

## **FROM A PRE-SERVICE TO AN IN-SERVICE TERTIARY EFL TEACHER: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

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### **Abstract**

This autobiographical narrative inquiry study sheds some light on my career trajectory from a pre-service EFL teacher to an in-service tertiary EFL teacher. The data were garnered from written reflections on my lived experiences during initial teacher education program and seven years after graduation from initial teacher education program (2011-2021). Thematic coding was employed to analyze the data. The findings signified my career dynamics as a novice EFL teacher. It was challenging to find a permanent job as a teacher or lecturer. It was important for teachers to continuously develop themselves professionally through taking further formal education and training. The initial teacher education program enabled me to shape my character, personality, and identity as a teacher through formal classes and extra-curricular activities; and developed my professionalism through community, organization, competition, workshop, seminar, scientific work, and others. It was true that decisional capital played an essential role in teaching profession. It also indicated that struggle, patience, and endurance were important to endure in this teaching profession. This study signifies that an early career teacher must have other sources of income apart from their teaching profession, while waiting for a better and permanent teaching job. Future studies on the career trajectory of novice EFL teachers are still encouraged, particularly beyond the Indonesian context. Various research methods and designs may be applied to further study this issue.

**Keywords:** *Autobiography, Career Trajectory, EFL Teacher, Narrative Inquiry, Teaching Profession.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Most English teachers nowadays are non-native English speakers who have completed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teacher education programs. They begin their teaching careers in a linguistic and educational setting which is strategic yet demanding (Hadi, 2019). It is now common to discuss EFL teaching career and have a look at references regarding EFL as a profession. Up to the present, it appears that the use of such

both terms —career and profession— has been irresistible. It indicates that a closer examination towards the concepts of EFL teaching career and profession is crucial (Johnston, 1997).

Teachers, particularly EFL teachers, who must fulfill the demands and standards of English as an international language (EIL), play a significant role in the shifts of teaching methodologies and contribute to the advancements of teaching quality (Vo & Nguyen, 2009). The teaching quality is heavily influenced by teachers' performance. Excellent teachers can manage and handle the teaching and learning process in a classroom to generate successful teaching. They positively provide an impact on the teaching quality (Aimah & Purwanto, 2019). Thus, there is a widespread agreement that teacher education becomes a primary goal in the 21st century (Yan et al., 2020).

The fact of teaching EFL, on the other hand, should cause reflection. Teachers in most, if not all, countries are underpaid and overworked. They also work in frequently hazardous physical and psychological circumstances. EFL teaching profession as a whole is less prestigious compared to other well-established professions such as professions in medicine and law. Numerous teachers do not have stable employment or perks (Johnston, 1997). Furthermore, many pre-service teachers are enthusiastic when they first start a pre-service teacher education. Nevertheless, after working for one or two years in EFL teaching profession, teachers are likely to feel deeply inadequate and they may perceive themselves as 'losers' compared to non-EFL colleagues who already have progressed to work on 'better' things. One of the causes for the shift in attitude towards their professions may be because the teachers' expectations remain unmet after one until two years since they graduated from a pre-service teacher education (Skinner, 2002). Whereas, teachers' beliefs are associated with perceptions and thoughts on all facets of school education and attitudes towards teaching and learning throughout their careers (Liu et al., 2021).

Teachers are routinely asked to deal with heavy workloads whether they are relevant to their teaching duties or not. Teachers'

labor does not truly cease after the class concludes and the students go home. Teachers are more commonly required to carry their work home which is strangely not considered as paid hours. They have to allocate one or two hours to prepare forthcoming class activities or to grade stacks of students' works. In certain cases, parents may request to meet the teachers in an attempt to query their children's academic progress. It may lead to quarrels and complaints addressed to the teachers. It is easy to see how teachers' duties can deplete their energy both physically and mentally (Rizqi, 2017).

Teachers' initial years of practice are seen as a crucial period. Teacher attrition becomes common in the first five years of teaching with roughly 40%-50% of novice teachers in North America leaving this profession. During the first five years of teaching, novice teachers are exposed to the facts of teaching profession and determine whether teaching is the best career path or not. This phase is considered as a period of worry and essential development for EFL teachers (Faez & Valeo, 2012). Similarly, an alarming number of teachers are recently reported to leave this profession after completing a teacher education. The rates of teacher turnover are typically higher than that of other professions making this tendency more concerning (Huang, 2021).

The professional life of EFL teachers includes interactions with students, colleagues, parents, and plenty of other people associated with the institutions wherein they work. As they seek to expand their content and pedagogical knowledge as well as develop classroom skills and competence, EFL teachers' career development should touch on all of these interactions (Cowie, 2011). The evolving, multifaceted, and continuous nature of teacher learning results in the understanding that teacher development is a process that is strongly linked to their previous experiences and future goals. Whereas, teachers possibly face numerous challenges and necessarily make strategic decisions and take strategic actions in the initial stages of their careers (Babanoglu & Agcam, 2019). Therefore, teaching must be viewed as a lifetime

career that necessitates professional qualities for personal and career development (Chu et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, there is very little available information regarding the lives of EFL teachers. It seems important to obtain real evidence regarding the professional lives of EFL teachers and make it as the focus of study (Johnston, 1997). Furthermore, investigating the issues of teacher education through the analysis of their career trajectories will aid English teachers in identical EFL settings comprehend their career development to maintain career sustainability and job satisfaction. Prior studies have also highlighted the distinguishing characteristics of great teachers, but seldom looked into how such characteristics are acquired and nurtured throughout the course of their careers (Chu et al., 2021). Several topics deserving further investigation include the influence of family and colleagues on teachers' decision-making process, the degrees of sustained motivation and satisfaction with the selected job, and the challenges in which in-service teachers must deal with while crossing the middle stage of their careers (Olan & Bello, 2016).

With these revealed facts and issues in mind, this present study attempts to fill the identified void and contributes to the body of knowledge in the area of EFL teaching career. It is still essential to scrutinize how an EFL teacher can go through an initial teacher education program and struggle in the initial stage of his teaching career. It has already been known that it is not easy to survive during the first five years of teaching career. This present study aims to portray how an EFL teacher in Indonesia can accomplish his teacher education, get jobs, survive in this teaching profession, and develop himself professionally. Actually, the EFL teacher mentioned here is the author himself. Besides addressing the gap in this area, I want to share my reflections from 2011 to 2021 regarding the accomplishment of my teacher education, teacher development, and survival in seeking a tenured job in my career. Therefore, this present study is lead by these following questions: 1) How is my career trajectory from a pre-service EFL teacher to an in-service tertiary EFL teacher? and 2) How can I

survive in my career from a pre-service EFL teacher to an in-service tertiary EFL teacher?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A career is the notion of a path over which a person progresses and has some control (Johnston, 1997). Unlike a job, a career entails professionalism which helps teachers to advance both professionally and personally. Human capital, social capital, and decisional capital belong to three aspects of a teacher's professional capital. Human capital refers to teachers' individual ability. Social capital belongs to teachers' collaborative ability in a group. Meanwhile, decisional capital means the intelligence and ability required to create smart decisions regarding the profession. The sustainable development of these three aspects of professional capital is projected to contribute to the advancement of teaching profession and teachers' professionalism. Teacher professionalism has progressed through four different phases which include the pre-professional phase, the autonomous professional phase, the collegial professional phase, and the post-professional or postmodern phase (Yumarnamto, 2019). Furthermore, the model of teacher career cycle consists of eight steps although they are not strictly organized in a linear way. Several terms used to describe these steps include pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiastic and growing, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down, and career exit (Johnston, 1997).

Professional development of early career teachers still becomes a major issue across the world. Despite the extensive studies on teacher turnover, scant interest has been devoted to teachers' life experience in determining whether or not to remain in this profession. It is essential since the diverse settings where early career teachers are placed have an impact on them. Personal factors including demographics, family traits, burnout risk, and other psychological factors can also impact on early career teachers' professional development (Huang, 2021). Similarly, teachers' career cycle is affected by two sets of aspects namely personal environment and organizational environment (Johnston, 1997).

Given the sensitivity of this period in teachers' career, it is critical to consider what teachers take away from induction programs and how these programs train novice teachers for the duties they will be required to complete in the classroom. A large body of evidence suggests that well-trained and skilled teachers have a substantial influence on students' achievement (Faez & Valeo, 2012).

Several researchers have focused their studies on the characteristics of expert or successful EFL teachers. Studies on teacher excellence have been done to investigate and enhance their professional experiences and views, therefore offering a reliable source for less experienced teachers. Previous studies have presented teaching as a stressful and difficult profession. Due to broken interpersonal connections and unreasonable public demands, English teachers, as a major part of a teaching team, might be overwhelmed by negative feelings. Simultaneously, renewal in language teaching and socio-economic development have raised expectations and necessitated the hiring of more competent teachers (Liu et al., 2021).

Great teachers have pivotal roles in EFL teaching in schools and the general growth of EFL teaching community. Nevertheless, there has been little investigation on the professional characteristics of EFL teachers which can aid them in responding to obstacles and opportunities and allow them to succeed in complicated educational environments. Teachers can build and modify their teaching beliefs, develop their pedagogical competence, and improve their teaching skills due to the intricacy of their living and working environments. Their EFL teaching qualities, which include their beliefs, competencies, and skills, have to be investigated extensively (Chu et al., 2021). A teacher must also make professional decisions which will have impacts on his professional progress and trajectory (Yumarnamto, 2019).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed narrative inquiry as a part of qualitative research approach. For a myriad of purposes, narrative inquiry is already an old method which may seem contemporary. It is

conventional knowledge that humans live and share stories regarding their lives. These experienced and shared stories and talks on those stories become means in which we construct meaning in our lives and seek supports from others in establishing our lives and communities (Clandinin, 2006). Narrative frequently becomes the spark which enlightens our professional life since stories allow us to have reflection and development (O'Brien & Schillaci, 2002).

Particularly, this study employed one type of narrative inquiry known as autobiography. In the area of teacher education, autobiography has received tremendous attention as a mean of exploring and comprehending teaching practices as well as delving into the what, how, and why of pedagogical actions. Teachers' autobiography arises as a useful method for studying their current beliefs, conceptualizations, thoughts, and actions. Autobiography is a written account of individual's life stories, personal experiences, and views which enable researchers to get a better understanding of how people think about life, reflect on it, and make sense of it (Narváez et al., 2013).

Autobiography as a subset or type of narrative inquiry conveys the intrigue of inner and outer life or the oneness of self and situation. It is indeed a self-discovery, a self-creation, and a self-impersonation at the same time. Existential circumstances are provided in the individual's life history for comprehension. Autobiography allows us to go back to our own situation and recreate our intellectual goals (O'Brien & Schillaci, 2002). A plethora of qualitative studies, including self-study, which highlight the significance of the individual in academic study and the relationship among scholars' personal biographies and their scholarly works have become well-established occurrences (Skerrett, 2008).

This study investigated the narrative of a teacher's life story obtained by garnering and retelling parts of his life which are related to the research questions. The participant of this study was myself since I have passed my first seven years (2015-2021) in teaching profession without any turnover although it was very challenging to achieve a stable career path and get a settled job in

my country. Through this study, I shared my lived stories since my initial teacher education program until my present job as a tertiary English teacher in a state university (2011-2021). Data were garnered through written reflections toward my lived experiences during initial teacher education program and seven years after graduation from initial teacher education program (2011-2021). Data were chronologically organized in order from the oldest period to the latest one to identify my career steps. Lessons learned from the stories were then pointed out in each career step.

Thematic coding was utilized to analyze the data in this study. The data were divided thematically, just as in any qualitative study. The data from the stories were then coded into themes or categories. The discovery of themes gives depth to the knowledge of individual experiences and increases the complexity of the stories. These themes were later incorporated into paragraphs depicting the participant's stories (Creswell, 2014). To guarantee the trustworthiness of the results, the coding was done three times at various times.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Throughout this section, I retold my own stories which had been expressed through written reflections. These stories were all the stories relevant with my own experiences regarding my career trajectory and survival in my career from a pre-service EFL teacher to an in-service tertiary EFL teacher in Indonesian context. My narratives were chronologically presented in order. These narratives were divided into three parts according to the periods of time including initial teacher education program, early career and postgraduate teacher education program, and early career after postgraduate teacher education program. The findings were then explored, highlighted, and discussed with the findings of previous relevant studies and prior closely related literature to enrich our insight and complement our understanding on this issue.

### **Initial Teacher Education Program (2011-2015)**

Becoming a teacher was actually not my first preference when I applied for college. At that time, I wanted to be a software engineer or an expert in the field of Computer Science or Informatics Engineering. So, I put Computer Science (in the national college admission test) and Informatics Engineering (in the independent admission path) in the first place of my choices. The second choice went to Accounting department (in the national college admission test) and Agribusiness department (in the independent admission path). So, English Education department was placed on the third choice and I was finally admitted in this department. In fact, I failed in the national college admission test in which English Education was not included in my choices. I was further admitted through the independent admission path. I finally included English Education department in my choices since my mother suggested me to include it. My mother argued that I was good in English and my family had strong engagement in education field since both my father and mother were teachers as well as my grandparents. Therefore, I was born in the family of teachers. However, I was at first not interested to become a teacher too. It was my mother suggestion's and the God's fate which lead me to become an English teacher and finally pursue initial teacher education program at a state university in Central Java, Indonesia.

I began my initial teacher education program in August 2011 and graduated from this program in January 2015 with title Bachelor in Education and Cum Laude predicate (grade-point average 3.83 out of 4.00). I completed my initial teacher education program in just 7 semesters. Furthermore, I only needed 8 months to finish my undergraduate thesis although I was also doing my internship program at a school for 4 months in the same time as one pre-requisite to take the undergraduate thesis examination. I was really motivated to graduate in the most minimum time since I had wanted to get my first job as soon as possible and get married after that. This motivation drove me to finish my undergraduate thesis in 8 months and register myself for the undergraduate thesis examination soon afterward. I was also eager to achieve the best

results in my initial teacher education program so that I used to perform my best in every class, assignment, task, project, examination, and another work which I had to accomplish. It resulted in high grade-point average which I could achieve and achievement as top 3 winners in several national competitions.

Although I could graduate in the most minimum time, I also had enough experiences besides formal training and education during my initial teacher education program. I joined in several extra-curricular organizations and activities concerning on my interests related to English, debate, speech, writing, research, innovation, and others. I also attended several competitions mostly in scientific writing and public speaking which made me travelling to some cities in Indonesia such as Purwokerto, Surabaya, Semarang, Jakarta, Palembang, and Medan. Moreover, I ever joined in two conferences abroad as a presenter. The first conference was held in Malaysia and the second one was held in Thailand. These experiences shaped my identity as a teacher candidate to strengthen my competences including personality competence, professional competence, and social competence. Overall, I did not only spend my time for formal classes but also made use of my time for other beneficial activities such as joining in some organizations, attending several competitions, and travelling to some cities in Indonesia and two countries in South East Asian region. I learned a lot from these unforgettable experiences.

Despite my high activities during my initial teacher education program, I still prioritized my initial teacher education program as my first priority. I was never absent in more than three meetings in a semester on each course. I used to submit tasks or assignments on time or before the deadline. I also did my best on every single work I completed including assignments, projects, examinations, and others. Another important thing was to maintain good relationships with all lecturers. Therefore, I was also engaged in their projects including research, workshop, conference, and others. With these hardships, I could achieve the best results in my initial teacher education program along with several additional achievements which I was very thankful of.

Reflectively, it was not enough for me to passively rely on formal initial teacher education program only. I needed additional values, knowledge, and skills for myself which could be internalized through extra-curricular activities. As I told earlier, I joined in several extra-curricular activities by engaging myself into organizations, committees, competitions, conferences, seminars, workshops, debate clubs, and others. From these activities, I got very valuable experiences which could not be obtained by attending formal classrooms only. These experiences complemented the knowledge and skills I learned from formal initial teacher education program. I confidently concluded that I successfully improved several skills through these extra-curricular activities including scientific writing, public speaking, team-work, leadership, and others. I also believed that these activities have shaped my character, personality, and identity as a teacher candidate. Furthermore, I became more confident, tough, hard-working, and survived. These activities also facilitated me to build networks, make friends, strengthen relationships, create communities, and others.

### **Early Career and Postgraduate Teacher Education Program (2015-2017)**

In the early 2015, I seeked for my first job. At first, I wondered that I could directly get a prestigious job since I thought that I had good achievement during my initial teacher education program. Nevertheless, the reality was not as sweet as I imagined. I needed two months to get my first job. I became an academic staff and a tutor at once in a tutoring agency. This was my first milestone in my professional career in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). I then continued my career by moving from one institution to another one for several times. There were several factors which led me to move from one institution to another. They were, for example, uncomfortable working environment, low salary, career obscurity, and others. Therefore, it made me to try other opportunities and get more experiences until I found a tenured job.

I ever worked as an extra-curricular teacher, non-permanent teacher, contract teacher, and tutor. Besides having experiences working in some tutoring agencies, I had experiences working in several junior high schools and senior high schools. I had experiences working in both public schools and private schools. These various teaching experiences have shaped my identity as an EFL teacher who had to be professional, competent, and well-qualified in many contexts of teaching. However, I did not have experience in teaching English to young learners such as in early childhood, kindergarten, and primary school settings since I was not interested to teach young learners. Furthermore, I also established a translation agency to make more money outside of teaching profession. It was really challenging to find a tenured job during my initial career as a teacher. At this time, I only applied for jobs in Surakarta and its surrounding cities like Karanganyar, Sukoharjo, Sragen, and Boyolali.

Willing to improve my career, I decided to continue my formal education in a postgraduate program. I then took a master program in English Education at the same university as my initial teacher education program. I finally decided to choose the same university since I had been working as a contract teacher in a private junior high school at that time. I also still wanted to live and work in this city since it was very comfortable for me. However, I did not enroll myself in a teacher professional education program since I wanted to be a lecturer/tertiary teacher/college teacher in the future. It was really my dream to become a tertiary teacher since I started my initial teacher education program. Thus, I already shifted my dream since the first year of my initial teacher education program.

I began my postgraduate teacher education program in August 2015 and graduated from this program in February 2017. I only needed 3 semesters to graduate from this master program majoring in English Education. I graduated with title Master in Education and Cum Laude predicate (grade-point average 3.86 out of 4.00). During my postgraduate teacher education program, I could not participate in extra-curricular activities actively like what

I had done during my initial teacher education program. It was since my time was spent to work as a contract teacher in a private junior high school having 30 hours of teaching per week. So, I had to work as a teacher around four and a half days and attend my postgraduate program classes for three days. Simply, I had no regular holiday every week. I was working very hard at that time. I ever felt tired and exhausted to undertake both my job as a teacher and my study in the postgraduate teacher education program. This was one of the hardest episodes in my life.

Once upon a time, I felt burdened and cried hard. I almost gave up to accomplish my postgraduate study. Finally, I decided to quit my job as a contract teacher when I was in the end of the second semester of my postgraduate study. This decision was made by considering several things including the stories from some friends of mine who also undertook postgraduate study but could not graduate on time since they were also working full time. At the same time, I wanted to focus on my postgraduate study and graduate in 3 semesters (the minimum study time). Besides, I also became uncomfortable with my working environment due to some reasons. Practically, I just worked as an extra-curricular teacher in a public senior high school, a private tutor, and a translator. I could take this choice since my parents still gave me money for my postgraduate program tuition fees. Moreover, I ever applied for a scholarship to fund my postgraduate study but I did not pass the scholarship selection. This choice was indeed a dilemma. However, I could pass this hard times and finish my thesis in 6 months. Fortunately, I was granted a Master in Education in February 2017.

### **Early Career after Postgraduate Teacher Education Program (2017-2021)**

Having graduated from the postgraduate teacher education program, I tried my new opportunities as a newly-minted master in TEFL. I applied for jobs in many higher education institutions in Surakarta, Sukoharjo, Klaten, Karanganyar, Sragen, Salatiga, Yogyakarta, and Semarang. At this point, I began to expand my applying-for-job areas into Salatiga, Semarang, and Yogyakarta. I

started to get a job in a higher education institution in March 2017. I was admitted to be an English tutor at a language center of a public college in Sukoharjo. I was very happy and enthusiastic to begin my career in higher education settings. Later, I was also admitted as a non-permanent lecturer in several public and private colleges around Surakarta. It was possible for me to work as a non-permanent lecturer in multiple colleges since I only had to teach in certain schedules and had no obligation to stay in the office. Moreover, I was also still working as an extra-curricular teacher at a public senior high school in Sragen and Surakarta. Therefore, I did not have a permanent job from early 2015 to early 2019. It was challenging to find a permanent job as a teacher or lecturer.

I then enrolled myself in the selection of civil servant candidates in 2017 and 2018. In 2017, I applied for a lecturer position in a public university in Semarang. However, I failed at this time. I was not ranked in the top three. Later, I tried my second chance to participate in the selection of civil servant candidates again. I applied for a lecturer position at a public college in Sukoharjo. Fortunately, I was admitted to occupy this position through the announcement released in January 2019. After several processes, I then started to work as a civil servant candidate in the position of a lecturer in March 2019. Having been a civil servant candidate for one year, I was later appointed as a civil servant in March 2020 which became the milestone in my career as a permanent lecturer. At this stage, I still did not have a lecturer functional position. I then submitted a credit score assessment to propose my first lecturer functional position as an associate lecturer in June 2020. My associate lecturer decree was finally issued in September 2020. Thus, I had 150 credits which could then be upgraded by carrying out the tridharma activities of higher education to advance my career.

From that moment, I began to have rights to become an undergraduate thesis supervisor, propose research grant, supervise student internship, and others. It was also the milestone of my career in the lecturer functional position because my tridharma activities would be taken into account since I obtained my associate

lecturer decree with 150 credits merely from my master degree. Currently, I have been focusing on my tridharma activities including teaching, researching, and giving service to community. Besides, I have been doing several supporting activities such as attending workshops and seminars as well as joining professional organizations and communities to develop myself. I also started to write and publish scientific works again in early 2020 after being admitted as a permanent lecturer. My first article was published by a journal in April 2020. This breakthrough was followed by upcoming success. I could continuously publish many journal articles and a course book from 2020 to 2021. I hoped that this spirit was kept alive to continuously contribute to the development of science.

Subsequently, I aimed to advance my career by upgrading my lecturer functional position into lecturer. To achieve this goal, I had to consistently carry out tridharma activities with more focus on teaching and researching since these two elements had major contribution on the credit score assessment. Whereas, the community service and supporting activity gave minor contribution on the credit score assessment. Particularly, I needed to write and publish many journal articles and several books to successfully achieve my goal to upgrade my lecturer functional position.

Reflectively, lecturers or tertiary teachers were slightly different from school teachers. We had many other duties besides teaching such as supervising students' thesis, researching, writing scientific works, and others. Whereas, school teachers had to focus on teaching and its administrative stuff. However, I thought that both lecturers and teachers had to continuously develop ourselves since we had a similar duty to educate our students. It was also because science is always evolving. Therefore, we must always be up-to-date with the development of science.

The path to becoming a teacher might begin long before a person enrolled in a teacher education program. Multiple complicated factors might influence a person's decision to become a teacher. Internal and external factors, such as the involvement of significant others, socio-cultural issues, economic considerations,

and teacher political issues, could all play roles. Having intertwined connection, these factors gave impacts on a person's final decision to enter the teaching profession or not. External factors largely influenced the early days of a teacher. Nevertheless, a person could later discover his passion to become a teacher internally (Daud, 2021).

Personal decisions, as well as socio-cultural factors, influenced the decision to enter and remain in the teaching profession. Having learned from significant events experienced by an Indonesian EFL teacher, it was discovered that professional capital including human, social, and decisional capital became an essential factor to promote professionalism. Decisional capital encompassed not only decisions made in the classroom but also those made at a macro level outside the classroom where socio-cultural and political circumstances played significant roles in the teacher's professional decisions (Yumarnamto, 2019).

For teachers working in supportive environments, teacher education programs could help promoting teacher professional development. Several schools, on the other hand, were apathetic in development thus resulting in the decline of teachers' favorable attitudes earned during teacher education program. Furthermore, teacher education programs which prepared teacher candidates to recognize and comprehend pertinent contextual factors in their specific teaching contexts might ease the teachers' transitions from the teacher education program to the workplace (Skinner, 2002). It was also found that language teacher education program could take advantages from a deeper awareness towards teachers' working situations to promote autonomy and experimentation for teachers (Benson, 2010).

Drawing on Bakhtinian analysis, Polish teachers frequently positioned themselves as experienced English speakers offering congruence to career choices beyond the teaching profession. Furthermore, TEFL was portrayed as a flexible profession which could be joined and left easily. Teachers dealing with challenging conditions and highly dynamic socio-economic contexts could benefit from these kind of strategies. However, there might be

some drawbacks due to these discursive choices. For example, the choice to present themselves as experienced English speakers might cause the teachers to ignore the skills, expertise, and knowledge regarding their position as teachers. Thus, it resulted in the difficulty for teachers as a group to obtain the status and influence they deserved in the broader society (Johnston, 1997).

Opportunities for professionalization were considered as restricted since socio-economic realities made long-term commitment to EFL teaching seemed impossible. In fact, it exacerbated systemic issues including high teacher attrition and a scarcity of competent teachers for many places, particularly in public schools and kindergartens. Alternatively, teachers who loved and were qualified at their jobs could discursively make a life as a teacher to remain in this profession longer. Nevertheless, socio-economic issues and other competing discourses made teacher identities fragile. Simply, many Polish teachers did not remain as teachers (Johnston, 1997).

Drawing on the professional life of an English as a second language (ESL) teacher in Hong Kong, it was discovered that teacher identity formation was considered as intricate, evolving, disjointed, and multi-faceted. It was also found that teacher agency was influenced by teacher experiences, prior characteristics of thought and behavior, changing circumstances, and strategic developments. Personal traits, views, and expertise aided to deal with difficulties in teaching although the dissonance with situational factors necessitated pliable notions as a teacher. Moreover, the capacity to handle problems on teacher agency throughout the early career stage was affected by the meaning given to teacher identity (Huang, 2021).

Novice teachers required much more professional and individual assistance than most schools could offer. Interpersonal interactions could serve as a buffer among the institution and teachers in many educational circumstances. As a result, the sustainable professional development of novice teachers relied heavily on an open attitude and successful communication among colleagues. Novice teachers should be provided opportunities to

reflect on their instructional practices. It seemed essential to support teachers in inducing further reflection on being and becoming a teacher and addressing factors which might not be immediately obvious to them during their early career stage. Thus, teachers required guidance to ponder their vulnerabilities, themselves as teachers, and the obstacles which might exist in their teaching practices (Huang, 2021).

Supportive institutions and friendly social ties were two essential factors which helped a teacher to deal with day-to-day challenges. Furthermore, the teacher seemed to possess a tremendous positive emotion which was affected by surrounding people such as the students. Evidently, the harmful impacts of stress could be mitigated by fostering the essential tenets of resilience, especially in the context of Indonesian education (Rizqi, 2017). In light of the interviews done with EFL teachers at Tokyo universities, it was discovered that the teachers possessed highly favorable feelings of emotional warmth for students which were exhibited through their identities as caretakers and moral advisers. However, the teachers exhibited even more terrible emotional terms regarding their ties with colleagues and institutions (Cowie, 2011).

Individual fulfillment motives were common in the investigation of factors which influenced the EFL teachers' career choices in various regions of the globe. Whereas, intrinsic career value included the excitement with English language and its teaching. It was revealed that the teachers chose EFL teaching profession to achieve individual and professional fulfillment. This had to do with the development of teacher agency and the significance of teachers' positioning in decision-making processes beneficial to shape their professional lives. It was also found that socio-cultural influences were ubiquitous. Moreover, it was emphasized that having conversations and sharing viewpoints with members of teacher communities while going through the process of career choices were worthwhile. As a result, remarkable conversations such as typical interactions with family, close relatives, friends, and colleagues were critical to demonstrate the

essential roles which family and community members could have in the teachers' career choices. The teachers received many influences from their community members and relatives (Olan & Bello, 2016).

Drawing on an empirical study involving 18 female senior teacher educators at a non-elite teacher education college, it was revealed that the teachers' plateauing was evidenced by their teaching-focused professional identity and the paucity of individual and group agency for professional development and organizational growth. Their reported shortage of professional expertise and research idleness in the pervasive 'publish or perish' environment were determined to be driven by individual and situational factors (Yan et al., 2020).

## **IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

This study scrutinizes my career trajectory as an EFL teacher in the first decade starting from the initial teacher education program to my current position as a tertiary EFL teacher at a public university seen from an autobiographical narrative inquiry lens. This study results in many important findings regarding the career dynamics of a novice EFL teacher. It is challenging to find a permanent job as a teacher or lecturer. I had to wait around 5 years to get a permanent job. This condition made me to become a non-permanent teacher in several institutions and ever move from one institution to others. It was because the income as a non-permanent teacher would not be enough for my living expenses. Thus, I taught in multiple institutions and became a self-employed translator.

It is also important for teachers to continuously develop ourselves professionally through continuing formal education and training such as postgraduate teacher education or teacher professional education program. Initially, this self-development can be carried out since we are in the initial teacher education program. We can begin to shape our character, personality, and identity as a teacher through formal classes and extra-curricular activities. We can also develop ourselves professionally through community, organization, competition, workshop, seminar, scientific work, and

others. The key is our own will to learn, develop, and grow professionally. It is also indicated that struggle, patience, and endurance are important to survive in this teaching profession since we do not know when we will get a permanent job which is enough for our living and it is, of course, challenging. Therefore, an early career teacher must have other sources of income outside the teaching profession. It will be useful to struggle and survive in this teaching profession while waiting for a better and permanent teaching job.

It is also true that decisional capital is essential in this teaching profession. It is very helpful to aid us decide when we should continue our formal education and training, when we should quit from an educational institution, when we should focus on our study and thesis, and other important decisions regarding our teaching profession. It is because the career path of a teacher is so dynamic and challenging. Thus, teachers must be able to make the best decision in every stage of our career. Alternatively, we can determine how long we are willing to struggle and survive in this teaching profession, 5 or 7 years for instance. However, I suggest for those who have been more than 10 years in this teaching profession but not found a permanent teaching job yet to consider leaving this profession if you cannot afford your living expenses.

Despite its shortcomings, this study is still very valuable and relevant, especially for early career EFL teachers. They can learn many lessons told in this study to keep struggle and survive in this teaching profession. Furthermore, future studies on the career trajectory of novice EFL teachers are still encouraged, especially outside the Indonesian context. These future studies will be very useful to complement the results of this study since different contexts and settings may affect the career trajectory of early career teachers. Various research methods and designs may also be applied to further study this issue. Thus, the career trajectory and lesson learned may be different and unique.

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