

Investigating Teaching Career Choices and Perception towards Teaching Profession among Student Teachers

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Abstract

Education is essential to cultivating respect for the value, dignity, and equality in a diverse society. Teachers believe in the power of education and the importance of providing children with excellent role models, and they teach with that faith. They teach not for recognition or wages but because they are passionate about youth and education. They can play a crucial role in laying the foundation for the future of society because they will educate students in school according to their beliefs and values. Therefore, teachers must internalize universal values to cultivate a dignified generation for a peaceful society. Many factors influence the teachers to play a pivotal role in society. Two significant factors that shape teachers' professional identity are the motivating factors that force individuals to choose the teaching profession and the teachers' perception of teaching. Determining reasons for choosing to teach and career perceptions of student teachers will help to analyze the thinking process of their vision towards teaching. The present research study has been specifically explored to examine the motives behind selecting teaching as a profession and student teachers' perceptions towards the teaching profession. In this study, qualitative methods were adopted for exploring research questions. The participants of the study were 28 second year student teachers. The study identified various themes and subthemes from the participants' qualitative responses.

Keywords: Career path, perception towards teaching

Introduction

Education contributes to the country's economic growth because it is about acquiring knowledge and being able to apply it wisely to our lives while improving the lives of others. Students may learn physical and emotional abilities, good manners, brotherhood, patriotism, and religious tolerance through education. Education aims to ensure that students have the knowledge and skills necessary to work and succeed and the compassion and emotional means to be part of a safe and peaceful society (Bhat, 2018).



A teacher plays a vital role in the entire process of education. Teachers are social engineers. They broaden the young minds of the pupils to build up a society embedded with social values. The teacher encourages the curiosity and imagination of the pupil to create a magical learning experience. They give children a purpose, prepare them for success as citizens of our world, and inspire them to succeed. The role of the teacher in society is of paramount importance in securing a promising future for the nation. Thus, teaching is a service rather than an occupation or profession. Many factors influence the teachers to play a pivotal role in society. Two significant factors that shape teachers' professional identity are the motivating factors that force individuals to choose the teaching profession and the teachers' perception of teaching.

Three types of motivating factors are often emphasized in teacher education research when deciding on a career in teaching. (Bastick et al., 2000; Boz et al., 2008). These are extrinsic motives, intrinsic motives, and altruistic motives (OECD, 2005). Society needs whole-hearted, committed teachers to bear the fruit of education. Thus, it is critical to understand the motivational factors that influence an individual's decision to pursue a teaching profession.

Recent research findings reveal that teachers' broader perceptions towards teaching are critical to their ability to teach effectively. Instructors' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes impact their practice and, in turn, influence their students' performance. (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001). *It was also found that* teacher burnout is linked to a teacher's positive outlook on the teaching profession, which impacts their classroom performance and practice. (Ispir, 2010). Teachers' psychological experiences and their views of their job may be causes of stress, which might reduce their effectiveness as educators. (Ransford et al., 2009). Teaching is a challenging profession, requiring a high level of accountability and selflessness. However, owing to misunderstandings about this profession, it is seen as a vocation rather than a nation-building process. (Watt, 2012). This study explores motivating factors for choosing the teaching profession and perception towards teaching among student teachers.

Research Questions

The success of every educational system is heavily reliant on the efforts of teachers. They are the driving force behind the learning process, and the entire system depends on them. (Government of Botswana, 1994). Determining reasons for choosing to teach, career perspectives and expectations are some of the critical areas that will be examined to understand the vision of student teachers towards their profession. So the research questions framed for this study are;

1. What motivating factors influenced student teachers to choose teaching as their career?
2. How do student teachers perceive the teaching profession?

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the motivating factors influencing student teachers to choose the teaching profession,
2. To study student instructors' perception towards teaching profession

Research design

In this study, qualitative methods were adopted for exploring research questions. For this, general descriptive research was used. Descriptive analysis aims to provide a detailed description of the investigated problem to establish its current profile. (Borg et al. 1993). The first phase of this study was the collection of data with the help of open-ended questionnaires. The second phase was the analysis phase of the data and interpretation.

Sample

The researcher collected the data from 28 student teachers. The student teachers were from the second year B.Ed. course.

Data collection

A student teacher's motivation for choosing the teaching profession and their perception of it was assessed using a questionnaire. The researcher elicited descriptive responses in

order to ascertain the respondents' motivations and perspectives regarding the teaching profession. Qualitative tools were used to collect the data in this study.

Significance of the study

A review of the teacher education literature reveals that very little study has been undertaken on the elements that impact young people's decisions to pursue a career in teaching. The research study exploring the motivational factors for choosing the teaching profession and student teachers' perception towards the teaching profession is extremely important in the present-day context. The findings of this research may be utilized to better understand student teachers' perceptions about their careers and assist teacher educators in developing positive attitudes toward their profession. This study could serve as a framework for the design and implementation of strategies aimed at increasing the level of commitment and retention among teachers. The findings of the study will help teacher training institutions to develop clear guidelines on framing the policies for teacher education curricula. The findings also will help strengthen the component of professional ethics in teacher training programmes so that student teachers conduct themselves according to the requirements of the teaching profession.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Questionnaire responses were subjected to thematic analysis. The written responses were analyzed by identifying common themes from the statement responses of the participants. Each of the responses was coded.

Question No. 1: What motivated you to pursue a career as a teacher?

Qualitative analysis of the responses helps to identify major themes and minor themes. There are major themes identified as intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic.

Major Theme: Intrinsic motives

Subthemes emerge from the analysis of the main theme of intrinsic motivation. Subthemes are cognitive motives and self-confidence. These subthemes are highly influential factors in motivating student teachers to choose the teaching profession.

Subtheme 1: Cognitive Motives

The first subtheme identified from the responses is cognitive motives. Most of the student teachers are interested in sharing their knowledge with the younger generation through the teaching profession. Participants indicated that teaching is a profession where a more knowledgeable person (a teacher) shares the knowledge with the children.

"Teaching is Nobel profession and I love to share my knowledge with the upcoming new generation."

"The interest towards teaching the concept to others."

"There are various factors, but one of the most important factors is that I love teaching and love to interact and impart knowledge to the students."

Subtheme 2: Self Confidence

The second subtheme identified under intrinsic motivation is self-confidence. Student teachers have shared their view that they have selected this profession because they have excellent communication skills and are confident in delivering knowledge successfully.

"I feel that I have good explanation skills, and I'll be able to deliver knowledge to my students successfully."

"I am interested in teaching, and it suits my personality."

Student teachers share their view that they selected the teaching profession because they are interested in sharing knowledge or teaching concepts clearly to young students. The research results of Chong & Low (2009) and Jungert et al. (2014) also revealed that cognitive motive is a significant factor that causes intrinsic motivation to choose the teaching profession. Struyven et al. (2013) reported that self-confidence was also one of the reasons to choose the teaching profession.

Major theme: Altruistic motives

The second major theme was identified based on the responses as altruistic motivational factors. Rarely did the participants share their views regarding the altruistic motivational factor to choose their career as teaching. Based on the data analysis, two significant

subthemes have been identified. The subthemes are the transformation of the young generation and society and self-transformation.

Subtheme 1-Transformation of the younger generation and society

Participants stated that they selected teaching as a career because they wanted to make a difference in the minds of future generation.

"I took teaching as work because I feel that teachers teach students and have a great role in changing students' lives, which will help bring change in society."

"The factors that have led me into teaching are the interest in teaching, making a difference to society, and being with the young minds to help them do things positively for society."

Subtheme 2: Self-Transformation

One comment indicates that choosing a teaching profession is for self-transformation through self-regulated learning and reflection.

"The zeal and passion for being driven towards the sharing of education. I also believe this was truly a time to transform myself internally and externally and mould me as a different personality."

Major theme: Extrinsic motives

The third major theme identified was the extrinsic motivational factor based on the analysis. Different factors are involved in the extrinsic motivational factor. The majority of the student teachers have chosen this profession due to external factors. The subthemes identified under extrinsic motivational factors are family pressure, family influence, teacher's motivation and status of the teaching profession.

Subtheme 1: Family Pressure

The first subtheme under extrinsic motivation is family pressure. Participants shared that they had selected the teaching profession due to family pressure.

"My family members wanted me to become a teacher."



Previous research findings show that family plays an essential factor in choosing a career. Stambler (1998) found that parents are often influential when young people make career decisions. Parents are also the most commonly reported catalyst for initiating the decision-making process (Biggart et al., 2004).

Subtheme 2: Family Influence

The second subtheme was the family influence. In some cases, student teachers are influenced or motivated by their family members to become teachers.

"My mother motivated me to teach; besides, I developed some interest in teaching initially before joining B.Ed. program."

"After finishing my graduation, I discovered that I love to teach students and looking at my Mom touching students life through her knowledge inspired me the most."

Based on the responses, it was found that students are observing their parents' profession. Through observation, they learn the values imbibed within a particular profession.

Subtheme 3: Teacher's motivation

The third subtheme identified as the teacher's motivation to choose the teaching profession is due to the teacher's motivation. Many of the student teachers responded that their teachers are the role model, and due to their motivation, they have chosen this profession.

"There was a teacher in my school; she was an inspiration for me, and I always aspire to be a teacher."

"While in school, I observed and listened to teachers who inspired me to be like them, to teach students skills that will help them succeed in life."

Subtheme 4: Status of the teaching profession

The fourth subtheme was the status of the teaching profession. Student teachers responded that teaching is the most respectful job in the current context. They have selected this career due to the status given to the teaching profession by society.



"Teaching is one of the respected professions, and it's the mother of all professions."

"I am always looking towards satisfaction and happiness, and no job brings you more happiness than being with children. I believe it's the most respectful job. And these things have attracted me towards teaching."

Discussion

Analysis of the above theme reveals that the student teachers have selected this profession based on intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic values. The elements that influence an individual's decision to pursue this profession is different from each individual. Among the three major subthemes, the altruistic theme and related responses were not emphasized much. At the same time, it was also analyzed that extrinsic motivational factors were well dominated by the student teachers in choosing their careers. Previous research findings also revealed three different motives behind the teaching profession (Bastick 2000; Boz and Boz 2008). The student teachers did not mention critical motivational factors like service to society, interest in learning, and teachers as social engineers. Findings reveal that intrinsic motivations to choose the teaching profession, including job satisfaction, sense of achievement, their love of the subject and enjoyment of working with children, were rarely mentioned by student teachers.

Question No. 2: What does teaching mean to you?

The analysis of the statement reveals that the concept of teaching is emphasized with cognitive aspects rather than a harmonious development. The major themes identified are knowledge transfer, overall child development, learning opportunities, community empowerment, and profession or occupation.

Major theme: Knowledge transfer

The major theme identified by the researcher based on the responses is that teaching is a mode of knowledge transfer. The student-teachers mentioned various purposes for transferring knowledge. Sub themes identified by the knowledge transfers are knowledge transfer for character development, knowledge transfer and value integration, and sharing of subject knowledge.



Subtheme 1: Knowledge transfer for character development

The first subtheme identified as teaching is a knowledge transfer process for character development. According to them, character formation is directly connected to acquiring knowledge.

"Teaching, in my view, is a medium through which I can create development in the knowledge and character of a learner."

"Teaching, in my opinion, is transacting the best-known knowledge to the knowledge seekers."

"Learn and share what you learn, guide students to learn, help them understand what they are learning and why - to encourage students to like and seek learning."

Subtheme 2: Knowledge transfer and with value integration

The second subtheme identified as teaching is a process of educating the future generation with knowledge and values.

"Teaching is the transaction of knowledge and values in my students to make them responsible citizens and good human beings."

"Imparting the knowledge to students and making them believe that they can change the world if they can set their minds. Teaching has the power to mould one's life and make it fruitful."

Subtheme 3: Sharing of Subject knowledge

A few comments reflected that teaching is a process of simplifying the subject content and transmitting subject-specific knowledge.

"Simplifying the subject as much as I can."

Major theme: Overall development of Child

A few of the responses revealed that teaching is a process that goes beyond the transmission of knowledge. Teaching is a process based on the moral values that support the child's harmonious development.



"Teaching means that we as a teacher are responsible for making changes in society or inspiring students to do good in their lives."

"It means moulding children towards a better path. If I successfully make a better person out of the child, I will be satisfied. My goal is as many hearts and minds I could touch I would."

"Teaching means trying my best for the child's holistic development and doing my best to also cater to their mental health and the curriculum."

Major theme: Provide learning experiences

A group of student teachers commented on teaching as providing quality learning opportunities with students at the centre of the teaching strategies. The subtheme identified are learning experiences from teachers and peer groups and self-regulated lifelong learning.

Sub theme 1: Learning experience from teacher and peer group

The qualitative responses reflected that teaching is the process of providing meaningful experiences to the students. One of the comments reflected that teaching is a process to help students learn from the teacher and their peer group.

"Teaching is a motivation to provide a meaningful learning experience."

"Teaching for me is not what I do but also what wonderfully I make students do and learn together."

Subtheme 2: Self-regulated lifelong learning

Student teachers commented that teaching is a process of lifelong learning. According to them, teaching is possible only when learning takes place. The following comments refer to the professional development of teachers.

"Teaching is not one-way process in this process teaching, and learning happens from both the sides from teachers and students."

Major theme: Empowering the community

Comments were also reflected concerning social empowerment. A few comments reflected that teaching is not only a job or transferring knowledge but also a social responsibility to empower the community through education. Through the teaching process, it is possible to uplift the quality of life and develop a society with justice. The teacher could spread joy and happiness among the community members through teaching. This theme was not emphasized much by the student teachers.

"To make everyone at one level."

"Spreading joy and happiness with children."

Major theme: Profession and hobby

A few of the comments reflected that teaching is an occupation or hobby.

"It is work for me."

"Teaching means more than just a profession to me. It's more of a hobby to me."

Discussion

The aim of teaching is a significant aspect in determining a teacher's professional identity and social position. The research found that teachers with a broader view of their professional activities had higher overall job satisfaction and commitment. Teachers' professional obligations are connected with their broader thoughts and sentiments about their work (Day, C. 2007, Hall, S. 2009).

The findings of the study show that student teachers emphasized the cognitive dimension as the purpose of teaching. Most of the responses emphasize that teaching is a transmission process of knowledge. The teaching profession is intended to transfer knowledge and the development of cognitive effort—the perception of teachers towards teaching influences their role. Teachers considering teaching as a cognitive process emphasizes the teacher-centric activity in the classroom context. They impart more knowledge than experience in their teaching process.

Understanding student teachers' perception towards the concept of teaching is necessary to make future teachers develop their teaching quality with better skills and attitudes. It can make their interactions with students more dynamic in and out of the classroom. It's complicated to change a student teacher's perception towards teaching in terms of their cognitive habits and personalities. However, through effective planning of the teacher education curriculum, it is possible to develop a better and broader perception among student teachers towards the teaching profession.

Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal that the current teacher education curriculum helps student teachers to develop teaching competencies and help them gain an understanding of different teaching strategies to deliver the content knowledge to learners. However, it is essential to create a broader philosophical understanding of the teaching profession among student teachers. Teacher educators must pay attention to both the ideals embedded in the teaching profession and the pedagogical abilities of student teachers, exposing them to a range of teaching approaches that allow them to grow learners harmoniously. Possessing a more positive view of teaching among student teachers could serve as a springboard for formulating and implementing strategies that enable the teachers to take an active role in their profession.

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