

## Novice Teachers' Critical Incidents and Motivation to Choose Teaching Professions: A Study of Teacher Professional Identity Construction

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### ABSTRACT

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Novice teachers, who are in the initial stages of their career as educators, may exhibit a propensity for uncertainty regarding the execution of their professional responsibility. This is particularly dependent on their motivation and experiences accrued throughout their teaching journey. Consequently, novice teachers must engage in reflective practices concerning their professional experiences which involve their beliefs, motivations, and significant incidents that shape their professional identity development. This study involved three EFL novice teachers in elementary schools who are in their first year of teaching. This is a qualitative study that employed the Critical Incident Technique to gather and analyze the data following the five steps proposed by Hughes, William Son, & Lloyd (2007). The data were obtained using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews which were conducted online. Findings reveal that female novice teachers are more intrinsically motivated, driven by their interest in English and teaching, whereas male novice teacher is primarily motivated by his educational background and the prestige of the profession. Although all participants encountered similar critical incidents related to student behavior, teaching ability, classroom management, and teacher-teacher relationships, their responses varied. One participant viewed these challenges as opportunities for growth, while others felt demotivated, particularly when teaching elementary school students. The future career trajectories of novice teachers in education may be influenced by their reflections on these experiences.

**Keywords:** beliefs, critical incidents, EFL novice teacher, motivation, teacher professional identity

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## INTRODUCTION

The transition from teacher education to classroom practice often presents significant challenges for novice teachers, who are in the early stages of their teaching careers. As new teachers enter the real classroom and leave the classroom setting of their education program, they face a variety of unforeseen obstacles and triumphs. Therefore, the first year of teaching is fundamental for novice teachers to develop their professional identity (Strom et al., 2018). According to Hong et al. (2018), early teachers are challenged to develop a stable and positive professional identity by being able to cope with the tensions. Moreover, their professional identity is continuously influenced by many factors as they face the complexity of work and environment. It is a crucial moment for novice teachers because they experience culture shock related to the teaching world that does not suit their expectations (Ke Lomi & Mbato, 2020).

Having limited experience in dealing with real-teaching situations enables novice teachers to experience the various tensions in doing the profession dealing with students, colleagues, or even themselves. In their study, Mahmoudi and Özkan (2015) found that in their first year of teaching, novice teachers might face various kinds of students, situations, and institutions which may result in an inevitable struggle to comply with all the challenges. A study by Cendra (2019) discovered that novice teachers experience stress factors related to their image as a teacher (e.g., being a caring

teacher vs being a tough teacher), cultural context (e.g., expressing opinions vs being in total obedience), and professional and pedagogical problems. Moreover, dealing with students' issues, not cooperative colleagues, overloaded work, demanding parents, and inadequate salary can influence their identity transformation (Pravita & Kuswandono, 2021). This challenging process led to their professional identity tensions and pressure of becoming a good teacher which was caused by various difficult situations (van der Wal et al., 2019 ;Warner, 2016). Hence, as new teachers, novice teachers need to adapt to the teaching environment and be able to do their role as competent teachers. If not, novice teachers possibly leave the job early since they cannot alter challenging situations into positive experiences (Diasi, 2021). Therefore, it is also essential for them to reflect and analyze the incidents that happen to facilitate them to critically think about their next actions. Tripp (1993) explained, "critical incident refers to the event or situations that mark a significant turning point or change in the life of the person" (as cited in Estaji & Fatalaki, 2022). According to Joshi (2018), questioning their teaching practice, and reflecting on their critical incidents also aids them to develop their professionalism. It means that this moment allows novice teacher to stop and judge their actions toward the incidents.

Furthermore, unforeseen situations and expectations encountered during the transition to teaching can wave novice

teachers' motivation to develop their professional identity as teachers. Motivation plays a vital role in individuals' decision-making, including their careers. Wang and Zhang (2021) assert that a teacher's job motivation refers to the motives that influence a teacher to choose and commit to the profession, or even leave it. Motivational factors in teaching are divided into three categories, namely intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic (Thomson & Berger, 2021; Asriani et al., 2022). Teaching motivation can be intrinsically driven by individual personal values and passion for the profession, interests in teaching the subjects, and satisfaction with the job. Then, extrinsic motivations can be driven by salary, holidays, job guarantee and security, and relative ease. Last, altruistic motivations refer to the social responsiveness driven by the motivation to serve the community. Understanding the motivational factors that drive novice teachers to pursue their teaching careers is important in providing valuable insights for teacher education and professional development programs (Asriani et al., 2022; Wang & Zhang, 2021). Starting from being pre-service teachers, they might have been motivated by many factors. Some previous studies investigated pre-service teachers of English education are motivated to be teachers because of subject interest, intrinsic career value, social utility value, and their prior teaching and learning experiences (Suryani, 2020; Asriani et al., 2022). In other words, motivation drives

them to achieve their goal which is also vital for retaining and motivating them to pursue their career in teaching.

A teacher's identity construction is rather dynamic than stable. It is constructed and reconstructed along the journey through ongoing social interactions and contextual experiences (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). As they experience desired or undesired, expected or unexpected incidents in their life as a novice teacher, it can influence the development of their identity. As explained in a study by Pravita and Kuswando (2021), novice teachers had transformed their imagined identity into a practiced identity due to their experience in the community of practice.

Regarding the complex and interconnected relationship between novice teachers' beliefs, motivations, and critical incidents stated in the previous studies, it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of how these factors interact to shape teachers' professional development and overall well-being.

This study intends to explore the interplay between beliefs, motivations, and critical incidents, and provide EFL novice teachers with a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities they face in the early stages of their careers. Moreover, the findings of this study can contribute to the teacher education programs in developing effective strategies to support the development of teacher professional identity. Thus, there are two research questions aimed to be answered in

this study, 1) What are the novice teachers' beliefs about teaching as a profession? 2) What are the novice teachers' motivation to become a teacher? 3) What are the critical incidents that shaped their teacher's professional identity? By answering these questions, this study seeks to provide valuable insights for novice teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their passion and guide their professional growth. Furthermore, this study could help educators to provide effective support for new teachers, for policymakers to develop effective policies about teacher recruitment and professional development, and for the teacher education programs to refine the curriculum and practical experiences to better prepare the pre-service teachers.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This is a qualitative study that employed Critical Incident Technique (CIT). As stated by Butterfield et al. (2009), CIT has a focus on finding "what helps or hinders in a particular activity". Thus, CIT was employed as this present study focused on finding specific moments or incidents that are critical based on the teaching experiences of novice teachers. A critical incident is "an interpretation of the significance of an event" (Tripp, 1993). The concept of critical incidents can be different according to the way a person reacts and responds to those incidents so that they can significantly affect their lives. In other words, a critical incident is created by the person as they perceive it as the

opportunity to change, learn, and make meaning from it (Jennifer & Mbato, 2020). Critical Incident Technique (CIT), according to Hughes et al. (2008) is "a well-proven qualitative research approach that offers a practical step-by-step approach to collecting and analyzing information about human activities and their significance to the people involved". There are five steps included in this approach, such as 1) Establishing general aims; the researcher defining the study's objectives by forming specific questions to be addressed, 2) Establishing plans and specifications; the researcher outlines the detailed procedures and instruments to collect the data, and the method to select the participants, 3) Collecting the data; the researcher gathers the necessary information from the participants, and addresses challenges that may arise during the phase, 4) Analyzing the data, and 5) Interpreting and reporting the data.

### **Participants**

This study involved three EFL novice teachers who have been teaching for less than a year in different elementary schools after graduating from the same English Language Education study program in 2023. The first participant is an English teacher in a private elementary school in Jakarta and she has been teaching for ten months. Second, she is an English teacher in a private elementary school in Jakarta and she has been teaching for eight months. The last participant is an English teacher in a private high school in Tangerang and he

has been teaching for nine months. They voluntarily join the research and they agree to be reported. The participants were chosen based on purposive sampling, considering their educational background, teaching period, and student's level as displayed below in Table 1. The following table is the data demographic of the participants in this present study in which their names are pseudonyms. According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposive sampling is an appropriate method for involving the participant and obtaining the data that matches the research objectives as well as its effectiveness in approaching the participant.

**Table 1. Participants' Demography**

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Teaching Period	Students' Level (Grade)	School Status
Mestika	Female	10 months	Elementary school (4th Grade)	Private
Kinar	Female	8 months	Elementary school (2nd Grade)	Private
Dikta	Male	9 months	Elementary school (3rd, 4th, 5th grades)	Private

### **Instruments and Data Collection**

By using the Critical Incident Technique to obtain the qualitative data, this study used two instruments, namely questionnaires, and interviews. Firstly, the open-ended questionnaire was used to gain information related to the novice teachers' perception of their beliefs and motivation for becoming teachers. Open-ended questions are used as they allow the participants to respond freely so that they

can provide richer insights about the topic being asked and extract more information from the participants (Geer, 2015; Baburajan et al., 2021). Based on the questionnaire, the participants were asked about their motivation in choosing a teacher education program. Also, they described the most pleasant and stressful incidents that they experienced during their first year of teaching and their influence on their motivation for teaching.

Second, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews where the participants expressed their thoughts, feelings, and notions regarding their previous answers to the questionnaire. A qualitative semi-structured interview contributes to the objectivity and trustworthiness of studies because it makes the results more credible (Kallio et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews are employed as there would be room for a deeper discussion about the issues and allow the participants to clarify their answers (Estaji & Fatalaki, 2022; Wilson, 2014). The interviews, which lasted between twenty-five to thirty minutes, were carried out to obtain an in-depth understanding of novice teachers' beliefs and motivations in teaching, and critical incidents that influence their teacher professional identity development.

### **Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, there are two different phases. In the first phase, the researcher first collected and transcribed the raw data from the open-ended



questionnaire. The transcriptions were read carefully and coded into several categories to describe the answers. The results from the first phase were then used in conducting the interviews.

In the second phase, the researcher analyzed the data from interviews. The researcher will follow the analysis steps by Butterfield et al. (2009); 1) Determining the Frame of Reference; the researcher focuses on novice teachers' motivations and beliefs of a teacher, and how critical incidents in teaching impacted their motivation and commitment to the profession, 2) Formulating Category; the researcher groups similar incidents stated by the participants using the pre-existing studies and creating new coding, and 3) Determining the level of specificity or generality; researcher discuss the decision regarding the level of detail of the findings and focus on a specific incident to illustrate novice teachers' emotional responses and motivation about teaching. Finally, the data were interpreted and reported in a manner that aligned with the analytical framework. Moreover, the triangulation in this qualitative research involves the use of multiple data sources, such as questionnaires, and interviews, to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999). Additionally, to achieve the credibility of this qualitative study, the researcher employed member checks techniques by asking the participants to recheck the transcript and

examine the codes and themes of their interview results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This part was divided into two sections that answered the two research questions proposed in this research. In the first part, the researcher described novice teachers' beliefs of a teacher and their motivation to become teachers. Then, the second part explained the critical incidents that happened in their teaching experiences and the influence on their motivation in teaching. Before each part, the researcher provided the tables to present the categorization of the participants' answers.

### Beliefs: One's View of Being a Teacher and the Image of a Teacher

This section shows the answers to the first research questions about beliefs about being a teacher which are displayed in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. EFL Novice Teachers' Beliefs**

Categories	Type of Findings		
	Mestika	Kinar	Dikta
One's view of being a teacher	Yes, had a view of being a teacher	Yes, had a view of being a teacher	No, had not a view of being a teacher
One's view of the image of a teacher	Teacher as a parent and friend	Teacher as a professional	Teacher as a facilitator

*"I have imagined myself as a teacher even before coming to the university."  
(Mestika)*

With this statement, Mestika first elaborated that she had been herself as a teacher even before starting to study in teacher education.

*"As I experienced learning with the lecturers in my undergraduate program, I feel like they are my friends as well as parents."* (Mestika)

Then, Mestika reflected on her experience during her teacher education to discuss the image of a teacher she wanted to be. She found out that the lecturers she met in the undergraduate program were mostly represented as friends, especially for the younger lecturers. For her, the lecturers create the learning environment to be more comfortable and supportive as they can easily connect with the students' communication style. Also, she found that her lecturers acted as mentors as well as parents because they can give guidance and support to the students. Thus, Mestika was encouraged to also be a friend and parent to her students because they are all still young learners who need those figures to help them learn.

*"I want to be a teacher since I was in junior high school. I have imagined myself standing in front of the children to teach them English."* (Kinar)

With this statement, Kinar strongly reflects her pre-existing belief in herself as someone who envisions herself as a teacher. It indicates an early formation of her professional identity and her future role as a teacher.

*"I want to be a teacher who is close and connected to my students. I want to be a bridge that they can use to achieve their dream."* (Kinar)

Then, talking about the image of a teacher, Kinar emphasized the relationship she wanted to build. She wanted to be, she explained that she wanted to establish a positive and genuine relationship with the students. Furthermore, she is also concerned with prioritizing the students' needs and wants in designing the activities and lessons. She has a view of herself as a supportive teacher who can empower her students to achieve their dreams and potential.

*"I have never considered myself to be a teacher because I never think about it."* (Dikta)

Dikta presents a contrasting view of himself compared to other novice teachers. Dikta did not ever think and imagine becoming a teacher before. because he acknowledged his passions in other fields. Dikta explained that he was planning to choose different faculties and majors besides teacher education. He put teacher education as his last option because of his interest in other fields. However, due to financial matters, he decided to choose an English Language education program because it is more affordable than his other options. Thus, this explanation implies that he had low motivation in teaching because of his low interest in the teacher education program.

## Motivation: One's motivation to be a teacher

This section presents the results of the second research question about EFL novice teachers' motivations to become a teacher.

**Table 3. Novice Teachers' Motivations**

Categories	Type of Findings		
	Mestika	Kinar	Dikta
Motivation to be a teacher	- Subject interest	- Subject interest	- Fallback career
	- Intrinsic career value	- Teaching ability	- Second job
	- Family background (esp. Mother)	- Family background (esp. Mother)	- Tuition fee for teacher education
	- Salary	- Contribution to the society	
	- Job guarantee		

*"I want to be a teacher, especially an English teacher because I love English. Also, living with my teacher-mom motivated me to follow her because I learned about this profession from her."* (Mestika)

Mestika found that she is intrinsically motivated to drive in this educational field due to her love of the subject. Hence, this intrinsic motivation indicates a strong desire to instruct her identity as a teacher. Secondly, Mestika also recognizes the significant motivation that comes from the role of her mother who is also a teacher. This shows how Mestika's career goals were shaped by a positive role model as she admires her mom a lot. She further explained that she also got to see her mom's experience with the difficulties and

joys of teaching which might offer insightful information and possibly serve as inspiration for her.

*"I became more motivated when I had a chance to teach some children during the pandemic in my hometown. I became more comfortable with teaching."* (Mestika)

Gaining deeper information on Mestika's motivation in teaching, she highlighted this moment which increased her motivation to pursue the profession. She said that she got some opportunities to teach some children and obtain more experience in teaching during the 6th semester. This moment allowed her to experience the enjoyment of teaching which then fostered her self-efficacy in teaching. She explained that she could confirm her suitability for the role as she believed that she had the competencies.

*"My mom really inspires me in this profession. She has been my role model since day one."* (Kinar)

Similar to Mestika, Kinar also has a dream to become a teacher because she has her mother as a teacher. It means that Kinar is also extrinsically motivated to become a teacher. She explained that the background of her family which is closely related to the teaching profession implicitly influenced her choice to come to the teacher training faculty and become a teacher. Thus, her family also became her number one



supporter in reaching her goal of becoming an English teacher.

*"I love English and teaching, so I think PBI (English Language Education) is the most suitable place for me to combine both and achieve my dream."*(Kinar)

Moreover, Kinar's love of the English language is the intrinsic factor that motivated her to become a teacher. It means that Kinar's belief in teaching motivates her to choose the appropriate major that can give her exposure to the world of teaching. Likewise, her experience in learning in the major also solidifies her motivation to excel as an English teacher.

*"I have the S.Pd title so I think that's the reason for becoming a teacher now."*  
(Dikta)

This statement indicates Dikta's low motivation to become a teacher. According to him, the only reason for working as a teacher was because of the title he had. In other words, Dikta still wants to become a teacher because of his background education which can be one of his qualifications. It means that his motivation to become a teacher mostly comes from extrinsic factors. Moreover, Dikta stated that the students' level also became one consideration for him in choosing the school. He explained that he would rather teach the high school students than the children or young learners. He found himself to be more comfortable in

communicating with the higher-level students who could be invited to be in discussions.

### **Novice Teachers' Critical Incidents in Teaching**

This section elaborates on the answers to the second research question regarding novice teachers' critical incidents and their influence on their motivation to stay or leave the profession. Hence, their answers to the open-ended questionnaire and interviews are displayed in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Novice Teachers' Critical Incidents

Categories	Type of Findings		
	Mestika	Kinar	Dikta
Pleasant	Supportive colleagues	Students' Achievement	School Events
Unpleasant	- Teacher ability	- School Culture	- Students' Behavior
	- Teacher-teacher relationship	- Parents Behaviour	- Workload and Side jobs
Motivation to stay in the profession	Yes	Yes	Neutral/Pessimistic

Incident 1: *"It happened during my second exam, the daily exam. I got complaints from some parents whose children got wrong answers on one particular question. They complained that I made the question too hard for the children."* (Mestika)

Mestika started with one incident that she found to be the most disappointing. She had to be in a tough discussion with parents as they wanted her to give extra points to the children as it was too hard for them. Finally, it was found that there was nothing wrong with the question she asked and

they all agreed not to give it as a bonus. She further explained that she reflected on the incidents. She learned she will make the questions suitable for her students next time which is not too easy and not too hard. Also, she learned to make her instructions clear when it comes to the exam materials and topics so that the students can prepare well.

Incident 2: *"I have some friends here, who are my colleagues, and we are the same age. So, I ask for their advice and suggestions in dealing with the situation."* (Mestika)

Then, she connected this disappointing incident with another incident which helped her to overcome the situation. This incident refers to the colleagues that she has in the school. Her colleagues are mostly the same age as her and they also start teaching in the same year. So, she feels grateful for having them because she can share her problems and ask for advice.

Incident 1: *"I got a chance to assist my student to join a competition and she won."* (Kinar)

As this moment became one of the happiest moments teaching in the school, she explained that she was and is proud of her students. She found that her students were excited to practice and prepare for the competition. At the same time, she also realized that she actually can contribute to

developing students' potential. She elaborated that at this moment, her role might have only become a supervisor teacher but she is also proud of herself. Then this incident strengthened her motivation in teaching as she wants to contribute more in guiding her students to achieve their full potential as learners. For her, it is not about winning the competition but the encouragement that she can transfer to the students so that they are confident to join and perform in the competition. Moreover, Kinar stated that her role as a teacher is also as the number one supporter for the students in finding their potential.

Incident 2: *"In this school, there will be two teachers in one class during the lesson. Their homeroom teacher will be in the classroom during another teacher's class."* (Kinar)

Moving on to another incident, Kinar stated this one as the most stressful moment. As she is a new teacher, she was shocked because she never experienced this except for the first time she did her teaching practice in her undergraduate program. She said that the homeroom teacher would be in the same classroom during her class. She found it to be difficult because she could not freely control the classroom. At one time, the homeroom teacher would suddenly stop the class because some students did not pay attention to the class during Kinar's explanation. For her, this situation is helpful because they can work together to manage the classroom.

However, this situation could easily make her lose focus during her explanation because of the interruption. So, this incident frustrated her as she had limited autonomy in controlling the class. Moreover, she also became less confident in teaching as she always got watched by another teacher.

She felt overwhelmed and stressed because she felt the pressure to always perform well in class. Therefore, as this is the school culture that Kinar must follow, she said that she is the one who should adapt. As a new teacher, she tried to communicate her doubts with the homeroom teacher and other teachers. She would ask for help and suggestions from them as they have more experience in dealing with the situation. Thus, she took this situation as an opportunity for her to improve her teaching.

Incident 1: *"When my school will hold an event, then I usually get the responsibility to design a poster."* (Dikta)

Dikta shared that whenever his school held events, he would get a job to design a poster. On one hand, he said that this moment made him feel happy because he could contribute to the event with his skill in designing posters. He said that this moment became an opportunity as well as a challenge for him to design creative posters. However, he always did that happily. Whenever he gets this kind of job, he feels so excited.

On the other hand, this moment made him realize what he was passionate about.

Besides his major job of teaching, Dikta discovered his love in doing another thing which is designing posters. He explained that this moment often led him into confusion in choosing his future career path as he also mentioned that he was still thinking about it.

Incident 2: *"One of my students is crying during the class."* (Dikta)

This is one moment that affected Dikta's teaching life. He explained that teaching young children has never been in his thoughts. For the first time, he said that he froze and didn't know how to react to that kind of situation. He said that he did not know how to calm them and express his emotions to them. Then, he realized that he could not handle the children or young learners at that moment. It means that he found himself not capable enough of taking care of the young children in the classroom. Additionally, he mentioned that his teacher education program focused more on teaching high school students.

However, he said that he cannot easily give up on his students' behaviors but he should handle it. He explained that he tries to express his emotions and cares more for the students. Besides, he also becomes gentler to the students and responds to their stories because he realizes that the young children like to complain and want his attention.

## **Motivation to Stay in or Leave the Teaching Profession**

As the final question, the researcher asks the three novice teachers about their thoughts on being in the teaching field for their entire life. Here are their answers based on what they have experienced for almost a year in teaching elementary school students.

*"Yes, I want to always be a teacher. I don't have any place to go besides teaching."* (Mestika)

Delving deeper into her view of the critical incidents stated in the previous part, she found that those moments did not make her leave the profession. At first, of course, she felt disappointed by the situation but she did not want it to hinder her from moving forward. She stated that these incidents taught her a lot of things as a person and a teacher. She explained that problems are inevitable in any field, so she just wanted to face the problems. Additionally, Mestika suggested that she reflected on those problems to critically think about what is wrong and right, and what should be improved and maintained.

*"Yes, I think teaching is the profession that I am passionate about. However, if I can choose, I want to teach junior high school students."* (Kinar)

Kinar stated that she loves teaching and wants to always teach. She once again explained that being a teacher is her dream

and she wants to improve her teaching skills with more experience. It implies that Kinar has a promising foundation in fulfilling her teaching career. Therefore, Kinar highlighted that she wanted to be a teacher for the higher level of students, like junior and senior high school students. She expressed her preference for teaching junior high school students as she acknowledged her competence and ability in teaching at that specific level.

*"I don't know about it yet. I still want to be a teacher if I can teach junior or senior high school students."* (Dikta)

Meanwhile, Dikta has a neutral response to this question. He sounded pessimistic in answering the question as he expressed his uncertainty about his teaching career. However, Dikta still mentioned his desire to remain teaching, specifically for junior and senior high school students. As he had explained in his critical incidents, he has not had much exposure to dealing with young learners, he would rather enjoy the teaching and learning process with high schoolers.

## **Discussion**

This study explored the beliefs and motivations underpinning the teaching practices of the EFL novice teachers. Moreover, this study also investigated the critical incidents experienced by EFL novice teachers for less than a year. Specifically, the study focused on the impact of these

critical incidents on their teacher professional identity construction.

Firstly, this study explored EFL novice teachers' beliefs about a teacher and their motivation to become a teacher. It was found that female novice teachers show higher motivation to become teachers rather than male novice teachers. Regarding the questions asked about their views of themselves as a teacher, only female novice teachers answered yes to all the questions. Their interest in the subject and ability to teach are the factors that motivated them the most to become a teacher (Asriani et al., 2022). Moreover, female novice teachers are extrinsically motivated to become teachers because of their family background. It was found that their mothers, who are teachers, inspired them to pursue their teaching careers. Meanwhile, the male novice teacher did not have any view of becoming a teacher due to his interest in other fields which is similar to the findings of a study by Jennifer and Mbato (2020). Moreover, his extrinsic motivation for becoming a teacher comes from his educational background and the title he has after graduating. Similar to the result of Upa and Mbato (2020), the male novice teacher has high extrinsic motivation but low intrinsic motivation to be a teacher.

Furthermore, this study also obtained novice teachers' beliefs or images of a teacher. Thus, teachers' beliefs and images of teachers can also be one factor that motivates them to be teachers and do their

job as teachers ((van der Wal et al., 2019; Warner, 2016). Influenced by previous experience as a student in the university, one novice teacher believes that the teacher acts as a parent and a friend for the students. Moreover, as an elementary school teacher, this image of a teacher suits the environment of the classroom in which the students need those roles in their learning process. It means this novice teacher constructs and develops her image of the teacher, as a parent and friend, based on the working environment and students' attitudes (Pravita & Kuswandono, 2021; Lap et al., 2022). Similarly, another novice teacher had an image of a teacher who is close and connected to the world of the students, as a friend. Then, other images of a teacher are discussed by the novice teachers as a professional and a facilitator. Their imagined identity refers to the role of a teacher as someone responsible for transferring knowledge and assisting the students to reach their full potential as students. Teachers should also facilitate the students with the learning environment that helps them to grow.

Lastly, this study examined the critical incidents experienced by novice teachers and their impact on the construction of their professional identity. Joshi (2018) has described that a critical incident is different from a simple incident because of the meaning that a person can take from that incident. As early teachers who have been teaching only for less than a year, they had experienced several



moments where they found it motivated and unmotivated them in teaching. Aligned with Thomson and Berger (2021), novice teachers may feel the tensions and pressure in doing their jobs as they find teaching is distinct from reality and how they imagine. Then, there are two major incidents, pleasant and disappointed, that are mentioned by each novice teacher.

In this present study, since all of the novice teachers are teaching in elementary school, they experienced similar incidents in their teaching. Some critical incidents mentioned by novice teachers are related to their teaching ability, classroom management, and students' behaviors. These novice teachers also experienced pressures due to the shocking school cultures that were different from their previous learning experiences and teaching practicum. Moreover, working together with other teachers as their colleagues also created some tension in the profession. Similarly, these critical incidents were previously found in the studies (Estaji & Fatalaki, 2022; Jennifer & Mbato, 2020).

However, each novice teacher had a different reaction to those incidents. Their ability to establish positive professional identities can be affected by many factors, such as their commitment to teaching, the support from the school, as well as their ability to negotiate both inside and outside themselves (Hanifah et al., 2022; Hong et al., 2018). Then, an incident can be meaningless for one teacher but not for the other one because they experience it

differently. Joshi (2018) in his study explained that an incident can be a turning point for the teacher whenever they question and reflect on that incident. Moreover, critical incidents can impact the teacher's professional identity development depending on how they make meaning from those incidents (Tripp, 1993). As also mentioned by Jennifer and Mbato (2020) incidents can affect the teachers' beliefs, motivations, and identities they have as a teacher.

Therefore, in this present study, it was found that reacting to the student's behavior, one novice teacher believed that this moment should be taken into a lesson to improve their teaching ability and manage the classroom. This situation motivated them even more to hone their skills in teaching. Meanwhile, other teachers discovered that they had limited experience in dealing with the younger students which led to the feeling of demotivated in teaching elementary school students. Hence, it can be concluded that after reflecting on their critical incidents, novice teachers might have the possibility to leave the job of teaching elementary school students and move to teach a higher level of students. It means that they were not thinking of leaving the field of education to pursue their teaching career.

## CONCLUSION

Taken as a whole, this study shed light on the beliefs, motivations, and critical incidents experienced by EFL novice teachers with less than a year of teaching

experience. The female novice teachers displayed stronger intrinsic motivation which was driven by their interest in the English subject and teaching. Conversely, the male novice teacher was primarily motivated to be a teacher due to his educational background and the title of a bachelor of education. Moreover, while all novice teachers experienced similar critical incidents that related to the student's behavior, teaching ability, classroom management, and teacher-teacher relationships, they reacted differently. One viewed it as an opportunity to grow, while others felt demotivated to teach, especially younger students. Thus, reflecting on these experiences can potentially lead novice teachers to think about their future career paths in the field of education. However, this present study is limited to a small number of participants and suggests that future research involve a larger and more diverse sample to provide stronger insights related to the teacher's professional identity.

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#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

ND, CL, and OT collaborated to conduct this research. ND designed the main concept of the research and wrote the manuscript. Then, CL and OT collaborated

in responding to, reviewing, and revising the manuscript.

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