

Teaching as a Career Choice: A Discriminant Analysis of Factors as Perceived by Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) Student Teachers in Malaysia

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Abstract: The topic on perception of student teachers on choosing teaching as their career has attracted debates on the factors that determine them in doing so. Teaching as a career is often perceived by student teacher as a morally valuable service. Factors such as motivation, perception, expectation and satisfaction are the driving force inducing the teachers to teach. Characteristics such as gender and chosen academic program could also possibly influence student teachers to consider teaching as a career. This paper identified the best combination of factors that best distinguished students who choose teaching from those who do not. The study involved 300 students from four public universities in Malaysia. The results from the discriminant analysis shows that the student teachers who intend to pursue a teaching career mentioned that motivation factors namely intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic are the best combination of variables that best explain their choice. However, the perception variables did not contribute strongly to the discriminant function yet it is moderately highly (negatively) correlated with the overall discriminant function. This study has a strong implication in improving teacher recruitment strategies and retaining them longer in the teaching profession. The understanding on the factors that drive a person to take up the teaching career is indeed crucial in explaining their commitment and credibility in the teaching profession.

Key words: Teaching Career • Factors Influencing Teaching • TVE Student Teachers

INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession has undergone changes in accordance with the job market, with students in education program regarding teaching as a career [1]. Discussions on the teaching profession has become complex in light of issues pertaining to teaching workforce, teacher shortage, teacher recruitment and retention which are also prevalent in many other countries in addition to Malaysia. As the teacher attrition dramatically intensifies, it significantly affects teacher retention [2]. Findings from [3] showed that the average age of teachers leaving the profession in conventional retirement is 29 years old. In addition, previous studies found that graduates of teacher education programs at universities decide to quit from teaching profession within two to five years after becoming a teacher at school [4] reported that 40% of student teachers quit from teaching within the first two years of working at school in the

United States [5] claimed that the decision of teacher education graduates to leave the teaching profession within 5 years was influenced by several factors. It is also perturbing that teaching profession is negatively perceived by the public as a middle class career and is of less prestige compared to other professional careers such as medical, engineering and accounting [6]. This negative perception influenced people not to join this profession. Another study conducted by [7] indicated that 15 % of teacher trainees in Brunei choose to become a teacher as a last option [8] conducted study on prospective students and found that they have a negative attitudes about teaching as a career.[9] hints that the profession has to overcome some important obstacles such as trivial teacher's welfare, more workloads and less reward, less salary and lack of future prospect, all of which contribute to the weakness in this profession in attracting the younger generation who perceive teaching as less attractive. As a result, young teachers will probably leave

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this profession early. The trend of early retirement and resignation of teachers will have a significant effect on teacher shortage at school [10] mentioned that when teachers retire the problem of teacher shortage becomes apparent particularly in critical rural and urban areas.

However, it is quite the opposite in Malaysia when it comes to the prestige of the teaching profession. Teaching as a career is perceived positively as a moral and high status career. It can be seen from the number of the intake of student at the bachelor degree level at public university at Malaysia in the education field which was 6445 in 2007, 4815 in 2008 and 5353 in 2009 [11] indicating an increasing trend of students choosing teaching as a career. Although many students at public university choose to study in teacher education program, they may have different perception and views about choosing teaching as their profession. It is due to the fact that is not an easy decision and individuals vary in their perceptions. Hence, teacher candidates should have enough information and skills to make a career decision [12]. A positive perception of the profession and a positive experience may induce them to enter and stay in the profession.

Teaching as a Career Choice: Nowadays, the teaching profession is considered as a respectable career among Malaysians. Based on the 10th Malaysia Plan, 175,000 applicants apply for this profession every year. At present, there are 285,194 teachers working at 2282 secondary schools and another 126,848 teachers are teaching at 771 primary schools [13]. However, there is still the concern that the best and brightest students are less interested to join the teaching profession. In order to attract student teachers to choose teaching as a profession, it is very important to fully understand the factors that draw a person into teaching. Teaching is a demanding profession as it requires teachers to be highly-trained, well-educated, and highly motivated. Consequently, teacher will probably influence student's learning motivation in school, [14]. The government in Malaysia listed four important components to reinforce the profession; financial reward, career building, teaching for nation building, and enhancing the teaching profession with the aim to attract more of the best and brightest students in Malaysia to join this profession. Most past researches used to study about the reasons or factors that influence people to teach. Motivation factors, perceptions, expectations and satisfaction are the most influential factors on student teachers at universities to consider teaching as a career.

Previous studies revealed that motivation factors namely intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic influence student teachers to choose teaching as a career. Trends in selection of teaching as a profession in developing countries show these motivation factors influence teacher candidates to choose this career path [15] and [16]. The motivation to join the teaching profession would have implications on student teachers' behavior [17]; [18]; and [19]. Teachers with high motivation tend to stay longer in the teaching profession. Thus, motivations most probably enhance teacher recruitment and retention. Understanding the interest, causes or motive for a person to be involved in the teaching career is indeed crucial in explaining the commitment and credibility in the profession.

On the other hand, previous studies have reported that positive perception about teaching could also influence a student teacher to choose teaching as a career [20] conducted a study on interest, motivation and skills in teaching among teacher trainees in Malaysia and found that 9 out of 25 respondents had positive perceptions about teaching and perceived teaching as a motivation for them to succeed. In addition, [21] investigated student teachers in Singapore and seconded the findings by [20]. The positive perceptions about teaching as a career can be summarised as student teachers: (1) thinking that teachers have good salaries; (2) viewing teaching as a high social status profession; and (3) believing that teaching requires high morale, skills and knowledge. Studying perception among student teachers is important to understand the teacher's perspective and attitude towards a teaching career. According to [22], beliefs and attitudes are the lenses through which teachers interpret their daily work and use knowledge to construct practice.

Numerous studies have attempted to explain the expectations of student teachers, and their viewpoint of teacher diversity [23] found that a majority of pre-service teachers have positive expectation towards teaching as a profession. This finding was similar to [9] which found that more than 50% of the respondents in England and Norway believe that teaching is a worthwhile job, with lengthy holidays and they feel excited to educate their pupils. Student teachers with positive expectations may be retained longer in the teaching profession. The positive expectations will help to maintain confidence and enhance retention. The importance of understanding student teachers' expectations is about their short-term and long-term commitment to teaching.

The satisfaction experienced from choosing the teaching profession may in turn result in a teacher remaining longer in the teaching profession. Several studies on student teachers show that teacher candidates have a high level of satisfaction after choosing the teaching career. [16] reported that undergraduates that decide to join the teaching career expressed high level of satisfaction. In addition, [24] found that student teachers are happy to become teachers and are thus expected to stay longer in the profession. By understanding the relationship between satisfaction and the duration of a teaching career among student teachers it will help improve their commitment to stay longer in this career. If the student teachers have low satisfaction with their teaching career, they may find this career problematic and may quit early.

In addition, demographic factors such as a gender, age and academic program may be associated with undergraduate teachers' career choice [16] examined the differences between genders in their decision to choose teaching and found that more women perceived teaching as a favorable job. Salary and promotional opportunities are the dominant factors for men to choose teaching while women tend to view the career as interesting. Predictably, the number of men who choose to become a teacher is lower. This results in gender imbalance among teachers working with children in school. Therefore, it is essential to understand how this factor influence student teachers to choose teaching as a career. The current academic program that they enroll in may be relevant. *No Child Left behind Act (2001)* stated that there was an increased attention on the academic preparation of teachers. The academic program may have some bearings on the career choice of student teachers.

Researches on student teachers who choose to become teachers and those who do not will give a significant idea on the prospect of teacher retention [24]. Previous researches have shown that motivational factors, perceptions, expectations and satisfactions are the factors that influenced education teachers to choose teaching as a career. Nonetheless there is no study about choosing teaching as a career by predicting the characteristic and choices perceived by Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) student teachers in Malaysia. Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) teachers are also known as Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers in the United State and other countries. The role of TVE teachers at secondary school is to prepare students to enter the workforce. TVE teachers in Malaysia are required to complete a bachelor's degree

from a teacher education program at public university. The duration for them to fulfill the bachelor's degree is four years. This study examines the combination of intrinsic, altruistic motivations, perception, expectation, satisfaction, gender and academic program which influence career choice and retention of teachers. This study is important to provide an idea of the reality and prospect of retaining and recruitment teachers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study focuses on student teachers at public universities in Malaysia who enroll in technical and vocational educational programs. The present study is based on the survey method which has been widely applied in educational research. The population in this study was TVE student teachers at public universities. A sample size of 249 was chosen based on the Cochran sample size formula which stated that for a population reaching 700 the minimum sample size is 249 at a confidence level of 95%. However, the researcher decided to choose a slightly larger sample size as recommended by [25] and thus chose to use 300 samples of TVE student teachers in this study which can help in reducing the sampling error and improve the accuracy of the result obtained in order to generalize the result to the population [25]. The samples were chosen randomly from each group that represents the population. Public universities that offer Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) program are University Putra Malaysia (UPM), University Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), University Technology Malaysia (UTM), and University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). Ideally, new teacher education graduates seeking employment should have been included in this study. However, the researcher decided to use final semester TVE student teachers for two important reasons: firstly, the final semester student teachers were likely to have made their career decision by that time; and secondly, the study would be costly and it would be unmanageably difficult to administer a questionnaire once the teacher graduates are in the workforce [26].

Instruments: The researchers used the Expectancy-Value Theory by [27] as a framework in the present study. The reason this theory was selected is because it is the most relevant with all the variables and it explains the motivation factors, perception, expectation and satisfaction of choice as perceived by people. The Expectancy-Value theory and model developed and

researched by [27] deals with achievement motivation. The constructs for the achievement motivation are ability beliefs, the expectancies for success, and components of the subjective task value. Subjective task value comprises utility, importance, and interest items. Utility item refers to how far a individual uses what he or she studies. Importance item measures how important is it for an individual to be good in their area. Interest item measures how much the job is of interest to an individuals. Previous research using Expectancy-Value Theory has been conducted by [28] on the reasons for people to choose a teaching career.

Student teachers were asked to circle an answer in the questionnaire consisting of five parts. The researcher had permission to adopt and adapt the "FIT-Choice Scale" instrument. The "FIT-Choice Scale" instrument was researched and developed by [28] who used FIT-Choice scales to investigate the reasons people choose a teaching career. In this present study, the researchers have added a few items by referring to the existing literature. Part A of the questionnaire focused on the demographic data and measured the dependent variable. Part B of the questionnaire focused on the motivation factors namely intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivation about teaching career. Part C focused on the perception about the teaching career while part D of the questionnaire focused on the expectation about teaching career. Lastly, part E of the questionnaire focused on the satisfaction about teaching career. Part B, C, D and E of the questionnaire used rating scale. The instrument used five-point Likert-type scale. The researcher conducted the pilot test before collecting the data. The Cronbach's alpha values are as listed in Table 1.

Data Collection: A questionnaire survey was administered in April (2011) to the final semester students at four public universities namely UPM, UPSI, UTM and UTHM. There were two modes involved in order to administer the questionnaire. Firstly, the questionnaire was administered using face to face for student teacher in UPM and UTM while the questionnaire was administered by mail to UPSI and UTHM. The researcher administered the questionnaire by mail since some of student teachers in UPSI and UTHM underwent their practical training at schools in their final semester. In this process, the researcher obtained the list of address of student teachers from their academic department at the universities and proceeded with the data collection process. Although the two modes are different, they are similar in the sense that respondents for both modes responded to the

Table 1: Reliability of the pilot test N=30, Item=73

Construct	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Motivation factors; intrinsic, extrinsic, altruistic	29	.937
Perception	9	.845
Expectation	10	.827
Satisfaction	6	.847

questionnaire using hand writing by circling the answer in the questionnaire. Thus, both of the methods present the same memory and perception issues were avoided [29].

Data Analysis: All of the questionnaires were collected directly by the researchers to ensure confidentiality. Then, the data was analyzed systematically using SPSS. The present study attempted to identify the best combination of variables that best predict students who choose teaching from those who do not. Previous researchers usually used the regression analyses and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) for this objective [30]. [31] mentioned that the discriminant analysis is multivariate dependent to predict nonmetric variables in the study. Hence, the researchers decided to use the discriminant analysis in order to achieve the objectives of this study. This analysis is used when the dependent variable is categorical with the independent variable at interval level. In addition, the discriminant analysis' purpose is to investigate between groups on the basis of attribution of the cases, indicating which attributes contribute most to group separation. The matrix scatterplot has been prepared before the analysis to check the multicollinerity and consistency between variables and to determine that they met the data assumption of this analysis.

RESULT

As indicated in Table 2, a total of 300 of student teachers were surveyed; 73.7% were female and 26.3% were male. This findings indicated that there were more females at the public universities.

The Table 3 above illustrates the current academic programs followed by TVE student teachers. A majority of the respondents were enrolled in the Bachelor of Education Living Skill at 61%. Meanwhile, 54 (18%) of the respondents were from Bachelor of Technical and Vocational Education. About 10% of the respondents were from Bachelor of Education Agriculture Science. This was followed by Bachelor of Education Home Science with 8% of the respondents. Only a small number of respondents were Bachelor of Technology students with 3% from Bachelor of Education Mechanical Engineering.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Respondent-Gender (n= 300)

Gender	Percent %
Male	26.3
Female	73.7
Total	100.0

Table 3: Participants Based on Academic Program Followed

Academic Program	Percent %
Bachelor of Education Agriculture Science	10.0
Bachelor of Education Home Science	8.0
Bachelor of Education Living Skill	61.0
Bachelor of Technology with Education Mechanical Engineering	3.0
Bachelor of Technical and Vocational Education	18.0
Total	100.0

Discriminant Analysis: The discriminant analysis was conducted to assess whether the eight predictors- intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivation, perception, expectation, satisfaction, gender and academic program - could distinguish those who choose teaching and those who do not. Wilk’s Lambda was significant, $\lambda = .73$, $\chi^2 = 61.672$, $p < .001$, which indicates that the model including this eight predictors was able to significantly discriminate the two groups. Table 4 presents the standardized coefficients which suggest that intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivation contribute most to distinguish those who opted for teaching or otherwise. The largest weights of the variable were associated with the most powerful discriminating variable. Intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivations have the large weights which contribute mostly to differentiating the student who choose teaching from those who do not. In addition, the correlation coefficients in the table indicate the extent to which each variable correlates with the resulting discriminant function. The perception variables did not contribute strongly to the discriminant function yet it is moderately highly (negatively) correlated with the overall discriminant function.

The classification results show that the model correctly predict 79.5% of those who choose teaching and 75.7% of those who do not choose teaching. The analysis shows that 218 [209+9] of the respondents will choose teaching as a career while 82[54+28] of the respondents will opt for other careers.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the discriminant analysis clearly indicated that TVE student teachers in Malaysia who choose teaching as a career give significantly higher priority to intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivation. Further, the result indicated that the perception was negatively significant on this career decision. This model reveals that intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic have the highest discriminatory power. However, the perceptions, expectations and satisfaction, academic programme and gender factors contributed less strongly to predict their choice. It is most likely because of perceptions, expectations and satisfaction were less important and not clearly associated to student teachers career decision. Taken together these findings shed light on whether the teacher will stay or leave the profession [24]. The advantage of this study is that it identifies the best combination of variables that strongly distinguished student who choose teaching from those who do not. This is the first study conducted with the aim to demonstrate the combination variables that predict the career choice of TVE student teachers in Malaysia. The present study produced the result which corroborates the findings of a great deal of the previous work in the teaching career. The present study shows that intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivations are the most important reasons for TVE student teachers to choose teaching career in Malaysia. [32] stressed that people are attracted to the teach by the extrinsic reasons. Extrinsic motivations consist of material benefits such as job security, monetary rewards and salaries. On the other hand, [33] mentioned that intrinsic motivation improve student ‘s internal motivation such as happiness or satisfaction of doing activities [21] identified the reason for student teachers in Singapore to enter the teaching career to be intrinsic and altruistic motivations. The findings from [34] further support this claim. Adding to that, [35] agree that pre-service teachers choose teaching for altruistic reason. Previous research by [8] found that an altruistic reasons such as prestigious job and high value become a relevant reasons for them to

Table 4: Standardized Function Coefficients and Correlation Coefficients

	Standardized Function Coefficients	Correlations between variables and discriminates function
Intrinsic motivation	.780	.999
Extrinsic motivation	.694	-.236
Altruistic motivation	.415	-.465
Perception	.220	-.535
Expectation	.202	.471
Satisfaction	.151	.370
Gender	.010	-.001
Academic Program	-.121	.005

Table 5: Classification Results of Sample

Group	Discriminant Score for Group Means		
Choose Teaching	0.226		
Not Choose Teaching	-1.604		
Classification matrix	Predicted Group		
Actual Group	Observation	Choose Teaching	Not Choose Teaching
Choose Teaching Career	263	209 (79.5 %)	54 (20.5 %)
Not Choose Teaching	37	9 (24.3 %)	28 (75.7 %)

choose a career. The findings from this discriminant analysis, meanwhile, shows the best combinations of variables which strongly predict TVE student teachers' decision to choose teaching or otherwise. Therefore, the study will provide the information on what really influence student teachers to make a decision to join the teaching profession. Thus, this study can contribute significantly on knowledge for teacher recruitment and retention in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

The present study clearly indicated that TVE student teachers in Malaysia who choose teaching as a career give significantly higher priority to intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivation. The model reveals that intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic have the highest discriminatory power. As the motivation factors shows positive findings for TVE student teachers to choose teaching as a career, it should be highlighted in the teacher education program since it is related to job satisfaction which gives the teachers the opportunity to be creative. Further, the result indicates that the perception was negatively significant on this career decision. The classification results show that the model correctly predict 79.5% those who choose teaching and 75.7% those who do not choose teaching. In addition, this study explains the combination of variables that strongly predict who choose teaching and those who do not. The significant motivating factors should be highlighted and stressed by educators and programs at universities. The result shows that 79.5% of the student teachers may choose teaching as a career and this is an indicator for the retention patterns when they complete their studies. If they do not choose teaching after graduates the government would have wasted significantly to train them in teacher education program for four years. Although the present study shows that a small proportion of the TVE student teachers do not choose to become a teacher, it might reflect on teacher shortage at school. The strong point of this study is its identification of the best combination of variables that strongly distinguish students who choose teaching from

those who do not. In fact, this is first such study on TVE student teachers at public universities. Hence, the findings of this research can contribute immensely for recruitment strategies and retaining of teachers in Malaysia. Moreover, the study adds to the theoretical realm by proving the suitability of the Expectancy Value Theory which used in "Fit-Choice Scale" framework. The framework is suitable to study factors influencing student teachers to choose teaching as a career in Malaysia since the findings shows the motivation factors such as intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivations are most important and influenced TVE student teachers' career choice. For the practical implications, the findings of the present study can significantly help to devise ways to improve teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development. Hence, the government, educators at public universities and school administrators in Malaysia should cooperate and play significant roles in order to recruit and retain teachers for a long period as well as reducing the cases of teacher shortage and teacher leaving the profession earlier.

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