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**Title: Teachers' Professional Identities: Narratives of KSSR English Language Teachers in Malaysia**

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## **Introduction**

Educational reforms have swept across the globalized world, and in the field of English language teaching (ELT), there is no exception. The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has featured the country's ambitious yet achievable and feasible tasks to build a strong and efficient education system by 2025 that aims to ensure every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English language. In doing that, a key priority for this transformation is to first ensure better alignment between policy formulation and implementation along the entire education value chain (MOE, 2012). Another priority is to improve resource productivity by strengthening the link between desired outcomes and the effective allocation of resources as well as efficient implementation and evaluation of relevant programmes and projects (MOE, 2012).

For the aforementioned reasons, the English Language Curriculum for Primary School has been introduced and implemented in primary schools in Malaysia starting 2011. This policy is commonly known by its Bahasa Malaysia acronym, KSSR. The Curriculum Development Division (CDD, 2011) stated that the new curriculum aims to overcome illiteracy problems among primary school students and to improve quality of teaching and learning process. There are six pedagogical principles outlined in this curriculum: back to basics, learning is fun, meaningful and purposeful learning, teaching is learner-centred, integration of salient new technologies, assessment for learning and character-building infused (CDD, 2011). The implementation of these six pedagogical principles is hoped to enhance language acquisition of students in English, improve quality of teaching and learning as well as to overcome the problem of illiteracy among primary school students in Malaysia.

Evidently, Malaysia is one of the countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language that have witnessed the introduction of many western-rooted methodologies such as Communicative Language Teaching and Task-based Learning. Emphasizing the role of interaction in language learning, these language pedagogies view this process as a social practice in real situations (Nunan, 2004). In Malaysia, these language pedagogies have been warmly welcomed by the educational administration and promulgated as part of the curriculum requirements. In actual classroom practice, however, these reforms might have been met with resistance from teachers who remain attached to traditional pedagogies featuring teacher-centred, test-oriented and rote-based teaching and learning (Tsui, 2007). The competing demands of the old and new systems thus create a unique workplace environment for pedagogical adaptation and renegotiation of teachers' professional identities.

**Why teachers' professional identities matter**

In discussing language planning and policy, Bianco (2010) stated that gaining the desired policy enactment-implementation alignment will not be a straightforward process. This is particularly because policies are mediated by the agencies of the state, the school, the English department and individual teachers, while they are inflected and refracted to position teachers and students in particular ways (Bhattacharya et al., 2007). The process of implementing what is enacted highlights the role of teachers as language planners (Bianco, 2010) and vital agents of change.

Having said that, it is important to note that teachers' reactions to the implementation of an educational reform depends largely on how they perceive their identities being reinforced or threatened by the proposed changes (Van Veen & Slegers, 2006). Consequently, those with threatened identities may have tensions existing between what is externally demanded by the educational innovation and what they personally believe in and practice as what they consider good education (Ketelaar et al., 2012).

In addition, as adopting specific pedagogies mean adopting specific ideologies, Scotland (2014) asserted that the pedagogy which an English language teacher employs is a constituent of their professional identity. Teachers act as a filter and guide action (Haworth, 2008). Therefore, it is highly relevant to study how teachers respond to the notions of acceptable pedagogy and its inherent ideologies may result in renegotiation of their professional identity. This is supported by Holland and Lachicotte (2007) who argued that to understand how teachers deal with these new challenges, we need to examine how they "form sense of themselves identities in relation to ways of inhabiting roles, positions, and cultural imaginaries that matter to them" (p. 103).

However, Ketelaar et. al. (2012) found that teachers do not simply reject or accept an imposed change. Instead, their professional identities are renegotiated in a positioning process that involves three identity-related concepts of ownership, sense-making and agency. They went on to highlight the usefulness of studying the aforementioned concepts in different contexts. To add, Scotland (2014) purported that there are gaps in our understanding of English language teachers' ongoing construction of professional identities, particularly those who work in environments which contain non-Western social, cultural, governmental and institutional discourses. Realizing the gaps in the literature, this study aims to look into how ownership, sense-making and agency as identity concepts are manifested in the English language teachers' renegotiation of professional identities in meeting the demands of KSSR in an environment that contains non-Western social, cultural, governmental and institutional discourses.

### **Context of the Study**

This study has been conducted in the context of national primary school English language education in Malaysia where English is taught as a second language. Since 1983, primary school English language was taught using the Integrated Curriculum for Primary School or better known as *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah* (KBSR). As educational reforms are sweeping across the globalised world, the need for change in the curriculum can be summarized in only one word; relevance. What worked very well for teaching pupils in 1983 might reveal many shortcomings in equipping Malaysian pupils for this fast-paced progressive world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Hence, the English Language Curriculum for Primary Schools or KSSR in its Malay acronym, was introduced in 2011. In line with the Malaysian government's policy in strengthening English, it aims to equip pupils with basic language skills to enable them to

communicate effectively in a variety of contexts that is appropriate to the pupils' level of development (Curriculum Development Division, 2011). Using a modular approach, the new curriculum seeks to go beyond the focus of holistic learning. Both teachers in this study describe their schools as adequately equipped to support the implementation of the educational change. Other than physical support, the teachers in both schools were trained to teach using KSSR curriculum at district and school levels.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions have been formulated to study the English language teachers' renegotiation of professional identities with regard to the KSSR pedagogical principles:

1. How has the KSSR pedagogical principles influenced pedagogical adaptation upon English language teachers?
2. How has the teachers' adaptation to KSSR pedagogical principles resulted in a renegotiation of their professional identities in terms of ownership, sense making and agency?

### **Teachers' professional identities in the literature**

There is a considerable amount of literature dedicated to the topic of teachers' professional identity and specific trends in the research on professional identity. However, a situation commonly found in numerous research on teachers' professional identities in the context of educational reform is one in which both traditional and liberal pedagogical systems coexist in the same institution. To illustrate, Clarke (2008) investigated the dynamic process of identity development of a group of pre-service teachers in the United Arab Emirates. It is situated within a changing environment "where aspects of traditional and Bedouin culture coexist with the immense changes resulting from the forces of globalization" (Clarke, 2008, p. 2). By looking at the process of learning to become a teacher, Clarke examined how these teachers negotiated their identity of being 'new teachers of the present and future' and 'traditional teachers of the past.' (p. 106). As the KSSR English language teachers in the current study are similarly placed in the competing forces of traditional teaching and the challenging demands of the new, globalized era, the findings are hoped to provide notable implications for supporting teachers as they construct identities and implement innovative, KSSR practices in their English language pedagogy.

In addition, Schatz-Oppenheimer and Dvir (2014) examined the psychological processes involved in constructing professional identities among 200 Israeli novice teachers as expressed in stories they wrote about their induction year. Professional written stories are deemed more reflective of the teachers' identities on the basis that a story is a manifestation of its writer's character. Despite its novelty, the study involved a number of assumptions about the 'stories', making the interpretations made through literary, psychological and professional lens highly subjective. Stories can be fictional, particularly because of the discourse of writing competition. By approaching stories and narratives in this manner, the researchers had risked the internal validity of the study. Nevertheless, the study has presented teacher stories as opportunities for teachers to channel their emotions in dealing with educational change.

Another prior research that has underscored the importance of exploring educational reform from the perspective of teacher identity is by Liu and Xu (2013). The study traced the establishment of a 'new work order' within an English department at a university in China. They argue that 'teachers need to shift their identities to survive change' (Liu & Xiu, 2013, p.

589). In addition, the study highlighted the role of teachers' communities of practice in contributing to pedagogic improvement and reforms. However, they did not reveal the nature and mechanism of such communities of practice. The current study extends this focus on educational reform and teacher identity by examining the experiences of two KSSR English language teachers as they communicate and collaborate with others in their communities of practice.

Correspondingly, Scotland (2014) explored how the professional identities of ten experienced English language teachers were affected as their pedagogies adapted to operating in a major government institution of higher education in Qatar. He found that institutionally imposed pedagogical adaptation may result in a renegotiation of professional identity for some teachers. In this exploratory study, data analysis involved the establishment of a logical chain of evidence using yes/no questions which were carefully sequenced in the questionnaire designed. The questionnaires, however, investigated professional identity from a simple analytical polarity, as acknowledged by the researcher. Therefore, the use of narrative inquiry in the current study is hoped to allow deeper investigation into the issue.

Evidently, a common thread that runs through these studies is that teachers need to reconstruct their identity to cope with new challenges in the workplace and that the process is very complex, involving "institutional construction" and "personal reconstruction" of identities (Tsui, 2007, p. 658). The present study follows this line of research as it believes that teachers are constantly engaged in moments of self-awareness and reflection. This has been built on the existing conclusion of the literature review about professional identity by Rodgers and Scott (2008, p. 751), namely that 'teachers should, in fact, make sense of their experiences at a particular level of development', so that they may be more self-critical and self-authoring of their own projects according to their convictions and intentionality in view of the 'normative contextual and relational forces that shape their identities' (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 737).

This broad body of international research on teachers' professional identities implies that educational change such as KSSR may impose challenges for teachers' professional identities, challenges that need to be addressed in systematic research. Nevertheless, this topic is insufficiently studied in non-Western context (Scotland, 2014). Therefore, the present study intends to study the topic in the Malaysian context and contribute to narrowing the gap in the literature. To add, the use of the three identity concepts namely ownership, sense-making and agency in understanding teachers' renegotiation of identities are presented as the value added aspect of the current study.

### **Three Identity Concepts: Ownership, Sense-making and Agency**

The first identity concept, teacher ownership, has been discussed in the literature as vital in ensuring sustainability in educational reform efforts (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2017, Kyza & Georgiou, 2014, Breiting, 2008, Fullan, 2007 & Van den Berg & Geurts, 2007). In studying the newly mandated teacher standards in Australia, teacher ownership over the standards and their implementation along with contextual reasons were found to be the contributing factors of the participants' positive manner (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2017). This underlines the importance of ownership in teachers' reactions towards educational change.

In addition, Kyza and Georgiou (2014) explained that teacher ownership of an educational change increases when teachers are given opportunities to take part in the design of a learning environment. This highlights the importance of ensuring teachers' understanding of the educational change in order to develop a strong sense of ownership towards the change.

Within a flexible understanding of the links between instructional goals, student activity and the targeted learning outcomes, teachers can plan activities that cater to the need of their students. Consequently, teacher ownership develops as they identify themselves with the creation of the educational change.

Another lens used to view teachers' professional identities in this study is the identity concept of sense-making. Lutzenberg et al. (2009) describe four types of sense-making. The first type of sense-making is assimilation, which means that the teacher uses his or her own frame of reference in the sense-making process and adapts the new ideas in such a way that they fit into the existing frame. This results in a variation within his or her frame of reference. The second type of sense-making is accommodation, in which the teacher transforms his or her own frame of reference in such a way that it fits in with the situational demands. The situational demands are predominant in this type. The third type defined is toleration, whereby the teacher accepts the new situational demands but at the same time maintains his or her own frame of reference, which results in different perceptions within the teacher. The last type of sense-making is distantiation, where the teacher totally rejects the situational demands and continues to use his or her initial frame of reference. Lutzenberg et al. further added that different combinations of the four types of sense-making can be found within one teacher.

Existing studies have shown the usefulness of sense-making in understanding teachers facing educational change (Lutzenberg et al., 2009, Spillane et al., 2002, Ketelaar et al., 2012 & Marz & Kelchtermans, 2013). To illustrate, Marz and Kelchtermans (2013) stated that the ways in which teachers make sense of an educational change may affect the implementation process. Ketelaar et al. (2012) described the work of Lutzenberg et al. (2009) who elaborated on sense-making as an active cognitive and emotional process in which a teacher's identity interacts with an educational change or innovation. As teachers decide whether to maintain or alter their professional identities, they rely on their knowledge, beliefs and experiences to evaluate the congruence between their frames of reference and that of the educational change.

The third identity concept, agency, also sparked a noticeable trend within studies of teachers' professional identities in the context of educational reforms (Vahasantanen et al., 2008, Beijaard, 2009 & Tao & Gao, 2017). Agency is deemed important in understanding such issues because teachers who experience a high degree of agency in their work are more likely to initiate actions to achieve their work goals and feel in control of situations happening in their classrooms (Ketelaar et al., 2012). Considering the importance of agency, Tao and Gao (2017) purported that in the shifting sands of educational reforms, there is a vital need to prepare and support teachers as agentic professionals.

The paper thus far shown how each of the identity concepts of ownership, sense-making and agency played out in studies of teachers' professional identities separately. However, the three identity concepts are equally beneficial when utilized as a combined lens for looking into the professional identity issues of teachers facing educational change. To justify, in studying the ways teachers position themselves towards an educational innovation, Ketelaar et al. (2012) found that the three identity concepts namely ownership, sense-making and agency are useful parts of teacher identity to capture the realities of policy and practice as well as for describing similarities and differences between teachers.

By investigating teachers' professional identities through the lens of the three identity concepts in a new context, the present study aims at gaining better understanding of how teachers position themselves towards KSSR as an educational change. It is hoped that this study

would contribute to current views on teachers' renegotiation of their professional identities in the context of educational reform in a non-Western context. It also hopes to provide insights into the role that ownership, sense-making and agency play in it. The findings will have practical implications for teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders in understanding teachers' different reactions to an educational change such as KSSR.

### **Wenger's Social Theory of Learning: Foregrounding Identity**

Wenger's (1998) social theory of learning builds on his initial work with Lave (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to emphasise learning as situated in particular physical and social contexts and distributed across the individual, other persons, and tools within communities of practice. The conceptual framework for Wenger's social theory of learning includes communities of practice and encompasses four components. They are meaning and learning as experience, practice and learning as doing; community and learning as belonging and identity and learning as becoming (Wenger, 1998). The construct of identity creates a partnership between the social and the individual that highlights the person within the practice of teaching and emphasizes the importance of knowing who we are and what we believe as teachers.

Identity is characterised by Wenger (1998) as "a constant becoming" that defines who we are by: "the ways we participate and reify our selves; our community membership; our learning trajectories which refer to where we have been and where we are going; reconciling our membership in a number of communities into one identity; and negotiating local ways of belonging with broader, more global discourse communities" (p. 149). In this way, Wenger sees identity and practice as "mirror images of each other" (p. 149) so that one "inherits the texture" of the other (p. 162).

Furthermore, this notion of identity is defined just as much by the practices we engage in which is participation, as the practices we do not engage in, which is non-participation (Wenger, 1998). Guided by Wenger's conception, learning is evidenced when there is increased participation in: mutual and meaningful activities; negotiating and making meaning; and developing a sense of becoming and belonging within multiple communities of practice. These ideas resonate strongly with Sfard's (1998) conception of learning as "a process of becoming a member of a certain community" (p. 6). Thus, becoming an English language teacher is a deliberate term that implies an evolving process of identity formation that is always under construction.

In order for teachers to survive the new challenges brought about by the educational reforms in the workplace, McLaughlin, Gardner and Talbert (2006) asserted that it is essential for teachers to experience effective learning. This can be achieved through redesigning teachers' workplace into a community of practice for learning (Lave & Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998). In Malaysian schools, communities of practice for learning may have already been established. Be it from courses that are formally conducted by the agencies of the state, in-house training within the school's English language panel, sharing of knowledge through online platforms and informal discussion in the staffroom, communities of practice are an integral part of a teacher's life.

Other than nurturing a climate of collegiality as an essential strategy for improving organisational productivity, communities of practice contribute significantly to pedagogic improvement and school reforms (McLaughlin, Gardner & Talbert, 2006). Evidently, it is

highly relevant for the present study to be constructed within the framework of Wenger's (1998) social theory of learning.

### **Theoretical framework**

This study will be conducted within the framework of social theory of learning by Wenger (1998). The social learning theory is highly relevant to the current study as an important part of the theory explains identity as learning of becoming. To illustrate, identity is characterised by Wenger (1998) as "a constant becoming" that defines who we are by a number of ways. They involve "the ways we participate and reify our selves, our community membership, our learning trajectories, reconciling our membership in a number of communities into one identity and negotiating local ways of belonging with broader, more global discourse communities" (p. 149). Wenger's notion of identity will guide the current study as it observes teachers' participation in several mutual and meaningful activities. They include negotiating and making meaning as well as developing a sense of becoming and belonging within multiple communities of practice.

These ideas resonate strongly with Coldron & Smith's (1999) conception of teachers' professional identities as a tool through which individuals make sense of themselves in relation to contexts and other people. This helps the current study to recognize that becoming a teacher of English language is a deliberate term that implies an ever evolving process of identity formation. Moreover, this underlines the significance of the study in contributing to the understanding of teachers' professional identities as they make sense of themselves in their moments of self-awareness and reflection through their narratives.

In discussing professional identity, Scotland (2014) mentioned that it is challenging for a study to attain a complete understanding of professional identity and provide a comprehensive analysis of it. This is due to its vigorous and multi-faceted nature. Realizing that it is not possible to have a completely decentralized idea of identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011), the present study is therefore committed to portray teacher's professional identities at the nexus of three identity concepts namely ownership, sense-making and agency. The three identity concepts relate to each other in their capacity to explore issues and capture the realities of teachers' professional identities in facing educational change.

To illustrate, the concept of ownership is deemed important because only if teachers support the ideas of the educational change, and feel the urge or necessity for that change, are they willing to invest time and energy in it (Van den Berg & Geurts, 2007). As for the concept of sense-making, teachers engage in sense-making process when they are confronted with an educational change in the light of their own knowledge, beliefs and experiences. The concept of agency refers to the extent to which someone feels in control of his or her own actions (Beijaard, 2009) and abilities to pursue goals that they value in teaching (Scotland, 2014). It is useful to the study as the degree to which teachers experience agency within their work will probably influence their response to the change. For these reasons, the past study highlighted the need for more studies that utilize the three identity concepts in different contexts, thus accentuating the significant need of the present study.

### **Narrative Inquiry Methods**

Narrative inquiry is a social phenomenon of human experience as well as a research methodology of human experience (Xu & Connelly, 2009). Therefore, it has a primary interest in the personal, practical and individual experience (Liu & Xu, 2013). The present study is positioned within such a narrative understanding of teachers' learning experience in

educational reform. ‘Teacher stories’ and ‘stories of teachers’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) are viewed as a social phenomenon of human experience. Meanwhile, a ‘relational methodology’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of exploring this experience is by ‘telling and retelling’ and ‘living and reliving’ (Clandinin et al., 2010). Clandinin and Connelly (1995) further added that narrative inquiry as a relational methodology carries ‘a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships’ (p. 4).

Following the narrative inquiry methods adopted from Liu and Xu (2013), the present study conceptualises the introduction and implementation of KSSR as a ‘professional knowledge landscape’. Within this landscape, different people have different stories to tell. To position themselves in this landscape, teachers may need to shift between identities: the ‘designated identity’ in line with the dominant stories of the community, and the ‘actual identity’ enacted in personal stories of practice. As teachers live by the conflicting stories, they also seek to resolve the incongruities in identities (Liu & Xu, 2013).

In doing this narrative inquiry, the challenge lies in the researcher’s double identities in the field as a participant observer (the researcher) and a community member (the researched). However, the double identities will open and opportunity to explore both etic and emic views of the community (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The researcher will attend teachers’ lesson planning and reflection conferences, observe and record their classes, interview and have informal conversations with them on various occasions. Working closely with these teachers will help build rapport and trust with them. Besides, the researcher will also be able to form a holistic picture of their work and lives in the reform.

## **Data**

The data in the present study will be derived from a Video-Stimulated Interview and semi-structured interviews.

## **Interviews**

The interviews will be semi-structured. It will include questions that are framed around the three identity concepts of ownership, sense-making and agency as well as other relevant questions that emerge from the situation. The questions related to the indicators of the three identity concepts will be adopted from Ketelaar et. al. (2012). The indicators are:

- Ownership: support for KSSR, sense of necessity for KSSR, and communication about KSSR.
- Sense-making: matching between teachers’ frame of reference about KSSR and the frame of reference of the innovation, and dominance of either frame of reference.
- Agency: teachers’ goals, school goals, differences and similarities between teachers’ goals and school goals, choices teachers make, and activities performed to reach the goals.

These indicators are translated into concrete questions. Table 1 (Appendix A) shows each concept with its indicators and for each indicator an example question. During the interview, follow-up questions will be asked if elaboration or clarification is required.

## **Video-Stimulated Interviews (VSI)**

Two weeks after the semi-structured interview, for every teacher approximately 1.5 hour of lessons will be video-taped by the researcher. Permission for filming in the classrooms

will be obtained from both school leaders and participating teachers. Pupils will be informed about the purpose of the filming and will be given the possibility to position themselves beyond reach of the camera. The researcher will follow the following procedure adopted from Ketelaar et. al. (2012) to select fragments of the video-taped lesson that serve as input for video-stimulated interview (VSI).

Firstly, the video will be divided into fragments. A fragment consisted of an interaction between the teacher and an individual pupil, a small group of pupils or the whole class. A new fragment starts when a different interaction takes place. Therefore, the length of a fragment could range from a few seconds to several minutes. An observation scheme will be used to score per fragment the activities the teacher shows. Three or four fragments will then be selected as input for the VSI. The selected fragments will either show a series of teacher activities observed several times during the lesson or a series of activities that occurs only once. This is an attempt to include in the VSI as much as possible of the teacher's repertoire shown in the lesson.

The VSI will be conducted several days after recording the lesson. The VSI is also set up around the concepts of ownership, sense-making, and agency, but now it will be closely related to the teacher's behaviour in interaction with students. During the VSI, the teacher will be first shown one of the selected fragments, after which several questions are asked (Lyle, 2003). Examples of the questions are: 'Is this behaviour typical of you as a teacher and how you interact with your students?', 'What were you aiming for in this fragment?', and 'Is this behaviour in line with the new curriculum? Why?'. When all questions are answered and the teacher has nothing more to add about the particular fragment, the next fragment is shown, until all selected fragments are discussed. Although the interviews will focus on the three identity concepts, participants will be given opportunities to raise themes that are important to them. The goal of this procedure is to produce rich data on the teachers' experiences in their pedagogical adaptation and renegotiation of professional identities.

### **Participants**

This study will involve a purposeful sample of two English language teachers, Lia and Sri. The two female participants are both qualified teachers with Lia having a diploma and Sri, a bachelor's degree, both in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Despite the different level of academic achievement, both had undergone teacher training courses that include pedagogical studies. Lia has 15 years of teaching experience while Sri is only in her fifth year of teaching.

Lia, the more experienced teacher, teaches alongside eleven other English language teachers at a highly populated national primary school. It is situated in the heart of the town's centre of trade activities. The demography of the school includes pupils coming from a variety of economic status, income level and parents' marital status. Sri, on the other hand, teaches alongside four other English language teachers in a small national primary school. Situated 20 kilometres away from the town, the school nestled amidst the greenery of palm tree plantations and rubber estates. The pupils there are the sons and daughters of the farmers, plantation workers and rubber tappers.

Despite being chosen for the convenience of purposeful sampling, the basis of selection of the participants include some other reasons that surfaced through the preliminary interviews with them. Lia is a middle-aged teacher who has learnt and taught English with a traditional approach while Sri is a young and enthusiastic teacher that ensures her teaching repertoire

features salient new technologies and fun learning. Both experiences have emblematic value in exemplifying how senior and young ESL teachers cope with the new challenges in the workplace. They are both the trainers for KSSR, and them joining the community symbolises their participation in the reform practices. Being titled the KSSR trainers, both teachers are expected to be well-informed about the curriculum and lead in-house training and discussion in their respective communities of practice. Such responsibility coupled with their own struggles with pedagogical adaptation and renegotiation of identities will offer rich data and insights into the subject under study.

### **Ethics and procedures**

The implementation of this research study will follow the principles of ethical research. The participants will be gathered in a face-to-face meeting in which they will be given explanation about the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. The rights include no entity will be given access to their data and their right to know how the data would be reported prior to publication. The researcher will also obtain the participants' written consent in order to use their data within a published article. In order to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms are given to both participants. In addition, they will also be given the opportunity to member check the paper.

### **Possible weaknesses of the research design**

No research method is without limitations, and narrative methodology is no exception. Among the possible weaknesses of the research design concerns with its qualitative data. It is frequently subject to concerns about its trustworthiness. In this study, the issue will be addressed by the building trust and rapport with both participants so that the stories are told with fidelity (Flick, 2006). This will help in securing high quality data. The fact that the researcher is already in a long-term friendship with both participants strengthens the possibility of achieving the desired trustworthiness of data. Yet, ethical issues may pose some difficulties in this narrative inquiry research. This is particularly because in such close collaboration between researcher and participants, the researcher's personal biases and subjectivity may influence the results.

To illustrate, when a researcher listens to a story, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) noted that the researcher must be cautious about the distinction between "the events as lived and the events as told" and to avoid the illusion of "causality". In other words, a correlation between two variables does not mean that one variable caused the other (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). They also highlighted that ample time is needed to collect data and prerequisite skills are a necessity before conducting this type of research. This is because researchers must give rich descriptions of studies to allow replication.

Therefore, the data in this study will be analysed in a systematic way, and the processes of data analysis will be documented so as to provide opportunity for scrutiny and critique. The goal of the study is not to produce generalizable data, but a rich and nuanced understanding of the teachers' renegotiation of professional identities. Although it is inarguable that the teachers' experiences do not lend it well to generalisation across all educational contexts, one cannot deny that a nuanced understanding of the cases might generate new insights that could be transferrable to other similar situations.