# Barriers to Professionalism in the Native-Speaking English Teacher Scheme in Hong Kong

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## Abstract

This article reports on a small-scale exploratory study that examined how native-speaking English teachers (NETs) working in the Primary Native-speaking English Teacher (PNET) Scheme construct their professional identity(ies) and explored the barriers to their professionalism that exist within their role and context. Data were collected using questionnaires and a group interview with qualified NETs. The findings of the study show that NETs' identities are complex with NETs having to negotiate their professional identities to fit into *their* role and local context. Although other stakeholders endorse this modification, it does not come without cost. NETs sacrifice their authentic selves while facing barriers to their own personal beliefs of good teaching and professionalism. The author suggests that if these barriers are not addressed, NETs may feel marginalised and be unable to be their professional selves. A number of suggestions are made for NETs, teachers, school administrators and policy-makers on how to better support NETs' professionalism.

Keywords: teacher professionalism, native-speaking English teachers, teacher identity

## Introduction

The professional identity of teachers has long been an area of interest in educational research. This area of interest has not escaped Hong Kong, and there have been studies on the professional identity of in-service teachers (Cheung, 2008), pre-service teachers (Gu, 2011) and second-career English language teachers (Trent & Gao, 2009). However, little research has specifically looked at the professional identities of native English-speaking teachers (NETs) working in an established scheme such as the Primary Native-speaking English Teacher (PNET) Scheme Those that have looked at the NET scheme have explored the challenges NETs face integrating into role and context (Forrester & Lok, 2008), the differing views of teaching between NETs and their local colleagues, NETs' positioning within the school context (Trent, 2012) and the adaptions newcomers need to make to integrate into the school community (Tsui,

2009). This research will add to this growing literature on the PNET scheme by exploring how NETs form their identities and describing the barriers they face to being their authentic selves.

Although the expectations and entry requirements of NETs in Hong Kong can often be high, with an emphasis on the need for 'qualified teacher status' and previous teaching experience, they are often not required to perform traditional roles associated with teaching, such as being a class teacher, communicating with parents, assessing students' learning and providing pastoral care to students. Instead, NETs have a large array of other roles, such as classroom teaching usually over multiple levels with different classes, conducting extracurricular activities, developing 'good' teaching methods, developing teaching materials and conducting professional development for their local colleagues (Lok, 2004). Although this list seems extensive, it is still narrow in focus and noticeably different compared to duties assigned to their local colleagues. Along with this, they are required to team-teach with a local teacher for all their lessons (Curriculum Development Institute, 2012). NETs also lack career progression opportunities. They are hired outside of the school promotion structure on a two-year contract basis (Education Bureau 2017). This juxtaposition of being qualified and experienced (but with no clear career path) and in a role with a narrow focus and myriad of responsibilities could have an impact on the teachers' professional identities.

This research is important because how a teacher sees himself or herself professionally can affect pedagogy and teaching (Agee, 2004), as well as a teacher's commitment, self-esteem and motivation (Kelchtermans, 2009). If a NET does not feel they are being treated as a professional, this could lead to frustration and demotivation, and even to them leaving the scheme. Indeed, the NET scheme has a high attrition rate, with up to a quarter of NETs leaving the scheme each year (Chu & Morrison, 2011).

This two-stage exploratory study seeks a better understanding of the professional identity(ies) of native English teachers working in primary schools in Hong Kong, building on previous research in the field. It is useful for policy-makers, administrators and teachers as it gives a voice to NETs, showing how they view their identities in their roles and the barriers they face. It could also help shed light on the professional identities of NETs in other Asian countries while adding to the growing discourse on teachers' professional identities. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do NETs construct their professional identities within the Primary Native-Speaking English Teacher Scheme in Hong Kong?
2. Do they face barriers to their own professional identities?
3. If barriers exist, where do they come from?

## Context

In many Asian countries, such as Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong, an important strategy in the promotion of English language learning is the hiring of native-speaking English teachers (Jeon & Lee, 2006).

In the academic year 2002/2003, the Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB) established the PNET scheme. Since then, each public sector school with six classes or more has been provided with a NET. The PNET scheme was primarily initiated because of a high level of dissatisfaction with students' English proficiency and a belief that there were an insufficient number of competent local English teachers (Hong Kong Education Commission, 1995). The Education Department (now EDB) states that the role of NETs is to "enhance the English language proficiency of individual students, to demonstrate contemporary approaches to the teaching and learning of English and to share professional ideas with their fellow English teachers" (Education Department, 2000, p. 33).

Possibly as a result of these aims, the NET scheme is unique compared to other schemes in Asia, such as Korea and Japan, as it emphasises the need for NETs to have both relevant teaching experience and language teaching qualifications (Forrester & Lok, 2008).

## Literature review

This literature review will examine how teachers construct their professional identities, exploring the role and contextual factors that influence their identities (Burke & Stets, 2009) with a specific focus on the PNET scheme in Hong Kong.

Identity has been defined as "our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are" (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 10). A teacher's identity is important in the construction and sustaining of a teacher's professional self, in other words how they seem themselves as a teacher (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006). However, our identities are not fixed but fluid. They constantly change as we interact with different people, social environments, cultural situations and work contexts (Beijaard, Miejer & Verloop, 2004; Wenger, 1998). Therefore, to better understand a teacher's identity, we need to understand what influences them, including their beliefs, education, and training as well as their self-position within a community, such as a participant or non-participant, insider or outsider. We also need to consider how society views them, that is, as professional, semi-professional, or non-professional. Through analysing these influences, we can better understand a teacher's sense of professional identity (Olsen, 2008).

Teachers develop beliefs about teaching and learning early in their career and these continue to be shaped by their own learning experiences, teacher role models, family and significant others (Knowles, 1992). These personal and educational beliefs guide a teacher's actions and their perceptions of themselves in their work as teachers (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Teachers form views of the characteristics, attitudes and values associated with a professional or good teacher. This creates the basis of the teacher they want to be. This is what they may consider their authentic self or their true self: our values and attitudes that they bring to our role and social groups (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Issues can arise when a teacher's personal views are not aligned with the positions in which they find themselves. Trent (2012) found:

> NETs perceive challenges in their self-positioning as professional language teachers from some local English teachers and school managers who seem to question the value

of their teaching experiences and practices in the context of English Language classrooms in Hong Kong. (p. 104)

Likewise, Chu, and Morrison (2011) found NETs were 'surprised and frustrated' by the difference in teaching in Hong Kong schools and that the Hong Kong education system was "very different from those in their home countries" (p. 490). This could be evidence of a mismatch between how NETs and their local colleagues define being a good teacher. This therefore makes it challenging for NETs to be their authentic selves as their beliefs could conflict with the expectations of the role of a teacher in Hong Kong.

Although teachers may have formed their views on what it means to be a professional teacher, these views are not "entirely unique" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 122). Among professionals and other groups, there is often a "set of expectations tied to a social position that guides people's attitudes and behaviour" (p. 114). The role a teacher takes within a school will also impact their identities, such as principal, senior teacher, class teacher, teaching assistant or NET, and this in turn will impact how others see them.

As mentioned in the introduction, a NET's role can be very different from that of other teachers in the school (Lok, 2004). This is partly due to one of the PNET scheme aims, namely 'to share professional ideas with fellow English teachers' (Education Department 2000, p. 33). To achieve this aim, NETs are required to co-teach with local English teachers. Some NETs may teach up to 16 different classes of learners in a week for 30–60 minutes per lesson and co-teach with up to 16 different local teachers (Moorhouse, 2012). Local teachers, however, will usually teach two to three English classes for eight periods a week and have greater autonomy and responsibility for the development, assessment and pastoral care of students and for contact with parents. Carless (2006) found that NETs in Hong Kong had difficulty developing a close working relationship with such a large number of teaching partners and students. The difference in role requirements of NETs and local teachers could make it hard for them to relate to each other and may lead to different professional expectations.

This can be further complicated when we consider social influences. Wenger (1998) argues that "building an identity consists of negotiating meaning of our experiences of membership of social communities" (p. 145). Therefore, a person's social identity is based on identification with a social, cultural or political group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). If they associate with a group and see the group members as similar to them, they will feel like an insider. This association and group membership can lead to a feeling of higher self-worth. Whereas if they feel they do not belong in a group or are not accepted by a group, they can feel like an outsider (Burke & Stets, 2009).

A teacher's professional identity is most likely influenced by their reference group, which often decides how the members interpret their reality (Nias, 2005, as cited in Ball & Goodson, 2005). The most important reference group could be the community in which teachers function, such as their school or English team. Indeed, 'how teachers perceive they are seen through other people's eyes is important in framing teachers' professional identity(ies)' (Evans, 2014, p. 4).

Local teachers may find their school community a 'natural fit' as they grow up and were educated in that community. However, NETs' experiences may be very different. They may lack cultural knowledge or language abilities, making it hard to participate in the community. This has been acknowledged by the Hong Kong Legislative Council, which reported, "the school culture in Hong Kong is very different from that in the home countries of NETs" (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 2005, p. 9).

This was also evident in Chu and Morrison's (2011) study in Hong Kong, where they found issues of "cross-cultural adjustments of the NETs themselves, the host schools and the government's induction programme" (p. 481). They reported that NETs felt marginalised by their host schools and were "treated as outsiders rather than partners" (p. 497).

NETs may expect language and cultural differences when interacting with local colleagues. However, these differences could lead NETs to modify their own identities within the school community. This could disrupt their original identities and require them to adapt and reinvent themselves (Neilsen, 2011).

A teacher's professional identity is "rich, complex, relational and dynamic" (Scotland, 2014, p. 35). It is a mix of personal, role and social influences. If our personal views, role requirements and/or our social positioning are "mismatched," then the teacher could feel that they cannot be the type of teacher they want to be, creating barriers to their professionalism. For example, if the teacher has a personal belief that they should be trusted and have autonomy but the role does not match this expectation, then the teacher could feel they are not being treated as a professional and cannot be their authentic self. Likewise, if they feel a community, such as an English department or school, does not validate their role identity, they may feel dissatisfied and withdraw from interaction (Burke & Stets, 2009). It is important to explore this relationship so we can get a better understanding of how NETs position themselves and whether they can be the kind of teacher they want to be.

## Methodology

This is a two-part exploratory study, designed to gather participants' perceptions, views, attitudes and beliefs regarding their professional identities in order to answer the research questions. Qualitative data were collected in two stages. First, a questionnaire was conducted, then a group interview was held. This allowed for general trends regarding the views and opinions of NETs to be identified in the questionnaire that could then be further explored in the group interview.

### Participants

Participants were qualified NETs working in the PNET scheme in Hong Kong. Eleven native English-speaking teachers were invited to complete a questionnaire, and four of these eleven also participated in the group interview. Convenience sampling was adopted, with the participants either known to the researcher or invited to join by his colleagues. All participants are referred to by pseudonyms. All participants were qualified teachers in Hong Kong and had

been in the NET scheme for between two to nine years. They all had previous teaching experience before joining the PNET scheme.

**Questionnaire and group interview**

The researcher developed a structured questionnaire with eleven open-ended questions specifically for this study (Appendix 1). The questions were developed to gain a better understanding of the participants' views on professionalism, barriers to professionalism, and how they see professionalism in their context. After collecting and analysing the questionnaires, an interview guide was developed, and a group interview was conducted with four of the participants who had previously completed the questionnaire. The group interview allowed for issues raised in the questionnaire to be discussed in greater detail. Group interviews create a shared space for participants to discuss and explore their views, beliefs, and attitudes.

## Data analysis

The data were analysed in two stages. First, initial codes were identified in the questionnaire data using NVivo, and potential themes were identified. These themes informed the interview guide for the group interview. After the group interview had been conducted, the recording was transcribed and coded. The questionnaire and group interview data were compared and contrasted, and four themes were identified.

## Findings and discussion

The four themes identified in the data analysis were

1. NETs have a shared identity;
2. NETs negotiate their professional identities;
3. NETs are valued and have high self-worth; and
4. Barriers to professionalism exist. These barriers come from both the role of a NET and their context.

The first three themes relate to the first research question, ' How do NETs construct their professional identities within the Primary Native-Speaking English Teacher Scheme in Hong Kong?' And the last theme relates to the second and third research questions: 'Do they face barriers to their own professional identities? and 'If barriers exist, where do these barriers come from?' respectively.

The findings will be presented and discussed in relation to the themes identified.

**NETs have a shared identity**

In the questionnaire, participants were asked to define a good teacher. Participants mentioned similar characteristics of a good teacher. Most mentioned that a good teacher needs to cater for learner diversity, create meaningful lessons and encourage students to be lifelong learners. This

supports the idea of a shared identity between NETs and uniformity in their thoughts and actions (Burke & Stets, 2009).

> A good teacher plans a lesson that is based on students' interests, culture and the social structure that they live in. Lessons should be interactive, engaging and promote student-to-student interaction. There should also be an awareness of learner diversity (multiple intelligence), which is addressed through differentiation and multi-sensory activities. (Juan)

> A good teacher needs to have a good awareness of their students' abilities, strengths and weaknesses and the ability to engage and interest students. They should also have a thorough understanding of each lesson's objectives and yearly objectives and keep these in mind when planning/teaching. If co-teaching, they need to have effective collaboration with colleagues. Classroom management skills are also essential to good teaching. (Ada)

Most NETs in the study believed that their local colleagues share similar views of good teaching to themselves. However, they face barriers to being a good teacher from the education system and pressures placed on them by the school, parents and examinations. This belief that their local colleagues have the same views and constraints on their professionalism could give NETs and local teachers common areas to connect with each other. This could strengthen their relationship and it validates the NETs' views and approaches.

> I think my colleagues and I agree on what we need to do to teach our students effectively. But because of demands from the EDB and parents, wherein our students are expected to have good results with their class work and examination, it has forced my colleagues to compromise their teaching values. (Juan)

> I believe we all share the same general views, but personal teaching styles differ, and often local teachers have little time and chance to apply their teaching philosophies due to exams and dictations and so on. (Nick)

These views were not shared by all participants, although they believed their colleagues' workload was the primary barrier to their professionalism.

> There is indeed a gap between my view of a good teacher and that of my colleagues in the local context, but from my recent interactions with them, I find that there is a narrowing of this gap. Most of the local teachers are snowed under by a huge pile of paperwork and are struggling to keep their heads above the water. This affects energy levels and their overall morale, and I can't help but feel guilty when I compare our work loads. In general, the younger generation of local English teachers is more proactive and open to new ideas, and I hope this is indicative of a more positive teaching attitude. (Ada)

> Although NETs believe local teachers share similar views about teaching to them, they still feel they have more in common with other NETs. They attributed this primarily to

culture, shared views and how they are viewed by their local colleagues. This may bind them together, giving them a space to be their authentic selves (Burke & Stets, 2009) and a community of practice in which they feel a full member (Wenger, 1998).

In the focus group, Toby talked about why he has more in common with other NETs:

> We just have the same culture, right? You know, we understand each other, and we do the same things and stuff. You know, if I speak to another NET, and I say 'Oh, this is happening in my school,' he will totally get what I'm on about.

Fred talked about local teachers' stereotypes of NETs:

> I think in my school there is a perception that people believe that as soon as I leave school I go to a bar.

Paul mentioned that local teachers have a stereotypical view of NETs being rich:

> There is also a perception that NETs are rich. I remember my colleagues saying, 'Oh, you're so rich,' or something like that.

## NETs negotiate their professional identities

NETs redefine and shape a new identity in order to match the expectations of their role (Vahasantanen, Hokka, Etelapelto, Rasku-Puttonen & Littleton, 2008). When asked whether their identity had changed since becoming a NET, most participants responded that it had. They gave a variety of different reasons for this, such as becoming more tactful to change the system, becoming a language specialist, being different from colleagues and the different nature of the role compared to their previous roles.

> …besides educating children, I have to ease new ideas and change into a very stubborn system in a most tactful way. Being a NET is not just about taking care of your class, you are always trying to think of ways to improve the English language standard of the school as a whole… I've also become everyone's 'walking dictionary' – that definitely was not the case before I joined the scheme. (Jenny)

> Yes, I have not been perusing my area of interest as a learning assistance teacher (remedial methodology) even though as a NET teacher I am dealing with a lot of learning difficulties. I feel I have changed from the teacher I wanted to be (a 'Learning Assistance Teacher') to a 'NET Teacher'. (Fred)

This need to adapt was not only about the role but also about the adaption to the school environment and culture.

In the group interview, Toby talked about how he has changed:

I think as NET teachers, as well, we need to be understanding. If you'd asked me that question when I was in my first year, I would have said 'Yeah, it's horrible,' but then you learn to adapt and find the middle mark. We do changes at our school. They listen to my opinion but it's like I'm going in with a wrecking ball: this is gone. You know, you find a middle ground and build up respect and relationships so you can get something done which is better than whatever they are doing now.

Jenny mentioned in the group interview that she wanted to "make them [her colleagues] see that I am also part of the team."

This conscious decision to comply with the system could allow NETs to move from being an outsider to an insider (from the periphery to the core of the school community) (Wenger, 1998). By becoming part of the social group, NETs can gain self-meaning, and this membership leads them to receive 'recognition, approval and acceptance by others' (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 127).

**NETs are valued and have high self-worth**

The findings showed that other stakeholders endorse the NETs' identities as the majority of NETs in the study felt valued in the classroom, English department, school and country.

I feel very much respected by my peers and students in the classroom because my teaching approach is accepted and is seen as fun and effective. (Juan)

I am celebrated in this school! My principal is a strong believer in creativity in the classroom and he proudly flaunts me to the parents. (Ada)

On the whole, I feel that the EDB is supportive of NETs. (Jack)

Most NETs also felt their professional judgment was respected. When responding to the question about whether professional judgment is respected, Tom and Juan wrote:

I do [feel this], as I have made suggestions as to the planning of the English curriculum that has been adopted. Involvement which has helped. Whenever my ideas are rejected, the primary concern is time restraints. (Tom)

From my point of view, I do believe that my colleagues and principal fully respect my professional judgment. (Juan)

However, this was not the case for all respondents, as some felt it depended on the topic or support from the school or head of English.

Some of my ideas are respected, but I have been ridiculed (bullied) by other local English teachers with comments such as 'foreigners don't learn grammar' or 'they don't know grammar.' (Peter)

This endorsement of their role and opinions gives validity to the identity they have constructed and could increase job satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment (Kelchtermans, 2009). It could help them justify their modification in identity as their new identities are validated by others (Burke & Stets, 2009). This type of acceptance was also observed by Trent (2012), who found that NETs saw their close relationship with school stakeholders, such as principals and English head teachers, as "playing a crucial role in shaping their self-positioning" as an English language teacher (p. 116).

**Barriers to professionalism**

To feel valued and to fit in, NETs modify their identity to meet the expectations of their role and context (Nielsen, 2011). Although this seems to be done willingly, this need to modify and adjust their identity highlights that there may be barriers that exist concerning their personal views of 'professional'. NETs are aware of the conflict between their authentic self and their role and acknowledge that they cannot always be the teacher they want to be. Some barriers were identified in the data; these barriers come from both the role of NET and context.

a) Within the role of NET, they felt restricted by the limited contact time and the number of classes they teach. This prevents them from fulfilling their definition of a good teacher and being their authentic self, such as catering for students' needs (Burke & Stets, 2009).

> The frequency of lessons with each class is far from ideal. The number of different classes I have to teach makes catering for students' needs difficult. (Jenny)

> There shouldn't be any barriers, but the NET scheme and limited contact with students do make it more difficult to motivate certain students. It's a bit harder to go that extra mile for a student when you don't know their background or whether this effort will be accepted. (Paul)

b) NETs also felt their role was quite rigid and narrow, only focusing on English language teaching, and with some having even narrower roles. This could affect a teacher's self-efficacy, as their contributions are not validated and they cannot bring their unique skills and identity to the role.

> As NETs, I don't think we are allowed to be full-fledged 'teachers'. Our roles do not fully exploit the range of responsibilities shouldered by a classroom teacher. (Ada)

> In the NET scheme, lesson times are assigned and fixed within a timetable, and English is a specialist single subject. This makes teaching concepts to students more difficult and harder to make other subjects transdisciplinary. (Toby)

> I think that schools regard the role of the NET is only to teach English. (Jack)

An example of the narrow role was also mentioned by Fred in the group interview:

I wanted to do something else as an ECA (extra-curricular activity), but 'No, you must do English drama.' I wanted to do English basketball.

c) Culture and the school system were also seen as barriers to professionalism. Participants mentioned the emphasis on exams, restricted English curriculum, textbook dominance and highly competitive culture as all being barriers to professionalism.

The highly competitive culture that is nurtured and encouraged by parents and HK's economy are strong barriers against being a good teacher. (Peter)

The reliance on third party textbooks, the emphasis on meeting (or exceeding) levels set by school-based and national tests and the spread of contact time. (Tom)

As a NET, the main barrier is trying to promote the teaching of 'authentic English' as opposed to 'examination English' to our students. I try my best to encourage the use of 'authentic English' to my colleagues during our co-planning meetings. (Juan)

d) A lack of connection to the school community, alienation and isolation were also mentioned, with participants feeling committed to teaching in Hong Kong but not connected to the school community. This relates to the unique role of the NET. Although they want to fit into the school and modify their identity, they can remain isolated because of the different nature of the job; the narrow role given to them by their local colleagues still prevents them from fully integrating into the school community (Wenger, 1998).

It is hard always to feel connected as the nature of being a NET under the NET Scheme is totally different to being a local teacher. The fact that there is usually only one NET per school, NETs are in that sense, alone… With factors such as cultural differences and just being at different stages in our career paths, I do sometimes feel that I am fighting a losing battle and hence the feeling of disconnect. (Jenny)

In terms of connection, the scheme can alienate certain NETs who do not communicate or are not open to fellow colleagues. In local standards, it is a glorified teaching job. (Paul)

I feel committed to the teaching profession in Hong Kong. However, I do not feel very well connected because it is easy to become isolated as a NET. (Jack)

e) NETs in the group interview mentioned the lack of career progression and short-term contracts as barriers to professionalism. This could have a negative effect on their self-worth and make them stand out from their colleagues. This may lead NETs to question their future prospects within the scheme and whether they see the NET position as a career.

If you have a continuing contract, you would feel more comfortable profession-wise. (Fred)

> At my old school I had a permanent post so I knew every year… now when it comes to end of contract year, you just think 'Is it time to change? Will they keep me?' (Toby)

> It can be a career, but I don't feel it's like a career in terms of that you climb up some sort of ladder. (Jenny)

The participants suggested that some of these barriers are not unique to NETs and can be experienced by their local colleagues (as mentioned in section 6.1). This can be illustrated by Fred's observation of a new colleague's difficulty in adapting to the school culture:

> I saw her frustration. What she had taught and learned at university, she was like, 'it doesn't apply here.' She had to re-think how she was going to be a teacher.

Although NETs face barriers to their professional identity, they are by no means alone, and the pressure to adapt to the role and context can be felt by NETs and their local colleagues alike.

## Conclusion and implications

This study provides a greater understanding of NETs professionalism in Hong Kong, building on the literature on NETs' identities. Although not all NETs have the same professional identity, some commonalities were found, giving evidence to the idea of a shared identity and community of practice among NETs. The research showed that NETs' identity is complex with NETs negotiating their identity to fit into their role and the local context (Burke & Stets, 2009). NETs need to negotiate their own views and the expectations of the role, and they must conform to the prevailing social group. This ability to modify and adapt seems to be valued as NETs expressed positive recognition from others. However, this does not come without cost. NETs may sacrifice their authentic self while facing barriers to their own personal beliefs of good teaching and professionalism from their role and context.

Successful integration of NETs into the school community is essential if NETs are to become more professional and have a higher self-worth (Forrester & Lok, 2008). To do this, schools and the government need to look at ways to ensure NETs are more connected. Including NETs more in whole-school decision-making and events, rather than just English subject events, could be one way to do this. Opportunities for NETs to get together with other NETs from other schools and share experiences, pedagogy and approaches could also make them feel more connected.

As NETs have been recruited and hired for a specific role, schools may feel reluctant to deploy them outside of English language teaching or deploy them as a class teacher. However, acknowledging NETs' other skills, knowledge and experiences could help them feel more professional and at the same time lead to greater acceptance from their colleagues.

Although schools may feel that in order to get maximum benefit from the NET they should be in as many different classes as possible, this may be counter-productive. NETs are valuable resources, and if schools reduce the number of classes they teach, their impact could be greater as they would feel a greater ability to cater for difference and support students better. This

would then lead to a better alignment between the NET's perceptions of a good teacher and their role as a NET.

NETs may never feel a full member of the school while they remain in a temporary position – always on a contract with the fear that it may not be renewed. If schools are given the option of providing NETs a permanent position and career progression opportunities, this may also add to their sense of professionalism and connection to the school. This would help them see a future in their role and loyalty to the PNET scheme.

The study has shown the complexity of forming a professional identity for NETs as they juggle their personal views of good teaching, role requirements and a desire to fit into the school. Barriers to their identity from the role and context make this complex act even harder. Although these barriers may not be unique to NETs, this study does highlight issues regarding professional identities that need to be addressed. This paper has made some suggestions to hopefully help tear down some of the barriers to professionalism in the PNET scheme in Hong Kong.

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# Appendix 1: Questionnaire

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**Questionnaire on the Professional Identity of Native-speaking English Teachers (NET) hired under the Native-speaking English teaching scheme in Hong Kong**

**Part 1: Background**

1. Nationality _____     2. Age: _____     3. Gender:   M/ F

4. Years of teaching _____          5. Years in NET scheme _____

6. What professional teaching qualification(s) do you hold? _____

**Part 2: Questions**

1) What is your own definition of a good teacher?

_____

_____

_____

2) What do you think influenced your own definition of a good teacher?

_____

_____

_____

3) How does your definition align and/or conflict with your role as a NET in your school?

_____

_____

_____

4) To what extent do you think your view on what is a good teacher is shared by your colleagues? Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

5) Do you think there are any barriers to being a good teacher in your context? If so, what are they?

_____

_____

_____

6) Do you feel your professional judgment is respected in your school? Please explain.

_____
_____
_____

7) To what extent do you feel committed and connected to the teaching profession generally in Hong Kong? Please explain.

_____
_____
_____

8) To what extent do you feel a valued member of the teaching community at the classroom level? within the English department? whole school level? And national level?

Classroom: _____

English Department: _____

Whole school Level: _____

National level: _____

9) Has your professional identity changed since you became a teacher in the NET scheme? If so, how? Why?

_____
_____
_____

10) Do you feel there are conflicts between being a professional teacher and the day to day experiences you have of being a NET teacher? If so, why? If not, why not?

_____
_____
_____

11) Is anything currently being done or has anything been done in the past to make you feel more professional at the school and/or national level? If yes, please provide examples. If no, please suggest what could be done to make you feel more professional?

At the school level:_____

_____

At the national level:_____

_____

Many thanks for completing the questionnaire ☺