. However, with all of her personal intention about career, she still has the teacher identity with her. She loves teaching, and finds happiness in teaching. She has no strong teacher-family influence. None of her parents is a teacher, but her aunty and aunt are teachers, who might give her some influence to study in ELESP. As her future plan, she wants to pursue her higher education in master's program to get the better job as a lecturer. As soon as she is in touch with the teaching environment, although it is in college, she will be able to construct her teacher identity more, because she has the interest and passion on it. Moreover, she is waiting for her calling in teaching.

Nowadays, similar to Mary, she works in the foreign telecommunication company where she can train and improve her English competency. Compared to teaching, she prefers her current job. She considers that the salary she got now is good.

Tom has finished his exploration to find the most suitable job for him. Tom has sort of working experiences and he found out that he has the job satisfaction and passion in teaching. Tom has constructed his teacher identity. Tom realizes his calling in teaching and he is doing the great action to answer it by leaving his non-teaching job. His reason for permanently leaving the teaching job was because of the teacher's workload and administrative stuff. The economic factor is not such a problem for him.

Conclusion

From the finding above, found that *economic, school environment, relationship among teacher, students, administrative stuff, and workload* becomes the reason why the participants choose the non-teaching job. While, the reason of the participant working in their current occupation is that they got the benefits of their job, which are they could improve the English competency, and they got the chance to learn new things.

It is interesting that from two (Tom & Thea) of four participants who worked in the non-teaching job still have the passion in teaching and still constructing their teacher identity. One out of those two (Tom) has taken his action to answer his calling in teaching by leaving his current job. While Bobby and Mary, have deconstructed their teacher identity because they have lost their interest in teaching. Bobby is interested in business field and constructing his identity on it. It can be concluded that not all ELESP graduate who choose the non-teaching job has lost his or her teacher identity. Some of them consider the salary as the factor, or they have some other condition that force them to undergo non-teaching job.

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