

Professional Identity Formation of Pre-Service Economics Teachers through Domestic and International Teaching Practicum Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to examine how professional identity is formed among pre-service economics teachers through meaning-making and professional reflection on teaching practicum experiences in domestic and international contexts.

Methodology – This study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving 15 pre-service economics teachers who had completed teaching practicums in domestic schools in Indonesia or at the Indonesian School of Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), Malaysia. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, comprising seven participants with domestic practicum experience and eight with international practicum experience. Data were collected through 40–60-minute semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis supported by NVivo 12 Pro.

Findings – The findings reveal that professional identity formation occurs through three interrelated processes: reconstructing initial expectations through meaning-making, developing professional reflection in response to diverse learning contexts, and forming professional vision that guides pedagogical decision-making. International teaching practicum experiences enriched this process through cross-cultural adaptation, whereas domestic experiences strengthened participants' understanding of diverse student characteristics, school cultures, and socioeconomic contexts.

Contribution – This study extends the literature on professional identity formation by demonstrating that teaching practicum does not automatically shape professional identity; rather, identity develops through meaning-making and professional reflection across diverse teaching contexts. The findings highlight the importance of designing teacher education programs that provide diverse practicum experiences and systematically facilitate professional reflection.

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INTRODUCTION

Research developments in education over the past two decades indicate a significant paradigm shift in how we define teacher quality. Rushton et al. (2023) explain that research on teachers has increasingly moved beyond a focus on pedagogical competencies, mastery of instructional content, and the ability to manage the learning process, but also on the process of shaping professional identity. Meyer et al. (2023) argue that these technical competencies alone are not fully capable of explaining how teachers make pedagogical decisions, respond to changes in the learning environment, maintain their professional competence, or adapt to the complexities of 21st-century educational challenges. Teachers with relatively equivalent levels of pedagogical competence may still demonstrate different levels of professional quality when faced with complex learning situations (Varis et al., 2023). This situation indicates that a teacher's professional quality is determined not only by what they know or can do, but also by how they understand, interpret, and construct their identity as an educator (Berbegal Vázquez et al., 2024).

This shift in perspective has led to increased attention to professional identity formation as a central issue in teacher education research. Tsybulsky and Muchnik-Rozanov (2023) argue that professional identity is no longer understood merely as a characteristic that is formed after a person completes teacher education. Rather, it is a dynamic developmental process that unfolds through experience, reflection, social interaction, and the negotiation of meaning in the various professional situations encountered by prospective teachers (Gholami et al., 2021). Therefore, professional identity can be viewed as an important dimension of teacher development, closely associated with teachers' beliefs, values, self-efficacy, pedagogical decision-making, and long-term commitment to the teaching profession.

The complexity of the learning context is becoming increasingly important as schools face ever-greater cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. Today's classrooms bring together students with diverse backgrounds, experiences, learning styles, and cultural orientations, requiring prospective teachers to adapt their pedagogical practices to a variety of contextual needs (Lorenz et al., 2021). Exposure to diverse educational contexts, particularly through international or cross-cultural teaching experiences, can provide prospective teachers with opportunities to encounter unfamiliar educational practices and reconsider their assumptions about students and teaching (Huang et al., 2023). These experiences require prospective teachers not only to develop strong pedagogical competencies, but also to understand diversity and adapt teaching strategies to students' diverse needs (Effendi et al., 2024). In this regard, Zhang et al. (2024) highlight the internationalization of teacher education as an important strategy for preparing prospective teachers to work in increasingly complex and multicultural educational environments.

This issue is particularly relevant to teaching practicum at the Indonesian School of Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) in Malaysia. SIKL is a unique educational environment because it is an Indonesian school operating abroad, with students from the Indonesian diaspora who have grown up in a Malaysian social and cultural context. These contextual differences provide prospective teachers with opportunities to encounter unfamiliar classroom situations, reconsider their professional assumptions, and reflect on their emerging professional roles (Back et al., 2022). In this setting, prospective teachers not only apply their pedagogical competencies but also adapt their teaching practices to different cultural realities (Costa et al., 2023). Differences in learning cultures, school communication systems, student characteristics, and expectations regarding the teacher's role encourage prospective teachers to reevaluate how they perceive the teaching profession (Lee & Gube, 2024). These experiences may encourage prospective teachers to reflect on their professional roles and develop new understandings of what it means to become a teacher in a cross-cultural educational setting.

Previous studies have examined several dimensions of professional learning during teaching practicum and international or cross-cultural educational experiences. Shi et al. (2025) found that teaching practicum can contribute to pedagogical competence, self-efficacy, and intercultural competence among prospective teachers. Thinh (2024) shows that cross-cultural experiences can enhance prospective teachers' cultural intelligence. However, this increase in cultural intelligence does not always account for how prospective economics teachers interpret these experiences in relation to their emerging professional identities (Lu & Habil, 2025). Furthermore, Anindya and Triyoga (2025) found that research on professional identity formation in cross-cultural teaching practicum

remains largely focused on language education and often involves participants from a single higher education institution. As a result, attention to how prospective teachers from diverse institutional backgrounds develop their professional identities in cross-cultural educational contexts remains limited, particularly in Indonesian schools operating abroad and in economics education.

However, previous research has generally examined professional identity formation within a single teaching practicum context, whether domestic or international (Ardi et al., 2023). Consequently, limited attention has been given to how differences across practicum contexts are interpreted and incorporated into professional identity development, particularly among prospective economics teachers. The novelty of this study lies in conceptualizing professional identity formation as an interpretive process that links the practicum context to meaning-making, professional reflection, and professional vision. Rather than treating teaching practicum merely as a setting for developing pedagogical competencies, this study examines how prospective economics teachers interpret their experiences across domestic and international practicum contexts, reflect on their emerging professional roles, and develop professional vision in relation to their professional identities. Theoretically, this perspective extends research on teacher professional identity by emphasizing the role of contextual experience and interpretation in identity development (Özaşkın-Arslan et al., 2024; Zhu & Chen, 2022) While in practice, the findings provide a basis for designing practicum programs that intentionally incorporate contextual diversity and structured reflection to support both pedagogical competence and professional identity development.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore how prospective economics teachers make meaning of their teaching practicum experiences in domestic and international contexts, how these experiences shape their professional reflection, and how that reflection contributes to the formation of professional identity. Specifically, this study addresses three research questions: (1) How do prospective economics teachers make meaning of their teaching practicum experiences in domestic and international contexts? (2) How do these experiences shape their professional reflection? (3) How does professional reflection contribute to their professional identity formation?

Drawing on the theoretical perspectives discussed above, this study conceptualizes professional identity formation as a process shaped by teaching practicum experiences, learning contexts, meaning-making, professional reflection, and professional vision. Based on this conceptualization, a framework was developed to guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as presented in Figure 1.

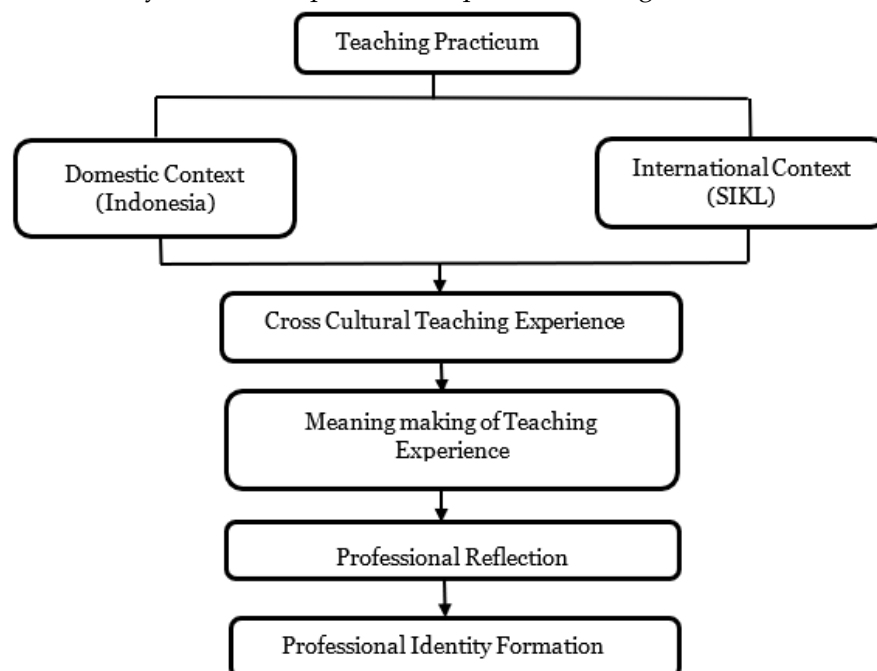


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework that guides this study. This framework positions teaching practicum experiences in both domestic and international contexts as the foundation for the formation of professional identity, while professional vision represents an evolving understanding through which pre-service teachers interpret teaching situations and their professional roles. The international teaching practicum at SIKL provides an additional cross-cultural teaching experience in this process. This framework serves as a guide for developing interview guidelines, analyzing data, and interpreting participants' experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, specifically a qualitative descriptive study (QDS), to explore how prospective economics teachers can develop their professional identity through teaching practicum experiences in domestic and international contexts (Kim et al., 2017). This approach was selected because it enabled a detailed and contextually grounded description of participants' experiences, interpretations, and reflections on the teaching practicum. The study focused on describing and interpreting participants' narratives within the context of their actual teaching practicums, rather than developing a new theoretical model or examining the essence of their experiences. The domestic and international practicum contexts were treated as distinct experiential settings that provided participants with diverse experiences for meaning-making and professional reflection

Participant

This study involved 15 pre-service economics teachers from four universities in Indonesia offering Economics Education programs who had completed their teaching practicum at the senior high school level in either domestic or international contexts. The participants consisted of 10 females and 5 males. Seven participants completed their teaching practicum in domestic schools in Indonesia, while eight undertook an international practicum at the Indonesian School of Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) in Malaysia. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on four criteria: (1) enrollment in an Economics Education program, (2) completion of a teaching practicum in a domestic or international context, (3) voluntary participation, and (4) the ability to provide in-depth reflections on their teaching practicum experiences. These criteria were applied to ensure that participants had direct, relevant experiences and could provide information-rich accounts of professional identity formation in line with the research objectives. Detailed participant characteristics and teaching practicum contexts are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of Participants and Teaching Practicum Contexts

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	10	66.7
	Male	5	33.3
University	Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), Surabaya, East Java	9	60.0
	Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM), Makassar, South Sulawesi	2	13.3
	Universitas Serambi Mekkah (USM), Banda Aceh, Aceh	2	13.3
	Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), Semarang, Central Java	2	13.3
	Domestic – Indonesia	7	46.7
Teaching practicum context	International – SIKL, Malaysia	8	53.3
Total participants	—	15	100

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which provided participants with flexibility to describe their experiences and reflections while maintaining consistency in the topics explored across interviews. The interviews covered four main aspects: (1) expectations prior to the teaching practicum, (2) experiences in understanding student characteristics and school contexts, (3) adaptation and reflection during the teaching practicum, and (4) changes in participants' perspectives on themselves as pre-service economics teachers after completing the practicum. Each interview lasted approximately 40–60 minutes and was conducted either in person or online. All interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. The data collection process adhered to research ethics principles, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of participants' identities.

Instrument

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed from the research questions and the study's conceptual framework. The interview guide was designed to explore participants' teaching practicum experiences and the processes by which these experiences shaped their professional identity. The questions focused on participants' initial expectations, their understanding of student and school contexts, experiences of pedagogical adaptation and professional reflection, and changes in how they perceived themselves as pre-service economics teachers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, developed by Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2022) because this method allows researchers to systematically identify patterns of meaning (themes) that emerge from participants' experiences. The analysis follows six phases: familiarization with the data, initial coding, development of preliminary themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and formulation of interpretations of the results. During the analysis, codes and themes were repeatedly reviewed, revised, combined, or separated based on their relevance to the data as a whole, until the most representative themes were identified to answer the research questions.

NVivo 12 Pro was used to support data organization, coding, node development, category grouping, and theme development. The software was used to enhance the auditability and transparency of the analytical process rather than to generate interpretations. All analytical decisions, including coding, theme development, and interpretation of findings, remained the researchers' responsibility. To enhance trustworthiness, member checking, peer debriefing, and an audit trail were employed to support the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.

FINDINGS

Overview of Thematic Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Reflexive Thematic Analysis on 15 interview transcripts from prospective economics teachers, yielding interrelated themes that explain the process of professional identity formation during teaching practicums in both domestic contexts in Indonesia and international contexts at the Indonesian School in Kuala Lumpur (SIKL). Based on the study's conceptual framework, the findings were organized into three main stages: the meaning-making of teaching practicum experiences, professional reflection, and professional identity formation. The entire coding process was conducted iteratively to ensure that the emerging themes truly reflected the patterns of meaning in the data. To enhance the transparency of the analysis process, the coding results were visualized using the Word Cloud and Hierarchy Chart features in NVivo 12 Pro.

Figure 2: Word Cloud of dominant concepts emerging from interview transcripts

Contextual Understanding				Cross Cultural Experience				Instructional Adapta...				Professional Identi...	
Contextualized Teaching		Teachi...	Economi...		Expectati...				Contextual Examples		Identity Shift		
Student Context					Scho...					Perspectiv...	Rapp...	Teaching Confid...	
		Student ...	Localiz...		Res...						Expl...		
					Instru...	Cult...	Cult...		Teaching...	Aca...			
Turning Point				Initial Expectations				Professional Vision					
Context Aware...		Critical Incide...	Te...	Te...		Contextual R...		Economic...	Perso...				
			Profe...						Mixed ...	Ba...			
			Identi...					Gamifi...					
Support System				Cross Cultural Learning				Pedagogical Adjustme...					
Professiona...	Self-Motivation	Peer...	Ment...		Future Practice						Professiona...	Te...	
Reflective Prac...													
		Stud...	Self ...										

The hierarchy chart shows that the identified themes are interrelated and constitute a dynamic process in the development of prospective economics teachers' professional identities. This visualization illustrates that teaching practicum experiences evolve from the participants' initial expectations, followed by an understanding of student characteristics in the learning context, which then leads to cross-cultural experiences that influence the process of adapting teaching strategies (Çetinkaya & Varis, 2026). Through reflecting on these experiences, participants began to build their professional identities and formulate their visions as prospective economics teachers. Thus, the Hierarchy Chart not only illustrates the relationships among themes but also shows the progression of experiences that form the basis for presenting the research findings in the following sections.

Meaning-Making of Teaching Practicum Experiences

An analysis of fifteen interviews revealed that most participants entered the teaching profession with the expectation that learning would proceed in accordance with the pedagogical knowledge they had acquired during their college studies (Gholami et al., 2021). Participants conducting their teaching practicum at SIKL generally assumed that, since the school uses the Indonesian curriculum and the majority of its students are Indonesian citizens, the students' characteristics would not differ significantly from those at schools in Indonesia. Meanwhile, participants conducting their PLP in Indonesia mostly expected the main challenges to relate to classroom management rather than to differences in students' backgrounds.

However, direct teaching experience shows that these assumptions do not fully align with on-the-ground conditions. Most participants reported encountering a wide range of student characteristics that were far more complex than they had previously imagined. In the SIKL context, these differences are evident in the life experiences of diaspora students who have grown up in Malaysia's social and cultural environment. Conversely, in the domestic context, diversity is more heavily influenced by school culture, families' socioeconomic conditions, and students' learning habits.

One participant conducting the PLP at SIKL explained that he initially assumed all students had similar experiences because they were all from Indonesia. However, classroom interactions made him realize that cultural backgrounds shape how students interpret economic examples.

"At first, I assumed that since they were all Indonesian, their ways of thinking would be the same as those of students in Indonesia. However, after attending a few classes, I realized that their life experiences were different because they had grown up in Malaysia." (L/27 April 2026/SIKL)

This quote indicates that practical teaching experience encourages participants to rethink their initial assumptions about student characteristics. In line with Holloway et al. (2023), although they share the same nationality, their life experiences across different cultural contexts shape how students understand economic concepts.

"When I first started teaching, I realized that every student has a different cultural background and set of experiences. I gave economic examples that I thought were common, but it turned out that not all students had the same experiences." (P/27 April 2026/SIKL)

The findings show that teaching practicum not only exposes prospective teachers to the diversity of students' perspectives but also encourages them to develop new insights into the relationship between students' cultural backgrounds and the economics learning process. This experience helps participants realize that an understanding of students' characteristics is fundamental to designing more contextualized learning experiences (Dursun et al., 2023).

In the domestic context, shifts in expectations also occur, even though cross-cultural differences do not influence them. One participant explained that diversity is more evident in schools' socioeconomic and cultural conditions, which influence how students understand economic concepts.

"I did not think there would be a cultural gap since we are both in big cities. However, it turns out the differences are more evident in students' socioeconomic backgrounds, so the way they interpret concepts like money and the market also differs." (P/July 13, 2026/Domestic)

This quote indicates that meaning-making occurs not only in international teaching practicums but also in domestic contexts. Participants began to understand that variations in schools' socioeconomic and cultural conditions influence how students interpret economic concepts, so instruction needs to be tailored to students' real-life experiences (Rissanen et al., 2023). Overall, these findings indicate that teaching practicum experiences not only altered the participants' initial expectations but also encouraged them to develop a new understanding of the relationship between student characteristics, the learning context, and teaching strategies. Thus, teaching practicum experiences not only altered the participants' initial expectations but also shaped their interpretation of the relationship among student characteristics, the learning context, and teaching strategies. This process of interpretation subsequently serves as the foundation for professional reflection, which is discussed in the following section.

DISCUSSION

Initial Expectations toward Teaching Practicum

Research findings indicate that changes in the initial expectations of prospective economics teachers not only reflect their emerging understanding of teaching but also constitute a process of meaning-making regarding the realities they encounter in practice (Westerlund, 2023). When their initial assumptions about students' characteristics were not fully aligned with the conditions they encountered in the field, the participants were prompted to reinterpret the relationship between the learning context, the students' backgrounds, and the pedagogical strategies they employed (Renwick, 2023). Zhu and Chen (2022) Similarly, they argue that the teaching practicum serves as a space to transform prospective teachers' perspectives on the learning process, rather than simply providing an opportunity to apply the pedagogical knowledge gained in college.

This interpretation is consistent with the study by Shi et al. (2025), which views initial expectations as part of professional readiness prior to undertaking a teaching practicum. However, this study extends this perspective by highlighting the role of practicum context in shaping how prospective teachers develop their understanding of students and the learning process. Wiese et al. (2024) emphasize that teaching practicums contribute to professional development through learning experiences in a school setting. This study complements these findings by suggesting that the reconstruction of expectations may take different forms across the domestic and international practicum contexts examined here, as prospective teachers encounter different student characteristics, school cultures, and learning environments. These findings indicate that contextual differences shape how prospective teachers make sense of their teaching experiences, reflected in changes in how they understand students, interpret the learning context, and adapt their pedagogical approaches. Thus, shifting expectations constitute an initial foundation for professional reflection and subsequent pedagogical adaptation.

These findings suggest that both domestic and international practicum contexts can disrupt prospective teachers' initial expectations, although the sources and scope of the disruption differed across the contexts examined. In the domestic practicum context examined in this study, participants encountered relatively familiar language, social norms, and school environments. However, differences in school culture, socioeconomic conditions, and students' learning habits still prompted them to reconsider their assumptions. At SIKL, the participants encountered additional cultural and communicative differences associated with students' lived experiences in Malaysia. These experiences prompted them to reconsider assumptions based on shared national identity and to pay greater attention to how students' backgrounds shaped their interpretation of economic concepts. Although the students were Indonesian, many had grown up in a Malaysian social and cultural environment, which was reflected in differences in communication patterns, cultural practices, socioeconomic experiences, and learning expectations. These differences challenged some of the assumptions that participants had developed through their previous educational experiences. This is consistent with Kurup et al. (2023), who show that international teaching practice can develop pre-service teachers' capacity to navigate diverse, cross-cultural classrooms and learning contexts.

Professional Reflection through Cross-Cultural Teaching

The findings indicate that professional reflection develops as a result of the process of making sense of teaching practicum experiences (Wang et al., 2023). Once prospective teachers realize that students' characteristics and the learning context differ from their initial expectations, reflection becomes an interpretive process through which they reevaluate their pedagogical decisions and consider how these decisions can be adapted to students' needs (Gotwalt, 2023). In both contexts, prospective economics teachers can evaluate their pedagogical decisions in relation to student characteristics and learning conditions. In SIKL, differences in student characteristics, school culture, and socioeconomic context prompted prospective teachers to reconsider how they design lesson materials, select learning examples, and facilitate classroom interactions. Thus, reflection in this study is not merely an evaluative activity conducted after teaching, but rather an ongoing process that helps prospective teachers understand the relationship between the learning context and the pedagogical decisions they make (Lefebvre et al., 2023).

The findings indicate that the content of professional reflection varies according to the contextual demands of the teaching practicum program. In the domestic context examined in this study, comparatively familiar social and educational conditions were associated with reflections focused on students' individual characteristics, classroom management, school culture, and the appropriateness of teaching examples. Their reflections primarily involve refining their existing pedagogical understanding in response to specific classroom needs (Qiu et al., 2021; Wang, 2023). In the context examined at SIKL, the combination of cultural, communicative, and socioeconomic differences prompted broader reflection, as prospective teachers also interpreted differences that extended beyond immediate classroom pedagogy. These differences prompted participants to question assumptions about what students needed, how teachers should communicate, and which examples were pedagogically relevant (King et al., 2022). In this regard, cross-cultural teaching does more than simply increase the number of experiences available for reflection; it transforms the very object of reflection itself. Prospective teachers are encouraged to reflect not only on what they should do as teachers, but also on why certain pedagogical practices are considered appropriate in specific cultural and social contexts. This was reflected in participants' use of concrete examples drawn from everyday economic situations in Malaysia.

This interpretation is consistent with the concept of reflective practice proposed by Schön (1983) and further developed by Griffiths (2000), which views reflection as an ongoing process through which practitioners examine experiences and reconsider subsequent actions. These findings are also consistent with recent empirical research by Gotwalt (2023), which shows that teaching practicum provides a space for prospective teachers to develop professional reflection through direct interaction with complex and diverse classroom situations. However, this study offers a more specific perspective by demonstrating that the professional reflection of prospective economics teachers is influenced not only by the teaching experience itself, but also by differences in the contexts of teaching practicum they encounter. These findings extend previous research by Heinz (2024), which generally regards practical teaching experience as an important basis for the development of professional reflection, by showing that the characteristics of the learning context also shape the focus of reflection and pedagogical decision-making. Experiences across domestic and international contexts, therefore, position reflection as an interpretive link between contextual experiences and more responsive pedagogical adaptations.

Professional Identity Formation

The findings suggest that prospective economics teachers' emerging professional identities were closely associated with their reflections on their teaching experiences across different practicum contexts (Yue et al., 2024). These experiences not only provide opportunities for pedagogical adaptation but also shape how prospective teachers understand the role of a teacher as an educator who responds to students' characteristics and contextual conditions. These findings indicate that the development of professional identity is a gradual process shaped by experience, reflection, and interaction with diverse learning environments.

The findings further indicate that differences in professional reflection have implications for professional identity formation. In the domestic context examined in this study, participants described comparatively familiar conditions that were associated with the refinement of their understanding of the teacher's role through reflection on students' characteristics and instructional needs (Zhu & Chen, 2022). At SIKL, participants described greater contextual unfamiliarity associated with students' lived experiences in Malaysia, which prompted them to reconsider assumptions about students, communication, effective teaching practices, and the teacher's role (Li & Khairani, 2025; Rosenfeld & Yemini, 2023). The SIKL practicum, therefore, involved more than adapting teaching practices; it also prompted participants to reconsider how they understood themselves as emerging teachers. In the contexts examined in this study, relatively familiar conditions were associated with the refinement of existing professional understandings. In contrast, experiences of greater contextual unfamiliarity were associated with reconsideration and reinterpretation of those understandings.

This finding is consistent with Mankki et al., (2025) which explains that the reflective teaching practicum serves as an important vehicle or platform for the professional development of prospective economics teachers through reflection on their teaching experiences. These findings also support MacPhail et al. (2026) which indicates that reflection during the teaching practicum contributes to the formation of professional identity by helping prospective teachers make sense of their pedagogical experiences. However, this study demonstrates that the formation of professional identity is influenced not only by the reflective process but also by direct teaching experience. Based on a synthesis of these findings, the formation of professional identity among prospective economics teachers can be understood as a context-sensitive interpretive process involving three interrelated processes. First, initial expectations are disrupted and then reconstructed through teaching practice experiences, thereby generating new meanings regarding students, teaching, and the learning context. Second, contextual differences shape the focus and direction of professional reflection, particularly when prospective teachers reconsider the appropriateness of their pedagogical decisions in relation to students' needs. Third, sustained meaning-making and reflection contributed to participants' emerging understanding of the teacher's role and informed their pedagogical decision-making. From this perspective, professional identity was not formed solely through exposure to teaching practice or through isolated reflection. Rather, the findings suggest that it emerged through the interaction between contextual experiences, meaning-making, professional reflection, and participants' emerging understandings of the teacher's role.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on professional identity formation by showing that practicum context is not merely a setting for professional learning, but an experiential condition that shapes the content and direction of professional reflection and, consequently, the form of identity work undertaken by prospective teachers. In the domestic context examined in this study, relatively familiar conditions supported the refinement of existing pedagogical understandings. In contrast, the greater contextual unfamiliarity encountered at SIKL prompted prospective teachers to question and reinterpret assumptions about students, teaching, and their professional roles. The contribution, therefore, lies not in treating domestic and international practicum as simply different locations, but in showing how differences in contextual experience can generate different forms of reflection and identity work within professional identity formation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the formation of professional identity among prospective economics teachers is a context-sensitive, interpretive process shaped by teaching practicum experiences, meaning-making, and professional reflection in both domestic and international contexts. The findings indicate that differences in teaching practicum contexts influence how prospective teachers interpret their experiences, reconsider pedagogical assumptions, and develop an evolving understanding of their professional roles. The main theoretical contribution lies in positioning the context of teaching practice as an experiential condition that shapes the content and direction of professional reflection and identity formation, rather than merely as a setting for developing pedagogical competencies. In practice, teacher education institutions should provide

diverse teaching practicum contexts, accompanied by structured opportunities for reflection, mentoring, and dialogue to support the development of professional identity. Given the focus on 15 pre-service economics teachers in the specific contexts examined, the findings are not intended to be generalized. Future research could extend this inquiry to other fields of study, educational systems, and longitudinal settings.

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