

Career Profile among Malaysian In-Service Teachers

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Abstract

Personal aspects of teachers is an important area in teacher education studies. This they are closely linked to various issues and challenges of teachers such as attrition and early retirement. The purpose of this study is to investigate two important personal aspects among in-service teachers, namely, reasons to become a teacher and feeling about being a teacher. A total of 467 in-service teachers from public schools around Malaysia was sampled to provide responses for the study. Results showed that enjoy working with children, the opportunity to further studies and assurance of job were the three most important reasons. With regards to feeling about being a teacher, we found that primary school teachers showed significantly positive feelings compared to their secondary school counterparts. Their feeling about being a teacher was also significantly varied according to their teaching experience. Nevertheless, no significant difference was reported on the feeling of being a teacher according to gender and ethnicity. We also provide discussions within the context of teacher professional development in Malaysia.

1. Introduction

Issues of attrition and early retirement among the in-service teachers are prime concerns in teacher education research (Lindquist & Nordanger, 2016; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). Attrition among in-service teachers can cause some severe consequences such as shortage of quality teachers (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016), negative effect on students' grades (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008; Henry, Fortner, & Bastian, 2012) and financial loss (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Low pay, low respect, less autonomy together with the increased workload, have been reviewed as a potential factor of teacher attrition rate (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Smethem, 2007). In addition, Kyricacou and Kunc (2007) specifically identify personal expectations as an important motive for attrition among in-service teachers. According to them, the mismatch between personal expectation and experience influence more negative thoughts about teaching that in turn enliven the feeling of wanting to leave the profession. Studies have shown that the mismatch between personal expectation and real experience is not something that should be overlooked. For example, one of the most popular motive to become a teacher is the ability to make difference among children (Guarino et al., 2006; Smethem, 2007). However, the expectation is constantly challenged by the fact that teaching is often perceived as being low social respect (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005).

Based on the abovementioned arguments, the present study intends to further investigate the personal aspects of the in-service teachers. This is important since, at the moment, the in-service teachers are experiencing an unprecedented transition in their role and status that in turns,

require them to have multiple skills other than teaching. The in-service teachers are defined as teachers who are already employed and working in the classroom. In this study, we investigate the personal aspects of the in-service teachers under the construct of career profile, which include two domains, namely, (1) reasons to become a teacher, and (2) feeling about being a teacher. We hope that the information gathered from this study will be able to shed some light that can be useful in the study of attrition among in-service teachers in Malaysia.

2. Purpose and Objective of Study

The purpose of this study is to develop career profile among Malaysian in-service teachers. More specifically, the objective of this study is given as follows:

- i) To determine the most and the least important reasons to become a teacher.
- ii) To investigate the perceived status of teaching as profession according to gender, ethnicity, types of school and teaching experience.

3. Literature Review

Reasons to become a teacher is extensively studied in Malaysia. A study by Khairani (2011) among pre-service teachers reports that the prime reason to become a teacher is that teaching is considered as a noble profession. Another important reason is that they believe teaching provide opportunities to shape the future of children. Also, teaching provides a platform for the teacher to stimulate continuous intellectual skills. In contrast, the same study documented that the in-service teachers choose to teach as a profession not because there is no other available job. Also, they did not intend to join teaching because of the influence of their friend or family. Also, the pre-service teachers did not intend to become a teacher because the job is easy. Research by Bakar, Muhammad, Suhid, and Hamzah (2014) echoes the same finding from 600 pre-service teachers. They report that reasons such as the ability to shape the child future, to help a young child have a meaningful life, and to influence the next generation as important reasons to become a teacher. Extrinsic factors such as high pay, lots of holidays, secure job and many other fringe benefits are considered the least important reasons for choosing teaching as a profession. Other studies by Azman (2013), also reports similar findings.

Studies on pre-service are important to know the extent to which they have motives that are in line with the needs and demands of a teacher's work. However, it is also important to have information on whether the motives are similar when they have been embraced by the world of teaching. The information gathered would be useful for a decision on the professional development of the teachers. For example, teachers who care about their students and want to help the children to have better future should be given training on the best way to achieve those ambitions. In contrast, if reasons are more towards extrinsic factors such as high salary and a lot of holidays, then there is certainly a need to explore future especially on the reasons why these extrinsic factors are important to them. Whatever the reasons, the information will certainly provide an avenue to improve satisfaction among the in-service teachers that in turns have a positive impact on job performance as well as lower level of anxiety, stress or burnout (Caprara,

Barbanelli, Steca & Malone, 2006).

Meanwhile, studies on feeling about becoming a teacher among in-service teacher are quite sparse, not in Malaysia but also across the region. However, we believe that the study is important especially in order to have a better understanding of the professional identity of the in-service teachers, that is, how they see themselves as teachers.

This is based on the argument that many teachers experience ‘reality shock’, in which they found that the job is more demanding than expected (Ingersoll, 2003) that may lead to high attrition rate among them (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Peterson, Roehrig & Luft, 2003; Kelly, 2004). As for experience in-service teachers, information on their feeling as a teacher may help researchers to understand the issue of stress as well as burnout which are well documented in many previous research (Arvidson, Hakansson, Karlson, Bjork & Persson, 2016; Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai & Yang, 2015).

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample

The sample consisted of 467 in-service teachers from public schools around Malaysia. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the sample.

Table 1: Demographic information of the sample.

Demographic	N	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	113	24.2
Female	354	75.8
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Malay	183	39.2
Chinese	144	30.8
Indian	140	30.0
<i>Type of School</i>		
Primary	341	73.0
Secondary	110	23.6
Others	16	3.4
<i>Teaching Experience</i>		
Less than 3 years	147	31.5
4 – 5 years	42	9.0
6 – 10 years	87	18.6
11 – 15 years	67	14.3
16 – 20 years	45	9.6
More than 21 years	79	16.9

4.2 Instrument

The in-service teachers career profile is measured using several domains, namely, (1) reasons to become a teacher, (2) status of teaching profession, (3) feeling about being a teacher, (3) community's view on teaching, and (4) future of teaching profession. Description of the items is given in the following Table 2.

Table 2: Description of the instrument

Domain	No of Item	Example of Item	Types of Scale
Reasons to become a teacher	8	With teaching qualification, I am assured of a job	Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree
Feeling about being a teacher	1	How do you feel about being a teacher?	Extremely Negative – Fairly negative – Fairly Positive – Extremely Positive

4.3 Data Analysis

The following Table 3 summarizes the procedure and statistical information of the present study according to the objectives of the study.

Table 3: Data analysis

Objective of Study	Procedure	Statistical Information
To determine the most important reasons for choosing teaching as a profession	Descriptive statistics	Item mean
To investigate the perceived status of teaching as profession according to gender, ethnicity, types of school and teaching experience	Cross-tabulation	Percentage, item mean
To study the difference in perceived status of teaching as profession according to gender, ethnicity, types of school and teaching experience	Independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA	The t value, F values, and significant values

5. Findings

5.1 Reasons to Become a Teacher

Table 4 shows the ordering of the reasons to become a teacher based on the item mean score. It demonstrates that *enjoy working with children* as the most important reasons for the in-service teachers ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.59$) followed by the *opportunity to further studies* ($M = 3.24$,

SD = 0.66). *Assures of a job* (M = 3.17, SD = 0.66) completed the three most important reasons to become a teacher in this study. In contrast, *a lot of free time* (M = 2.19, SD = 0.88) is considered the least important reason to become a teacher. The teachers also endorsed *opportunity to do the second job* (M = 2.22, SD = 0.83) as well as *good salary* (M = 2.73, SD = 0.62) as two of the least important reasons to become a teacher.

Table 4: Reasons to become a Teacher

Item	Percentage					Mean	SD
	NA	SD	D	A	SA		
5: Enjoy working with children	.2	.6	3.4	52.0	43.7	3.39	0.59
6: Provide an opportunity to further studies	.2	.6	10.7	52.2	36.2	3.24	0.66
1: Assured of a job		2.1	11.1	54.4	32.3	3.17	0.70
3: Teaching as a calling		.4	15.6	55.0	28.9	3.12	0.67
4: Recommended by relative/friend		3.0	19.7	57.2	20.1	2.94	0.72
8: Good salary		2.4	29.6	61.0	7.1	2.73	0.62
7: Opportunity to do the second job		18.4	48.0	26.6	7.1	2.22	0.83
2: A lot of free time	.2	22.9	42.2	27.0	7.7	2.19	0.88

5.2 How do you feel about being a Teacher?

Table 5 demonstrates response from the in-service teachers on the feeling of being a teacher. It is cross-tabulated with demographic variables, namely, gender, ethnicity, types of school they are teaching as well as their teaching experience. Between the male and the female in-service teachers, their mean score is about the same even though the female teachers demonstrated a higher percentage of a positive feeling of 83.6% compared to 75.2% of the males. With regards to ethnicity, the Chinese in-service teachers show a higher percentage of negative feeling (29.2%) compared to both the Malays (12.0%) and the Indians (15.7%). This also resulted in the low mean score of 2.74 (SD = 0.54) compared with the Malays (M = 3.19, SD = 0.64) and the Indians (M = 3.05, SD = 0.65).

Meanwhile, the in-service teachers from secondary schools reported lower mean score. Finally, for teaching experience, it is reported that the group of 4 – 5 years of teaching showed the lowest mean compared to other age category followed by the most senior teachers, that is, the group of more than 21 years of experience.

Table 5: Feeling about being a teacher

Demography	Negative Feeling		Positive Feeling		Mean	SD
	Very Negative	Fairly Negative	Fairly positive	Extremely Positive		
<i>Gender</i>						
Male	0.9	23.9	45.1	30.1	3.04	0.76
Female	0.8	15.5	66.4	17.2	3.00	0.60
<i>Ethnicity</i>						
Malay	0.5	11.5	56.8	31.1	3.19	0.64
Chinese	0.7	28.5	66.7	4.2	2.74	0.54
Indians	1.4	14.3	61.4	22.9	3.05	0.65
<i>Types of School</i>						
Primary	0.9	17.9	60.4	20.8	3.01	0.65
Secondary	0.9	17.3	65.5	16.4	2.97	0.61
Other		12.5	50.0	37.5	3.25	0.68
<i>Teaching Experience</i>						
Less 3 years		15.0	49.0	36.0	3.01	0.61
4 - 5 years		23.8	33.3	42.9	2.88	0.63
6 - 10 years		13.8	39.1	47.1	3.01	0.71
11 - 15 years		6.0	38.8	55.2	3.18	0.72
16 - 20 years		2.2	51.1	46.7	3.04	0.64
> 21 years	1.3	6.3	44.3	48.1	2.92	0.55

Further analysis regarding the perceived status of teaching profession was also conducted. Firstly, we conducted a test to determine whether there is a significant difference between male and female in-service teachers using the independent sample t-test. The result showed that there no significant mean difference on the feeling of being a teacher between the two group, $t(159.289) = .565$, $p = .573$. We also conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine the difference between ethnicity, and found that there is no significant difference in the mean score between the Malays, Chinese and Indians [$F(2, 464) = 1.939$, $p = .145$].

In contrast, we report that the in-service teachers in primary school demonstrated significantly higher mean score compared to their counterparts in the secondary school, $F(2, 464) = 5.789$, $p = .003$. Finally, with regards to teaching experience, we found that there are significant differences in the mean score of feeling about being a teacher [$F(5, 461) = 3.698$, $p = .003$]. Using the Tukey post-hoc test, we identified that teachers with more than 21 years of experience show significantly lower mean score from two groups, namely, (1) less than 3 years, and (2) 11 – 15 years. Summary of the findings is given in the following Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of the Inferential Statistics

Demographic Group	Statistical Test	Result	Conclusion
Gender	Independent sample t-test	$t(159.289) = .565, p = .573$	No significant difference in the mean score between male and female
Ethnicity	One-way ANOVA	$F(2, 464) = 1.939, p = .145$	No significant difference in the mean score between the Malays, Chines, and Indians
Types of school	One-way ANOVA	$F(2, 464) = 5.789, p = .003$	Teacher in primary schools show significantly higher mean score compared to secondary schools
Teaching experience	One-way ANOVA	$F(5, 461) = 3.698, p = .003$	Teachers with more than 21 years of experience show significantly lower mean score compared with the groups of less than 3 years, and 11 – 15 years.

6. Discussions and Conclusion

Similar to their pre-service counterparts, the in-service teachers in Malaysia endorsed that enjoy working with children as the most important reasons for them to join the teaching profession. There are various reasons for this. Children are known to be curious and have limited exposure. As such, they often ask a lot of questions and it is very satisfying for teachers to be able to share our knowledge that help children understand better. Also, children are very excited but at the same time obeys what you instruct them. Nevertheless, in this study, we found an interesting finding, that is, opportunity to further studies as an important reason to become a teacher. According to Muhamad and Junoh (2004), the reasons can be classified into three primary motives as follows:

- 1) Professional Development
This motive indicates the purpose of the teacher to further their study is to provide themselves with knowledge, experience, and skills to improve work performance so can provide quality education to children.
- 2) Cognitive Interest
This motive indicates the purpose of the teacher further study is to earn and deepen knowledge.
- 3) Social Welfare
This motive indicates the purpose of the teacher to continue studying is to provide themselves with knowledge, experience, and skills required to help and provide the best service to the community.

Another important finding of the present study is the one related to the group of in-service teachers who have more than 21 years of experience. Not only had they showed one of the lowest

scores for positive feeling about being a teacher, their scores of the construct is significantly lower than other groups of teachers. This is a worrying finding because as the most experienced teachers, they are supposed to be compatible with the task of a teacher, and should be exemplary to other teachers. The lack of a positive sense of being a teacher may be a factor that leads to problems among experienced teachers such as stress (Hadi, Naing, Daud, Nordin, & Sulong, 2009) and burnout (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010).

Its limitation notwithstanding, the present study extends the understanding of motive to become a teacher as well as feeling about being a teacher among Malaysian in-service teachers. As provided in the present study, the in-service teachers provided some interesting findings regarding both issues that not only essential in understanding them, but also informative in designing development program for them.

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