"Teaching is God's Calling":
Teachers' Beliefs and Professional Identity at Ten Christian Schools in Indonesia

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Abstract

Teachers' beliefs and their roles in the classroom may change over time as they are more informed about the profession from their own experiences, from their colleagues, and from their continuing education. In this study we investigated teachers' beliefs and roles at 10 Christian schools in East Java, Indonesia to see how their beliefs influence their professional identity development. The data were collected from 107 teachers who participated in semi-structured interviews and who wrote reflective essays as a part of their career development program. The data were analyzed in the framework of narrative inquiry to see the emergent themes. The findings suggest that the most salient beliefs among the participating teachers are the beliefs which are based on their Christian affiliation. These salient beliefs and Christian identity of the teachers could enhance their positive image as teachers and could motivate them to be better teachers. However, the salient religious identity may also be able to be hindrance for teacher agency to solve problems in their practices as the beliefs can be the shielding for their reluctance to change.

Keywords: Christian schools; identity; teacher education; teachers' beliefs

INTRODUCTION

Our understanding of the teacher professional identity formation and the factors contributing to the professional growth has been documented well after Shulman (1986, 1987) suggested the taxonomy of teacher knowledge. The taxonomy sheds light on the underlying reasons of what teachers believe and do. Our understanding about teacher knowledge has developed, not only related to pedagogical knowledge, knowledge about the subject matter, knowledge about learners and learning, but also more personal aspects of teachers that include their beliefs and their emotion (S. Borg, 2003). Those aspects influence the way teachers think, act, and do (Kagan, 1990, 1992; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Walkington, 2005). Teachers' beliefs, for example, can influence teachers' practices and the roles they play in the classrooms and in many ways shaped and reshaped their professional identity. They are often conceptualized as the beliefs about the profession (teaching), about the learners and learning, and about the subject matters (Allen, 2002; Andrews, 2003; Biesta et al., 2015; Borg, 2001; Gleeson & Davison, 2016; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lin, 2013; Peacock, 2001; Zacharias, 2003). In this perspective, therefore, teachers' beliefs are very important in determining teachers' career trajectory. In Farrell's (2011) terms, teacher beliefs and identity keep on constructing and reconstructing "a conceptual sense of who they are (their self-image) and what they do (their professional role identity)" (p. 54). In this way what teachers believe, what they do, and what they aspire to do in the future could enable them to make the right decisions in their professional practices.

While teacher knowledge and their cognition have been researched and documented well in literature (Carter, 1990; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Kereluik et al, 2013), the more personal aspects of teachers such as their religious beliefs and their emotions are still limited and rarely discussed. Religious beliefs, which rest in teachers' personal space, have not got a proper

attention because it is a sensitive issue and it is often put in the opposition to scientific thoughts. In the US and many other Western countries where religions are separated from the state, religious beliefs are often suspected as a means of promoting certain religions and proselytizing of faiths to young people—which is against the constitution. Thus, in public school the role of religions and faith are in contentious debate (Subedi, 2006; White, 2009).

Different from Western contexts of education, religions in public schools in Indonesia are visible and even promoted by the government as the state believes in One Supreme God as embodies in the first principle of the state's ideology, Pancasila (Hoon, 2017). In this context, public schools in Indonesia should integrate religious education as part of character education. Similarly, private schools that are affiliated to certain religions have the freedom to integrate religious values in their education. These private schools, then, can be a place to maintain religious values and identity. The case of Christian schools in Indonesia can be a good example of the value and identity preservation. In mapping Christian schools in Indonesia Hoon (2011) highlighted the important roles of Christian schools to maintain the cultural and religious identity for the students. Therefore, teachers in Christian schools are expected to pass the Christian values to their students as well as to enhance their professional works based on the values.

Religious Identity and Narratives

Religious identity in education setting has not been fully explored and it is often considered as a taboo to discuss. Worse, it is often misunderstood and it could bring a suspicion of discrimination (Subedi, 2006). When it is researched, religions in education setting are seen as instrumental in shaping individuals' world views (Gardner et al., 2017; Geiger, 2017; van der Kooij et al, 2016). These world views of teachers embody in their beliefs and their actions in the profession. The beliefs and actions in the framework of individuals' world views can be understood, among other, through narratives. Clandinin (2006) suggests that:

> Narrative inquiry is an old practice that may feel new for a variety of reasons. It is a commonplace to note that human beings both live and tell stories about their living. These lived and told stories and talk about those stories are ways we create meaning in our lives as well as ways we enlist each other's help in building our lives and communities (p. 44).

Therefore, in educational setting, teachers' narratives can be important sources to understand their world views—their perspective about their profession and their practices as teachers. In short, their world views can make what they believe and do in their profession meaningful for their lives (Clandinin,

2006, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 1989; Clandinin, et al, 2011; Clandinin et al, 2007; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Clandinin, et al, 2014). Clandinin and his colleagues have developed a method of studying teachers' narratives which can relate teachers' experiences and their identity and professional growth. First, in narratives, there are multiple identities enacted and performed. Peek (2005) argues that since there are multiple identities, an identity enacted at a certain point of time is a matter of saliency. Therefore, the saliency of identity is important to understand how the dominant one acted out in practice. In her own words she said:

> As individuals become more committed to a given role, that role will assume higher identity salience. Moreover, the higher the identity in the salience hierarchy, the more likely that identity will be enacted in a given situation, or in many situations. In essence, this probability of invoking a particular identity, whether intentionally or not, defines identity salience and thus commitment to that identity (p. 217).

Second, since identities are acted out, they are fluid and they keep changing as they respond to the changing contexts and discourse around them. In short, identities are negotiated or discursively constructed (Bamberg et al, 2011). In the case of teachers, they claim their identities while the outside world around them may acknowledge the claims or assign different identities to them.

Professional Development and Identity Formation

Although not all teacher professional development programs can lead to teacher learning, many of them can help teachers to enhance their competence and to stay in the profession (Avalos, 2011). Teachers continue to learn in their profession to survive and thrive, making them professionals. Focusing on school-based teacher professional development, Guskey (2002), underlines the important of change in teacher that will become the precursor for their professional growth. In his model, professional development can change classroom practices, learning outcomes, and teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Based on Guskey's model, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) theorize changes from various perspectives. In their models they capture teacher change in professional development as learning and growth. This growth is always contextual and it is determined not only by individual teachers but also teachers' collective efforts and their community (D. Jean Clandinin et al., 2015; Johnston, 1997; Yumarnamto, 2019). In short, to grow professionally teachers need a supporting environment at school and in their professional community (Clark, 2008; Harjanto et al, 2017; Tam, 2014). They also need systematic support from their superior and their colleagues.

In the contexts of current study, the perspective of change in professional development is relevant so that we embrace the perspectives to understand the data in this inquiry. In this framework, this study was conducted to fill the gap on our understanding of

teachers' beliefs and their professional identity formation. There were three leading questions central in this inquiry: (1) What do the teachers in the Christian schools want to be identified with in relation to their profession? (2) What beliefs do they hold to maintain and enhance their professional identity? (3) How could teachers' beliefs contribute to their professional identity formation? By answering those three questions we expect this research could contribute to expanding our understanding on religious beliefs and the formation of professional identity—which are rarely discussed in the context of education (Subedi, 2006).

METHODS
This study is qualitative, using the narrative inquiry framework to analyze the data. It is aimed at describing the identity, roles, and critical events of teachers in relation to their professional growth. The setting of this research was schools under a private Christian foundation in East Java. The participating schools included kindergartens, elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. All in all, there were ten schools involved in this project. These schools were located in three different sites in a big city in East Java. The selection of the participating schools was based on a convenient method as all these schools were undergoing a professional development program and we were members of the outside agency that assessed the teachers.

We secured permissions and consents from both the schools and the teachers involved in this study to use the data for this inquiry. However, to reduce the risks that might threaten the participants, we reanalyzed the data two years after the project was completed in 2016. At that time, the foundation of the schools put a lot of effort to improve teacher competence as there was a new curriculum implemented in the school. In addition, the foundation initiated a new career path for teachers that require them to be assessed on their portfolios and competence. The teacher assessment was designed to determine their career development as teachers. The participants of this study were 107 teachers from the three sites.

Multiple data were collected from the participants. The majority of the data were in the form of participants' narratives resulted from interviews and the written self-assessments. In the interview, the teachers were asked about their roles as teachers, the critical incidents, and other questions related to their professional growth as teachers. These interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Another form of supporting data was collected from classroom observation in the form of field notes. Table 1 shows the forms of data collected for this inquiry.

Table 1
The Multiple Data Collection

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION	DATA	NOTES
Teachers' written reflections/personal essays	Written reflections	Focused on motivation and critical incidents.
Interviews	Transcribed Interviews	Focused on teachers' roles, identity claims, critical incidents, and their professional growth.
Classroom Observations	Observers' notes	Focused on teachers' observable actions in the classroom.

The collected data were analyzed in terms of critical event analysis and thematic analysis. First, the transcribed data and written data were thematically coded, analyzed. They were classified based on themes, and analyzed further for patterns in relation the underlying beliefs that emerged from the themes. These thematic analyses were guided by role identification, belief revelation, and the critical events the participants had gone through in their lives as teachers. Second, the narratives were analyzed to identify critical events the participants shared during the interview and in their reflective essays.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The central questions in this inquiry are related to the roles, the beliefs, and the critical events experienced by the participants in relation to their professional growth and identity formation. To answer the questions, the summary of the findings and emerging themes are organized into three major sections: (1) identity and roles, (2) beliefs, (3) critical events and identity formation.

Identity and Roles to Enhance Teaching Profession
From the transcribed data and the personal essays written by the participants, there was a wide range of identities and roles claimed by the teachers. The identities they claimed can be subsumed in five categories: (1) identity and roles in relation to the students, (2) identity and roles in relation to the institution, (3) identity and roles in relation to the profession (teaching), (4) identity and roles in relation to other teachers or other people, and (5) identity and roles in relation to their religions. Their identity claims can be seen in Table 2 and the roles they see for themselves as teachers in Table 3.

Teachers' roles were identified by looking at the answer of the questions "what roles do the teachers do and act?" Table 3 shows the teacher roles which were explicitly expressed by the teachers in the interviews and reflective essays.

Table 2
Teachers' Identity

In relation to students	In relation to the Institution	In relation to the Profession	In relation to teachers & others	Religion
Inspiring teachers	Loyal teachers	Teacher learners	Inspiring teachers	Evangelists
Humble teachers	Wise teachers	Open minded teachers	Humble teachers	God's Servants
Creative teachers	Responsible teachers	Reflective teachers	Wise teachers	Grateful teachers
Servants	Professional teachers	Wise teacher	Responsible teachers	Religious/faithful teachers
Enthusiastic teachers		Responsible teacher	Professional teachers	
Kind hearted teachers		Professional teacher		
Open minded teachers				
Observers				
Happy teachers				
Friendly teachers				
Leaders				
Wise teachers				
Responsible teachers				
Professional teachers				

Table 3
Teachers' Roles

In relation to students	In relation to the Institution/school	In relation to the Profession	In relation to teachers & others	Religion
Inspirer	Employees	Learners	Mentors	Evangelists
Examples		Apprentices	Examples	God's Servants
Facilitators		Teachers		
Helpers				
Motivators				
Friends				
Leaders				

From Table 2 and 3, the identity claims and the teachers' roles in many ways are overlapping. The main difference, however, can be understood in that the identity claims indicate how the teachers want to be known by others while roles refer to the doers of professional actions. Therefore, the two tables can be read as complimentary, providing lights on the participants' identity and roles they want to take as professional teachers.

As teachers, their identity claims could not be separated from the students. That is why the identity and roles in relation to students are dominant. They wanted to be known among other as inspiring, humble, friendly and helpful, wise and professional. In relation to the institution the work for, they wanted to be known as loyal and professional. In the profession, they wanted be open minded, reflective, and professional. To other teachers they claimed to be inspiring, humble, wise, and professional. In relation to their religion, they claimed that they were evangelists, God's servants, and faithful teachers. Interestingly, these claims related to religious identity are salient in the data, indicating a strong affiliation to Christianity.

Teachers' Beliefs
Teachers' beliefs play crucial roles because the beliefs underlie the practice of the teachers in the classroom and beyond. Teacher beliefs as acknowledged explicitly and implicitly by the teachers can be subsumed in terms of their beliefs about (1) teaching, (2) subject matter, (3) teachers, (4) students, (5) the contexts (school and society), and (6) other beliefs

that cannot be categorized under the previous themes—in this case religious beliefs in relation to teaching profession. Table 4 presents teachers' beliefs in relation to teaching, subject matter, teachers, students, contexts, and others.

The teachers' beliefs in many cases reflect the teachers' roles and identity. The beliefs in teaching, for example, show the well-known documented attributes of teaching: fun, enthusiasm, engagement, creativity, discipline, and fairness. In addition to these common attributes, the teachers also acknowledged that teaching was challenging and it was not easy. They also realized that teaching was meant to prepare the students to be ready to involve in the society.

The beliefs about students are very interesting in that the teachers expressed a wide range of beliefs, which are often contradictory. While they acknowledged the autonomy of the students and encouraged them to be independent, they also believed that the students were powerless and they needed help and even they needed to be disciplined. These contradictions can be understood as the teachers were of various school levels, from kindergarten, to elementary, and to high school.

Table 4
Teachers' Beliefs

BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING	BELIEFS ABOUT SUBJECT	BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHER	BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENTS	BELIEFS ABOUT CONTEXTS (School, Society, etc.)	OTHER BELIEFS
Teaching should be fun.	Subject matter should be made interesting/fun for students to learn.	Teachers are not perfect; a teacher needs to learn.	Students have varied needs.	School is a place to grow faith religion.	God's plan works at school and in teachers.
		Teacher should be inspiring.	Students need help; not yet autonomous.		
		Teachers are autonomous.			
Creativity is important in teaching.	Subject matter keeps changing / dynamic.	Teachers are students' friends.	Students need to be disciplined.	School is a place to grow professional aspects of teachers.	Teachers should build belief in God.
		Teachers are students' parents.			
Enthusiasm is important in teaching.	Subject matter should be able to solve social problems.	Teachers should be reflective.	Students should be obedient to teachers.	School is a place for teachers to interact and to influence others.	God will help in difficult situations or when teachers have problems.
		Teachers should be patient.	Students are powerless/need help from teacher.		
Discipline is important in teaching.		Teacher should be fair to their students.	Students should be treated well.		
Fairness is important in teaching.		Becoming a teacher is God's plan.	Students need to be active & engaged.		
Teaching is challenging/not easy.		Formal education is important to become teachers.	Students have their own varied problems.		
Teaching is to prepare students to live in society.		Teacher should know their students.			

Critical Events and Teacher Identity Formation
The critical events told by the teachers in their personal essays and interviews were varied but they could be categorized in two stages of their professional lives. The first stage was the decision of becoming a teacher. The second stage was how they face difficulties in the profession. These two stages were common among the teachers involved in this study. In this section, some cases are highlighted to describe each stage of the critical events.

Decision to Become a Teacher. Each participant had their own story about why she or he wanted to become a teacher. Interestingly, prior to this stage, most of the teachers had no intention to become teachers. They decided to become teachers because of God's will and God's calling. These deeply religious convictions became the bases for their decisions. The following excerpts are examples of how teachers felt about their decision to enter the profession.

One kindergarten teacher, for example, felt that becoming a teacher was not a promising career because of the salary and the profession that she considered boring. However, she finally decided to become a teacher because she felt the strong calling from God.

> At the first time, I didn't plan to become a teacher. When I was in college, I dreamed to be a guide or an employee who is working in a bank or in a big company. I've never planned to work at school and be a teacher because I think it was too boring and also I thought of the salary. I was not interested to be a teacher at that time. But, everything was changed after I graduated. I could say "Someone may plan his or her future, but God has the best plan for everyone who believes in Him" (Kindergarten Teacher 1, Personal Essay).

An elementary school teacher had a similar experience. At first she did not like children or teaching them. However, in a strange situation she was felt that God touched her heart and she suddenly felt the urgency of teaching children as her calling and her duty.

However, there are many things that cannot be explained in my life especially how God led and guided me through the subject of study that I love till through His mighty hands He showed me the way I should take and obey. He also put in my heart to be a person who loves kids so much. Actually, I didn't know where it came from since I enjoyed being alone and often left a crowded situation. But when He touched me with His Spirit I felt something different happened in my life. I drastically loved children and wanted to bring them to know their God and Creator as what He has done it to me. When I realized His greatest gift upon my life then I decided to choose this wonderful profession, teacher, to become part of my life. (Elementary School Teacher 1, Personal Essay).

In addition to God's calling, a middle school teacher in the interview also echoed the importance of spirituality in the decision of becoming teacher and later in educating the students. As a teacher, her main job was to be with the students to help them enhance their spirituality as well as their academic endeavor.

> *Saya dulu itu sebenarnya tidak pernah terlintas cita-cita pingin jadi guru. Tapi saya tidak tahu mengapa Tuhan memanggil. Saya tahu ya saya percaya setelah saya jalani itu ternyata rencana Tuhan juga dan akhirnya hati saya itu juga mencintai menjadi seorang guru. Memang dari dulu itu saya suka dengan anak-anak dan akhirnya pun Tuhan memanggil saya untuk melayani di sekolah menjadi guru. ...*
> *Dengan kerohanian itu bener-bener merubah saya. Merubah saya, saya lebih menjadi seorang guru ini ndak..ndak asal pingin jadi guru. Saya ingin jadi lebih baik lagi. Terutama dalam hal mendidik e..kerohanian anak-anak, didampingi secara akademis e..secara apa kemampuan intelektual. Saya ingin juga membekali mereka*

> *e..dalam hal sikap perilaku mereka, iman mereka, kerohanian mereka, ya seperti itu supaya mereka itu nantinya e..kelak sampai dia besar dia rasa itu dia e..dia itu tidak hanya, oh ya saya itu pandai, tapi dia bener-bener sudah punya fondasi yang kuat dalam rohani, intelektual, perilaku, sikap.* [In the past I never had any dream to become a teacher. But I don't understand why the Lord called [me]. However, I believe what I had gone through is the God's will and at the end my heart tells me that I love kids. Indeed, I always love kids and finally the Lord called me to become a teacher and to serve in this school as a teacher...
> The [Christian] spirituality has changed me. It's changed me to become a better teacher, not only a teacher. I'm better in developing students' spirituality and in leading them academically, intellectually. I want to equip them with good behavior, [Christian] faith, and spirituality so that in the future, when they grew up as adults, they will not only smart but they also have strong foundations in spirituality, intellectuality, behavior and manner.] (Middle School Teacher 1, Interview).

The change of orientation, from not aspiring to become a teacher to become one with beliefs and faith in the profession is the mark of the calling of the profession. The bible reference about the God's will and the God's plan is the basis of the change and their turn into the profession, which they often considered as sacred, beautiful, and worthy of their sacrifices and difficulties they faced.

Although most teachers in this study had prior unwillingness to become teachers, some who aspired to become teachers felt the calling since they were children. One of such teachers recalled his memories when his teacher inspired him to enter into the teaching profession.

> "Why I chose to become a teacher? If people ask me that question, it makes me remember my childhood. I want to become a teacher since I was in kindergarten. Like anyone else, we've all been touched by one or more great teachers in our lives. I remember my kindergarten teacher who was very kind. She inspired me, to become like her. Now I know that I have made the right career choice. When I decided to enter Teacher Education Department, my parents supported me. (Senior High School Teacher 1, Personal Essay).

Challenges and Difficulties. Challenges and difficulties faced by teachers could be critical events in their professional trajectories. When teachers overcame challenges and difficulties, they could become better teachers. The ways they overcame challenges could be different but most teachers in this study turned to God as the source of strengths and resources. One example of how the teachers face difficulties was from an elementary school teacher, who in the interview indicated that her great challenge was dealing with students' problems, which she saw as difficult students.

Tantangan yang terbesar itu ya, saya harus bisa membawa murid-murid ini kepada Tuhan, melengkapi rohani mereka itu. Karena banyak ya Bu, saya dapatkan kasus-kasus anak yang bermasalah itu. Jadi tantangan saya itu. [TRANSLATION: The greatest challenge that I have is bringing the students to God, enriching their inner spiritual life. Many of them, as you know, have problems. That's my challenge.] (Elementary School Teacher Grade 5, Interview).

How to face the great challenge? The teacher relied on God's help when she said:

Kalau seperti ini saya selalu minta hikmat Tuhan karena tanpa hikmah Tuhan itu saya tidak bisa melangkah sendiri. Saya juga minta bimbingan Tuhan. Saya minta secara pribadi dengan Tuhan itu supaya e..Roh Kudus itu menuntun saya. [When I face the problem, I always asked God' grace. Without God's grace, I cannot walk alone. I will let God lead me. Personally, I will ask God, the Holly Spirit to lead me.] Elementary School Teacher Grade 5, Interview).

Another elementary teacher dealt with personal laziness as a great challenge for him. He tried to enhance self-discipline by overcoming his laziness. Interestingly, the teacher also asked God to help him overcome the problem.

This is not easy because I have to beat my laziness. I need God's hands to help me, to remind me how to be a good teacher as He told us in the bible. (Elementary School Teacher 2, Personal Essay).

Laziness is a personal problem. However when it becomes a hindrance for personal and professional development, a person who realizes this personal weakness will try to solve it and in the case of the teacher above, God is the resource of strength to overcome these personal weaknesses. Different from this personal problem, another teacher, a junior high school teacher, found that her experiences at the Christian school formed her professionally and personally. Being in the school and meeting students and other teachers in the schools were her critical events because the encounters were understood as religious revelations that enhanced her faith. She felt the current school was an intense place for her Christian formation and she learned more of being a Christian there than her previous school. To describe the important of the school in her religious formation, she said:

I have been a teacher at formal schools for eleven years, and I have been a teacher at [school name] Junior High School for eight years. Within a few months at [school name], I learn a lot more about being a Christian teacher than the three years I spent at another school. (Junior High School Teacher 1, Personal Essay).

These types of critical events that occurred at schools and change teachers' perspectives personally and professionally could enhance their professional life as envisioned by the Christian schools. Most teachers realized the vision and mission of the school and they embrace them wholeheartedly. Consequently, their professional identity was much influenced by the schools' culture, which was the day-to-day activities involving prayers and reading the gospels.

These experiences were mostly interpreted and understood by the teachers as positive experiences. The critical events, even the worst one, could be understood positively in the light of their faith. The acknowledgements of their religious resource could enhance positive interpretations on their experiences as teachers and they could sustain their professional growth.

Discussion
While beliefs related to the students are more diverse, the overall findings suggest that religious beliefs occupy prominent space in developing teachers' relations with students, the school, and colleagues. Teacher religious identities were salient in the data, both from the teacher reflective essay and from the interview. Most teachers in the schools held the view that their professional calling as teachers was God's will. Their day-to-day activities as teachers, which were often hectic and stressful, were viewed in a religious perspective.

Therefore, the salient religious identity which influenced the way the teachers interpret professional life as God's calling and their positive interpretations of their experiences can be understood as a way of maintaining and enhancing their career as teachers. Teachers in the schools were bound and shaped by the contexts the schools, which were envisioned by the founders as reflected in their vision and mission that put the emphasis of Christian quality education, embracing both religious and academic excellences. In this way, religious beliefs that influenced the way teachers thought, acted, and did, indeed, could enhance their profession as it is also a part of vision and mission of the schools.

From the data related to teachers' beliefs and the critical events, the schools were intended to become places of religious formation for the teachers and students, emphasizing on discipline, obedience, and the love of God. From the socio-cultural perspectives of identity, the saliency of religious identity in the data, can be seen as becoming (Peek, 2005).

As teachers work in Christians schools embracing Christian identity in the context of Indonesia, their "identity is generally used to define and describe an individuals' sense of self, group

affiliations, structural positions, and ascribed and achieved statuses. Identity results from internal subjective perceptions, self-reflection, and external characterizations" (pp. 216-217). In this perspective, the religious identity embraced by teachers conforms to the contexts of the schools and to the envisioned principles of the schools' authority. The religious identity of the teachers, therefore, could enhance their professional identity and career.

While the roles and identities embraced by the teachers were positive and critical events were interpreted in the light of Christian faith, some roles and identity claims may also indicate a contradictory value. Some teachers viewed students as helpless kids needed to be disciplined and they brought problems in the classroom. This perspective of students' deficit may not fit well with the autonomous view of learners who are full of potentials to be excellence. This view could influence negatively on the ways teachers act in the classroom. Like the deficit view of foreign language learners (Fránquiz, et al, 2011), the negative view on learners in general could bring about tensions and difficult situations for the students in the classroom.

Most teachers did not want to be teachers in the first place; they jumped into the profession for various reasons but the reasons were seen as God's calling. The decisions to enter the profession may indicate that teaching as a profession was not the first choice for many teachers participating in this study. In Indonesian context, teaching profession may still be considered an unfavorable profession as the financial rewards are meager compared to other professions regardless the Indonesian government's efforts to uplift the teaching profession (Bjork, 2004, 2005; Jalal et al., 2009; n.a, 2010a, 2010b; Yuwono & Harbon, 2010)

Finally, by exploring professional identity formation of teachers in the private schools the results could shed light on teachers' professional lives in the profession. The information about teachers' beliefs, and their roles, identities and the critical events could shed light on the how the teachers enhanced their identities as professional teachers. The salient identity as Christian teachers can influence their perspectives and beliefs about their students, their works, and their professional lives. For most teachers, religious perspectives can provide framework to make their experiences and critical events in their lives more meaningful to enhance their personal and professional identity.

The implications of the research findings here can be two folds. First, for teachers at the Christian schools, enhancing religious identity provides resources for teachers to understand their experiences in a positive light. In this way, professional growth can be maintained and teachers can meet the demand of the schools in realizing quality Christian schools. More positive religious perspectives prosper in these schools consequently should be maintained and encouraged for all teachers.

The second fold is that the religious perspectives and identity maintained in the Christian schools could fall to a strict and narrow perspective. There could be a danger of suppressing different perspectives that may also enhance teachers' professional identity development. This perspective may not allow students and teachers to see the complete pictures of the sociocultural contexts of the school. In this way, the strong religious beliefs can be a shield for their reluctance to change.

CONCLUSION

As presented in findings and discussion, we conclude that the participating teachers in this study wanted to be identified as faithful and professional teachers. The faithfulness refers to their religious identity, which was aligned with the schools' vision and mission. Professionalism refers to their competence in the subject matter and in pedagogy. The beliefs underlying their identity claims as faithful and competent teachers are related to the students, to other teachers, and to the school or school authority.

The claimed beliefs and identity of the participating teachers were indeed important as they tried to align themselves with the vision and mission of their schools. They saw their religion as the ultimate resource of their development, professionally and personally and more importantly, as professionals, the also saw themselves not only serving and helping students but also serving God because they perceived that teaching was God's calling.

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