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Factors Motivating Bachelor's Degree Graduates to Pursue Teaching as a Career: A Case of the National Institute of Education (NIE), Cambodia

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Abstract

Understanding what motivates graduates to choose teaching as a career is crucial for teacher recruitment and preparation programs, but information regarding their motivation is scarce. This study addresses that gap by exploring the motivational factors of student teachers to choose teaching as a career, employing a quantitative approach, using cross-sectional design among 765 bachelor's degree graduates at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Cambodia. A total of 667 questionnaires of the 28-item instrument (87.19%) were completed with the five-point Likert scale measured extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivations showing internal reliability (α = .854). The study found that the highest motivation was the nobleness of the profession (M = 4.55), the second was assisting children to do well in academic performance (M = 4.47), and third was contributing to the society (M = 4.38). Respondents highly supported professional development, lifelong learning, joy, and applying knowledge. Opportunities for work and its stability, and the social support also mattered for respondents, but the least valued aspect was teaching as "no other choice" (M = 2.37). This research has practical applications for recruiting, career guidance, and pre-service training.

1. Introduction

Students in teacher training programs have varying reasons for their decision to enter this profession. These reasons range from enjoyment in the instructional process to a sense of devotion to assisting students to job security, recommendations from family members and friends, and the need for career change. Although these reasons differ for individuals, and may vary based on level of education, they ultimately manifest in one decision-career choice. Some scientific studies on teaching motivation have addressed the fun associated with the teaching process and its outcomes, touching on individuals' sense of self, social motivation, and interpersonal relationship among others (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Watt & Richardson, 2007).

The motivation of future teachers to embark on a teaching career deserves attention. It is particularly important to analyze the motivation of individuals who possess a bachelor's degree to study teacher education. Thus, for them, choosing a teaching career may be a way of using their subject knowledge, making a contribution to society, continuing their own learning, and having a stable job. However, teacher education institutions need to obtain this kind of information.

The development of the Cambodian teacher workforce is intertwined with the improvement of education quality and the human resource development of Cambodia. The National Education Priorities acknowledge the importance of preparing the country's teachers to attain

the national goals (MoEYS, 2014; UNESCO, 2024). According to MoEYS (2021), developing teachers should not be limited to the initial employment of teachers. The Teacher Career Pathway (TCP) and the corresponding policy on professional development offer a framework for the development of teachers (MoEYS, 2021).

The Cambodian Teacher Policy Action Plan 2024-2030 identifies workforce development as connected to other areas of teacher management, transformative leadership, teacher education and professional identity and development (MoEYS, 2023). More recent policies within the education sector emphasize quality pre-service preparation and qualification upgrading (UNESCO, 2025). Even the most recent educational policies focus more on the opening up of more opportunities for teachers' careers and less on the career choice of individuals. For example, the availability of career opportunities will not change the interpretation that prospective teachers give to this value. Thus, the views of student teachers should be sought.

International studies help identify the expectations of graduates. The existing studies adapted the theory of self-determination, which recognizes both intrinsic and extrinsic motives (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Also, the factors influencing teaching choice framework identifies, among others, graduates' intrinsic career value, perception of teaching ability, social and personal utility, previous teaching experience, social factors, as well as fallback careers (Watt & Richardson, 2007). These frameworks allow researchers to systematize their studies and accept that the same considerations may take on different meanings in different contexts. For instance, security which could mean a stable income, or safeguards, and recognition could mean social respect or appreciation for the role of teaching. Evidence specific to the context is required to understand what kind of consideration graduates prefer.

The National Institute of Education (NIE), Cambodia, is a context that allows examining the motivations of graduates who have chosen the teaching profession. These student teachers have to have a bachelor's degree and clear the professional preparation entrance examination. Therefore, the responses of these individuals represent the case of graduates who chose to take a certain route into teaching. Drawing on evidence from this case, this article explores the factors that motivate the bachelor's degree graduates to choose teaching as a career choice.

The research question of this study is: what factors motivate bachelor's degree graduates at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Cambodia, to choose teaching as a career? Conducting a descriptive study of a quantitative nature, the article reveals the relatively stronger and weaker support of the statements reflecting motivational factors. Its major contribution is to provide evidence of the motivations of student teachers, and relevance to the teacher recruitment, career guidance and preparation.

2. Literature Review

Motivation refers to the causes and processes responsible for motivating behavior. This can be measured in terms of its strength, which shows the degree of motivation, and its orientation, which demonstrates the motivation behind such behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000). People can be equally eager to perform actions for different reasons. For teaching, an individual can be strongly drawn to the field due to the expected rewards, or because of the pleasure he or she gets while doing it or the importance of the work to the individual. Furthermore, distinction should be made between motivation, intention, and behavior. Motivation factors constitute the motivation itself (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020). Intentions refer to the person's will or determination to perform a certain act, and behavior is the act itself (Ajzen, 1991). In teaching career studies, this distinction helps to understand what appeals to individuals about the teaching profession, what leads to their intentions to join the profession, and what means they use to attain their objectives of becoming teachers. The participants of this study had started preparation, and therefore behavior in the teaching field had been evidenced; however, the

reasons stated in the questionnaires remain, at the most, statements of the respondents' views regarding the actions undertaken, and not direct evidence of the first step of the decision-making process.

While intrinsic motivation is described as engagement in an activity due to internal interest in that activity, extrinsic motivation means carrying out an activity for the sake of getting an external reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Interestingly enough, extrinsic motivation does not have to involve externally determined outcomes in which people can actually find personal value in pursuing external goals (Mani & Mishra, 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Thus, teaching because you enjoy it is different from teaching to earn a salary. The latter does not preclude the former. From a practical point of view in this study, such separation is useful to organize different types of motivational factors. It does not, however, preclude the possibility of participants having more than one reason for being motivated. It is important to note that such reasons do not preclude the participant belonging to different types of motivation.

According to Self-Determination Theory, extrinsic reasons should not always be viewed the same way as extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2020) state that extrinsic motivation encompasses to what extent a person endorses the reason for engaging in a given activity. Hence, teaching may have a positive influence on society even if the person teaching does not find the activity enjoyable. The review mentions various factors like autonomy, competence and relatedness as intrinsic motivators. This differentiation is crucial as items in a given category of a questionnaire may encompass various psychological processes. Social recognition, family encouragement, job security, and a host of others may be considered extrinsic motivators. It should be noted, however, that having the same reason does not necessarily mean that the motivational experience is the same. Someone encouraged by relatives to take a given action may welcome the suggestion. Someone else may, however, experience the situation as a form of control. Descriptive ratings identify the reason endorsed. However, additional evidence may be needed to shed more light on the motivational experience. Interpretation, therefore, should be made closely tied to the wording of a given item.

Situated expectancy-value theory connects preferences to expectations of success and the subjective values held by individuals based on their social and cultural contexts. According to Eccles and Wigfield (2020), the expectation of success and subjective value of tasks are influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which people live. When examining teachers' career choices, using this perspective allows distinguishing between the expectations people have for their future success in teaching and the subjective value related to the teaching profession. The questionnaire covers the domains of teaching interest, benefit anticipation, teaching, and perceived teaching aptitude. There are judgments of values and expectancies, but the questionnaire should not be interpreted as an exhaustive test of situated expectancy-value theory. The cost and the value of alternative careers are not addressed. Thus, this theory allows for a different interpretive perspective rather than providing a structural model that can be assessed statistically.

Separation of perceived capability from actual demonstrated capability is also important. While some graduates may believe they have a natural aptitude for teaching, this does not necessarily mean they can teach effectively. Graduates may also be doubtful of their aptitude. Entrants to the profession may recognize the importance of training and refining their teaching skills. Like others, they may need additional preparation to teach effectively, but may also express doubts about their teaching aptitude and capacity.

As noted by Watt and Richardson (2007) and Clark and Watson (2019), to expand upon the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) model, several different dimensions of teaching have been assessed to provide a better idea of the motivations for selecting teaching as a career. The different dimensions assessed included the worth of other careers, their perception of their own teaching competence, their own utility (strengths, needs), their social

utility, their experience with teaching and learning, social influence, and how they perceive teaching in relation to a 'safety net' career (protective measure). Having these distinctions allows us to think about a career in a more detailed fashion, rather than simply classifying careers.

The conceptual framework for the study was developed by the author, illustrated in Figure 1, which categorizes the study of motivations for teaching careers into three dimensions.

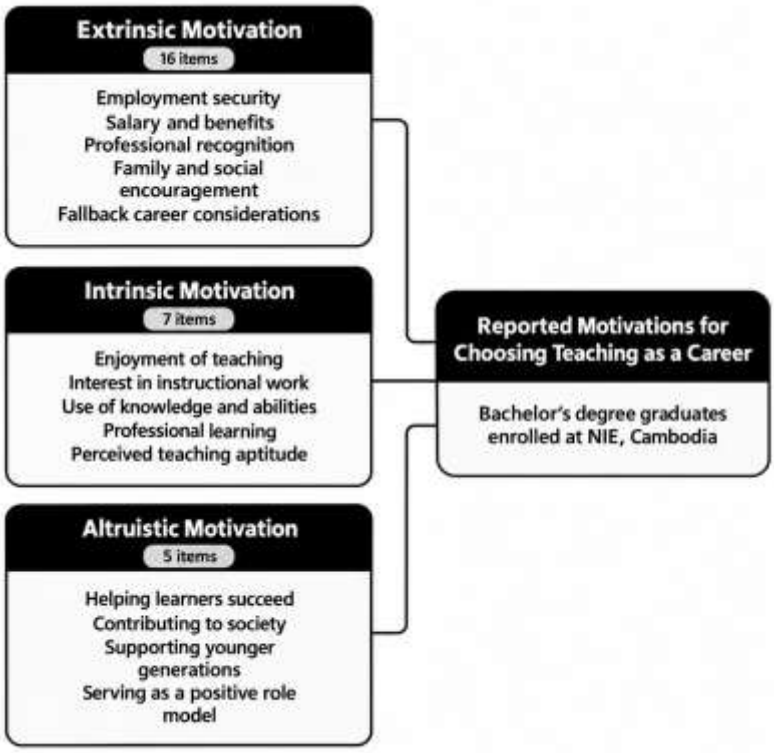


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

While this study does not strictly rely on the FIT-Choice framework, it utilizes the main elements to construct 28 items along the extrinsic, intrinsic and altruistic dimensions. The use of these categories helps to structure the data; however, the presence of a single unifying construct in each category cannot be proven. Therefore, an analysis at the item-level is imperative, especially in the case of a category that includes the employment benefits or alternatives. The framework helps to conceptualize and describe the motivation; however, it does not evaluate the instrument.

Altruistic motivation has been used to define the willingness to serve others and is presented in this study to describe the emphasis placed on the benefits of learners and society. Altruism is an analytical category that is most commonly used in research on the motivations towards a teaching career, and is not one of the three fundamental types of motivation defined by the Self-Determination Theory.

Findings from other regions allow for essential regional comparisons, such as Htang (2019), who shows a high level of acceptance of teaching as a sacred profession, which, amongst others, includes the dissemination of knowledge to children, helps to ensure their success, and provides job security upon graduation. It appears that professional meaning, social contribution, and employment are combined in a single construct. Nonetheless, differences in participants, training programs, and instruments used in the surveys make it difficult to compare the situation of Cambodian graduate entrants to teaching directly to the findings from the other countries.

There is a finding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as well as altruism, responsibilities, and opportunities by Onyefulu et al. (2023) in their comparative research in Jamaica, Poland and Türkiye. This finding reinforces the thesis of the need to contemplate extensively the variety of motivating factors, going beyond the realm of financial or intrinsic motivations. It is worth noting that participants of the other studies are practicing teachers while the current study's participants are future teachers. This indicates that the motivation and choices made for the first career as well as the reasons for continuing participation in teaching should be differentiated.

There is information about Cambodian student teachers as well. Huot et al. (2025) have looked into the reasons behind choosing a teaching career amongst 223 student teachers in the 4th year, about to start their career in teaching primary and lower secondary schools from Phnom Penh and Battambang Teacher Education Colleges in Cambodia. In their study, altruism, the influence of teachers and intrinsic motivation have been considered as the most important factors. Altruistic, teacher, and intrinsic motivation were the dominant types of motivation, while fallback motivation was the least dominant type. It gives a chance to compare the present sample with a similar sample from the same country, although the differences in educational programs and the prior experience of the teachers cannot be ruled out.

All the above studies emphasize the need to take into account the various aspects of motivation, and leave an empirical question about the present sample. The present article provides a detailed descriptive account of graduate entrants to one particular institution. The aim of the study is not to prove the dominance of any motivation or the presence of national differences indirectly, but to describe the various aspects of motivation that are important to this population, and interpret them based on the existing literature.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to understand the reasons that led student teachers to opt for a teaching profession. This design helped to understand the self-reported reasons of participants at a given moment (Setia, 2016). Data were collected from the 765 student teachers, majoring in 19 different areas at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Cambodia. A total of 676 questionnaires were completed and returned. Of these, 9 were removed because of inadequate completion or unsuitability. Thus, there were 667 adequate questionnaires, that is, 87.19% of the eligible population.

Given the overwhelming favorable results of the survey, the extrapolation of the results can be consistent with the generalizability of results. Nonresponse could have been due to the unavailability and unwillingness of respondents. However, the population was formed of successful entrants to the training program. The findings are not representative of the graduates who did not enter the program, or of unsuccessful applicants and the people who chose to follow other careers.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first collected respondents' demographic and educational information, including their age, gender, subject specialization. The second section was made up of 28 items on the reasons for choosing teaching within sixteen extrinsic items, seven intrinsic items and five altruistic items, in which twenty-two indicators were used and adopted from the model developed in Singapore by Goh and Atputhasamy (2001); three were adopted from the model developed in Myanmar by Htang (2019); and the remaining three were adapted from the framework developed in Jamaica, Poland, and Türkiye by Onyefulu et al. (2023). Adaptation of the items included translated and revised to suit the context of the study and were reviewed by a research specialist to improve clarity.

Before officially conducting the research, the preliminary reliability test of the questionnaire was performed with 76 respondents. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be 0.707 for extrinsic motivation, 0.845 for intrinsic motivation and 0.740 for altruistic motivation. The overall alpha for the questionnaire was found to be 0.826 (see Table 1).

Preliminary test results of the questionnaire suggested it is prepared for further use (Sullivan & Artino, 2013).

Table 1. Reliability Survey Instruments: Cronbach's Alpha

Motivation	Cronbach's Alpha	Indicators
Extrinsic Motivation	0.707	16
Instrinsic Motivation	0.845	7
Altruistic Motivation	0.740	5
Total	0.826	28

Descriptive analysis was performed using SPSS, version 21. Individual-item ratings were described by using means and standard deviations, and distributions were described by using frequencies and percentages. Motivational items were analyzed in the context of various categories. Between-item means were described and were performed to determine any significant differences among motivational items (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). Therefore, mean rankings were used to express order.

The study received authorization from the National Institute of Education (NIE) and permissions from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). Prior to the data collection exercise, participants were acquainted with the objectives, procedures and arrangements for confidentiality of the study as well as the right to opt out of participation. Participation was voluntary and not coerced in any way. Questionnaires were administered to student teachers within various class levels (19 subject specializations) and took approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. Results are reported to protect the identities of the participants.

4. Findings

Of the 765 student teachers we invited to participate, 676 answered the questionnaire, for an overall response rate of 88.37%. Nine of the returned questionnaires were not used in the analysis due to insufficient completion. Hence, the 667 completed questionnaires (87.19%) were analyzed. The remaining 89 of the eligible population did not participate, which accounts for 11.63% of the total eligible student teachers.

The high return rate of the questionnaire shows the level of engagement of participants in the research. However, the small number of disqualified questionnaires does not guarantee the quality of the collected data as well as does not rule out the existence of nonresponse bias among student teachers (see Table 2).

Table 2. Questionnaire Participation

Measure	Number	Percentage of eligible population
Eligible student teachers	765	100.00
Returned questionnaires	676	88.37
Usable questionnaires	667	87.19
Returned questionnaires excluded	9	1.18
Questionnaires not returned	89	11.63

Analysis of internal consistency yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.773, 0.801, and 0.772 for extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivations, respectively. The corresponding standardized-item alpha coefficients were 0.778, 0.811, and 0.786 (Table 3). Therefore, the internal consistency of both extrinsic and altruistic motivations can be considered as acceptable. The consistency of intrinsic motivation can be considered as satisfactory. Even if intrinsic motivation has the highest Cronbach's alpha coefficient, it cannot be said that this motivation was better defined and measured.

For 28 items, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.854, and the corresponding standardized-item alpha was 0.870. Thus, the difference between the two coefficients was small, and this shows insignificant difference between the two coefficients. However, it should be noted that the

overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the motivational questionnaire cannot be evaluated in an unambiguous manner. It contains different motivational dimensions, and therefore, it does not prove that all items measure the same construct.

The obtained results confirm the interpretation of the data of the motivational questionnaire. The results do not confirm the construct validity, dimensionality and the research hypothesis, especially with regard to the motivating factors.

Table 3. Internal Consistency of Motivation Dimensions

Dimension	Indicators	Cronbach's alpha	Standardized-item alpha
Extrinsic motivation	16	0.773	0.778
Intrinsic motivation	7	0.801	0.811
Altruistic motivation	5	0.772	0.786
Total instrument	28	0.854	0.870

Extrinsic Motivation Indicators

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations of sixteen indicators of extrinsic motivation. Result in Table 5 indicates that the means for the variables measured for extrinsic motivation ranged from 2.37 to 4.55. The factor that motivates bachelor's degree graduates to choose teaching as a profession was found to be the most noble profession (M = 4.55, SD = 0.558). Regarding the data analysis, the noble profession is the highest factor. Participants had a positive opinion about immediate employment (M = 4.09, SD = 0.825) and job security (M = 3.90, SD = 0.744). These data indicate that participants gave a relatively high importance to professional value and job security as career motivators. Absence of any other career choice was, on the other hand, rated the lowest (M = 2.37, SD = 1.158).

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for Extrinsic Measures

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation
Secure job	3.90	0.744
Many fringe benefits	3.81	0.789
High salary	3.74	0.749
Noble profession	4.55	0.558
Others value teacher	4.20	0.721
High status profession	3.67	0.797
Easy promotion	2.72	0.878
Relatively easy job	2.66	0.913
Salary during training	3.85	0.888
Employment immediately after training	4.09	0.825
Long holidays	3.48	0.914
Opportunities to undertake other work	3.01	0.932
Family's encouragement	3.75	1.016
Inspired by teachers	3.06	1.080
Friend's encouragement	2.67	1.036
No other choice	2.37	1.158

Intrinsic Motivational Indicators

Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations of seven indicators of intrinsic motivation. Items measuring intrinsic motivation ranged from 3.40 to 4.34. Concerning intrinsic motivation in the questionnaire, new learning and professional development was given the highest mean (M = 4.34, SD = 0.583), followed by lifelong learning (M = 4.31, SD = 0.643), enjoyment of teaching (M = 4.27, SD = 0.767) and intellectual stimulation (M = 4.24, SD = 0.612). The results suggest that participants were favorably disposed toward opportunities for learning and intellectual stimulation, as well as enjoyment of teaching.

Working with children was positively viewed (M = 4.06, SD = 0.685). Having high expectations for teaching was assessed somewhat less positively (M = 3.85, SD = 0.768). Inborn talent was assessed least favorably of all the factors in this domain (M = 3.40, SD = 0.900) and had the greatest variance of responses. It suggests that the participants were less endorsing of natural teaching talent compared to the other factors, and the highest variance indicated that some of the participants viewed it as lacking perceived talent.

Student teachers mostly positively assessed intellectual engagement and professional learning compared to natural teaching talent. These assertions are relative rather than absolute and do not indicate that any of the factors assessed influenced the decision to teach.

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations of Intrinsic Measures

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation
Love teaching	4.27	0.767
High expectations for a teaching career	3.85	0.768
Love working with children	4.06	0.685
Inborn talent	3.40	0.900
Intellectually stimulating	4.24	0.612
New learning and professional development	4.34	0.583
Lifelong learning	4.31	0.643

Altruistic Motivational Indicators

Table 6 shows the means and standard deviations of five indicators of altruistic motivation. The highest score was assigned to assisting others to succeed academically (M = 4.47, SD = 0.575), followed by the contribution to society and the country (M = 4.38, SD = 0.594), and providing a good example to children (M = 4.33, SD = 0.584). Participants highly evaluated the role of teaching in the academic and social development of its recipients.

A positive evaluation was given to counseling and advising of learners (M = 4.09, SD = 0.651). Statements in this category refer to the purpose of teaching in adults and young people. The mean of shaping the futures of young people was 3.73 (SD = 0.777) and showed highest response variability and comparatively weak and inconsistent endorsement. The statement, assisting others to succeed academically, was endorsed with highest agreement and shown lowest standard deviation.

Table 6. Means and Standard Deviations of Altruism Measures

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation
Serving as a role model for children	4.33	0.584
Love counselling and advising students	4.09	0.651
Contributing to society and the nation	4.38	0.594
Influencing young people’s future lives	3.73	0.777
Helping others succeed academically	4.47	0.575

Generally, student teachers supported ideas related to extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivation; however, the patterns varied by motivation type. The highest individual mean score (4.55) was reported for the perception of teaching as a noble calling, and positive responses were also reported for immediate employment and job security. Conversely, the perceived likelihood for easy promotion and for the profession to be relatively easy and having no career choice were endorsed least.

Endorsing intrinsic and altruistic motivations was more consistent. Intrinsic mean scores ranged from 3.40 to 4.34, and endorsing teaching for professional development and for lifelong learning and enjoyment, respectively, was more endorsed compared to endorsing teaching for a perceived natural talent. Regarding altruistic motivation, meaning range was from 3.73 to 4.47, and endorsing teaching to help learners to succeed academically and to contribute to society were most endorsed.

5. Discussion

Summary of Findings

This study explored the factors motivating the bachelor's degree graduates to pursue a career in teaching. The study showed that the extrinsic motivation "noble profession" is the highest, followed by altruistic motivation "helping others succeed academically" and intrinsic motivation "new learning and professional development." The findings indicate the positive attitudes towards professional worth, helping learners, social contribution, enjoyment and continued learning. When interpreting the results, it is important to keep in mind the differences in the various types of motivations and altruism, as well as the differences in the means. Teaching's professional nobility was found to be the highest mean (M = 4.55, SD = 0.558), and was highly endorsed by participants. This result is similar to that of Htang's (2019) study conducted in Myanmar, where participating teacher trainees highlighted the moral worth of the profession, and providing opportunities for learning support for children. Professional worth and altruism seem to play a major role in attracting people to pursue the teaching profession across different contexts.

Professional Worth and Social Recognition

Of all the statements rated in the survey, teaching's professional worth was found to be the highest (M = 4.55, SD = 0.558), and is similar to Htang's (2019) study conducted in Myanmar, where professional worth and supporting children's learning was prioritized by participant teacher trainees. Similar to this study, the motivation for teacher education in Myanmar appears to have been influenced by more than one factor. Here, professional worth was found to be the strongest.

Conceptual care is needed when interpreting participants' endorsement of professional nobility. While the questionnaire places professional nobility in extrinsic motivation, it doesn't necessarily mean that participants endorsing worthwhile teaching attributed it to seeking an external reward. Participants could have endorsed nobility with service, ethics, or social recognition. The difference is important as "others value teachers" (M = 4.20) and "high status profession" (M = 3.67) received differing levels of support. Thus, professional worth, public esteem, and social position should be, and were, treated as distinct constructs.

As with the case of altruism, it's apparent that participants endorsed nobility with the benefits that teaching offers the society. "Helping learners to succeed academically" received a mean (M = 4.47) slightly higher than "Contributing to society and the nation" (M = 4.38), perhaps explaining why teaching is the noblest of all professions and considered as one of the social callings (Huot et al., 2025).

Although beliefs of what young people need to succeed was valued by participants, it was less valued than what teachers need to help students to achieve academically. One of the main reasons could be that participants perceived that helping young people to succeed academically is relatively easier to accomplish than influencing young people's future in general. But that's not what the survey is focusing on. Like the case with altruism, participants could have valued the statements to different extents.

Enjoyment of Teaching and Professional Learning

In the intrinsic category, new learning and professional development (M = 4.34), lifelong learning (M = 4.31) and love teaching (M = 4.27) and intellectual stimulation (M = 4.24) were favored. The favorable responses suggest that teaching involves intellectual stimulation and professional development. Ryan and Deci (2020) differentiate intrinsic motivation, which is derived from interest and enjoyment, from motivation directed toward separable outcomes. Enjoyment of teaching fits this distinction, whereas professional learning may serve several functions including, for example, self-satisfaction, growth in efficacy and promotion.

Thus, without further evaluation, the measurement of this category of the questionnaire are not interpreted to reflect a single psychological process. Professional development and enjoyment of teaching are related but are not the same.

This study provided the evidence to suggest opportunity for instructional design to connect enjoyment in teaching with structured professional development. It suggests that the motivational ratings related to enjoyment may also be improved through guided instruction, critical feedback and opportunities for advanced teaching.

Employment Conditions, Social Encouragement and Fallback Choice

Although professionally-related and social-purpose-related factors dominated the sample case, employment conditions remained relevant. Receiving immediate employment after training (M = 4.09) and job security (M = 3.90) indicated above average importance. Other employment conditions, such as salary during training (M = 3.85), benefits (M = 3.81), and a high salary (M = 3.74), also received generally positive responses. Overall, the findings indicate that higher employment conditions were positively valued.

Prioritization of employment conditions does not necessarily suggest lack of professional motivation. As Ryan and Deci (2020) note, extrinsic motivation can be personally endorsed and autonomous. It is therefore possible that a respondent may consider stable employment, and yet enjoy teaching and help students learn. The current analysis does not assess the rationale for each of the individuals' combinations of item endorsement.

Social encouragement also varied by the source. Family encouragement (M = 3.75) was endorsed more than teacher inspiration (M = 3.06) and friend encouragement (M = 2.67). In Huot et al. (2025), by comparison, teacher influence was endorsed the most. The differences may lie in the sample participant backgrounds, the programme contexts, or in the measurement. Overall, the data demonstrate the importance of distinguishing various personal influences.

The least endorsed choice (M = 2.37) was received no other choice, while easy promotion (M = 2.72) and relatively easy work (M = 2.66) were less endorsed. This indicates limited agreement with fallback choice and ease at work. It does not mean all participants selected teaching as their first choice, or that they fully appreciated its requirements.

Measurement and Practical Implications

The category-specific alpha coefficients show internal consistency, but do not validate the questionnaire's dimension. In this case, the overall alpha of 0.854 does not support that the 28 items measure one construct. As Tavakol and Dennick (2011) note, internal consistency should not be confused with other types of validity.

The findings may assist recruitment communications which demonstrate professional purpose and learning opportunities and establish expectations for employment. Career guidance may encourage candidates to reflect upon their interests in light of the realistic conditions of employment and the demands of the job. Preparation to teach, with its focus on improving instructional practice, could assist teachers in integrating their professional aspirations for student learning with opportunities for meeting students' learning needs. These are areas for potential support; the survey did not validate the effective use of recruitment or preparation strategies.

Limitations and Future Research

The study was conducted at only one NIE cohort and, therefore, may not generally apply to other institutions and Cambodian graduates. The sample consisted of participants who had already joined the workforce, excluding graduates who chose different careers or who were not admitted. Although there was good participation, it is possible that some people were biased against participating. The responses may also reflect social desirability, including difference in meaning, and responses related to the participants' post-enrollment employment.

The design relies on capturing a moment in time and, therefore, does not allow for the study of causal relationships, changes over time, or interrelationships among the variables. Future research may examine motivational profiles of participants as well as validate the adapted

questionnaire and include multiple preparation routes and higher education institutions. Longitudinal studies may explore the development of expectations of new teachers, the relationship between expectations and professional learning, and the motivations that influence career persistence.

6. Conclusion

The study examines the factors which influence the choice of the teaching career by graduates with a bachelor's degree who are studying at the National Institute of Education, Cambodia. Based on the results of the cross-sectional survey of 667 student-teachers, various professional, personal, social, and employment-related factors were identified. The high level of agreement with the nobility of the teaching profession was significantly higher compared with the relevance about the benefits of education for learners and society and the country's development. Positive attitudes were expressed for professional and personal development, and the use of knowledge in general. Security of employment and social support were important, while teaching as a backup occupation and teaching as an easy occupation were not endorsed highly.

The findings allow addressing the research question; positive attitudes were reported for a variety of considerations including, security of employment, social support and personal and professional development. Positive attitudes toward the motivating factors for the choice of the teaching profession were reported within the context of more general concepts. However, descriptive information does not address the importance and the statistically meaningful differences between various considerations.

In the future, studies need to describe the consideration for motivating factors before and after the process of educating and training, and professionally active. Also, studies need to explain why motivated teachers leave teaching.

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