

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Being an English teacher involves more than just understanding the subject; it also demands classroom control, effective teaching strategies, and adaptability, especially for recent graduates. For novice teachers, the transition from being a student to becoming a teacher can be both exciting and challenging. Entering the classroom for the first time, these beginning teachers must quickly adjust to the realities of school life, student behavior, curriculum expectations, and professional responsibilities. Although many universities provide pre-service teachers with both theoretical courses and practicum experiences, some scholars argue that such preparation is not always sufficient. Many novice teachers experience *reality shock* as they encounter challenges that differ significantly from their expectations during teacher education (Veenman, 1984).

Although university teacher training programs offer foundational knowledge and practicum experiences, they may not fully prepare fresh graduates for the unpredictable nature of actual teaching environments. Many new teachers report feelings of stress, self-doubt, and a lack of confidence during their early teaching journey.

My personal experience during the *Program Pengalaman Lapangan (PPL)*—a compulsory teaching practicum in the English

Education Department—also reflected some of these challenges. The program was conducted for more than a month. Although the first meeting was somewhat awkward, it proceeded relatively well. However, as the program continued, I encountered increasing difficulties in managing the classroom. Several students appeared inattentive, engaged in conversations with their peers, and created noise during the lesson delivery. This experience led me to realize that teaching requires not only mastery of subject matter but also effective classroom management skills and adaptability. While my teaching practicum lasted only for a short period, it prompted me to reflect on the experiences of fresh graduate English teachers who undertake full-time teaching responsibilities. It raised the question of whether they face similar struggles or encounter even greater challenges in their first year of teaching.

Understanding the real experiences of fresh graduate English teachers is important, especially in their first year of teaching, as it is a formative period that can shape their long-term professional identity. However, studies that thoroughly explore the lived experiences of newly graduated English teachers—particularly through their personal narratives—remain limited. These early struggles, however, are not without purpose. In Islam, every individual is believed to be tested according to their capacity. Teaching is not only a professional responsibility but also a spiritual calling. Beyond the professional aspects, teaching can also be seen as a moral and spiritual responsibility. In Islam,

challenges are considered part of personal growth, as stated in the Qur'an (Al-Baqarah: 286):

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

"Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear."

Tafsir Wajiz explains "that there is no hardship in religion, and there is no need to feel anxious or burdened by inner whispers, because Allah does not burden a person beyond their capacity. Every individual will receive a reward for the good deeds they perform, even if those deeds are still in the form of intention and have not yet been realized in action."

This verse reflects the inner strength required by fresh graduate English teachers in navigating the challenges of their first year. Despite the emotional and professional struggles, every experience contributes to their growth, identity formation, and resilience as educators.

Many fresh graduate English teachers experience a disconnect between what they expect and the reality they face in the classroom. This phenomenon, known as reality shock (Veenman, 1984), can affect their confidence and motivation during the first year of teaching.

Previous studies (e.g., Weni & Yumarnamto, 2021; Nazari et al., 2023) have explored novice teachers' early experiences. However, limited research has combined the external challenges explained by *Reality Shock Theory* (Veenman, 1984) with the internal processes of professional identity development as emphasized by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009). Addressing this gap, the present study employs these two theoretical

perspectives to examine the lived experiences of fresh graduate English teachers in Indonesia.

This study aims to explore the first-year teaching experience of fresh graduate English teachers through a qualitative case study approach, focusing on the challenges, adaptations, and personal insights gained during this transitional phase.

B. Definition of Key Terms

Several terms related to the research are clarified to avoid misconception.

1. case study refers to a qualitative research method used to deeply explore and understand the teaching experience of a fresh graduate English teacher during their first year of teaching.
2. fresh graduate English teacher refers to an English teacher who has recently completed a bachelor's degree and is currently undergoing their first year of professional teaching.
3. first-year teaching experience refers to the teacher's experiences during the first 12 months of working as an educator, including the challenges, learning processes, adjustments, and adaptations encountered.
4. insights refer to the understanding, reflections, and valuable lessons gained from the new teacher's direct experiences in real classroom settings.

5. new educator refers to a beginning teacher who is the focus of this case study and is currently undergoing their first year of teaching.
6. reality shock refers to the gap between novice teachers' expectations before entering the profession and the realities they encounter during their first year of teaching. According to Veenman (1984), reality shock commonly involves challenges related to classroom management, workload, relationships with colleagues, administrative tasks, and limited professional support.
7. adjustment refers to the process by which novice teachers adapt to the school environment, curriculum, students, and professional roles in order to cope with challenges encountered during their first year of teaching.
8. surprising and enjoyable experiences refer to unexpected situations or positive moments encountered by novice teachers during their first year of teaching, which may influence their motivation, perceptions, and professional development.

C. Research Questions

In light of the problems identified and the aims of the study, the following research questions are formulated to guide the investigation into the first-year teaching experiences of fresh graduate English teachers:

1. What challenges do fresh graduate English teachers face during their first year of teaching?

2. How do the new teachers adjust to the curriculum, students, and school environment?
3. What experiences are the most surprising or enjoyable for the teacher during the first year?

D. Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are formulated to address the research questions and to guide the overall direction of the investigation. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify the challenges faced by fresh graduate English teachers during their first year of teaching.
2. Explore how the teachers adjusts to the curriculum, students, and school environment.
3. Describe the most surprising or enjoyable experiences they encounter in their first year of teaching.

E. Significance of Study

The research significance will be obtained consisting of theoretical and practical implications. The significance would be stated below :

1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the existing literature on teacher development, especially in the context of novice teachers' first-year experiences. It may enrich theoretical understanding of the

challenges, adaptation processes, and emotional experiences of fresh graduate teachers as they transition into professional teaching roles.

2. Practical Significance

The findings of this study can benefit fresh graduate teachers, school administrators, and teacher training institutions by offering real-life insights into what new teachers face. It can help improve mentoring programs, teacher preparation curricula, and policies aimed at supporting novice teachers in their early careers.