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Developing the Professional Identity of EFL Teachers as *Guru Penggerak* in Vocational High Schools: A Narrative Inquiry

Silvy Wahyu Hasanah[1], Urip Sulistiyo[2], Ella Masita[3]

Master of English Education Program Universitas Jambi[1,2,3]

Corresponding Author's Email: silvy.wahyuhasanah@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the professional identity development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers participating in the Guru Penggerak Program at vocational high schools in Sarolangun, Indonesia. Drawing on Gee's (2000) identity framework, the study examined four dimensions of professional identity: Nature Identity (N-Identity), Institutional Identity (I-Identity), Discourse-Identity (D-Identity), and Affinity Identity (A-Identity). The analysis was further informed by Karaolis and Philippou's (2019) concept of the professional self, encompassing self-image, self-esteem, self-efficacy, work motivation, task orientation, future perspective, professional commitment, and job satisfaction. This study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry design involving three EFL teachers who had completed the Guru Penggerak Program. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed distinct professional identity trajectories among the participants. TP1 demonstrated a professional identity primarily characterized by N-Identity, TP2 by I-Identity, and TP3 by A-Identity. These patterns reflected differences in how the participants understood themselves as teachers, negotiated institutional roles, and developed professional identities through social and professional experiences. In particular, TP3 entered the teaching profession without a clear initial intention, rather than explicitly rejecting the profession. Across the participants, professional identity development was shaped by personal experiences, institutional responsibilities, social relationships, and professional learning. Participation in the program also contributed to reflective practice, student-centered pedagogy, instructional leadership, collaboration, and continuous professional learning. The study concludes that EFL teachers' professional identity is a dynamic, ongoing process shaped by the interaction of personal, institutional, and professional factors. The Guru Penggerak Program provides opportunities for professional growth and the development of transformative educators in vocational education.

Keywords: *Guru Penggerak; Professional Identity Development; Vocational High School Teacher*

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational high schools in Indonesia prepare students for employment by developing practical competencies, professional attitudes, and skills relevant to specific occupational fields. Achieving these objectives requires teachers to fulfill instructional responsibilities while responding to institutional expectations and the changing demands of vocational education. Sugiarto et al. (2022) emphasize the role of vocational education in developing students' professional skills, while Nurtanto et al. (2023) highlight the broader responsibilities of teachers in vocational settings. These responsibilities may shape how teachers understand their professional roles and construct their professional identities.

Within vocational education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers have a distinctive role in supporting students' English proficiency for academic and workplace communication. Depending on the vocational program and curriculum, English instruction may also relate to occupational terminology and communication needs associated with students' fields of specialization. Consequently, EFL teachers in vocational high schools must negotiate the expectations of language teaching alongside the practical and employment-oriented objectives of vocational education. Understanding their professional identity is therefore important for examining how they perceive their roles, respond to institutional expectations, and develop their teaching practices.

Professional identity is dynamic rather than fixed, developing through interactions among personal experiences, institutional structures, social relationships, and professional learning (Beijaard et al., 2004; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Lim, 2011). It influences teachers' instructional decisions, classroom practices, and relationships with students and colleagues (Karousiou et al., 2019). Previous studies have examined professional identity in language teacher education, technology integration, workplace conflicts, and transitions between professional roles (Aktekin & Celebi, 2020; Eslamdoost et al., 2020; Meihami & Esfandiari, 2021; Moradkhani & Ebadijalal, 2021). Research has also highlighted the complex identity negotiations experienced by vocational teachers as they navigate pedagogical responsibilities and occupational expectations (Nurtanto et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, the *Guru Penggerak* Program was introduced as part of the *Merdeka Belajar* initiative to develop teachers' leadership, reflective practice, collaboration, and student-centered pedagogy (Faiz & Faridah, 2022; Safrizal et al., 2022). Participation in this program may provide professional experiences through which teachers reconsider their responsibilities, educational values, and relationships within school communities. However, further investigation is needed to understand how EFL teachers in vocational high schools' construct and develop their professional identities through participation in this program, particularly in Sarolangun, Indonesia.

Gee (2000) conceptualizes identity as a particular kind of person recognized and enacted within specific contexts. He identifies four interconnected perspectives: nature-identity, institution-identity, discourse-identity, and affinity-identity. Nature-identity (N-Identity) refers to identity associated with characteristics arising from nature; institution-identity (I-Identity) concerns identities associated with institutional positions and authority; discourse-identity (D-Identity) develops through recognition and representation in social interactions; and affinity-identity (A-Identity) emerges through participation in shared practices and experiences within affinity groups. These dimensions provide an analytical framework for examining how teachers understand themselves and negotiate their professional identities through personal characteristics, institutional roles, social interactions, and professional communities.

This framework is relevant to EFL teachers in vocational high schools because their professional

identities may be shaped by multiple, interconnected contexts. Their identities as language teachers develop through classroom experiences, institutional expectations, relationships with students and colleagues, and participation in professional learning communities. Participation in the *Guru Penggerak* Program may introduce additional responsibilities and opportunities for reflection that influence how teachers understand and reconstruct their professional identities. Gee's framework therefore provides a basis for examining the different identity trajectories of teachers who have participated in the program.

To complement Gee's identity framework, this study draws on Karaolis and Philippou's (2019) conceptualization of the professional self. This perspective provides additional dimensions for understanding how teachers perceive themselves and experience their professional roles. These dimensions include self-image, self-esteem, self-efficacy, work motivation, task orientation, future perspective, professional commitment, and job satisfaction. Together, they provide a basis for examining teachers' perceptions of their professional capabilities, responsibilities, motivations, aspirations, and experiences within the teaching profession.

Self-image concerns how teachers perceive themselves professionally, while self-esteem relates to their evaluations of themselves in relation to their ideal professional selves. Self-efficacy refers to their beliefs about their ability to perform teaching tasks successfully (Bandura, 1993). Work motivation concerns the reasons teachers enter and remain in the profession, whereas task orientation relates to their focus on teaching processes and educational goals. Future perspective concerns their professional aspirations, while professional commitment reflects their attachment to the teaching profession (Lee et al., 2000). Job satisfaction concerns their evaluations of their work experiences and teaching roles (Karaolis & Philippou, 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). These dimensions complement Gee's framework by connecting teachers' identity positions with their perceptions, motivations, commitments, and professional experiences.

The *Guru Penggerak* Program is a national teacher professional development initiative associated with Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar reform agenda. It aims to develop teachers as educational leaders who promote student-centered learning, reflective practice, collaboration, and school improvement (Faiz & Faridah, 2022; Safrizal et al., 2022). Its activities include professional learning, workshops, and mentoring, providing opportunities for teachers to develop their pedagogical competencies and leadership capacities (Wuryaningsih, 2023).

Participation in the program may influence professional identity by introducing new responsibilities, collaborative experiences, and opportunities to reflect on teaching practices. Safrizal et al. (2022) describe program components involving student-centered learning, coaching, decision-making, and school program development. These experiences may encourage teachers to reconsider their professional values, institutional roles, and relationships with colleagues and students. However, professional identity development should not be assumed to follow the same trajectory for every participant. Instead, the interaction between teachers' personal histories, institutional environments, and professional experiences provides a basis for examining how their identities develop in different ways.

Although previous studies have provided valuable insights into teacher professional identity, limited attention has been given to how EFL teachers in vocational high schools who have participated in the *Guru Penggerak* Program construct and develop their professional identities, particularly in Sarolangun. Existing research has largely focused on teacher identity in relation to technology, language teaching, workplace conflicts, teacher education, or transitions between professional roles (Aktekin & Celebi, 2020; Eslamdoost

et al., 2020; Meihami & Esfandiari, 2021; Moradkhani & Ebadijalal, 2021). Therefore, further research is needed to examine how participation in a national teacher leadership program interacts with teachers' personal characteristics, institutional contexts, and social experiences in shaping their professional identities. This issue is particularly relevant in vocational education, where teachers must navigate classroom responsibilities, vocational learning objectives, institutional policies, and professional leadership roles.

Accordingly, this study investigates the construction and development of professional identity among EFL teachers in vocational high schools in Sarolangun who have completed the *Guru Penggerak* Program. Specifically, it explores how their professional identities develop through personal experiences, institutional responsibilities, social interactions, and professional learning. The study addresses two research questions: (1) How do EFL teachers in vocational high schools who have participated in the *Guru Penggerak* Program construct and develop their professional identities, and (2) How do personal, institutional, and social factors shape their professional identities and relate to their professional practices.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry design to explore the development of professional identity among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in vocational high schools in Sarolangun Regency, Jambi, Indonesia, who had participated in the *Guru Penggerak* program. Narrative inquiry was selected because it enables researchers to examine how individuals interpret and construct meaning from their personal and professional experiences through stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Barkhuizen et al., 2014). This approach was appropriate because the study focused not only on participants' professional experiences but also on how their identities developed and were negotiated throughout their teaching careers. The research was conducted at three vocational high schools: SMK Negeri 1 Sarolangun, SMK Negeri 7 Sarolangun, and SMK Negeri 9 Sarolangun.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives (Campbell et al., 2020). The study involved three EFL teachers who had graduated from English Education or English Literature programs, had more than five years of teaching experience, had completed the *Guru Penggerak* program, and were willing to participate through informed consent. In addition, participants had experience undertaking identifiable organizational or leadership responsibilities within their schools or professional teaching communities, such as coordinating activities, participating in teacher working groups, or assuming school-related leadership roles. This criterion was intended to capture experiences through which professional identity could be negotiated in relation to institutional expectations and professional relationships. The participants had completed batches 5, 9, and 10 of the *Guru Penggerak* programs, respectively.

The selection of three participants was based on the study's focus on in-depth exploration of individual professional narratives rather than statistical representation. Each participant provided a case through which personal histories, teaching experiences, institutional contexts, and participation in the *Guru Penggerak* program could be examined in detail. This rationale is consistent with the concept of information power, which suggests that the adequacy of a qualitative sample depends on the relevance of the participants to the research aim, the specificity of the sample, the quality of the dialogue, and the analytical approach rather than sample size alone (Malterud et al., 2016). The three participants were considered relevant

because they shared the central characteristics required by the study while having different professional backgrounds and program participation experiences. Nevertheless, the small, context-specific sample limits the transferability of the findings. The results are therefore intended to provide contextualized insights into the professional identity development of these participants rather than represent all EFL teachers in vocational high schools.

The primary data consisted of participants' narratives collected through semi-structured interviews. The recruitment process began by consulting information from the *Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran* (MGMP) forum to identify eligible EFL teachers in vocational high schools in Sarolangun who had completed the *Guru Penggerak* program. After identifying the participants, the researcher contacted them, obtained informed consent, and arranged individual face-to-face interviews. The interviews covered participants' educational and professional backgrounds, entry into the teaching profession, significant career experiences, professional challenges, participation in the *Guru Penggerak* program, and perceptions of their developing professional identities. Follow-up questions encouraged participants to elaborate on significant events, changes in their professional perspectives, and the ways they responded to personal and institutional experiences. A subsequent validation session enabled participants to clarify or confirm information from their interviews. Participants were permitted to use their preferred language, including their native language, Indonesian, or English. Interviews were recorded with permission and transcribed for analysis.

The semi-structured interview guide was adapted from Moghal et al. (2020) and informed by Gee's (2000) identity framework. Questions explored participants' professional histories and experiences in relation to nature-identity, institution-identity, discourse-identity, and affinity-identity. The guide also addressed identity negotiation, professional challenges, and experiences associated with the *Guru Penggerak* program. Although the framework informed the interview questions, the interviews remained open to experiences and meanings that emerged from participants' narratives. This approach allowed the researcher to investigate individual career trajectories without restricting participants' accounts to predetermined theoretical categories.

Data analysis followed a narrative-oriented process informed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Riessman (2008), and Barkhuizen et al. (2014). First, the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and each transcript was read repeatedly to develop a holistic understanding of the participant's professional story. Second, the researcher identified significant events, transitions, challenges, relationships, and experiences that participants associated with their professional identity. Third, the accounts were organized into individual narrative profiles that retained the context and sequence of the experiences described by each participant. Where the interview data supported chronological reconstruction, the researcher traced participants' professional trajectories from their earlier experiences and entry into teaching through subsequent career developments and participation in the *Guru Penggerak* program. Fourth, the reconstructed narratives were examined to identify how participants interpreted changes in their professional roles, beliefs, motivations, and relationships over time. Finally, the narratives were interpreted in relation to Gee's identity framework and the dimensions of the professional self-discussed by Karaolis and Philippou (2019). Cross-case comparison was used to identify similarities and differences among the three trajectories while preserving the distinctive context of each participant's story. The findings were presented through narrative accounts and selected interview excerpts to demonstrate how the interpretations were grounded in participants' own experiences.

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, participant validation was conducted during the interview and follow-up process. Participants were given opportunities to clarify their accounts, confirm factual details, and review the researcher's interpretations of their experiences. The researcher also maintained consistency between interview transcripts, reconstructed narratives, and the interpretations presented in the findings. These procedures were intended to strengthen the credibility and dependability of the analysis and ensure that the participants' accounts were represented faithfully. Transferability was addressed through descriptions of the research setting, participant characteristics, and professional contexts, enabling readers to assess the relevance of the findings to other settings. Given the small sample and specific geographical context, the findings are interpreted as context-dependent accounts of professional identity development rather than universally generalizable conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Findings for RQ1: The Development of Teachers' Professional Identity

The findings indicate that the three EFL teachers developed distinct professional identity orientations shaped by their personal histories, institutional roles, and professional experiences. Based on Gee's (2000) framework, TP1 was predominantly characterized by Nature Identity (N-Identity), TP2 by Institution Identity (I-Identity), and TP3 by Affinity Identity (A-Identity). These dominant orientations represent differences in how the participants understood and experienced their professional roles rather than mutually exclusive identity categories. All four dimensions remained relevant to understanding their professional experiences.

TP1's dominant N-Identity was associated with her longstanding interest in English and her personal identification with the subject. Her statement, "English is my life," illustrates the personal significance she attached to English and provides evidence of her identification with the subject. Her account also associated teaching with subject mastery, character development, discipline, and literacy initiatives. However, the available evidence does not independently establish that she possessed consistently high self-esteem or self-efficacy. These psychological dimensions require direct supporting statements from her interview transcript.

TP2's dominant I-Identity was reflected in his institutional and professional responsibilities, including his role as vice principal for public relations and his involvement in leading the district-level *Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran* (MGMP). These responsibilities provided a context for understanding how institutional positions and professional recognition informed his perception of himself as an educator. His reported teaching approach combined firmness with humor, suggesting that he understood classroom leadership as part of his professional role. Nevertheless, further direct interview excerpts are needed to demonstrate how he interpreted these responsibilities and how his identity changed over time.

TP3's dominant A-Identity was associated with his participation in the *Guru Penggerak* program, school learning communities, and online professional networks. These experiences provided opportunities for collaboration and professional learning. His reported efforts to relate learning materials to students' interests, including K-pop and automotive topics, also illustrated his orientation toward adapting instruction to students' contexts. This finding suggests that participation in shared professional activities was an important part of how he understood his role as a teacher.

The participants' accounts also indicated different professional identity trajectories. TP1 described an established interest in English, TP2's professional orientation was associated with family influence and institutional responsibilities, and TP3's teaching identity developed through experience despite his initially unclear intention to enter the profession. These differences suggest that professional identity development

does not follow a uniform pathway. Nevertheless, because the available excerpts do not establish a complete chronological sequence of events for each participant, the trajectories should be interpreted as patterns reconstructed from their accounts rather than as fully documented longitudinal changes

Table 1. Dominant Professional Identity Orientations Among the Participants

Participant	Dominant Identity	Evidence Reported in the Interviews	Interpretation
TP1	N-Identity	Longstanding interest in English; "English is my life."	Personal identification with English was central to her professional orientation.
TP2	I-Identity	Vice principal for public relations and district MGMP leadership.	Institutional responsibilities and professional roles were prominent in his identity.
TP3	A-Identity	Participation in *Guru Penggerak*, school learning communities, and online professional networks.	Shared professional activities and collaboration were prominent in his identity.

Source: Data analysis results (2026)

The findings are consistent with Gee's (2000) conceptualization of identity as multidimensional and context-dependent. N-Identity, I-Identity, Discourse Identity (D-Identity), and A-Identity provide complementary perspectives for understanding how teachers interpret their personal characteristics, institutional positions, social recognition, and participation in professional communities. In this study, the three dominant orientations offer a comparative account of the participants' professional identities. However, the evidence supports differences in their reported experiences more directly than it supports definitive claims about the strength of each psychological dimension.

Findings for RQ2: Personal, Institutional, and Social Factors Shaping Professional Identity

The findings indicate that the participants' professional identities were shaped by the interaction of personal experiences, institutional responsibilities, and social relationships. These factors were interconnected rather than isolated, although their relative importance differed among the participants.

Personal factors. Personal interest, family influence, professional values, and previous experiences contributed to the participants' perceptions of teaching. TP1's longstanding interest in English was reflected in her statement, "English is my life." TP2's professional orientation was associated with family influence and moral responsibility, whereas TP3's identification with teaching developed through accumulated experience. These accounts suggest that teachers' professional identities may emerge from different personal starting points. Nevertheless, claims concerning self-esteem, self-efficacy, or job satisfaction should be supported by additional verbatim excerpts before being treated as established findings.

Institutional factors. Institutional responsibilities and professional development experiences also shaped the participants' accounts of their professional roles. TP2's leadership responsibilities illustrate the significance of formal positions and professional recognition in his identity. For TP1 and TP3, the *Guru Penggerak* program provided experiences through which they reconsidered or reinforced aspects of their teaching philosophy. TP1 reportedly placed greater emphasis on individual differences, learning processes, and character development after participating in the program. TP2 incorporated additional pedagogical strategies and technology while maintaining his existing professional beliefs. TP3 further developed a student-centered orientation that was already present in his teaching. These accounts suggest that professional development interacted with existing identities in different ways rather than producing a uniform transformation.

Social factors. Relationships with students, colleagues, and professional communities provided further contexts for identity development. TP1 was described as serious and disciplined, TP2 as firm but

humorous, and TP3 as adaptive to students' interests. Participation in professional learning communities and online networks also gave TP3 opportunities to engage with other educators. These accounts indicate that social interactions and professional affiliations formed part of the context in which the teachers understood their roles. However, because the study relied on interview accounts rather than classroom observations, the findings describe participants' reported experiences and perceptions rather than independently verified classroom behavior.

Table 2. Factors Associated with Professional Identity Development

Actor	Evidence from Participants' Accounts	Relationship to Identity Development
Personal	TP1's interest in English; TP2's family influence; TP3's developing identification with teaching.	Shaped the participants' initial orientations and personal meanings attached to teaching.
Institutional	TP2's leadership roles; participation in the *Guru Penggerak* program; differing responses to professional learning.	Provided responsibilities, expectations, and opportunities to reconsider or reinforce professional beliefs.
Social	Reported interactions with students, involvement in MGMP and school learning communities, and online professional networks.	Provided contexts for professional recognition, collaboration, and the negotiation of teaching roles.

Source: Data analysis results (2026)

The findings suggest that the *Guru Penggerak* program served as a professional learning context in which existing identities could be maintained, strengthened, or reconsidered. The participants' differing responses indicate that the program did not necessarily replace their previous professional orientations. Instead, its significance depended on their prior experiences, responsibilities, and beliefs. This interpretation is consistent with Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), who discuss teacher identity as a developing construct shaped by professional experiences and reflection.

Karaolis and Philippou's (2019) professional-self framework provides an additional perspective for interpreting these findings through self-image, self-esteem, self-efficacy, work motivation, task orientation, future perspective, professional commitment, and job satisfaction. The participants' accounts offer indications of professional commitment and motivation through their reported engagement with teaching and professional learning. However, the available evidence does not establish the degree of each psychological dimension or demonstrate that these dimensions directly caused particular teaching practices. Further analysis of verbatim interview excerpts is necessary to substantiate such interpretations.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that teacher professional identity is multidimensional, dynamic, and contextually constructed. The different dominant identities among TP1, TP2, and TP3 suggest that teachers enter and experience professional development from different identity positions. TP1's dominant N-Identity indicates that her professional identity was strongly rooted in personal characteristics, interests, and perceived aptitude. TP2's dominant I-Identity reflects the importance of institutional roles, responsibilities, and recognition in shaping his professional self-concept. Meanwhile, TP3's dominant A-Identity highlights the role of professional communities and shared practices in developing his identity. This supports (Gee, 2000) view that identity is constructed through multiple dimensions rather than through a single stable category. The four identity perspectives operate in relation to one another, while particular dimensions may become more salient depending on teachers' experiences and contexts. The professional identity development of the three English teachers in vocational high schools is analysed through Gee's (2000) four dimensions of identity: Nature Identity (N-Identity), Institution Identity (I-Identity), Discourse Identity (D-Identity), and Affinity Identity (A-Identity). These dimensions are complemented by Karaolis and Philippou's (2019) framework, which highlights self-esteem, self-efficacy, professional commitment, and task orientation as factors connecting professional identity with teaching practices.

The findings reveal that each participant developed a distinct professional identity. TP1's N-Identity was dominant, rooted in her passion for English since childhood, expressed through the statement "English is my life." This intrinsic motivation shaped her commitment to subject mastery, character development, disciplined teaching, and literacy initiatives. TP2's I-Identity was the most prominent, reflected in his leadership roles as Vice Principal for Public Relations and district MGMP leader. He viewed institutional responsibilities as opportunities to demonstrate discipline and educational values, which were reflected in his firm yet humorous teaching style. Meanwhile, TP3's A-Identity was dominant, demonstrated through his active participation in the *Guru Penggerak* program, school learning communities, and online professional networks. His collaborative orientation supported adaptive, student-centered teaching, including the integration of students' interests in K-Pop and automotive topics.

Across the four dimensions, the participants also demonstrated different identity development trajectories. Their N-Identity ranged from an established passion for English (TP1), to an interest shaped by family influence (TP2), and a teaching disposition gradually recognized through experience (TP3). Their I-Identity was shaped by institutional responsibilities, professional recognition, and employment status. Their D-Identity emerged through classroom interactions, with TP1 recognized as serious and strict, TP2 as firm yet humorous, and TP3 as adaptable to students' interests. Their A-Identity developed through participation in professional communities and collaborative initiatives, enabling them to strengthen professional belonging and exchange teaching practices.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of D-Identity in translating professional identity into classroom practice. The different ways TP1, TP2, and TP3 interacted with students illustrate how teachers' identities are continuously enacted and negotiated through social relationships. TP1's combination of discipline and empathy, TP2's use of firmness and humor, and TP3's adaptive communication demonstrate that professional identity is not merely an internal perception but is also performed through everyday classroom interactions. His ability to incorporate students' interests, such as K-Pop and automotive topics, can also be understood in relation to (Kumaravadivelu, 2021) discussion of identity negotiation and the flexible use of linguistic and communicative resources across contexts.

The different effects of *Guru Penggerak* on the three participants further indicate that professional development does not necessarily replace teachers' existing identities. Instead, it interacts with and develops identities that have already been formed through previous experiences. TP1 experienced a change in how she conceptualized effective teaching, particularly through greater attention to individual differences, learning processes, and character development. TP2 primarily incorporated new pedagogical strategies and technology while maintaining his established professional beliefs. TP3, meanwhile, experienced reinforcement of a student-centered philosophy that was already embedded in his teaching practice. These patterns are consistent with (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), who argue that professional development interacts with teachers' existing identities rather than simply imposing a new identity. Therefore, *Guru Penggerak* can be interpreted as a space for identity strengthening, negotiation, and reconstruction, rather than merely a mechanism for transferring pedagogical knowledge.

The findings also show that psychological mechanisms are important in explaining how identity is translated into professional practice. Self-efficacy is particularly significant because teachers' beliefs about their capabilities influence their motivation, choices, persistence, and performance. (Bandura, 1993) explains that self-efficacy plays an important role in determining how individuals approach challenges and organize their actions. The experiences of the three participants demonstrate this process. TP1's confidence in English and technology, TP2's development of technological competence, and TP3's confidence in differentiated learning were strengthened through professional experiences. These developments can further be related to (Bandura, 1993) sources of self-efficacy, particularly mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion. Participation in *Guru Penggerak* therefore provided not only new pedagogical knowledge but also opportunities for practice, interaction, observation, and social reinforcement that could strengthen teachers' confidence in their professional capabilities.

The relationship between identity and professional practice is also reflected in the dimensions proposed by (Karaolis & Philippou, 2019), particularly self-esteem, self-efficacy, professional commitment, job satisfaction, motivation, task orientation, and future perspective. The three teachers demonstrated strong professional commitment, but their commitment emerged from different sources. TP1's commitment was associated with a sense of calling and literacy advocacy, TP2's with family values, moral responsibility, and educational improvement, and TP3's with long-term experience and service to students. Similarly, their job satisfaction was largely derived from student development and professional growth rather than material rewards. These findings suggest that professional identity is strengthened when teachers perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with their personal and professional values.

The findings therefore suggest that professional identity and professional practice develop through a reciprocal relationship. Teachers' existing identities influence how they interpret and apply professional development experiences, while new experiences can subsequently strengthen, modify, or reconstruct those identities. In the present study, N-Identity, I-Identity, and A-Identity represented the dominant identity orientations of TP1, TP2, and TP3, respectively, while D-Identity provided an important mechanism through which these identities were enacted in classroom interactions. The psychological dimensions identified by (Karaolis & Philippou, 2019), particularly self-efficacy, self-esteem, commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction, functioned as important links between identity and practice. Thus, the study extends the understanding of *Guru Penggerak* by showing that its contribution is not limited to pedagogical competence. Rather, the program provides a professional space in which teachers can strengthen existing identities, negotiate new professional roles, and translate professional learning into classroom practices. This interpretation is consistent with (Bandura, 1993; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Gee, 2000; Karaolis & Philippou, 2019; Kumaravadivelu, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Regarding RQ1, the findings indicate that the three EFL teachers demonstrated different dominant professional identity orientations. TP1 was primarily associated with Nature Identity (N-Identity), reflecting her personal interest in English; TP2 with Institution Identity (I-Identity), reflecting his institutional responsibilities; and TP3 with Affinity Identity (A-Identity), reflecting his participation in professional learning communities. These orientations illustrate how the participants understood their professional roles through different personal and professional experiences, while the four identity dimensions proposed by Gee (2000) provided complementary perspectives for interpreting their accounts.

Regarding RQ2, the findings indicate that personal, institutional, and social factors were associated with the development of the participants' professional identities. Personal interests and previous experiences shaped their initial orientations toward teaching, institutional responsibilities and participation in the *Guru Penggerak* program provided opportunities to reflect on their professional beliefs, and social relationships and professional communities offered contexts for collaboration and professional learning. The participants responded to these experiences differently: the program reportedly encouraged some reconsideration of existing beliefs while reinforcing other established orientations. Thus, its role should be understood as a professional learning context rather than a direct cause of identity transformation.

This study contributes a context-specific account of how three EFL teachers in vocational high schools in Sarolangun Regency understood their professional identities through personal experiences, institutional roles, and professional affiliations. However, the findings are based on participants' interview accounts and do not establish causal relationships between professional identity and teaching practices or demonstrate changes in classroom performance. Future research could use longitudinal narrative inquiry

and classroom observations to examine how teachers' reported identity development relates to their enacted practices over time and whether these patterns are evident among teachers in other educational contexts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author contributed to the conceptualization of the study, development of the research methodology, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, and preparation of the initial manuscript. The second author contributed to the supervision of the research process, interpretation of the findings, and substantive revision of the manuscript. The third author contributed to the critical review, editing, and refinement of the manuscript. All authors participated in discussions of the research findings, reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript, and are responsible for the accuracy and integrity of the work.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct of the research, data analysis, preparation, or publication of this article.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USE STATEMENT

In preparing this article, the authors used artificial intelligence (AI) technology as an assisting tool for language editing, grammar checking, paraphrasing, and improving the structure and clarity of the manuscript. AI was not used to generate, manipulate, or analyze the research data. The authors retain full responsibility for the content of the article, interpretation of the findings, accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

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