

## Form Over Substance as Governance Technology: A Mixed-Method Exploration of Performativity in Indonesian Teacher Education

Anita Deka\*, Dasim Budimansyah, Mupid Hidayat, Momod Abdul Somad

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

Email: anitadeka87@upi.edu\*, budimansyah@upi.edu, hidayatmupid@upi.edu, somad100@upi.edu

---

### Keywords

Form over substance;  
governance technology;  
performativity;  
audit culture;  
teacher education;  
Indonesia;  
policy compliance.

---

### ABSTRACT

This research investigates the phenomenon of Form Over Substance (FOS) in Indonesian pre-service teacher education. Drawing on survey data from 347 students and focus group discussions with 15 participants, we inductively developed the Perceived Form Over Substance (PFOS) instrument, an exploratory scale with three dimensions: formalism, image management, and outcome preoccupation. Regression analyses show that systemic pressure for procedural certainty is the strongest predictor of PFOS orientations, outweighing dispositional traits such as the need for social validation. Qualitative findings deepen this picture: students describe ritualized learning, emotional labor in sustaining compliant identities, and grades functioning as social currency under familial surveillance. These patterns suggest that FOS is less a failure of motivation than a systemic outcome of governance regimes that operate through metrics, mimicry, and outsourced compliance. The PFOS instrument offers a preliminary, context-grounded tool for capturing the subjective experience of performative governance. PFOS is not a failure of will but a rational adaptation to systemic pressure, where compliance is not chosen but compelled. Reform requires reconfiguring performative policy technologies, preserving accountability while reducing reliance on forms and metrics, and re-centering teacher education on reflection, substantive evaluation, and meaningful pedagogy.

---

### INTRODUCTION

Formality has long shaped the rhythm of Indonesian education. Students learn to meet deadlines, follow prescribed formats, and accumulate certificates—not because these deepen understanding, but because visible compliance is institutionally rewarded (Dahlia & Maisarah, 2025; Efferi, 2018; Gunawan, 2017). Teachers similarly rely on standardized lesson plans, face persistent challenges in interpreting curriculum reforms, and often experience teaching less as an intellectual craft than as an administrative pathway to stability (Herlambang, 2018). In higher education, publication incentives reinforce these dynamics, privileging countable outputs and journal indexation over scholarly depth and local relevance (Gaus et al., 2022). Together, these pressures convey a clear institutional message: doing things “correctly” matters more than engaging meaningfully.

This environment contributes to a shift in student motivation from intrinsic curiosity toward pragmatic, risk-averse strategies. As Yuanita (2020) observes, academic motivation becomes increasingly extrinsic as students navigate pressure, fear of failure, and heightened social expectations. We refer to this pattern as Form Over Substance (FOS): a cross-level phenomenon in which procedural compliance and visible outputs overshadow substantive engagement in learning, teaching, and institutional reform.

Several decades of policy borrowing have reinforced this tendency. This is evident in the BAN-PT/LAM accreditation processes, which heavily emphasize administrative documentation over pedagogical quality (Sofiana, Mubarak, & Yuliasri, 2019; Tinggi, 2025), the PPG (Pendidikan Profesi Guru) certification, which prioritizes portfolio completeness over classroom competency (Atmoko & Kuswandono, 2021; Rarasati & Pramana, 2023), and university-level IKU (Indikator Kinerja Utama) metrics, which incentivize publication counts rather than teaching innovation (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2021). Similarly, institutional pushes for Scopus/WoS-indexed publications place pressure on pre-service teachers and early-career faculty to produce measurable outputs without commensurate methodological training or research support (Gaus et al., 2022; Tias & Tongjean, 2022). Such isomorphic mimicry (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2017) produces reforms that appear modern yet rarely transform pedagogical practice. As Steiner-Khamsi (2012) argues, policy borrowing is frequently a political strategy: global metrics construct local “problems” that justify imported “solutions.”

This pattern is visible across middle-income Asia. In Malaysia, accountability often takes the form of KPI-driven appraisals that emphasize procedural compliance over pedagogical depth (Asadullah, Jilani, Negara, & Suryadarma, 2025). In Singapore, Liew (2012) demonstrates how the Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS) functions as a “technology of discipline,” compelling teachers to produce textual performances of competence—what he terms “performing on paper”—through standardized Work Review Forms. Vietnam presents a partial contrast: its relatively stronger learning outcomes derive not only from inspection systems but also from greater investment in teacher content knowledge and pedagogical support, particularly in primary school mathematics (Afkar et al., 2023; Asadullah et al., 2025). These regional differences suggest that accountability, when decoupled from meaningful capacity-building and trust, risks reinforcing form over substance; when embedded in coherent, contextually grounded support systems, however, it can contribute to improved learning.

Within these conditions, accountability mechanisms in Indonesia often deepen proceduralism rather than improve learning. Empirical research consistently documents how performance evaluations and professional development allowances frequently reward checklist adherence rather than instructional quality (Sofiana et al., 2019). This pattern extends to how even comprehensive evaluation frameworks are routinely operationalized as compliance tools. For instance, Pambudi and Hermawati’s (2021) application of the CIPP model to assess a teacher professional forum (MGMP) demonstrates this shift: although theoretically designed for context-sensitive program improvement, the evaluation relied heavily on converting questionnaires, interviews, and observations into averaged scores categorically labeled as baik (“good”). The assessment prioritized verifying predefined administrative indicators—such as lesson plan (RPP) completeness, instructor attendance, and activity documentation—over examining substantive pedagogical transformation or teacher agency. Consequently, the framework functioned less as a reflective learning mechanism and more as a procedural audit device, rendering teachers and programs as “auditable subjects” (Ball, 2003), whose competence is validated through documentation and categorical metrics rather than classroom impact. This underscores how evaluation technologies, when decoupled from critical inquiry, reinforce checklist compliance and marginalize meaningful professional learning (Rarasati &

Pramana, 2023). As a result, reforms intended to elevate educational quality may inadvertently entrench a culture in which visible form substitutes for substantive practice.

This research argues that Perceived Form Over Substance (PFOS) reflects a structurally induced behavioral orientation within Indonesian teacher education. We conceptualize PFOS not as a psychological trait but as a contextually shaped adaptation to performative governance. We propose that systemic pressures, rather than individual dispositions, play the dominant role in shaping pre-service teachers' tendencies toward formalism, image management, and outcome-focused behavior. To investigate this claim, we conducted an exploratory mixed-methods study integrating scale development, regression analysis, and qualitative inquiry. We address three questions: (1) How do structural and personal predictors characterize PFOS orientations? (2) How do pre-service teachers narrate the institutional and experiential conditions shaping their engagement? (3) What do these patterns reveal about how systemic structures shape emerging teacher subjectivity?

Our contributions are threefold. Theoretically, we reinterpret FOS as a rational adaptation to governance logics that privilege visible compliance over pedagogical depth. Methodologically, we introduce PFOS as an inductively derived, context-grounded exploratory instrument for capturing subjective experiences of systemic pressure. Practically, we argue that addressing PFOS requires reducing audit burdens and strengthening trust-based, reflective forms of professional development.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), comprising two integrated phases. The first phase involved quantitative survey research to develop and test the Perceived Form Over Substance (PFOS) instrument and identify key predictors of performative orientations. The second phase used qualitative inquiry to contextualize and deepen the understanding of the quantitative findings. Integration was achieved through a joint display (Creswell, 2017), which linked statistical associations with qualitative themes to generate meta-inferences about the phenomenon.

### **Sample and Procedure**

A purposive sample of 347 pre-service teachers was recruited from four faculties at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Bandung: FIP (Education Science), FPIPS (Social Education), FPMIPA (Natural Science and Mathematics Education), and FPTK (Technology and Vocational Education). Participants were selected from semesters 4, 6, 8, and 10 to capture a range of academic experiences. All completed an anonymous online survey.

To complement the survey data, a single focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with 15 volunteers from the survey cohort. Participants were purposively selected to ensure representation across faculties and academic levels. The FGD was facilitated by the first author using open-ended prompts (e.g., "Describe your curiosity since you were children") without revealing the study's specific aim, allowing themes related to motivation and systemic pressure to emerge organically. This approach aligns with established methods for thematic analysis in group settings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015).

## Instrument Development

All instruments PFOS, Systemic Pressure (PSIST), and Personality Trait (PTRAIT)—were developed inductively through iterative cycles of classroom observations, pilot interviews, and focus group discussions, conceptually grounded in performativity theory (Ball, 2003) and sociometer theory (Leary, 2012). An initial pool of 50 items was generated and administered across two pilot rounds (N = 60 each) with pre-service teachers at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, distinct from the main study cohort. Based on qualitative feedback, expert review for face and content validity, and preliminary item analysis, several theoretical domains (e.g., entitlement, ethical compromise, short-term gratification, feedback resistance) were pruned to retain constructs directly aligned with audit-driven educational contexts.

**Table 1.** Theoretical domains tested in pilot study and retention or exclusion in final PFOS instrument

Pilot Domain	Theoretical Anchor	Item example	Retain?
Formalism	Ball (2003), Lyotard (1984)	“I feel more at ease when all administrative boxes are ticked, even if I don’t grasp the task’s purpose.”	Yes, Ball (2003) and Lyotard (1984)
Image Management	Goffman (1959), Leary et al. (2012)	“I focus more on polishing my CV than on skills no one can see.”	Yes, Leary et al. (2012)
Dependence on External Validation	Buffardi & Campbell (2008), Leary et al. (2012)	“I’m more confident when others acknowledges my achievement.”	Yes, Leary et al. (2012).
Outcome Preoccupation	Ball (2003), SDT (extrinsic motivation)	“I prioritize tasks that guarantee a high grade, even if they’re intellectually shallow.”	Yes, Ball (2003)
Ethical Compromise / Image over Integrity	Teixeira & Rocha (2010), Mazar et al. (2008)	“I sometimes adjust facts to appear more competent.”	No
Entitlement/ Narcissism	Campbell et al. (2004), Raskin & Terry (1988)	“I feel I deserve recognition even if I didn’t work harder than others.”	No
Short-Term Gratification	Steel & König (2006), Shalvi et al. (2012)	“I prefer instant results over long-term learning.”	No
Feedback Resistance	Bushman & Baumeister (1998), Ashford et al. (2003)	“I avoid criticism that threatens my self-image.”	No

Source: Adapted from Ball (2003), Lyotard (1984), Goffman (1959), Leary (2012), Deci & Ryan (2000), and pilot study analysis (N = 60 per round). Domains marked "No" were excluded due to low factor loadings (<0.30) or weak theoretical fit with audit-driven educational context

The final PFOS instrument comprises 18 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with oblique rotation (Promax,  $\kappa = 3$ ) confirmed a three-factor structure: (1) PFOS\_FRM (formalism; 6 items), (2) PFOS\_IMG (image management; 5 items), and (3) PFOS\_HSL (outcome

preoccupation; 6 items). Sampling adequacy was confirmed by a KMO value of 0.862 (meritorious) and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity,  $\chi^2(153) = 2,847.32$ ,  $p < .001$ . Factor loadings ranged from 0.451 to 0.827 across the three dimensions, with cumulative variance explained of 45.47%. Internal consistency was acceptable for all subscales: PFOS\_FRM ( $\alpha = .757$ ), PFOS\_IMG ( $\alpha = .705$ ), and PFOS\_HSL ( $\alpha = .710$ ). Representative sample items include: "I often pay more attention to writing rules (format, structure, page count) than to the strength of ideas and arguments in my writing" (PFOS\_FRM); "I am more often focused on appearing competent in the eyes of others than on deepening my understanding of the field" (PFOS\_IMG); and "I tend to measure my academic progress more by the accumulation of credits, graduation requirements, and GPA than by reflecting on how much I have actually mastered my field of study" (PFOS\_HSL).

Two predictor scales were similarly developed and validated. PSIST (Systemic Pressure) yielded two components: procedural certainty (PSIST\_KPST; 9 items;  $\alpha = .787$ ) and academic validation (PSIST\_VLDS; 7 items;  $\alpha = .754$ ). PTRAIT (Personality Trait), inspired by sociometer theory, yielded social self-validation (PTRAIT\_VALSOS; 8 items;  $\alpha = .746$ ) and academic competence validation (PTRAIT\_VALAK; 7 items;  $\alpha = .762$ ). All scales demonstrated adequate factorial structures and internal consistency (Supplementary Appendix, Tables S-A12–S-A63).

It is important to note that these constructs are not intended as measures of stable psychological traits. Rather, they are operationalized as context-bound orientations—provisional, exploratory scales designed to quantify how systemic and dispositional factors are subjectively experienced within this specific educational setting.

### **Data Analysis**

**Quantitative Phase:** PCA with oblique rotation was used to determine the factor structure of all instruments. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha \geq .70$ ). Mean scores for each component were computed and entered as dependent variables in multiple linear regression models, with PSIST and PTRAIT components as predictors. Assumptions of linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity ( $VIF < 5$ , tolerance  $> 0.10$ ) were verified and satisfied. All analyses were conducted in SPSS 29.

**Qualitative Phase:** Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process. Transcripts were familiarized, coded inductively, and iteratively refined to develop, review, and define themes. Member checking was conducted with a subset of participants to enhance interpretive accuracy, and an audit trail was maintained throughout the coding process.

**Integration:** Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated using a joint display table (Creswell, 2017), which aligned statistical predictors (e.g., regression coefficients) with qualitative themes (e.g., "ritualized learning," "emotional labor") to facilitate meta-inferences and develop a holistic, contextually grounded understanding of PFOS.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study received ethical approval from the respective deans of the participating faculties at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Data were fully anonymized, and confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout storage and analysis. Participants were debriefed post-study and offered counseling referrals if needed (none were requested).

### **Limitations**

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample was drawn from a single, elite institution (UPI), potentially limiting generalizability; future research should include

regional and diverse teacher education programs. Second, the cross-sectional design provides a snapshot in time; longitudinal studies are needed to track how PFOS evolves into professional practice. Third, the PFOS instrument is exploratory, and its number of items was constrained by the inclusion of two other constructs (PSIST and PTRAIT) in the same survey; future research should conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with a larger item pool to validate its three-dimensional structure. Finally, while self-report surveys are standard, triangulation with observational data would strengthen future findings.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Quantitative Findings

PFOS, PSIST, and PTRAIT all capture undesirable states. For example, PFOS measures the prioritization of educational formalities over substance, where the ideal response is 1 (strongly disagree); a response of 3 (neutral) represents a compromise position, and a response of 5 (strongly agree) indicates a complete disregard for substance. Social desirability bias naturally drives respondents toward the ideal response (Paulhus, 1991, p. 17), suggesting that the actual situation may be worse than represented by the reported results.

Descriptive statistics (Supplementary Appendix table 27-28) indicate that pre-service teachers reported a moderate-to-high orientation toward Form Over Substance (PFOS). The dimension of outcome preoccupation (PFOS\_HSL;  $M = 3.36$ ) was most prevalent, followed by formalism (PFOS\_FRM;  $M = 3.01$ ), while image management (PFOS\_IMG;  $M = 2.61$ ) was less pronounced. Systemic pressure for procedural certainty (PSIST\_KPST;  $M = 3.20$ ) was higher than pressure for academic validation (PSIST\_VLDS;  $M = 2.98$ ).

To determine the relative influence of systemic and personal factors, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted for each PFOS dimension. The results, summarized in Table 1, show that systemic pressures were consistently stronger predictors than dispositional traits. Crucially, pressure for procedural certainty (PSIST\_KPST) emerged as the dominant predictor across all three dimensions.

**Table 2.** Correlation of PSIST and PTRAIT to PFOS dimensions (see supplementary appendix table 29-46)

Predictor	PFOS_FRM (Formalism)	PFOS_IMG (Image)	PFOS_HSL (Formal Result)	Note
PTRAIT_VALSOS (validation of social-self)	$\beta = 0.138$ , $p = 0.013$ [significant]	$\beta = 0.289$ , $p < 0.001$ [significant]	$\beta = 0.065$ , $p = 0.279$	It exerted the strongest effect on PFOS_IMG but was not significant for PFOS_HSL.
PTRAIT_VALAK (validation of academic-self / actual academic capacity)	$\beta = -0.004$ , $p = 0.935$	$\beta = -0.142$ , $p = 0.015$ [significant, negative]	$\beta = 0.078$ , $p = 0.149$	Weak but significant negative association with PFOS_IMG and was nonsignificant for the other dimensions.
PSIST_KPST (pressure for procedural certainty)	$\beta = 0.579$ , $p < 0.001$ [significant]	$\beta = 0.268$ , $p < 0.001$ [significant]	$\beta = 0.436$ , $p < 0.001$ [significant]	It was the most consistent and strongest predictor across all PFOS dimensions
PSIST_VLDS	$\beta = 0.038$ , $p = 0.478$	$\beta = 0.146$ , $p = 0.021$	$\beta = 0.137$ , $p = 0.020$	It significantly predicted PFOS_IMG

Predictor	PFOS_FRM (Formalism)	PFOS_IMG (Image)	PFOS_HSL (Formal Result)	Note
(pressure for academic validation)		[significant]	[significant]	and PFOS_HSL, but not PFOS_FRM.

Source: Primary survey data (N = 347 pre-service teachers, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, 2026)

The findings indicate that systemic pressure for formal academic certainty (PSIST\_KPST) emerged as the strongest predictor across all PFOS dimensions, and overall systemic pressures explained more variance in PFOS than psychological dispositions. An interesting exception was found in the need of validation of academic-self (PTRAIT\_VALAK), which—although theoretically more relevant after graduation—showed a significant, although weak, negative effect ( $\beta = -0.142$ ) on the prioritization of professional image (PFOS\_IMG) and was not significant for the other PFOS dimensions. The significant negative association between PTRAIT\_VALAK and PFOS\_IMG suggests that students with a stronger orientation toward academic mastery are less likely to invest in superficial image work, which is in line with PTRAIT descriptives that showed VALAK higher than VALSOS.

### Qualitative Findings

The focus group discussion revealed that Form Over Substance (FOS) is not merely an abstract policy outcome but a deeply internalized, lived reality for pre-service teachers. Their narratives trace a trajectory from intrinsic curiosity and idealism to pragmatic adaptation and, ultimately, performative compliance under systemic pressures. These findings highlight the human cost of governance by metrics: future teachers are shaped into auditable subjects long before they enter the classroom.

Students universally described entering their education programs driven by a genuine love of learning and a desire to teach, often inspired by personal role models. As R1.4 recounted, “Playing teacher as a child” was the primary motivation, while R5.3 was “inspired by a biology teacher” who made the subject come alive. However, this intrinsic drive is systematically eroded by institutional and socio-economic realities. The rupture is palpable in statements like R7.2: “curiosity shifted by life priorities,” and R10.7: “realization that teaching in Indonesia won’t guarantee welfare.” This disillusionment is not a personal failing but a rational response to a system that offers little appreciation for pedagogical passion.

A core theme was ritualized learning, where the process of learning is displaced by an emphasis on procedural compliance. Students consistently describe contexts where procedural adherence takes precedence over conceptual understanding. R15.4’s observation—“university study doesn’t require you to truly master the topic but rather just diligently follow the program”—is a textbook example of Ball’s “fabrication” of quality. When R14.3 states they “decided to just try to pass the course because it was impossible to understand,” and R15.3 notes that “the lecturer just focused on grades, with no care if the students really comprehend,” they are describing the institutionalization of formalism.

This pressure extends to intense emotional labor in sustaining a compliant identity. R17.1 describes the weight of a performative assignment that is heavy in formality, producing tens of learning media—a task designed for audit, not pedagogy. The psychological toll is evident in reports of students “crying before doing assignments” (R17.3), illustrating Hochschild’s

concept of emotional labor. This performance is driven by external scrutiny, particularly from family. R20.2 describes parents who “keep checking on grades and must endure their lecture every semester,” while R20.1 and R20.3 feel the weight of being “the first in the family to succeed.” Similarly, R21.1’s experience with the “stereotype of childhood educators as being babysitters” creates a defensive need to perform competence.

The preoccupation with formal outcomes (PFOS\_HSL) is framed as a necessity for survival. The most potent driver is again systemic pressure, exemplified by R17.2’s account of feeling “pressure to publish in a nationally accredited journal from the first semester” and R23.1’s critique that the PPG certification felt like “just a formality.” This is compounded by profound socio-economic anxieties. R19.4 speaks of motivation “pressured by feeling like a burden to economically constrained parents,” making academic success an economic imperative rather than an intellectual pursuit.

In effect, instructional skills are measured through performative compliance: whether steps are followed, not whether learning is deeply achieved. This aligns with the idea that in a performative regime, being “auditable” matters more than being deeply competent.

**Data integration.**

The integration confirms that FOS is not an individual failing but a systemic outcome. The strongest quantitative predictor, systemic pressure for procedural certainty (PSIST\_KPST), finds its human face in the students’ descriptions of “ritualized learning” and “emotional labor.” Similarly, the dispositional trait of needing social validation (PTRAIT\_VALSOS), while statistically significant for PFOS\_IMG, is vividly illustrated by the crushing weight of parental expectations and societal stereotypes. This table moves beyond simple correlation to show causation and lived experience.

**Table 3.** Joint Display. Integrating Quantitative Predictors with Qualitative Themes

Quantitative	Qualitative	Note
PSIST_KPST → PFOS_FRM (β = 0.579, p < .001) Systemic pressure for procedural certainty is the strongest driver of formalism.	Students describe a system where understanding is secondary to procedure. Learning becomes a ritual of compliance. • R15.4: learns that university study doesn’t require you to truly master the topic but rather just diligently follow the program (formalities). • R14.3: decided to just try to pass the course because it was impossible to understand. • R15.3: The lecturer just focused on grades, with no care if the students really comprehended.	The system actively manufactures formalism. Ball’s (2003) “fabrication of quality”: adherence to procedure becomes the primary, and often sole, measure of success.
PSIST_KPST → PFOS_HSL (β = 0.436, p < .001) Systemic pressure is a primary driver of outcome preoccupation.	Students are pressured to focus on documentable results (certificates, publications) as mandated by institutional and national policy, often at the expense of deep learning. • R17.2: “pressure to publish in a nationally accredited journal from the first semester...” • R23.1: “felt the government policy that mandates... PPG ... is just a formality that doesn’t add to actual competency.” • R23.2: “feels that the chance of opportunities... is very limited,” forcing a focus on credentials.	Performative policies directly create a culture of credentialism.

Quantitative	Qualitative	Note
PTRAIT_VALSOS → PFOS_IMG (β = 0.289, p < .001) The need for social validation is the strongest predictor of image management.	Students perform “emotional labor” to maintain a “good student” image, driven by fear of social rejection from family and society. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R20.2: Parents keep checking on grades and must endure their lecture every semester.</li> <li>• R20.1 &amp; R20.3: Feeling pressure as the first in the family to succeed.</li> <li>• R21.1: Responding to the stereotype of childhood educators as being babysitters by over-performing competence.</li> </ul>	Maintaining a high-performing image is an adaptive strategy to secure parental approval and deflect societal devaluation, making PFOS_IMG a rational response to external sociometric threats.
PSIST_KPST → PFOS_IMG (β = 0.268, p < .001) Systemic pressure also significantly drives image management.	The burden of performative tasks forces students to invest immense emotional energy in appearing competent and diligent, even when they are struggling. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R17.1: Describes a performative assignment that is heavy in formality, producing tens of learning media... (Implied from context: R17.3 reports “crying before assignments”).</li> <li>• R18.4: expresses worries about being unable to teach in the future,” indicating anxiety about maintaining a professional facade.</li> </ul>	Emotional labor (Hochschild, 2012) is a direct cost of PSIST_KPST; it requires students to maintain continuous displays of competence under constant evaluation.
PSIST_KPST → PFOS_IMG (β = 0.268, p < .001)  (As Interplay)	Image management emerges from a complex interplay between institutional demands, the centrality of formal outcomes (grades), and familial expectations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R17.1: Describes “a performative assignment... heavy in formality” — done not just for the grade, but as evidence to show parents.</li> <li>• R20.2: “Parents keep checking on grades and must endure their lecture every semester.” → Grades become the currency of familial approval, forcing students to prioritize image (PFOS_IMG) to satisfy outcome expectations (PFOS_HSL) driven by systemic pressure (PSIST_KPST).</li> <li>• R18.4: Anxiety about future competence reflects the internalization of this performative gaze.</li> </ul>	External accountability becomes internalized as self-regulation. PSIST_KPST interacts with familial expectations and the symbolic value of grades (PFOS_HSL) to generate emotional labor (PFOS_IMG). Evaluation pressures operate across home and campus, indicating that audit logics are reproduced through social relationships.

Source: Integration of survey data (N = 347) and focus group discussion (n = 15) using joint display method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Qualitative themes derived from thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). FGD participant codes (e.g., R15.4) refer to transcript line numbers

This research shows that Perceived Form Over Substance (PFOS)—the prioritization of procedural compliance over pedagogical depth—is not a deficit of individual motivation or character. Instead, PFOS represents a rational adaptation to Indonesia’s performative governance regime, in which systemic pressures reward visible outputs but provide limited support for sustained professional inquiry. The data indicate that pressure for procedural certainty (PSIST\_KPST) is the strongest predictor of PFOS dimensions—formalism, image management, and outcome preoccupation—exceeding the influence of dispositional traits such as the need for social validation.

Quantitative patterns are reinforced by qualitative narratives. Students describe an environment in which procedural adherence outweighs conceptual understanding. As R15.4

states, “university study doesn’t require you to truly master the topic but rather just diligently follow the program.” Unlike in Singapore, where Liew (2012) documents how teachers “dress up” routine tasks as innovation to satisfy appraisal protocols, Indonesian pre-service teachers engage in ritualized compliance not for career advancement but for familial and institutional survival. Liew (2012) argues that Singaporean performativity is a rational response to a “profit-motive of performance excellence.” In contrast, our findings show that Indonesian PFOS is a rational adaptation to systemic uncertainty: where infrastructure, support, and clear pedagogical guidance are lacking, procedural certainty becomes the only navigable path. This distinction is ultimately crucial: Singapore’s system assumes capacity and enforces excellence, while Indonesia’s assumes formality and enforces survival. This explains why systemic pressure for procedural certainty (PSIST\_KPST), rather than dispositional traits, is the strongest predictor of all three PFOS dimensions in our regression models.

In line with Ball’s (2003) analysis of performativity, this reflects not an implementation failure but the expected effect of governance systems that equate legitimacy with procedural compliance. Performativity replaces substantive meaning with measurable indicators, redefining what counts as effort and professional value. Accordingly, PFOS is best understood as a structurally conditioned response to institutional expectations that privilege auditable outputs over pedagogical depth, rather than as a personal shortcoming.

These pressures extend into students’ domestic and social contexts. Grades function as a form of currency within familial expectations, positioning academic performance as a matter of relational worth. As R20.2 explains, parents “keep checking on grades and must endure their lecture every semester.” This accords with sociometer theory (Leary, 2012), which posits that self-worth is regulated through perceived social evaluation. Accountability pressures are thus internalized as self-regulation, shaping the affective conditions of learning: exhaustion and routinized performance become normalized indicators of “success.” Students report feeling secure not because they achieve deep competence but because their compliance aligns with external expectations.

These patterns are consistent with the uncritical adoption of global policy templates—what Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock (2017) describe as isomorphic mimicry. Initiatives such as mandatory publications, teacher certification programs (PPG), and accreditation frameworks are implemented without proportional investment in teacher agency or post-training support. As a result, collaborative spaces such as Lesson Study and MGMP, originally intended to promote professional learning, are often repurposed as procedural routines. Documentation becomes the central requirement, shifting emphasis away from reflective discourse and toward satisfying audit expectations.

This transformation is not uniform. Sudika et al. (2023) document a successful LSLC cycle at SMPN 1 Labuapi, where collaborative planning, observation, and reflection improved student engagement. This case indicates the model’s potential when supported by strong local leadership and focused implementation. However, such examples appear to be exceptions in a broader context where administrative demands frequently overshadow pedagogical goals (Atmoko & Kuswandono, 2021). Without structural reforms to reduce performative burdens, even well-designed initiatives risk being absorbed into existing compliance routines. These dynamics align with Heryanto’s (1995) characterization of “symbolic state discourse,” in which forms of modernity are adopted without corresponding substantive transformation.

Indonesia represents a critical case among middle-income education systems. Unlike high-capacity systems such as Singapore, where teacher appraisal is embedded in a meritocratic, resource-intensive system that links performance to career progression (Afkar et al., 2023; Asadullah et al., 2025), Indonesia's performativity operates without commensurate investment in teacher agency or professional support. Nor is it driven primarily by material scarcity, as in the Philippines, where systemic challenges such as chronic underfunding, logistical barriers, and fragmented implementation constrain teacher development (Rivera et al., 2025). Instead, Indonesia's performativity is shaped by the cultural internalization of New Order-era *formalitas saja* (Heryanto, 1995): even well-resourced institutions, such as those in which this research was conducted, reproduce compliance-oriented practices not due to inadequate infrastructure but because systemic incentives consistently favor visible outputs over pedagogical depth. This reflects a governance mechanism centered on adaptation to institutional expectations.

Our analysis reveals that performative accountability in Indonesia operates differently from both high-capacity systems like Singapore (Liew, 2012) and low-resource systems like the Philippines (Asadullah et al., 2025; Afkar et al., 2023). Unlike Singapore, where appraisal is meritocratic and supported by structured systems, Indonesia's performative regime lacks both the selectivity and the scaffolding needed to turn compliance into competence. Reform, therefore, must not mimic Singapore's tools but its underlying condition: trust-based accountability that rewards pedagogical depth, not merely procedural visibility.

Addressing PFOS therefore requires structural rather than remedial interventions. Individual-level supports such as stress reduction, motivational strategies, or time management may not counteract systemic incentives that reinforce performative behavior. Effective reform requires shifting from performative governance to trust-based professionalism. We propose four evidence-informed directions:

1. Shift from output quotas to formative, portfolio-based assessment. Replace requirements such as publication counts and standardized documentation templates with evaluations of reflective depth, contextual adaptation, and student-centered instructional design (cf. Suratno & Iskandar's emphasis on reflecting on student misconceptions rather than procedural models).
2. Reframe PPG and MGMP as mentoring ecosystems rather than compliance mechanisms. Certification should assess long-term professional growth rather than checklist completion, aligning with teachers' stated need for ongoing supervision and contextually responsive development (Atmoko & Kuswandono, 2021).
3. Pilot temporary "audit reductions" in teacher education programs. Limiting redundant reporting (e.g., repeated RPP submissions and activity logs) would create protected space for experimentation and collaborative lesson design, similar to the early phases of IMSTEP where teachers engaged in substantive pedagogical inquiry (Saito et al., 2006).
4. Integrate wellbeing and emotional sustainability into quality assurance systems. Routine assessments of burnout, intrinsic motivation, and emotional workload should accompany performance reviews, given repeated evidence of declining teacher motivation under administrative pressure (Pambudi & Hermawati, 2021).

These recommendations do not dismiss accountability but aim to recalibrate it. The goal is to shift from evaluating how well teachers meet procedural requirements to assessing how

effectively the system supports meaningful professional learning. Under such conditions, MGMP and Lesson Study can function as genuine platforms for pedagogical development rather than as procedural extensions of performative governance.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Perceived Form Over Substance (PFOS) is not a failure of individual will but a rational adaptation to performative governance in Indonesian teacher education. Systemic pressure, particularly the demand for procedural certainty, emerges as the primary driver of formalism, image management, and outcome preoccupation. Methodologically, this study makes three contributions. First, the PFOS instrument was developed inductively from local observational data, pilot interviews, and focus group discussions, ensuring contextual grounding in Indonesian teacher education. Second, the exploratory sequential mixed-methods design integrated scale development, regression analysis, and qualitative inquiry using a joint display to generate meta-inferences. Third, the PFOS instrument provides a preliminary, context-grounded template for measuring performative governance in Global South educational research. The PFOS instrument offers a preliminary, context-grounded lens for measuring this phenomenon. For reform to succeed, it must shift from auditing compliance to fostering pedagogical trust and authentic professional learning.

## REFERENCE

- Afkar, Rythia, Béteille, Tara, Breeding, Mary E., Linden, Toby, Mason, Andrew D., Mattoo, Aaditya, Pfitze, Tobias, Sondergaard, Lars M., & Yarrow, Noah. (2023). Fixing the Foundation: Teachers and Basic Education in East Asia and Pacific. In *World Bank East Asia and Pacific Regional Report*. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1904-9>
- Andrews, Matt, Pritchett, Lant, & Woolcock, Michael. (2017). *Building State Capability: Evidence, Analysis, Action*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198747482.001.0001>
- Asadullah, M. Niaz, Jilani, Aishath Hassan, Negara, Siwage Dharma, & Suryadarma, Daniel. (2025). Improving the quality of basic education in ASEAN – Emerging challenges and reforms. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 116, 103292. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2025.103292>
- Atmoko, Sandi Heri Dwi, & Kuswando, Paulus. (2021). The roles of English teacher forum (MGMP) in Indonesia towards the teacher professional development. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 6(1), 29–42. <https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v6i1.501>
- Ball, Stephen J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), 215–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065>
- Creswell, John W. (2017). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, John W., & Plano Clark, Vicki L. (2018). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Dahlia, & Maisarah, Ira. (2025). Library research: Teachers' difficulties and strategies in designing lesson plan based on the Merdeka Curriculum. *Journal of English for Specific Purposes in Indonesia*, 4(1), 22–28. <https://doi.org/10.33369/espindonesia.v4i1.34752>
- Efferi, Adri. (2018). Respon guru dalam menyikapi perubahan kurikulum (Studi kasus pada Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Kudus). *Quality*, 5(1), 19–39. <https://doi.org/10.21043/quality.v5i1.3164>

- Gaus, Nurdiana, Jasruddin, Saleh, Andi, Resnawaty, Risna, Paramma, Magfirah Amir, & Tanjung, Yusoff. (2022). Trading-off monetary rewards as reinforcers to enhance task motivation and performance of publication in academia. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 76(4), 800–814. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12350>
- Gunawan, Imam. (2017). Kurikulum Indonesia 2013: Manajemen pembelajaran, hambatan yang dihadapi oleh guru dalam implementasi, dan langkah ke depan. *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Education and Training (ICET 2017)*, 56–63. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icet-17.2017.9>
- Herlambang, Yusuf Tri. (2018). *Pedagogis: Telaah Kritis Ilmu Pendidikan dalam Multi Perspektif*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Heryanto, Ariel. (1995). Language of Development and Development of Language: The Case of Indonesia. In *Pacific Linguistics, Series D* (Vol. 86). <https://doi.org/10.15144/PL-D86>
- Leary, Mark R. (2012). Sociometer theory. In Paul A. M. Van Lange, Arie W. Kruglanski, & E. Tory Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 141–159). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446249222.n33>
- Pambudi, Setyo, & Hermawati, Istiana. (2021). An evaluation of Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP) program of Indonesian Language subject in vocational school. *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Evaluasi Pendidikan*, 25(2), 241–252. <https://doi.org/10.21831/pep.v25i2.43609>
- Rarasati, Niken, & Pramana, Rezanti Putri. (2023). Giving Schools and Teachers Autonomy in Teacher Professional Development under a Medium-Capability Education System. In *RISE Insight Series*. [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI\\_2023/050](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2023/050)
- Rivera, John Paolo R., Sinsay-Villanueva, Lorraine Marie V, Tanyag, Ivory H., Berroya, Janine D., Garcia, Genelyn D. V, & Lim, Vincent L. (2025). Revitalizing the Philippine Education System: Facilitating Access and Participation to In-Service Training (INSET) and Teacher Professional Development (TPD). In *Discussion Paper Series*. <https://doi.org/10.62986/dp2025.14>
- Sofiana, Nina, Mubarak, Hidayatul, & Yuliasri, Issy. (2019). English language teaching in secondary schools: An analysis of the implementation of Indonesian ELT 2013 curriculum. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(1), 1533–1544. Retrieved from [https://www.e-iji.net/dosyalar/iji\\_2019\\_1\\_98.pdf](https://www.e-iji.net/dosyalar/iji_2019_1_98.pdf)
- Steiner-Khamsi, Gita. (2012). Understanding policy borrowing and lending: Building comparative policy studies. In Gita Steiner-Khamsi & Florian Waldow (Eds.), *Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education* (pp. 3–17). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203137628>
- Sudika, I. Nyoman, Kaharuddin, Asyhar, Muhammad, Nazir, Yusra Nawawi, & Wahidah, Baiq. (2023). Implementation of the Lesson Study for Learning Community (LSLC) pattern in implementing Indonesian language learning: Case from SMPN 1 Labuapi Lombok Barat, Indonesia. *The International Journal of Language and Cultural (TIJOLAC)*, 5(1), 42–58. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7809938>
- Tias, Sayidatul Arofi, & Tongjean, Wanida. (2022). Teacher professional development in Indonesia: A comparative study with global practices. In I. Y. Maureen (Ed.), *Innovation on Education and Social Sciences* (pp. 89–95). <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003265061-12>
- Tinggi, Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan. *Peraturan BAN-PT Nomor 20 Tahun 2025 tentang Sistem Akreditasi Nasional Pendidikan Tinggi*. , (2025).