

I Don't Want to Be a Teacher: Factors Restricting Male Students from Entering the Teaching Profession

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by concern about the small number of male school-leavers entering the teaching profession in Malaysia. It is important to determine empirically the reasons why the teaching profession is not popular as their career option, to see whether this can inform us about measures that can be taken to increase the involvement of men in the teaching profession. This study seeks to explore the factors that restrict male students from choosing teaching as a career. A total of 85 first-year male engineering students completed a questionnaire in which they were asked to rate factors that restricted them from entering the teaching profession. The findings of the study revealed that the most significant factor was associated with social influences, followed by poor job conditions, negative perceptions of the teaching profession and limited personal value. This paper proposes that halting the decline in numbers of male teachers is a task that requires the intervention and contribution of not only schools and policy makers but also parents and society, and recommends that effective strategies for attracting young male school leavers to join the teaching profession be developed.

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INTRODUCTION

Why is the teaching profession not popular among the brightest young male school-leavers in Malaysia? This study was prompted by concern about the decline in the number of male teachers in Malaysia. Educational statistics for Malaysia reveal a significant increase in the imbalance

between numbers of male and female teachers. In 2005, men represented 31% of primary school teachers and 36.6% of secondary school teachers, a decrease from 33.4% and 38.2% in 2001. The gap has continued to widen; education statistics in 2015 showed that the percentage of male teachers declined to 30.06% compared to the percentage of female teachers, which is 69.94% (Malaysia Educational Planning and Research Division, 2015).

It cannot be denied that the decline in the number of men entering the teaching profession is due to the decreasing population of male students compared to female students. At the same time, the teaching profession has to compete with demand for male workers in other professions. Competition is getting tighter with the growing number of career possibilities. Unless adequate initiatives addressing the factors that restrict men from entering the teaching profession are taken, the imbalance between male and female teachers promises to worsen. The implications are that most teachers teaching today's children are female, appearing to support the notion that men do not wish to enter the profession (Taylor, 2006). There is a growing belief among educators that, as a consequence, young children do not have the opportunity to get the pedagogical and societal benefits of having a balance of male and female teachers in schools (Reynolds, 2010; Sax, 2005).

If policy-makers and employers wish to redress the current gender imbalance among teachers, then it is essential to

understand the factors restricting young people from pursuing teaching. There has been a considerable amount of research investigating the factors motivating pre-service teachers and teachers to opt for teaching as a career. In contrast, scant attention has been given to those who choose other careers. This paper aimed to investigate the reasons why male graduates are not choosing teaching as a career option. In order to appropriately address the decline in male participation in the teaching profession, we need a better understanding of their reasons. An understanding of the issues restricting male participation could significantly contribute to a larger effort to attract more male school-leavers to teaching as a career. This study was designed to answer the question: What are the factors that restrict young men from pursuing a teaching career? To seek answers to this question, this investigation surveyed the reasons why teaching is not selected as a career among first-year male engineering students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Choice of profession is one of the major decisions for anyone. Career choice research within the teaching profession has often sought to investigate the factors motivating young people to opt for teaching as a career. Lortie's (1975) seminal work entitled *Schoolteacher* is among the earliest research in this area. Lortie classified the motivating factors into attractors and facilitators. The first encompasses attributes such as "the desire to work with young people," "viewing

teaching as a mission student teachers wish to accomplish” and “a yearning to continue with their positive schooling experiences.” The make-up of facilitators, on the other hand, embraces themes such as “hailing from a family of educators,” “being regarded by others to embody the qualities of a teacher” or “being a female occupational choice, [it] is strongly endorsed by parents.” All these factors illustrate a combination of intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic motives that align with results from more recent studies. Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) describe these categories as follows: 1) Altruistic reasons: Deal with seeing teaching as a socially worthwhile and important job, a desire to help children succeed and a desire to help society improve; 2) Intrinsic reasons: Cover aspects of the job activity itself, such as the activity of teaching children and an interest in using their subject matter knowledge and expertise; and, 3) Extrinsic reasons: Cover aspects of the job that are not inherent in the work itself, such as long holidays and salary (p. 117).

The intrinsic and altruistic factors are created by internal motivation resulting from some innate drive, without apparent reinforcement from the outside (Malone & Lepper, 1987; Deci & Ryan, 2000). In contrast, an extrinsic factor is driven by external motivation that relates to environmental factors such as rewards. Many studies have classified the motivation to teach according to the spectrum of altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Bastick, 2000; Moran, Kilpatrick, Abbot, Dallat,

& McClune, 2001; Richardson & Watt, 2006). Based on the expectancy-value theory, Watt and Richardson (2007) offer a theoretical model of Factors Influencing Teaching Choice Scale (FIT-Choice Scale) to guide systematic investigation into the question of why people choose teaching as a career. The model consists of motivational factors (perceived ability, intrinsic value, fall-back career, personal utility value, social utility value, prior teaching and learning experiences and social influences) and perceptions (difficulty, expertise, social status, salary, social dissuasion and satisfaction). A review of international studies suggested that the motivation to teach can vary across different sociocultural contexts. For instance, a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on studies conducted with practising teachers from France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Netherlands confirmed that the most frequently cited reasons for teaching were altruistic and intrinsic reasons (OECD, 2005). These include a desire to work with children, make a social contribution and intellectual fulfilment (Alexander, Chant, & Cox, 1994; Tudhope, 1944; Valentine, 1934; Hayes, 1990). In contrast, extrinsic motivation appeared to be more prominent in developing countries. For example, Yong’s (1995) studies conducted in Brunei Darussalam highlighted the fact that extrinsic reasons are the main factors for trainees to choose teaching. Similarly, Bastick’s (2000) studies in Jamaica concluded that the extrinsic motives

given by Jamaican teacher trainees are similar to those reported from trainees in other developing countries and are in contrast with results from metropolitan countries that emphasise intrinsic and altruistic motivation.

All around the world the diminishing presence of men within the teaching profession has gained attention (Smith, Mack, & Akeyea, 2004; Johnston, Mckeown & McEwen, 1999; Riddell & Tett, 2006). However, there has been a lack of focus given to the difficulty of attracting male teachers to the teaching profession. The literature indicated that there are some factors that make teaching a less attractive career. These include a poor salary scheme, poor job conditions and low social status. (Hatch, 1999; Weiss, 1999; Shen & Hsieh, 1999; Ramsay, 2000; Bennell, 2004) identified that prospective entrants to teaching are exposed to many alternative career options in the graduate market, which can offer greater financial reward, career progression and a better lifestyle. Page and Page (1984) reported that the lack of discussion in schools about selecting the teaching profession discouraged high-school seniors from considering teaching as a career option.

So far, there is no empirical evidence exploring specifically the views of men who decided to enter careers other than teaching. Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) compared three groups of undergraduate students: Those who were definitely not considering teaching; those seriously considering teaching; and those undecided

about entering teaching. However, the study is not gender-specific. A few studies have been reported that have explored the issue of gender and the teaching career. Johnston, McKeown and McEwen (1999) investigated the views of male and female sixth-form students regarding the factors that might be important when considering teaching. Similar gender differences were also found by Reid and Caudwell (1997) in their study of Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students, which investigated the reasons for choosing teaching as a career. More male than female students rated extrinsic motivation such as “longer holiday” and “a change of career” as very important. In contrast, fewer male than female students rated intrinsic motivation such as “enjoy the working atmosphere,” “teaching as a challenge” and “hours fit with parenthood” as very important. Newby, Smith and Newby (1995), investigating African-American high school students’ perception of teaching as a career, found that male students evaluated the importance of teaching less than do females. Also, male students were more likely than female students to have been influenced by others in making teaching a career choice. Indeed, in previous research, scant attention was given to men who decided not to teach and the factors that might have dissuaded them from pursuing a career in teaching.

If we are to gain a clearer understanding of what attracts certain people to teaching, we also need to explore how teaching is viewed by men who decide to choose other careers. By understanding the factors

restricting men from entering the teaching profession, one would be better able to appreciate what needs to be done to attract the brightest male school-leavers to the teaching profession. Lack of understanding may contribute to the mismatch between what is needed and what is provided by initiatives for increasing the number of male teachers in schools.

METHODOLOGY

The target sample for this study was a cohort of 85 first-year mechanical engineering students from a public university in Malaysia. Only students with excellent academic achievement have the opportunity to be enrolled into this engineering course.

The majority (98.8%) were aged between 18 and 20 years old. Also, 70 (82.3%) participants were Malay, 13 (15.3%) were Chinese and two (2.4%) were others. The majority (95.3%) used the matriculation certificate as their qualification entry to the course. Nearly all (96.5%) placed engineering as their first choice course.

The questionnaire consisted of 27 statements dealing with the factors that might restrict male students from choosing the teaching profession. The factors included social influences (eight items), perception (perception of teaching profession – six items and perceived ability to be a teacher – one item), job conditions (working hours and workload – eight items) and personal values (four items). The items were developed from the literature review (teaching as a career of choice and teachers' job satisfaction) and informal dialogues with

engineering students about the teaching profession. The statements were Likert-type scale items, where the individual checked one of five possible responses to the statements, "Strongly Agree" (SA), "Agree" (A), "Neutral" (N), "Disagree" (D) and "Strongly Disagree" (SD) to the factors that restricted them from choosing teaching as a career. The questionnaire was administered in tutorial class groups to ensure a high return rate and allow for clarification of respondents' queries. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers, with the consent of programme coordinators, and informed consent of all participants. It took approximately 30 minutes for participants to complete the survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis set out the means and the rank orders (Ranks 1 to 4) based on the means scores of each item. Rank 1 was considered as "very important reasons" (having a mean of 4.00 and above on a 5-point scale), followed by Rank 2 as "important reasons" (having a mean of 3.50 and below 3.99), Rank 3 as less important reasons (having a mean of 3.00 and below 3.49) and Rank 4 as not important (having a mean of less than 3.00).

As shown in Table 1, social influences consisted of three sub-categories: School environment, influence from family members and influence from friends. The reason, "School experiences did not develop my interest in teaching," showed the highest mean value (4.11). This finding suggested that male engineering students in the present

study had a lack of exposure to a positive role model from among their teachers, as well as the school environment. Sullivan and Dziuban (1987) discovered that teachers frequently discouraged academically talented students from considering a career in teaching due to the frustrations associated with their own employment and status as a teacher. The mean values of the reasons related to the influence of family members ranged from 4.05 to 3.14 (Ranks 1 to 3). The most important reason was “No encouragement from father” (Rank 1). Three items considered as important reasons (Rank 2) were: “No encouragement from mother,” “No encouragement from sibling” and “Following my family career tradition in the engineering profession.” These findings indicate that family members may have been responsible for the decision of not choosing teaching as a career option. In a study by Norzaini (2013), it was found that 87% of women chose a teaching career due to parents’ influence compared to 63% of men. This may also indicate that parents have internalised the notion of “femaleness with regard to teaching” (Smith, 2000). This study also found that friends had significant influence on the decision of not choosing teaching as a career. This is evident as the reason, “Most of my friends are not choosing the teaching profession,” was at Rank 1. Also, the item “Friends told me teaching was not a good career choice,” was considered an important reason (Rank 2). The influence of peers in career decisions has been discussed widely in the literature (Webber & Walton, 2006; Crumb, George,

& Chandra, 2006). A critical analysis by Naz et al. (2014) of the influence of peers and friends in decision-making concerning career found that although family i.e. parents and other family members primarily shaped and transformed the behaviour of children in multiple ways, peers and friends’ influence are an asset for developing career opportunities and decision-making among youth.

The job conditions that were investigated in this study were focussed on two aspects. The first aspect consisted of five reasons associated with workload. Four of these five reasons were considered as important reasons (Rank 2). These included “Too many student discipline problems in school” (mean=3.98), “Need to teach tuition classes at the weekend” (mean=3.95), “Marking students’ homework after formal school hours” (mean=3.28) and “Teachers working during school holidays” (mean=3.85). Only one reason was considered as being less important (Rank 3), which was “Lots of non-teaching tasks” (mean=3.28). Teachers’ working hours was also one of the important reasons that restricted the male students from entering the teaching profession. Two out of three reasons were at Rank 2. These included “Extended working hours” (mean=3.79) and “Working hours not flexible” (mean=3.60). However, the respondents did not seem bothered about “Working time started too early” (mean 3.24, Rank 3). The overall mean of 5.71 showed that the job conditions was one of the important reasons for not choosing teaching as a career option among male

Table 1
Reasons for not choosing teaching as a career

Category	I am not interested in the teaching profession because....	Mean	Rank
Social influences	School environment		
	School experiences did not develop my interest in teaching	4.11	1
	Influence from family members		
	No encouragement from father	4.05	1
	No encouragement from mother	3.98	2
	No encouragement from siblings	3.90	2
	Following my family career tradition in engineering	3.78	2
	Influence from friends		
	Most of my friends are not choosing the teaching profession	4.04	1
	Friends told me teaching was not a good career choice	3.94	2
	Overall mean	3.97	
Perception	Perceived ability		
	Teaching is not suitable for my ability/I do not have the talent to be a teacher	4.00	1
	Perceptions of teaching profession		
	Teacher's salary is much lower than an engineer's	4.05	1
	Teacher's salary insufficient compared to its heavy workload	4.04	1
	Teaching is not a challenging job	3.29	3
	Lack of exposure to technology development	3.12	3
	Teachers are not valued/respected by society	3.01	3
	Teaching makes less contribution to the county	2.17	4
	Overall mean	3.51	
Job conditions	Workload		
	Too many student discipline problems in schools	3.98	2
	Need to teach tuition classes at the weekend	3.95	2
	Marking students' homework after formal school hours	3.93	2
	Teachers work during school holidays	3.85	2
	Lots of non-teaching tasks	3.28	3
	Working hours		
	Extended working hours – outside office hours	3.79	2
	Working hours not flexible	3.60	2
	Working time starts too early (7.20 am)	3.24	3
	Overall mean	3.70	
Personal value	Limited bonus in a year	3.81	2
	No overtime payment for working after school time	3.72	2
	Limited/poor job prospects/security	3.10	3
	Difficult to get job promotion	3.09	3
		Overall mean	3.43

students. This concurs with Kyriacou and Kunc's study (2007) that highlighted four key reasons to explain teacher attrition rates, namely, workload, salary, disruptive students and the low status of the profession in society.

There are seven reasons related to perception. One of the reasons is related to perceived ability to be a teacher. The respondents felt that teaching was not suitable for their ability. This was considered an extremely important reason (Rank 1), with a high mean value (4.00). Both items regarding perception of teachers' salary, "Teacher's salary much lower than engineer's" and "Teacher's salary insufficient compared to its heavy workload" were also ranked 1 ("extremely important reason") with the mean values of 4.05 and 4.04, respectively. Earlier studies such as those by Connie (2000) and Tiziava (2003) discovered that low salary led to teacher demotivation for continuing their service in teaching. Three reasons fell under Rank 3 ("less important reason") in determining the students' decision of not choosing teaching as their career. The reasons were: "Teaching is not a challenging job" (mean=3.29), "Lack of exposure to technology" (mean=3.12) and "Teachers are not valued or respected by society" (mean=3.01). This study supported Norzaini's (2013) findings that male trainees' perception of the status of teaching as a respected job was not particularly high compared to female trainees'. The perception that "Teaching makes less contribution to the country" was not only the least important reason (Rank 4)

in the perception category but also showed the lowest mean value overall for the 27 reasons presented to the male engineering students. This study supported Kyriacou and Coulthard's finding (2000) that the consideration, "The job will contribute to society," was important when choosing a career as it was ranked higher among the pro-teaching group compared to the anti-teaching group.

Personal values refer to how teaching may be useful to the individual. Of the four reasons, two were regarded as important reasons (Rank 2). The two reasons were related to the benefit of teaching in terms of income, "Limited bonus in a year" and "No overtime payment for working after school time." The findings indicated that male students showed high concern for extra benefits related to money. The finding concurred with Yuce, Sahin, Kocer and Kana's finding (2013) that males placed greater interest in financial-based extrinsic motives such as money. Unlike the private sector, which is profit-based, public education is a non-profit-based programme. Teachers' terms of service guarantee a regular monthly income and they are not eligible to claim any overtime payment for extra time worked above school hours. The other two reasons, namely "Poor job security" and "Difficult to get job promotion" were ranked "less important," with mean values of 3.10 and 3.09, respectively. That male students considered these reasons as less important may be connected to the status of teachers as civil servants who enjoy a permanent job

status. Studies in Taiwan by Wang (2004) as well as in Singapore by Soh (1988) showed that job security was one of the motives for joining the teaching profession. Besides job security, teaching is also attractive in providing further education to a higher level.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study indicated that the most dominant factors that restricted male students from choosing the teaching profession as their career option were social influences. School experience that failed to develop students' interest in teaching, together with the lack of encouragement from family members and strong influence from peers in career decision-making played an important role for rejection of the teaching profession as a career option. The second factor was job conditions, particularly the reasons related to job workload. The third factor was perception of the lack of talent needed to be a teacher and low salary. The last factor was related to personal value, with the focus on extra benefits in terms of money rewards such as bonuses and overtime payments.

Based on the research findings, some practical recommendations can be made. Firstly, a teacher recruitment campaign that is specifically organised for male students should be developed. In Queensland, Australia, through the Male Teachers Support (MATES) project, the number of male teacher enrolments increased by more than double the national average (Smith, 2005). The MATES project organised some marketing and promotion of the teaching

profession among male students, especially senior male high-school students. Secondly, male students need to be convinced that the teaching profession can offer a pleasant working environment. In this regard, policy-makers should undertake serious actions for overcoming the problem of teachers' workload. Finally, in order to compete with the advantage of high salaries in the private sector or other careers such as engineering, it is important for the government to provide more competitive remuneration packages for teachers.

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