

Motivation in Teacher Education: The Forgotten Element and Its Snowball Effect

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DOI: 10.26907/esd.16.3.07

Submitted: 20 April 2021; Accepted: 25 June 2021

Abstract

This research explores student teachers' motivation to join teacher education and its relation to their career intention to join the teaching profession. The qualitative study was conducted in the English department of private and state teacher education in Indonesia. A total of 14 student teachers (20-23 years old) took part in the interview. The findings show that most student teachers chose Initial Teacher Education (ITE) because of external motivation factors such as the alternative option of not being accepted at their desired faculty or following parents' suggestions. Besides that, considering the internal motivation factor, one of the common reasons students chose English teacher education was the interest in English, which was also viewed as transferrable skills that could be useful to many other job possibilities. The findings show that only a few of the participants who prioritised their career to become teachers. The findings might contest the generalisation that often associates student teachers' motivation to join teacher education to become teachers. Even though the assumption is valid to some extent, the nuances in the student teachers' motivation to choose teacher education might need to be considered, especially in the context when joining teacher education is relatively easy because there is no high-stake test involved and teaching might be perceived as an unattractive career intention. The findings also indicate that as motivation is fluid, abstract, and hard to measure, teacher education overlooks this element in the admission process. However, forgetting the importance of student teachers' motivation in teacher education could lead to a more severe problem in the quality of graduates and education in the long run.

Keywords: motivation, teacher education, qualitative study, student teachers, career intention.

Мотивация в педагогическом образовании: Забывтый элемент и эффект «снежного кома»

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DOI: 10.26907/esd.16.3.07

Дата поступления: 20 апреля 2021; Дата принятия в печать: 25 июня 2021

Аннотация

Данное исследование направлено на изучение мотивации будущих учителей и её связи с намерением студентов остаться в педагогической профессии. Качественное исследование было проведено на кафедре английского языка педагогического факультета в Индонезии. В интервью приняли участие 14 студентов в возрасте от 20 до 23 лет. Результаты исследования показали, что большинство студентов выбрали программы педагогической подготовки из-за внешних мотивационных факторов (не смогли поступить на желаемый факультет или сде-

ляли свой выбор по рекомендации родителей). Кроме того, повлияли и факторы внутренней мотивации: одной из распространенных причин, по которой студенты выбирают английское отделение, является интерес к английскому языку. Знание английского языка рассматривается как передаваемый навык, который может пригодиться в дальнейшем при трудоустройстве. Анализ данных показал, что лишь небольшая часть участников хочет работать по специальности. Полученные результаты опровергают утверждение о том, что выбор программ педагогической подготовки объясняется желанием работать в школе. Хотя это и справедливо в некоторой степени, необходимо учитывать и другие аспекты мотивации студентов, особенно когда поступить на педагогические факультеты относительно легко, поскольку здесь отсутствует тестирование с высокими ставками, а преподавание воспринимается как непопулярный вид деятельности. Данное исследование свидетельствует: поскольку мотивация изменчива, педагогические институты упускают такое направление работы, как мотивация студентов, что в долгосрочной перспективе может привести к более серьезным проблемам, связанным с качеством выпускников.

Ключевые слова: мотивация, педагогическое образование, качественное исследование, будущие учителя, карьерные планы.

Introduction

Motivation is widely accepted as one of the factors for one's success in a career. People who are doing what they like and are good at, find an element that could transform their lives (Robinson & Aronica, 2014). Nevertheless, motivation in teacher education as an institution to prepare teachers' skills and knowledge is often overlooked. There is a gap between what is suggested by the research and what is conducted in practice. Several studies have been published suggesting the importance of recruiting students with motivation to become teachers (Klassen et al., 2021; Rosyid, 2017; Surya, 2016). However, not many teacher educators consider motivation in the recruiting and admission process (Klassen et al., 2020). Motivation in teacher education has long been compromised and seemingly forgotten in the process. The impact of motivation becomes visible when many studies reported teacher graduates' low interest in the teaching profession, high turnover rate, and low rate of teacher retention. Motivation needs to be taken seriously in teacher education (Lamb & Wyatt, 2019). Otherwise, teacher education could be seen as a mere higher education institution that might be chosen as the last resort. Ideally, teacher education is supposed to prepare students interested in becoming teachers and creating teacher graduates who intend to join the teaching profession. That is not always the case because not all student-teacher education graduates choose to become a teacher. This phenomenon has been a concern in teacher education in the broader context as well as in Indonesia. For that reason, this study explored student teachers' motivation in joining teacher education in the first place at the admission process, then linking to what kind of job they prioritized after graduation.

Teacher education in Indonesia is a four-year bachelor degree program for preparing teachers in the teaching profession. There is no high-stake recruitment process. Considering the admission process, which is relatively easy without a specific test for ability or motivation, teacher education is considered less prestigious than subjects perceived to be more difficult such as medicine or engineering. The socio-economic background in Indonesia, which views teachers as a low paying job, especially for part-timers, casual teachers and non-civil servants, is another reason why teaching is not considered prospective (Allen et al., 2018). However, teacher education graduates are oversupplied in urban areas, but the quantity does not equal the quality. This phenomenon raises a concern regarding the quality of teacher education graduates. Many studies explore motivation and career intention in teacher education. However, few studies, especially in Indonesia, explore both issues in the same study. A deeper understanding of these two

interrelated issues is required to explore the possibilities for improving graduates' quality, as motivation is believed to be an essential element in study and career success.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The present study explored the student teachers' primary motivation in joining teacher education and the priority of their career intention. It attempted to identify the extent of student teachers' motivation to be teachers at the admission stage and their career intention after graduating from ITE. Furthermore, the study outlines the possibilities of the snowball effect of lacking motivation in ITE in the long run and its impact on the societal problem of education on a bigger scale.

Literature Review

Motivation, broadly defined as something that drives people to act, could be categorized into intrinsic, extrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and altruistic (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). In this study context, student teachers who have intrinsic motivation may choose ITE because they like the subject, interest in education, enjoy working with children and teaching activities. Meanwhile, other students who have extrinsic motivation might join ITE because they have expectations such as social status and salary. Besides that, external factors such as influences from parents, friends and teachers, circumstances or situations could also affect student teachers' decisions. Students with altruistic motivation enrol on ITE because of their personal belief in the value of teaching. Self-determination theory may explain how student teachers have the ability to make choices (Deci & Ryan, 2012), while expectancy-value theory suggests how student teachers perceive that each potential task carries with it a set of expectancies values and cost (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). In light of this theory, students are motivated to join ITE when they believe being a teacher will lead to a fulfilling career. Student teachers give intrinsic, utility and attainment values as personal values in their reasons to become teachers.

However, in an era of a rapidly changing social economy, this motivation is no longer adequate for understanding reason, and the findings of previous studies may not be relevant to all social contexts. For example, in the Indonesian context, there is a shift in how teacher education is perceived. ITE is no longer viewed as mere teacher preparation but as an alternative option to continue higher education study when student teachers are not accepted in faculties with high-stakes recruitment such as medicine or engineering. Given that the recruitment process in ITE is relatively easy, students join ITE as a last resort (Masbirorotni et al., 2020). Thus, student teachers' motivation in teacher education is multifaceted, fluctuating and tentative. Student teachers may join ITE to (or not to) become teachers (Suralaga et al., 2020). The motivation of student teachers to become teachers may be rooted in their interest in content areas and the teaching profession. Their motive to become teachers might be inspired by their former teachers or family members who became teachers. A teacher or "guru" in the Indonesian language is viewed as a respectful job and have a high social status. Nevertheless, from financial value, it is considered an unattractive job. Security in the position is mainly for civil servants or teachers in reputable schools. Teachers with intrinsic and altruistic motivation who are poorly compensated might not last long in their profession. Teaching as a fallback career is a common reason for choosing the teaching profession in Indonesia (Suryani, 2020). That study reported that 79.3% of 657 student teachers who wanted to become teachers chose it as a second job (Suryani, 2017; Suryani et al., 2016). Low salary and flexible time for part-timers and casual teachers result in teachers with more than one source of income. Some student teachers may not become teachers because they do not have 'a

calling' or do not like the nature of the job as a school teacher with high demands but low salary.

Much research regarding motivation to join teacher education is closely associated and often overlapping with motivation to become teachers. It is assumed that when students enrol to join teacher education, they are likely to become teachers. Several studies have examined motivation in teacher education with the lenses of intrinsic, extrinsic or altruistic values (Abotsi et al., 2020; Giersch, 2021; Mukminin et al., 2017), as well as using the FIT scale, measurement of factors influencing teaching choice (Abonyi et al., 2021; Akpochafo, 2020; Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012; Ivanec, 2020; König et al., 2016; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt et al., 2012). However, several studies have explored the tendency of student teachers who do not join the teaching profession after graduates (Rots et al., 2014, 2012; Trent, 2019). Student teachers shift their motivation or choose not to become a teacher possibly because of several variables such as the nature of the teaching job, which is perceived as complicated, full of administrative stuff and demanding as well as the perception of teacher status which is considered less prospective and prestigious (Han & Yin, 2016). Similarly, motivation could also be shifted through learning experiences such as practicum (Azkiyah & Mukminin, 2017; Kuswando, 2014; Sinclair, 2008). Practicum is typically viewed as the window for student teachers into the actual context of teaching. Nevertheless, the experience during practicum could 'make or break' their motivation to become teachers. On the one hand, students might have a favourable view of teaching when interacting with students. On the other, students might have a negative perception when they realise how difficult it is to manage the class. Overall, contextual factors and learning experience in teacher education play a significant role in student teachers' motivation to become teachers.

Methodology

The data collection began after permission to research from the Faculty of Education was obtained. Qualitative data were collected by interviewing the representatives of each class in the third and fourth year of each teacher education program. The demographic information of the interview participant is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Interview Participant

<i>Interview (N=14)</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
Gender	
Male	2
Female	12
Year of study	
Year 3	8
Year 4	6
Teacher education program	
Private	8
State	6
Age	
20-21	8
22-23	6

Before the interview, all the participants were asked to read the information sheet about the detail of the study, including the information about anonymity, confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were also given a chance to ask questions related to the study. Besides that, a consent form was provided to be signed as approval of voluntary participation. In the interview, the participants were asked two questions regarding why they joined teacher education in the first place and the kind of job they are interested in after graduating from ITE. After all the data was collected, the data transcription was produced, followed by member checking. The transcription was returned to the interview participants to check for accuracy. The interview data were analysed using reflexive thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2020). All the statements were coded and grouped by similarity of students' main reasons joining teacher education and priority of career intention as shown by looking at the comments they mentioned first and foremost in the interview. Three themes were identified from the data: alternative options, parents' suggestions, and interest in English. Interest in being a teacher came up in some comments after they mentioned their main reason, but none of them mentioned it in the first place. The three themes were then categorised into two broader themes: external motivation is defined as the motivation resulting from external circumstances or influence that affects student teachers' decisions. Internal motivation means a drive from the inside of student teachers to make a choice.

Results

Student teachers were asked about the reasons they joined teacher education. Despite the common assumption that student teachers enrolled in teacher education to become teachers, this idea was hardly mentioned as the first answer in the interview. Although student teachers had several reasons to join teacher education, including becoming a teacher, this notion tends to come up after mentioning the main reason. External factors influenced the majority of students' choices, and a few students expressed their internal motivation. Interview findings revealed a common pattern for choosing to join teacher education because of one or two of these three main reasons; alternative option of not being accepted at the desired faculty, parents' suggestion and interest in English as a subject and transferrable skill. The motivation pattern of students at private and state teacher education is typically the same. In private teacher education, out of eight students, three students mentioned not being accepted at the desired faculty. Three students chose it because of their parents' suggestion. Two of them chose it because of their interest in English as primary reasons. Meanwhile, in state teacher education, out of six students, three students expressed that they joined teacher education because they were not accepted at their desired faculty. Three students stated that they enrolled in teacher education because of parents' suggestions for their primary reason.

External Motivation

Alternative Option to Continue Higher Education

Regarding motivation to join teacher education, the interviews revealed that external factors of not being accepted at the desired faculty are the most common influence of students' choice to join teacher education as an alternative option. This phenomenon appears more obvious for private students as typically private universities were chosen because students were not accepted at favourite state universities with much lower tuition fees. However, this phenomenon also happens in state teacher education when students could not join their desired faculty; even the portion might be smaller. Six out of 14 students mentioned that they joined teacher education because they were not accepted at their desired faculty. Comments included.

“Initially, I didn’t have any slightest intention to join teacher education. I used to be obsessed with International Relations as a field of my study, actually. I tried to get into some universities but could not be admitted. It happened that I also have a passion for English. So okay, I try. thank God it turns out that I am accepted here. Before, I was not interested in teacher education. But now, I know the scheme of how to teach, experienced practicum teaching. So, it’s not bad. It turns out it is cool to be a teacher” (Student 12, Private).

“It was a second choice. I used to want to go to medical school, but I didn’t go in. Finally, I had a plan B. I wanted to study abroad, but my English is not too good, so I want to learn, I want to deepen it.’ Why do I take education?’ because I also have a passion for education. Since I was little, my hobby is teaching, like teaching friends, oh they understand what I taught, even some people enjoy me teaching them than their teachers, so I feel I have a passion for teaching, I also learn English, to pursue that goal...” (Student 4, State).

The references show that students also have an interest in becoming a teacher and education, but they are not their main reason to join teacher education. In other words, if their parents had not recommended it to them or if they have had not been rejected in their desired faculty, they would not have had chosen teacher education. As they were rejected at their desired faculty, they might choose alternative options where they could be accepted and had an interest. The comments also showed that some students started enjoying teacher preparation. However, as the findings from career intention illustrated, this interest that came up in the learning process in the program did not influence the majority of student teachers’ career intention at a significant level.

Following Parents’ Suggestion

Family plays a vital role in directing students’ major at university. Typically, parents want their children to consider following their career path. This phenomenon appears visible from student teachers whose parents are teachers. Six out of 14 students said that they joined teacher education because of their parents’ suggestions, as illustrated by these two students.

“I originally wanted to go to English literature. But because my parents were both teachers, they suggested I join teacher education. They said, “Instead of literature, it would be better you choose education “. So, yes, I tried the test, choosing English teacher education and thank God, I am accepted” (Student 1, State).

“So, it was my parents’ choice. I am actually less interested in teacher education. I am interested in Pure Chemistry, Pure Biology, and Pure Physics. But, again, my parents were both a teacher, so I was directed to become an English teacher. And I already know their habits. But, over time, I felt comfortable and okay, this is not bad” (Student 9, Private)

Internal Motivation

Interest in English as a Universal Subject

English is considered a universal subject because it is transferrable in any field. Two out of 14 students expressed their interest in English as the main reason they joined English teacher education. Some students who chose teacher education as an alternative option or following their parents’ suggestion also mentioned English as a secondary reason. The comments from two students who chose teacher education because of English are:

“First of all, I like English. I think English is one of the subjects or fields that is universal. Suppose that when we graduate and are experts in English, it is easier to get into any realm. Then, I think education is important. So, ‘English’ is important, ‘Education’ is also important, so why don’t we join the English Teacher Education...” (Student 7, Private).

“Because the first one is, I like English, the second is probably based on the previous experience. When I was in Junior High School, I started to love English, but I did not get the satisfaction of my teacher’s performance, so I thought, ‘why is English taught like this?’. Actually, I have many things to complain about, like when I had practicum teaching in high school yesterday, I get a variety of views on how teachers teach students. From my experience, they do not pay much attention to the students, in the sense that they just come to the class, and then they teach, and it is done. And as the effect, the students might have a bad perspective about English...” (Student 14, Private).

Overall, the participant interviews indicated that their initial motivation to join teacher education was not to become a teacher, as this remark did not initially appear from their interviews. Nonetheless, it could be inferred that some of the students have an interest in becoming a teacher to some extent. In a nutshell, being a teacher is a secondary reason students join teacher education because they were not accepted in their desired faculty or their parents asked them to join teacher education. However, most students across these two reasons believed that the English skills they received from the program were useful for any job, either becoming a teacher or choosing other professions.

Career Intention

The interview findings revealed that none of eight private students chose to be teachers to prioritise career intention. Meanwhile, two of six private student teachers prioritise being a teacher after graduation. However, the students who did not prioritise teachers as their career intention mentioned that they could also become teachers if they had to, but it was not their main priority. Some students who chose ‘lecturer’ mentioned that they were only interested in joining the teaching profession as a lecturer, as being a lecturer is perceived having a better income, more prestigious and more prospective for the career path. The main student teachers’ motivation to join teacher education and career intention is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Student Teachers’ Main Motivation for Joining ITE and Priority of Career Intention

State	Main reason for joining ITE	Career priority	Private	Main reason for joining ITE	Career priority
Student 1	Parents' suggestion	Lecturer	Student 7	Interest in English	Lecturer
Student 2	Alternative option	Lecturer	Student 8	Parents' suggestion	Lecturer
Student 3	Alternative option	Lecturer	Student 9	Parents' suggestion	Journalist
Student 4	Alternative option	Researcher	Student 10	Parents' suggestion	Lecturer
Student 5	Parents' suggestion	Teacher	Student 11	Alternative option	Ministry staff
Student 6	Parents' suggestion	Teacher	Student 12	Alternative option	Curriculum developer
			Student 13	Alternative option	Employee
			Student 14	Interest in English	Lecturer

The interview findings revealed the consistency between motivation and career intention. The majority of students who did not mention becoming a teacher as their primary motivation to join teacher education did not prioritise teaching as their career intention, even though student teachers mentioned interest in teaching or education after their primary reason. The students who choose to become a teacher after graduation are the ones who follow their parents' suggestions. While the three of four other students who follow their parents' suggestion prefer a teaching career in the higher institution as a lecturer. Lecturer becomes the most chosen career intention among other options, including choosing teacher education as an alternative option to continue higher education.

Discussion

This study focused on student teachers' motivation to join teacher education. The investigation explored why student teachers chose to follow the teacher training program in the first place. The study aimed to gain more understanding on the extent of motivation to become a teacher by extending it with career intention and examining whether the motivation to join teacher education related to motivation to become a teacher and their career intention. The interview findings concerning motivation to join teacher education indicated that student teachers chose teacher education primarily due to external factors such as an alternative option to continue higher education and following parents' suggestion and internal motivation factor such as interest in English. The findings also imply that motivation to become teachers is a secondary motive besides an interest in English which is viewed as transferrable skills. Regarding career intention, the interview findings revealed that most student teachers viewed teachers as an alternative option for their career intention. The finding is similar to a study conducted by Suralaga (et al., 2020). The study result shows that many student teachers did not have genuine motives and commitment to teaching. The findings suggest that when student teachers join teacher education to become a teacher as a secondary reason, they might choose a teacher as an alternative career intention.

A possible explanation for student teachers to choose ITE as an alternative option is because the admission process is relatively easy, especially since some ITE institutions have more available spaces than candidates who apply. Everybody will likely be accepted regardless of their motivation and abilities. The significant role of parents in influencing their children education could explain why some student teachers follow their parents' suggestion to join teacher education, mainly when their parents are teachers as they are familiar with teachers' roles. English as an international language that can be used in any job (a valuable transferrable skill) could be attributed to the fact that students chose English Department in teacher education. The results on how student teachers' motivation to join teacher education relate to career intention could be interpreted several ways. Student teachers had probably determined from the beginning that they did not want to become teachers, so the learning experience in ITE did not have much effect on them. Another plausible explanation was that student teachers considered teacher as their intention, but they were not sure if they were capable. Besides that, job security and payment could also become factors in why student teachers did not prioritise teaching because they were not sure whether they could make a living with that profession. Another possible reason was that students did not like the nature of teaching jobs such as working with students, fixed schedules, demand and low payment. In a similar vein, Bruinsma & Jansen (2010) asserts that students with an external motivation to join teacher education negatively correlated with their career intention.

Lacking motivation in teacher education is an important issue that should not be ignored. If teacher education does not consider student teachers' motivation in the recruitment process and during the learning process, the quality of graduates will be affected. Figure 1 shows the snowball effect of lacking motivation in ITE in the long run.

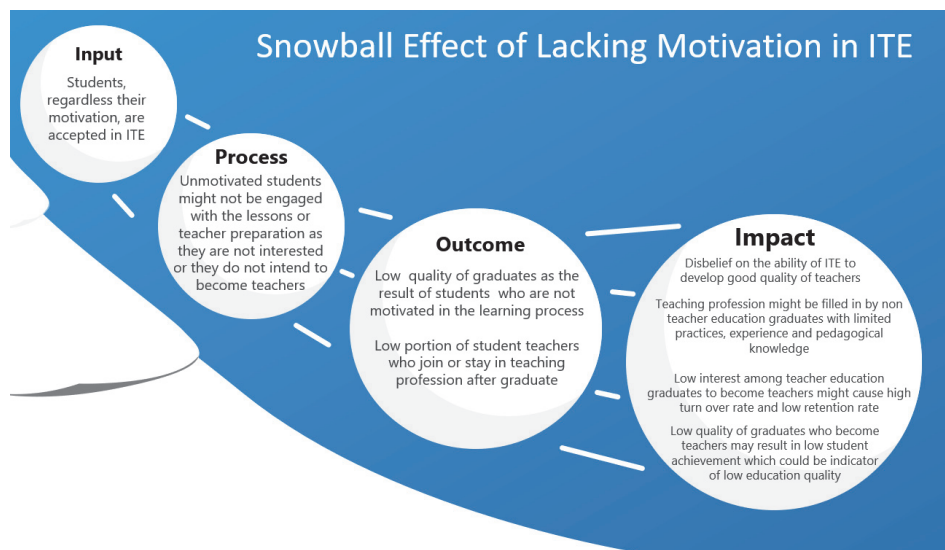


Figure 1. Snowball effect of lacking motivation in ITE

Even though the societal and educational impact seen in the figure can be caused by other factors, lacking motivation can be considered one of the contributing factors that need to be taken into account. One potential limitation of this qualitative study is the small sample, which means that this study cannot generalise the findings. Nevertheless, this study might offer some significant contributions to understanding student teachers' motivation to join teacher education and its impact on the process, career intention, and education in the long run. The study suggests that motivation needs to be taken seriously in teacher education, not compromised or forgotten. One possible practical implication of this study is to filter the candidates who enrol in teacher education based on their motivation to become teachers as one possible solution to improve the quality of teacher education graduates.

Conclusion

This study explores student teachers' primary motivation in joining teacher education and the priority of their career intention. The results suggest that being a teacher is the secondary reason why student teachers choose teacher education and link to how they view the teacher as an alternative option to their career intention. In other words, student teachers joining teacher education do not necessarily mean they want to become teachers. While contextual factors and learning experience in teacher preparation may influence their career preference, motivation at the beginning of the program is noticeably closely related to their interest in the job. These findings have substantial implications for teacher education practices, specifically in the admission process. The possible impact of lacking motivation in teacher education on graduates' quality and career intention implies that teacher education needs to consider taking student teachers' motivation into account

in the admission process. Student teachers who are motivated to become teachers are expected to prevent the snowball effect of lacking motivation in ITE to education in the long run and increase the number of student teachers who stay in the teaching profession.

Acknowledgement: This work was supported by Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP).

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