

Why They Choose Teaching: a Factor Analysis of Motives of Malaysian Teacher Trainees

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Key words: motives, Malaysian, teacher trainees, teaching profession, factor analysis.

ABSTRAK

Satu kajian telah dijalankan ke atas 210 orang guru pelatih semester keempat yang mengkhusus dalam pengajaran sekolah rendah dari sebuah maktab perguruan di Kuala Lumpur bagi tahun pengajian 1986/87, untuk mengenalpasti motif mengajar di kalangan mereka. Keputusan daripada analisis faktor menghasilkan enam faktor, tetapi hanya lima daripadanya ditafsirkan. Faktor 1 menyentuh tentang pertimbangan peribadi sebab memilih perguruan; Faktor 2 menyentuh tentang nilai mengajar; Faktor 3 hal-hal yang bersifat altruistik; Faktor 4 merujuk kepada keadaan pekerjaan yang disenangi; manakala Faktor 5 berkait dengan pengaruh daripada orang utama. Keputusan kajian dibincangkan dari segi teori pemilihan pekerjaan Ginzberg dan lain-lain karya bertulis yang berkaitan. Keputusan kajian ini mempunyai beberapa implikasi kepada pemilihan guru-guru pelatih.

ABSTRACT

A study was carried out on 210 fourth semester teacher trainees specializing in primary school teaching from a teachers' college in Kuala Lumpur for the 1986/87 academic year, to seek out their motives for taking up teaching. Results of factor analysis produced six factors, five of which were interpreted. Factor 1 touches on personal considerations for teaching; Factor 2 on the values of teaching; Factor 3 is altruistic in nature; Factor 4 refers to agreeable working conditions and Factor 5, influence received from key persons. Results are discussed in relation to Ginzberg's theory of occupational choice and other related literature. The findings of the study have several implications on the selection of teacher trainees.

INTRODUCTION

Investigations on the motives for taking up the teaching profession have been going on for more than half a century, mainly outside Malaysia. These studies report on the motives of either teacher education students (Fox 1961; Richards 1960; Haubrich 1960; Saxe 1969; Ee 1974; Anucia 1981; Jantzen 1981), or qualified teachers already serving in the schools (Obura 1974; Lortie 1975; Goodlad 1984).

When recruiting students into a teacher education programme, it is pertinent to find answers to two important questions. First, what inspired these young people to enter the

teaching profession? Second, are the reasons given by them enough to suggest that they will be good teachers?

The purpose of this paper is to identify the motives for taking up teaching among teacher trainees in a Malaysian teachers' training college.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Subjects

Subjects for this study were 210 primary school teacher trainees from a Kuala Lumpur teachers' college. The trainees were in the fourth (July) semester of their programme during the

1986/87 academic year. The sample comprised 113 males and 97 females from the three major ethnic groups, viz., Malays, Chinese and Indians.

Instrumentation

Thirty items were specially developed by the researcher to extract the underlying motives for teaching. The items came from two sources. The first group of items came from the results of a pilot study carried out on two groups of teacher trainees from the Language Institute, Kuala Lumpur, to seek out their reasons for joining teaching. The responses obtained were then compared to the questionnaire used by the Singapore Research Unit (1969). Twenty of the motives obtained from the pilot study were found to be similar to those items in the SRU Questionnaire. Two other items were dissimilar to the Singapore version but were nevertheless included. The second source, involving eight items, was Fox's (1961) questionnaire.

For each item, four alternative responses were given, i.e., "strongly agree" (SA), "agree" (A), "disagree" (D) and "strongly disagree" (SD). Respondents were required to indicate their answers on the same questionnaire by circling the relevant coded numbers provided in the right-hand margin. The completed questionnaires were edited and the data transferred on to diskettes by the author. Data processing was carried out on the IBM 4381 mainframe at the Universiti Sains Malaysia using the SPSS programme.

Analytical Procedure

The 30 items measuring motives for teaching were subjected to factor analysis which reduced the number of variables into just a few motive factors. Principal factoring with iteration was the type of factor analysis employed. Six factors were specified to be extracted based on the literature review. Varimax rotation was used on the assumption that there was very little correlation between the factors.

The 30 items were factor-analyzed for the following reasons. First, it is desirable to determine how many latent factors there are underlying the set of the 30 items or variables.

Second, based on the number of factors derived and the items included in each factor, one is then able to interpret the factors. Third, with factor analysis one is able to find out the amount of each common factor possessed by each observation i.e., the factor scores.

Results

The results of the factor analysis of the 30 items, using the varimax principal factor rotation, produced six factors. However, following Ghazali (1979), only loadings of more than 0.3 were considered. Thus, only five factors, accounting for 93.8 percent of the total factor variance, were interpreted. The loadings of the 28 items on these five factors are given in Table 1. For convenience, the *i*-th factor will be abbreviated as FAC_{*i*}; thus the first factor is written as FAC1, the second factor FAC2, and so on.

Relative frequencies of responses to the 30 items are given in Tables 2 through 7. The items are classified according to the factors extracted. Thus QM3 refers to question 3 of the questionnaire, and so on. Unclassified items are given in Table 7.

Items for FAC1 touch upon the individual making the decision to become a teacher. These items refer to how the individual appraises his inner qualities. Thus, FAC1 may be interpreted as representing the "personal consideration" dimension. FAC2 accounts for the similarity among items relating to factors apart from the self, i.e., looking at external reasons attached to the job. FAC2 may be termed the "teaching values" dimension. Items for FAC3 touch on idealistic reasons related to teaching; and this Factor may be called the "altruistic" dimension. FAC4 refers to "agreeable working conditions" dimension. FAC5 may be interpreted as representing the "influence received" dimension.

Factors Interpreted from the Varimax Factor Matrix

FAC1. After the orthogonal rotation, eight items are found to have high factor loadings on the first factor. The eight items relate to the evaluation of one's personal likings and ability. Six items have positive loadings while the remaining two loadings are negative in

TABLE 1
Varimax rotation of factor matrix for motive variables

Variable	FAC1	FAC2	FAC3	FAC4	FAC5	Communality
QM3	-.457					.459
QM6	.592					.386
QM8	.624					.546
QM9	.596					.399
QM11	.638					.446
QM13	-.451					.298
QM14	.345					.181
QM18	.585					.508
QM4		.660				.460
QM15		.326				.145
QM17		.386				.254
QM23		.513				.451
QM28		.457				.425
QM29		.483				.298
QM30		.559				.357
QM1			.328			.247
QM7			.314			.128
QM12			.692			.489
QM22			.418			.340
QM25			.433			.436
QM10				.373		.299
QM16				.304		.257
QM19				.721		.571
QM20				.544		.361
QM26				.415		.310
QM2					.616	.399
QM5					.687	.547
QM27					.392	.184
Percent of variance	39.1	25.5	12.0	9.4	7.8	93.8

Note: Factor loadings of less than 0.3 are ignored; five factors were extracted for interpretation; QM21 and QM24 dropped out.

nature.

In order of magnitude of the factor loadings, the first item (QM11) touches on the suitability of teaching in relation to one's ability and character. The second item hinges on liking for teaching itself (QMB), followed by the third item which is a liking for children (QM9). The fourth item states that teaching is fun (QM4), while the fifth item says that teaching has been one's ambition for a long time. Item six is a statement on teaching as a noble profession. Items 7 and 8 are negative in nature but they are related to questions

relating to the self. Item seven (QM3) states that one joins teaching as a last resort, while item eight (QM13) refers to the reason for joining teaching as a stepping stone to another profession. Thus, Factor 1 may be labelled as *personal considerations*. (Table 2.)

FAC2. A second set of items refers to some *teaching values* given to teaching (Table 3). The motives for this Factor, according to rank, are job security (QM4), ease of getting employment after graduation (QM30), to overcome the teacher shortage in the country

TABLE 2
Relative frequency of responses to items under personal considerations (FAC1)

Item	SD	D	A	SA
— Percent —				
QM3. I have no other choice	39.0	41.4	13.3	6.2
QM6. Teaching is interesting	1.4	26.0	63.9	8.7
QM8. I like teaching	0.5	8.7	76.0	14.9
QM9. I like children	0.5	9.2	59.9	30.4
QM11. My character and ability are suited to teaching	1.4	17.4	64.3	16.9
QM13. Teaching is a stepping stone to another profession	29.0	49.3	17.9	3.9
QM14. Teaching is a noble profession	0.5	1.9	35.3	62.3
QM18. Teaching is my ambition	5.7	23.8	45.7	24.8

TABLE 3
Relative frequency of responses to items under teaching values (FAC2)

Item	SD	D	A	SA
— Percent —				
QM4. Teaching is a secured job	1.4	10.0	56.9	31.1
QM15. Teaching gives me the opportunity to further my studies	0.5	9.6	52.9	37.0
QM17. Teaching will put me in a respectable place in society	7.2	32.2	49.5	11.1
QM23. I feel I can help overcome teacher shortage in Malaysia	1.0	12.9	67.1	19.0
QM28. I am unhappy about the performance of poor teachers	8.1	15.3	57.4	19.1
QM29. I like a certain school subject	8.1	32.4	46.2	13.3
QM30. It is easy to get employment after my teacher training	8.1	21.0	52.9	18.1

TABLE 4
Relative frequency of responses to items under altruistic reason (FAC3)

Item	SD	D	A	SA
— Percent —				
QM1. Teaching gives me the opportunity to be of service to society	1.0	1.4	50.0	47.6
QM7. Teaching gives me the opportunity to realise my potential in management, leadership, speak in front of others, etc.	0.0	4.3	48.6	47.1
QM12. Teaching is challenging	0.5	8.2	52.4	38.9
QM22. I feel I can educate the younger generation	0.0	2.9	78.1	19.0
QM25. I want to impart knowledge to others	1.0	2.4	67.1	29.5

(QM23), liking for a particular school subject (QM29), dissatisfaction with performance of poor teachers (QM28), social prestige bestowed upon teachers (QM17), and opportunity for further studies (QM15).

FAC3. A third set of items refers to some idealistic aspect related to teaching. This factor may be called *altruistic reasons* (Table 4), and may be regarded as an important factor influencing one's decision to take up teaching.

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TABLE 5
Relative frequency of responses to items under agreeable working conditions (FAC4)

Item	SD	D	A	SA
	— Percent —			
QM10. Teaching is an easy job after marriage	14.5	44.9	30.4	10.1
QM16. I was influenced by my parents	38.5	41.8	12.5	7.2
QM19. There is a lot of holidays in teaching	2.9	37.0	49.5	10.6
QM20. Teacher's working hours are short	17.2	56.5	22.0	4.3
QM26. My SPM/STPM results are appropriate to become a teacher	2.9	23.3	59.0	14.8

TABLE 6
Relative frequency of responses of items under influence received (FAC5)

Item	SD	D	A	SA
	— Percent —			
QM2. I was influenced by other students who want to be teachers	41.4	48.6	7.6	1.4
QM5. I was influenced by my teachers	31.1	43.5	23.4	1.9
QM27. I was advised by my guidance teacher	38.6	38.1	21.9	1.4

TABLE 7
Relative frequency of responses to items under "unclassified items"

Item	SD	D	A	SA
	— Percent —			
QM21. Teachers are well paid	30.0	59.5	9.5	1.0
QM24. I am unable to pursue my studies in the university	26.7	38.1	21.9	1.4

High on the list is the value attached to teaching as a challenging job (QM12), followed by the desire to impart knowledge (QM25), the desire to educate the younger generation (QM22), the opportunity to render service to society (QM1), and the opportunity to prove one's capability in handling group situations (QM7). Ringness (1952) calls this factor "self-esteem". Fox (1961) labels an almost similar set of items "altruistic reasons".

FAC4. A fourth set of items may be termed *interest in agreeable working conditions* (Table 5). Long vacations as a fringe benefit to teaching (QM19), relatively short working hours (QM-

20), relevant academic qualifications (QM26), convenient job after marriage (QM10), and family influence (QM16) are highly loaded on this factor. Ringness (1952) labels an almost similar factor as "interest in working conditions". Fox (1961) refers to these as "practical reasons."

FAC5. The fifth set of items may be termed "influence received" (Table 6). This is reflected in the statements of influence of former teachers (QM5), influence from peers who want to become teachers (QM2), and advice from career guidance teachers (QM27).

Since factor loadings of 0.3 and below are

ignored, two items were dropped. These are item QM21 ("teachers are well paid") and item QM24 ("I am unable to pursue my studies at the university") (Table 7).

DISCUSSION

Normally, the first thing that one would consider when making an occupational choice is to analyze oneself in terms of capabilities, interests and personal values related to the occupation. Results from the factor analysis seem to lend credence to the theory of occupational choice proposed by Ginzberg *et al.* (1951). The first category in occupational choice is labelled as the *self factor*, which is similar to the personal considerations factor in this study.

It is generally agreed that one of the personal attributes expected of teachers (especially at the primary school level) is "liking for children". About 90 percent of the respondents indicate they like children. This motive seems to be popular as shown in the literature (Best 1948; Tudhope 1944; Haubrich 1960; Ee 1974; Lortie 1975; Jantzen 1981; Wood 1978; Book, Freeman and Brousseau 1986).

Teaching is a profession which provides teachers with ample opportunities to interact with children; such opportunities enable the teachers to acquire a better understanding of their young "clients". Thus, it is desirable that those who decide on a teaching career have a genuine liking for children. There has been several calls from teacher organizations in the country on the need to select potential teachers on the basis of their "positive attitude towards teaching," a term which may be safely interpreted as "liking for children".

The second category proposed by Ginzberg *et al.* deals with the influence of the individual's perception of the real world on his or her choice of occupation. This category is labelled as the *reality factor*. The three extracted factors of FAC2 (values towards teaching), FAC3 (altruistic factor) and FAC4 (agreeable working conditions) may all be classified under Ginzberg's second category of occupational choice.

In a country such as Malaysia, where the

teaching personnel of primary schools are non-university graduates, it is natural to see a great majority of college teacher trainees expressing a desire of furthering their education at the university (Ee 1974; Anucia 1981). Most people perceive a university education to be a passport for upward social mobility, enabling the former non-university graduates to move up the social ladder, either within the teaching profession itself or outside the profession, such as business, public administration and politics.

It is also commonly acknowledged that securing a job after completion of a teacher education programme at any one of the 28 colleges in Malaysia is almost assured. This is because all teacher trainees are sponsored by the Ministry of Education to meet manpower needs of the Ministry. Currently, their prospects for employment seem to be brighter than those of university graduates, including government scholarship holders, who find it increasingly difficult to secure employment immediately after graduation. Furthermore, school teaching, like other government service occupations, is considered to provide maximum job security, in the sense that termination of service or retrenchment is rare.

Agreeable working conditions, such as short working hours and long vacations, are another reality factor associated with teaching (Goodlad 1984; Rowsey and Ley 1986). These practical considerations seem to be weighed more heavily by women than men, and these considerations may have influenced women to decide to become teachers earlier than men (Saxe 1969; Jantzen 1981; Best 1948).

Altruistic reason is another reality factor frequently quoted by potential teachers. The findings of this study indicate that teacher trainees are indeed altruistic in their motive for teaching, and this conclusion is corroborated by research reports of other investigators.

There are several ways of expressing the altruistic motive. Teaching gives the opportunity to impart knowledge (Fox 1961), or to educate the younger generation (Anucia 1981). A desire to help or be of service to others still ranked highest among Joseph and Green's (1986) respondents. There are

teachers who say that they get personal satisfaction from teaching (Book *et al.* 1985; Rowsey and Ley 1986).

Joseph and Green discussed the issue of altruism in contemporary society. According to these investigators, people who choose teaching in spite of the lower prestige of the profession in modern society are willing to get lower financial remuneration. Their motives for teaching are more altruistic in nature than materialistic. McLaughlin *et al.* (cited by Joseph and Green, 1986) had compared teaching to a religious vocation. According to McLaughlin, people who choose teaching are supposed to have "saintly" qualities because they would settle for a career with few material benefits, yet not highly respected by the public or one's own family.

Ginzberg's third category of reasons for occupational choice is called *key persons* who influence one's decision to take up an occupation. These key persons may be former teachers, own parents, or friends. The fifth factor extracted from the factor analysis did indicate a slight influence from peers and former teachers (Table 6). In the light of this finding, a few questions may be posed for consideration. If teacher trainees indicate they received very little influence from their former teachers, why is this so? Are teachers, especially guidance teachers, not recommending teaching to their pupils? Or, have the teachers themselves lost enthusiasm in teaching, for various reasons, that they avoid advising pupils on the prospects of teaching?

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have implications on the selection of teachers. Based on the different responses given by prospective teachers on their motives for teaching, one implication is that selection committees need to be cautious in the selection and recruitment of teachers. This suggests that there is a need for selection committees to be sensitive to the different motives of their candidates. For example, altruistic motives should not be taken at their face value because these could be learned responses.

From the findings of the study, it is

proposed that a standardised instrument be developed by selection committees to be administered on prospective teachers, seeking their reasons for choosing teaching. Using proper tools in the recruitment of teachers is just one of the methods of ensuring effectiveness among teachers.

Further studies are needed on the motives of a cross-section of teacher trainees in the country. In view of the current shortage of teachers, a knowledge of the different underlying motives for teaching would give further insights into this problem. In addition, a comparison between motives of college teacher trainees and university pre-service education students would further enrich our knowledge in this sphere.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to gratefully acknowledge the advice rendered by Dr. Ghazali Othman of University Sains Malaysia; and the permission to conduct this study, by the Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD), Malaysian Ministry of Education.

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(Received 28 June, 1988)