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# **Pre-service teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a career in Singapore**

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As the national teacher education institute in Singapore, the National Institute of Education (NIE) prepares all teachers seeking to be employed within the education service in Singapore. In the last decade, NIE's enrolment for initial teacher preparation programmes has grown significantly, with peaks in numbers during the recession years. There is also some evidence of attrition when beginning teachers complete their 3-year bond with the Ministry of Education, which sponsors their teacher education programme. It is thus important to determine empirically the reasons why pre-service teachers join the teaching profession, to see whether this can inform us about measures that can be taken to ensure they stay on in the profession. As part of a longitudinal study on beginning teachers' attitudes towards teaching and professional development, a research survey, the first of three data collections, was administered to whole cohorts of pre-service teachers entering NIE's three main teacher preparation programmes in July 2004. This paper presents the survey findings on pre-service teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a career and discusses the differences between cohorts of different programmes. The implications of the study are discussed in terms of informing future policy and practice in the areas of teacher recruitment, retention and professional development.

Keywords: reasons for joining teaching; pre-service teacher education; intrinsic/extrinsic/altruistic motives for joining teaching

## **Introduction**

There has been a considerable amount of research both internationally and locally investigating the factors motivating young people to opt for teaching as a career. The main reason why there exists such a huge body of literature is primarily because governments and policymakers are interested in knowing whether they are using the right incentives to recruit and retain teachers in the profession. What is more significant is the impact that teacher recruitment and retention has on student learning outcomes. The present study seeks to understand the reasons why pre-service teachers choose teaching as a career in Singapore using a qualitative approach. In understanding the reasons that motivate candidates to opt for teaching in a country

where the teaching profession is financially rewarding vis-à-vis other occupations, has a relatively high status, and the Ministry of Education as the chief employer provides many opportunities and incentives for promotion, professional development and other monetary and non-monetary rewards, one would be better able to appreciate what else needs to be done to prevent teachers of calibre from leaving the profession.

### **Literature review**

In a seminal work entitled *Schoolteacher*, exploring what motivated teachers to enter the profession, Lortie (1975) classified these reasons as *attractors* and *facilitators*.

The attractors encompass 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 the facilitators, on the other hand, embraces themes such as “non-elitist admission standards” (Wang & Fwu, 2001, p. 391), “hailing from a family of educators”, “being regarded by others to embody the qualities of a teacher”, or it “being a female occupational choice, is strongly endorsed by parents”.

Since then, many other studies have classified the motivations to teach according to a spectrum of intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic dispositions (Moran, Kilpatrick, Abbot, Dallat, & McClune, 2001; Whitbeck, 2000; Younger, Brindley, Pedder, & Hagger, 2004). According to Moran et al., based on previous research on motives for entering the teaching profession, three categories of motives may be derived: *extrinsic*, *intrinsic* and *altruistic* factors. Extrinsic motivation includes the benefits and perks offered, such as good remuneration and having holidays in sync with one’s own children. Intrinsic factors may be understood as job-related factors; for example, the nature of the job provides an avenue for lifelong learning; the

perceived good job fit, the many opportunities that the job appears to offer and so on. Altruistic factors go beyond any tangible benefits that the teaching profession has to offer. Instead, those motivated by altruistic reasons have a deep passion for teaching, a great love for children, and a desire to make a difference to the lives of their students.

Moran et al.'s (2001) categorization is broadly in agreement with Wang and Fwu's (2001) suggestion that there appears to be two broad attractions to the teaching profession: those related to job factors such as the nature and conditions surrounding the job (intrinsic factors) and external forces that propel one to select teaching as a career (extrinsic factors). It is important to have a broad overview of the different types of motives young people have for entering the teaching profession for at least two reasons: First, this enables us to study the correlation between the type of motivation and the propensity for staying in the teaching profession in the long run. Wang and Fwu found that those motivated by intrinsic factors outstayed their peers who were motivated by extrinsic reasons. Second, as Soh (1998) suggests, it is important to achieve a match between the motives for entering the profession and the measures taken by the local public authority to make teaching attractive, as any mismatch would result in shorter than anticipated retention rates. The diverse taxonomy of motivations, uncovered by numerous studies, dovetail with one another; the intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic categories very much reflect the attractors, while personal influences that are featured in many articles resonate with the facilitators described by Lortie (1975).

Previous research has established that there exists a wide range of reasons why pre-service teachers are attracted to the profession. These include factors related to "interpersonal" reasons such as the opportunity to work with young people, the joy

and satisfaction in witnessing a child's learning process, and being able to make a difference to their students and to society at large (Phillips & Hatch, 1999; Snyder, Doerr, & Pastor, 1995; Stiegelbauer, 1992). It has also been established that pre-service teachers are motivated by intrinsic rewards such as the opportunity to express their creative ability, the enjoyment of the challenges and responsibilities, the opportunity for continual learning and growth, and the chance to fulfil a lifelong dream (Allison, 1982; Dieterich & Panton, 1996; Farrell, 1980; Gordon, 1993; Phillips & Hatch, 1999). Edmonds, Sharp and Benefield (2002) studied the recruitment and retention of teachers in the workforce. Their findings suggest that pre-service teachers generally opt for teaching for intrinsic reasons, such as the perception that teaching makes an important contribution to society. Their research also suggests that people with different profiles are motivated by different reasons. For example, male pre-service teachers placed more emphasis on extrinsic factors compared to their female counterparts.

While different motives may influence pre-service teachers to take up teaching, student teachers also bring with them certain expectations of what teaching entails; what they bring when they enter into initial teacher preparation and what they realize when they actually begin teaching will determine their continued enthusiasm and ultimately their continuation in their profession. In a sense, the reasons for coming into teaching and the reasons why they leave teaching are two sides of the same coin. While three categories of motives for entering teaching, namely intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic, have been identified, four key reasons have been put forward to explain the reasons for leaving the profession, namely, workload, salary, disruptive students, and low status (Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007).

Comparative studies have also been done to understand pre-service teachers' motives for entering the teaching profession in different countries. In a study comparing pre-service teachers in Cyprus (University of Cyprus) and the United States (Pennsylvania State University), for example, Papanasasiou and Papanasasiou (1997) found that intrinsic motives were more dominant for students from Pennsylvania State University than those in Cyprus. The latter were attracted to the benefits they would enjoy after graduation and the job security their teacher training provided. The differences in motivation may be a reflection of the different economic standing between the two countries. There is in fact no guarantee of teaching jobs upon graduation in the United States and previous studies have shown that most pre-service teachers there are motivated much more by intrinsic factors rather than extrinsic ones such as expected salaries and the availability of jobs after graduation (Hayes, 1990; Robertson, Keith, & Page, 1983; Summerhill, Matranga, Peltier, & Hill, 1998). The same applies for pre-service teachers enrolled in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education in Britain where 96% of them asserted that they were largely motivated by altruistic and intrinsic factors such as the joy of working with children and the high job satisfaction granted by the teaching profession (Reid & Caudwell, 1997).

The study of motives for entering the teaching profession in Singapore began as early as 1968 with the work of Lau (1968), whose study suggested that the main motives for entering teaching were altruistic and intrinsic and included reasons such as being able to serve the society and having an interest in developing the young. Soh's (1981) study confirmed that of Lau's, and he summarized the motives for teaching as being linked to the intrinsic nature of the job, the ability to attain self-actualization (the highest form of needs under Maslow's hierarchy) and a spirit of

altruism. In a later study which Soh (1989) carried out on female pre-service teachers, he found that apart from the earlier reasons he cited, practical reasons also played a role; but ultimately, the predominant factor remained that of the fondness for children. Soh (1998) conducted another study on 180 in-service secondary school teachers and found that with this group of teachers, in-service conditions played an important role in determining their current decision to be in the profession. Soh's research on different groups of teachers corroborates the findings made by previous researchers who suggest that student teachers are motivated by more idealistic and altruistic factors than those already in the service (Bergsma & Chu, 1981; Green & Weaver, 1992).

Apart from Soh's work, Goh and Atputhasamy's (2001) study investigating the motives of pre-service teachers for entering the different initial teacher training programmes conducted at the National Institute of Education (NIE) remains to date the most current and comprehensive study on the topic. The purpose of their study was to investigate whether the government's efforts to introduce incentives to make teaching an attractive career through salary increases and better career advancement prospects had a bearing on the motivations behind student teachers opting for the profession. Interestingly, they found that the top five reasons motivating student teachers across the different programmes were altruistic in nature and included reasons such as a love for working with children, a love for teaching, the opportunity to influence young lives for the better, the intellectual stimulation provided by the job, and the perception that teaching is a noble profession. Other reasons included extrinsic factors such as the immediate employability afforded by the training and the fringe benefits enjoyed by teachers. Lowest on the priority list were reasons such as there being no other choice and the perception that the job was easy.

An interesting and valuable insight offered by Goh and Atputhasamy's (2001) study is their attempt to compare the motives across pre-service teachers from the different primary programmes. They found that those enrolled in the 4-year degree programmes were significantly more attracted by extrinsic factors, namely service conditions, compared to their counterparts from the other programmes. The less academically strong student teachers enrolled in the 2-year diploma programmes stood out significantly in terms of being motivated by altruistic factors, as did those who had no teaching experience, when compared with those who did have teaching experience. In terms of age-group differences, the oldest group (aged 25 and above) differed significantly from the youngest group (aged between 18 and 20) for being more motivated by altruistic reasons compared to their younger counterparts. The older group was also significantly less attracted to teaching on account of the job security it provided. The youngest group were the most influenced to join the profession upon prodding by their teachers, families and close friends.

One reason why this area of research remains highly topical is because previous researchers have reported that the type of motivation a pre-service teacher enters the profession with has a close relationship with the degree of commitment the teacher displays towards the job in the future (Wang & Fwu, 2001). They found that those who were decisive about their choice to enter the profession and had a great deal of enthusiasm ultimately outlasted their peers in staying in the profession. Consequently, studying motivation for entering teaching is important for the purpose of predicting retention rates in the profession for specific cohorts of students. The ability to predict retention rates backed by some form of empirical findings is important in helping a country's Education Ministry plan for possible shortages in the



teaching workforce as ultimately, there hardly exists a one-to-one correlation between enrolment figures and teachers entering and staying in the teaching service.

In Singapore, almost all teachers in the formal school system are employed centrally by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and are sent to NIE for their pre-service preparation. Thus, as the sole teacher education institute of Singapore, NIE has the onerous task of ensuring that its programmes remain current, relevant and responsive to a changing global and local educational landscape. Ensuring quality and excellence by constantly reviewing and enhancing the teacher preparation programmes and working on the professional development needs of our teachers remain a central mission of the Institute.

### **Aims of the present study**

The present study set out to investigate reasons why pre-service teachers choose teaching as a career in Singapore using a qualitative approach. The motivation behind the study is to seek an understanding of whether current recruitment, retention and teacher professional development programmes are in line with what motivated these individuals to join teaching in the first place.

This paper will present data on why pre-service teachers from four initial teacher training programmes offered at NIE have selected teaching as a career. While Goh and Atputhasamy's (2001) study remains the most comprehensive on the topic of motives for joining teaching conducted in Singapore to date, this study is different in that it targets the whole population of those entering pre-service teacher education, including those who will be posted to secondary schools.

## **Method**

### ***NIE programmes and the sample***

The NIE offers three main programmes for pre-service teacher training: the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programme for university graduates, the undergraduate degree programmes, and the Diploma in Education (DipEd) programme. Within both the PGDE and the degree programme, there are separate tracks catering to the preparation of primary and secondary teachers. The two tracks in the degree programmes share the same structure and have many courses in common, such as the content knowledge courses. When this study was conducted, only the primary track was offered, thus for this paper, the degree programme shall be considered a single programme for training primary teachers. However, the two tracks of the PGDE programme have different structures and share few commonalities, so for this paper, they will be considered two separate programmes: the PGDE(S) and the PGDE(P) for secondary and primary teachers, respectively. With the exception of a small number of subjects such as Mother Tongue, Art, Music and Home Economics, the 2-year DipEd caters for the preparation of generalist primary school teachers. The main features of these programmes are shown in Table 1.

(Table 1)

Participants from the degree and diploma programmes were admitted with either the pre-university General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-level qualification or a diploma from one of Singapore's five polytechnics, which provide technical and business education. Those admitted into the PGDE programmes were university graduates in different disciplines from various local and international universities. All pre-service teachers admitted into the respective programmes had already been

offered employment by the MOE and were at the NIE for the required professional training before being assigned to schools. This means that all pre-service teachers enrolled in NIE's programmes receive a salary and their tuition fees for the period of training are paid by the MOE.

As mentioned earlier, the study included the whole population of all the pre-service teachers entering NIE's programmes in the same year. Table 2 gives the number of participants belonging to each of the programmes as well as the mean age of the participants and the gender distribution in each of the four programmes. It can be seen that in the three programmes for primary teachers, the proportion of female teachers is very high, ranging from 66% in the degree programme to 86% in the diploma programmes. This is reflective of a worldwide trend where primary school education is overwhelmingly populated by female teachers.

(Table 2)

### ***Data collection***

The participants in this study were administered a questionnaire when they were first admitted into NIE. They answered the questionnaire in a sitting as part of an activity during their orientation into their programmes of study.

The questionnaire was designed to collect data for a larger study and the portion of the questionnaire that forms the basis for this paper required participants to self-report in a free-response manner on their main reason(s) for choosing teaching as a career. The two reasons for choosing to use open responses were that, firstly, the most influential and important reasons will come to the minds of the participants; and secondly, the researchers did not wish to cause participants to consider pre-crafted reasons if they were not the main reasons.

Besides the open-ended responses, relevant personal profile data such as gender, age, educational background and previous job were collected. Participants were also asked whether their parents were teachers and about the persons who had the greatest influence on their choice of teaching as a career.

### *Analysis of data*

These written responses were analysed by identifying common themes from the statement responses of the participants. A resulting list of themes was compiled as the set of main reasons for these pre-service teachers choosing teaching as a career. Each of the responses was then coded by one researcher according to the identified themes. The coding was then validated by another researcher independently, checking for accuracy and frequency, for the purpose of ensuring inter-rater reliability. The frequency counts for each of the reasons were then tabulated for comparison between respondents of the different programmes. It was possible for a participant's response to include two reasons but these were very few since they were asked for their main reason. In cases where there was doubt as to which reason an open response fell under, the interpretation of the response was agreed upon after discussion.

From the questionnaires, nine themes were identified as main reasons for choosing to become a teacher. In addition, the themes could be clustered into the three broad categories of Altruistic, Intrinsic or Extrinsic, as used in the literature. The nine themes are listed as main reasons in Table 3, in which they are also categorized as Altruistic, Intrinsic or Extrinsic. These reasons are further accompanied by examples of statements made by participants to explain why that theme was identified. The nine themes identified are further explained below.

(Table 3)

Under the Altruistic category, three themes were identified. The first theme *Love for children/young people* captured those statements which expressed the respondents' liking for children and youth. Associated with these positive feelings were also the expressed desires to work with or teach children.

Those responses that described goals to be accomplished were placed under the second altruistic theme *To fulfil a mission*. The statements under this theme tend to describe a desired outcome that is driven by a sense of mission, like developing children or helping them to achieve success. Others mentioned that they wanted to contribute to society, having benefited from their own education.

There were responses that seemed to describe a need *To answer a higher calling* through teaching. Those who chose this reason, the last under the Altruistic category, expressed a desire to enter into teaching because it would allow them to be able to respond to that calling.

There were four themes which could be categorized as Intrinsic. First, the *Interest in teaching* theme included those reasons that described respondents' keen interest to teach. Often, respondents reported that they had some experience in teaching and found it to be fulfilling, thus reinforcing their interest in the career.

There were a variety of statements that were assigned to *Job factor/fit*. This second intrinsic theme captured statements that described the desirability of teaching as a career, including the nature of the job (e.g., the job is challenging, it provides lifelong learning, or it provides security), its suitability to the respondent, and the opportunities that the job offers.

Some joined the teaching profession because they were *Inspired by role models*, the third intrinsic reason. The role models could be former teachers of the

respondents, but also included parents and others who had played an inspiring role to them.

There were those who reported a keen interest in a subject area which they would like to impart to their students eventually. Those athletically inclined would like to promote sports and physical education, and likewise those with a passion for the sciences would wish to teach and develop young scientists. Hence, those who responded in this manner were classified as under *For the love of the subject*.

Under extrinsic reasons, two main themes were identified. Reasons which were related to salary and financial rewards of the job were considered under the theme *Financial reasons*. These included the perceived good salary to be drawn and the salary to be drawn while still studying, which would help to alleviate financial difficulties.

The study also found that there were some respondents who saw *Teaching as a stepping stone* to achieving other objectives. An alternative career which was perceived to be better or a means to learn some desirable skills and knowledge were some of the provided reasons. This was the second extrinsic theme for choosing teaching as a career.

There were statements which did not fall into any of the themes identified and whose frequency counts did not warrant a separate category. Such statements were classified under *Others*. The frequency counts in this category were small, thus confirming that the other nine themes were comprehensive enough to capture the varied responses from the sample.

## **Findings and discussion**

### ***Main reasons for choosing teaching***

The data was compiled and compared across programmes to identify trends within and across programmes. As the data is qualitative, only frequency counts and proportions of respondents giving a particular main reason are meaningful.

The overall data show that the main reasons for choosing to enter the teaching profession fell into the Altruistic (41%) and Intrinsic (55%) categories, and these accounted for 96% of the sample, as shown in Figure 1. In fact, the reasons were rather evenly spread among four themes, which accounted for nearly 85% of the total responses. Two of these four themes, *Love for children/young people* (19.5%) and *To fulfil a mission* (19.6%), fell within the Altruistic category and the other two, *Interest in teaching* (25.1%) and *Job factor/fit* (20.3%), fell within the Intrinsic category. The spread across the various reasons is shown in Table 4 and represented graphically in Figure 2.

(Figure 1)

(Table 4)

(Figure 2)

*Interest in teaching* was the most popular reason, cited by a quarter of the pre-service teacher respondents (25.1%). An interest in the nature of a job is to be expected in the career choice of an individual. In the study by Goh and Atputhasamy (2001), “Love Teaching” was the second highest ranked factor motivating career choice. In the study by Yong (1995) in Brunei Darussalam, 11.4% of 174

undergraduates in education indicated that they had ambition to be a teacher. This reason ranked third among all other reasons cited in his study.

The researchers noted that there were, amongst the 267 respondents, some with prior teaching experience. There were 212 respondents who had teaching experience as relief teachers or served as untrained teachers in government or private schools. The rest had worked as private tutors. Among them, 60 respondents (28%) gave *Interest in teaching* as the main reason for coming into the programmes, and the influence of teaching experience in developing an interest for teaching is significant. Conversely, the remaining 207 respondents (77.5%) who gave *Interest in teaching* as the main reason were thus not influenced by their immediate teaching experience prior to joining teaching.

The other three main reasons were *Job factor/fit*, *Love for children/young people* and *To fulfil a mission*. About 20% of the respondents cited reasons that fit into each of these three main reasons. The other reasons were given by less than 5.2% of the respondents.

*Job factor/fit* reflected the pragmatism underlying the career choice. This theme captured the responses of the pre-service teachers in relation to aspects of the teaching job. Some deemed the job to be challenging and thus motivating, while others viewed teaching as a dynamic career with inherent job security. Goh and Aputhasamy (2001) also captured similar motives in their study. Teaching as an *intellectually stimulating* (rank no. 4) career and *secure job* (rank no. 6) were cited as major motives for joining the teaching career. Bastick (2000) reported that intrinsic reasons accounted for 8.8% of variance among pre-service teachers choosing teaching as a career in Jamaica. In our study, the sample statements matching job factor/fit and



broadly categorized under intrinsic reasons are “It is the profession I have always wanted” and “I see it as a lifelong career”.

*Love for children/young people* and *To fulfil a mission* were significant motivation factors in the career choice of the pre-service teachers and reflected their altruistic desires. *Love working with children* (rank no. 1) and *Influencing young lives* (rank no. 3) in Goh and Atputhasamy’s (2001) study similarly indicated the relative high importance of altruistic reasons in those choosing teaching as a career. In developed countries such as the United States, such altruistic reasons are ranked high. Hayes (1990) reported that 92% of college students majoring in education reported that they chose teaching because they loved children.

#### ***Analysis of reasons by programme***

The analysis also compared distribution of reasons given by the pre-service teachers across programmes. As the PGDE(S) formed the largest group among the four programmes, the overall distributions are largely reflective of the choices made by the respondents from this programme. Considering the distribution of reasons over the categories of altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, Figure 3 shows that the distributions across the large categories are rather similar across the programmes except for the PGDE(P) programme. In this programme, the altruistic category figured more prominently at 48% and correspondingly, it had a lower proportion of pre-service teachers selecting intrinsic reasons as compared to other programmes. The explanation for this will be discussed later when considering the distribution of the various reasons in the different programmes.

(Figure 3)

Going into the individual reasons, the percentages of respondents from each programme giving the different reasons are given in Table 5 together with their respective rankings. This data is also represented graphically in Figure 4 for easier visual comparison.

(Table 5)

(Figure 4)

Comparing across programmes, there was no difference in the set of four most common reasons although their rank orders within each of the programmes are different. The four reasons accounted for more than 75% of the respondents from the degree programme, 83% from the PGDE(S) programme, and almost 90% from the other two programmes. The reasons *Love for children* and *Interest in teaching* were ranked either first or second for all the three primary programmes. This is consistent with the findings by Goh and Atputhasamy (2001), Thornton and Reid (2001a, 2001b), and those of Thornton, Bricheno and Reid (2002), who found from their survey that most of the 1,611 undergraduate and postgraduate English students were “pulled” into primary school teaching as a career for very positive, often altruistic reasons. Considering the proportion of respondents citing *Love for children/young people* as their main reason for choosing teaching, the highest was from the PGDE(P) programme (28.4%) while the Diploma and Degree respondents had similar percentages, about 21% of each programme. In contrast, only 15.9% of the PGDE(S) participants gave *Love for young people* as a main reason, making it fourth in rank order. This is probably an indication that those who aspire to teach in primary schools are also likely to consider their relationship with the children an important factor in

their career choice and satisfaction but those aspiring to be secondary school teachers are more inclined to consider other reasons as relatively more important than the emotional aspects of working with children. As caring for the young could be seen to be a more feminine trait, this may also be a contributing factor for the high ranking of this reason among the primary programmes rather than the secondary programme where there is a higher proportion (40.4%) of male pre-service teachers.

*Interest in teaching* was ranked either first or second in all the four programmes. This is a positive finding given the importance of interest in the job as the motivating factor in career decision making. Teaching as a profession is highly visible in terms of its demands and the nature of job. The pre-service teachers themselves had also witnessed their own teachers at work. Hence, it is not surprising that this reason was ranked relatively high in the survey, indicating the realism underlying their choice.

For the Degree pre-service teachers, the two most common reasons of *Love for children* (21.7%) and *Interest in teaching* (20.6%) ranked far higher than reasons pertaining to *Job factor/fit* (15.2%). For the Diploma pre-service teachers, the most common reason given was *Interest in teaching* (32%), which was far higher than the second most common reason of *Love for children* (21.2%). For those in the PGDE(P), *Love for children* was the most common reason cited and the percentage of respondents giving this reason (28.4%) was highest among the programmes as mentioned earlier. This high proportion contributed to making the Altruistic category far more prominent among the PGDE(P) programme.

The reason of *Job factor/fit* was one of the common reasons given but it was less common among the Degree pre-service teachers (15.2%) when compared to around 20% for the other three programmes. Possibly, teaching as a *job* was further

from the minds of these young people who were only in the first year of their 4-year programme whereas the other pre-service teachers were considering job factors which were not too far in the future. Moreover, the PGDE and DipEd are professional diplomas as compared to the degree programme which is more academic in nature, and hence pre-service teachers in the former programmes would consequently view the prospective job fit to be more important.

It is also noteworthy that the reason *Inspired by role models* was ranked fifth by the pre-service teachers from all except the PGDE(P) programmes. Besides asking for their main reason for choosing teaching as a career, the questionnaire also asked the respondents who were the strongest influences for their decision to enter into teaching. In all but the PGDE(P) programme, more than 20% of the respondents (28.3% for Degree, 22.8% for Diploma and 20.8% for PGDE(S)) named teachers, principals and lecturers as the strongest influence. However, this was the case for only 8.6% of the PGDE(P) respondents. The influence of positive role models is thus considerable in motivating entrants to the teaching profession.

The findings also showed that few respondents cited *Financial reasons* as the main reasons for choosing to teach. Of the 22 who gave this reason, two were from the PGDE(P) programme and one was from the Degree programme, while 19 came from the PGDE(S) programme. Of these 19 pre-service teachers, 13 of them had scholarships or teaching awards for their undergraduate degree and the financial support of teaching scholarships/awards was inducement for them to take up teaching as a career.

Another positive finding is that only 1.3% of the respondents saw *Teaching as a stepping stone* to other careers. This means that pre-service teachers are inclined to be dedicated to their roles and work as teachers and are not using teaching and teacher

preparation for other purposes subsequently. These last two findings are also in accordance with other research findings where extrinsic motivation for joining teaching is not prevalent.

### **Implications and conclusion**

The findings from the present study show that pre-service teachers were mainly motivated by intrinsic factors to enter into teaching, followed by altruistic factors, and extrinsic factors ranked last. This finding was consistent across all programmes sampled in the study (Degree, Diploma, PGDE Primary and Secondary programmes). This finding concurs with what earlier studies (Hayes, 1990; Moran et al., 2000; Reid & Cauldwell 1997; Robertson et al., 1983; Summerhill et al., 1998) showed about the predominance of intrinsic factors, such as the need for intellectual fulfilment motivating young people to join the teaching profession. This study also reinforces Bastick's (2000) conclusion that altruistic and intrinsic reasons are more likely the motivation for those choosing teaching as a career in developed countries; Singapore falls into this category as well. The findings therefore clearly point to the need for governments and policymakers to rethink recruitment incentives, as monetary rewards are certainly not the answer to attracting teachers into the profession. Instead, recruitment campaigns should focus on attracting individuals based on their love for their subject and a love for passing on that knowledge to future generations. Furthermore, since altruistic motivations also feature strongly cross-culturally, recruitment advertisements need to focus on larger and more meaningful areas of concern such as making a difference in others' lives and the importance of teachers in helping to build the future of their nations and the world as a whole.

It follows logically that the teachers who experience fulfilment in their careers are likely to stay longer in the profession. The present study sheds important light on what motivates teachers to enter the profession, which is primarily intrinsic and altruistic. Therefore, in the professional development of teachers, it is important to allow these motivations to be realized. This is a view shared and purported by Moran et al. (2001) as well. For example, it is important to establish different career tracks of progression catering to the different profiles of teachers recruited. In this regard, the Singapore Education Ministry's three-pronged career advancement track for teachers—the Leadership, Specialist and Teaching tracks—can serve to inform other policymakers about teacher professional development. In designing three career tracks, it ensures that the teacher who loves teaching and dealing with children can continue to do so during the entire span of his/her career while the one who seeks intellectual fulfilment and is intrinsically motivated can find fulfilment developing curriculum in one's area of expertise, and the one who is altruistically motivated to “make a difference to the community” can find fulfilment in providing leadership and mentorship to the fraternity of teachers.

Finally, it is also equally important to understand the likely push factors that might de-motivate teachers from staying in the profession, that is, factors that account for teacher attrition that run counter to what motivates them. In this regard, Kyriacou and Kunc's (2007) study highlighted four key reasons that explain teacher attrition rates, namely, workload, salary, disruptive students, and the low status of the profession in society. Triangulating these factors against the intrinsic and altruistic motivations for joining teaching found in this study, it follows that school administrators need to be cognizant of not overloading the beginning teacher as they struggle to develop their sense of professional identity in the initial years. Professional

development courses should also focus on how to deal with highly disruptive classroom behaviour, an area which perhaps pre-service programmes may not have the time to go in depth into.

On a final note, it should be highlighted that the status of teaching in terms of the importance that society attaches to the profession is not measured by how highly paid teachers are but how highly teachers' roles are valued. Indeed, in societies like Finland and Singapore, where the roles of teachers are greatly emphasized as being an integral part of nation-building, it comes as little surprise, as purported by previous research, that quality teachers play an important role in leading to better student achievement outcomes. This is evidenced in the two nations' high rankings in internationally benchmarked tests such as the Trends in Mathematics & Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in Reading & Literacy Study (PIRLS), putting them both firmly in the league of high-performing education systems in the world.

### **Acknowledgement**

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## Tables and figures for MS08-151

Table 1. Initial teacher preparation programmes at NIE.

Programme	Duration	Admission criteria	Level being prepared to teach
Degree (comprising BA with DipEd & BSc with DipEd)	4 years	A-level holders or Polytechnic graduates	Primary
Diploma (comprising DipEd and other Diploma programmes)	2 years	A-level holders; Polytechnic Diploma graduates; or graduates from Art, Music and Mother Tongue pre-diploma programmes	Primary
PGDE(P)	1 year	University graduates	Primary
PGDE(S)	1 year	University graduates	Secondary

Table 2. Number of participants by programme.

Programme	Degree	Diploma	PGDE(P)	PGDE(S)
Number of participants	92	170	197	605
Mean age	20.73	22.76	25.65	25.65
Standard deviation	1.72	4.42	3.98	3.54
Gender proportions	Male: 33.7% Female: 66.3%	Male: 14.1% Female: 85.9%	Male: 19.8% Female: 80.2%	Male: 40.4% Female: 59.6%

Table 3. Student teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a career.

Category	No.	Reason	Examples of statements
Altruistic	1.	Love of children/young people	I enjoy and I love to interact with kids. I like to interact with young people
	2.	To fulfil a mission	To see students grow up. I like to help weaker students succeed. To pull students out of the cycle of poverty. To give back to society.
	3.	To answer a calling	To answer the call of God. I feel that children are my calling and I would like to influence children and inspire them to reach for their dreams.
Intrinsic	4.	Interest in teaching	Innate feelings that I would be a great teacher one day. I have an interest in teaching and had taught before.
	5.	Job factor or fit	It is a challenging job. Wanted a dynamic career. It offers high job security The job offers life-long learning opportunities.
	6.	Inspired by role models	My beloved primary school teacher had inspired me to be a teacher. I am inspired by teachers who loved their subjects and taught passionately.
	7.	For the love of the subject	Possibility of applying computer (IT) skills to teaching. I have a passion for wanting to teach math to young people
Extrinsic	8.	Financial reasons	I feel that the starting pay is good. I was offered a scholarship by MOE and accepted it because my parents can't afford to send me to university.
	9.	Teaching as a stepping stone	I like to start my own school.
Others	10.	Others	I'm not very sure the main reason. Many small reasons and contributing factors helped in this choice. Push factors from previous job.

Table 4. Main reason for choosing to join the teaching profession ( $n = 1064$ ).

Category	Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Altruistic	Love of children/young people	208	19.5
	To fulfil a mission	209	19.6
	To answer a calling	19	1.8
Intrinsic	Interest in teaching	267	25.1
	Job factor or fit	216	20.3
	Inspired by role models	55	5.2
	For the love of the subject	42	3.9
Extrinsic	Financial	22	2.1
	Teaching as a stepping stone	12	1.1
Others	Others	11	1.0
	No response	3	0.3
Total		1064	99.9

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of respondents for different reasons by programme.

Reasons	Degree ( <i>n</i> = 92)		Diploma ( <i>n</i> = 170)		PGDE(P) ( <i>n</i> = 197)		PGDE(S) ( <i>n</i> = 605)	
	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order	%	Rank order
Love for kids	21.7	1	21.2	2	28.4	1	15.9	4
To fulfill a mission	18.5	3	16.5	4	16.8	4	21.7	2
To answer a calling	1.1	7	2.4	7	2.5	5	1.5	8
Interest in Teaching	20.7	2	32.9	1	24.9	2	23.6	1
Job factor or job fit	15.2	4	19.4	3	19.3	3	21.7	2
Inspired by role models	13.0	5	4.1	5	1.5	7	5.5	5
Love of the subject	6.5	6	2.9	6	1.0	9	4.8	6
Financial reasons	1.1	7	0.0	9	1.0	9	3.1	7
Stepping stone	1.1	7	0.0	9	1.5	7	1.3	9
Others	1.1	7	0.6	8	2.0	6	0.8	10
No response	0.0	–	0.0	--	1.0	–	0.2	–
Total	100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0	
	0						0	

Figure 1. Distribution of reasons for choosing to join the teaching across the categories of Altruistic, Intrinsic and Extrinsic reasons.

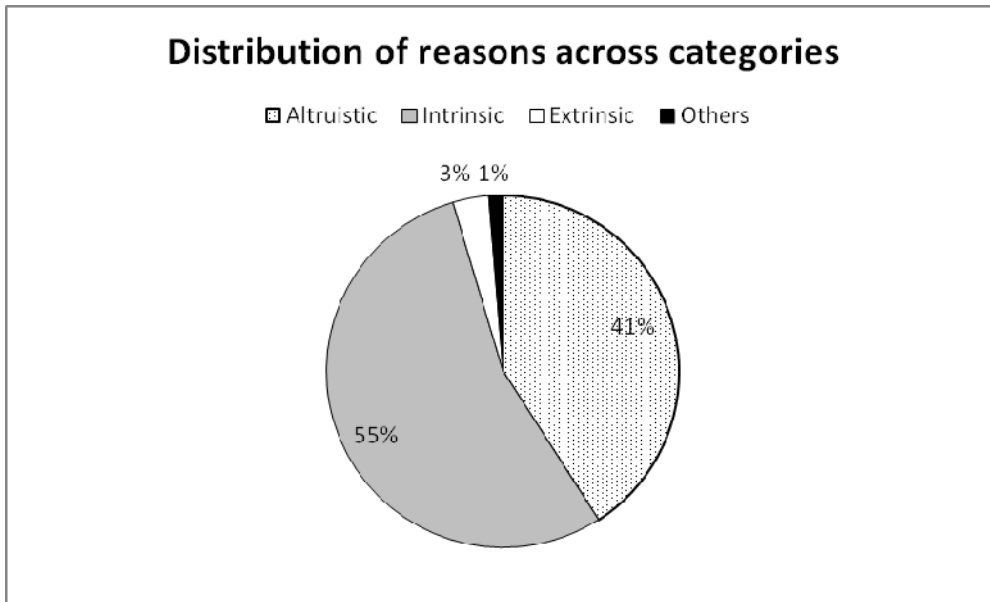


Figure 2. Main reason for joining the teaching profession.

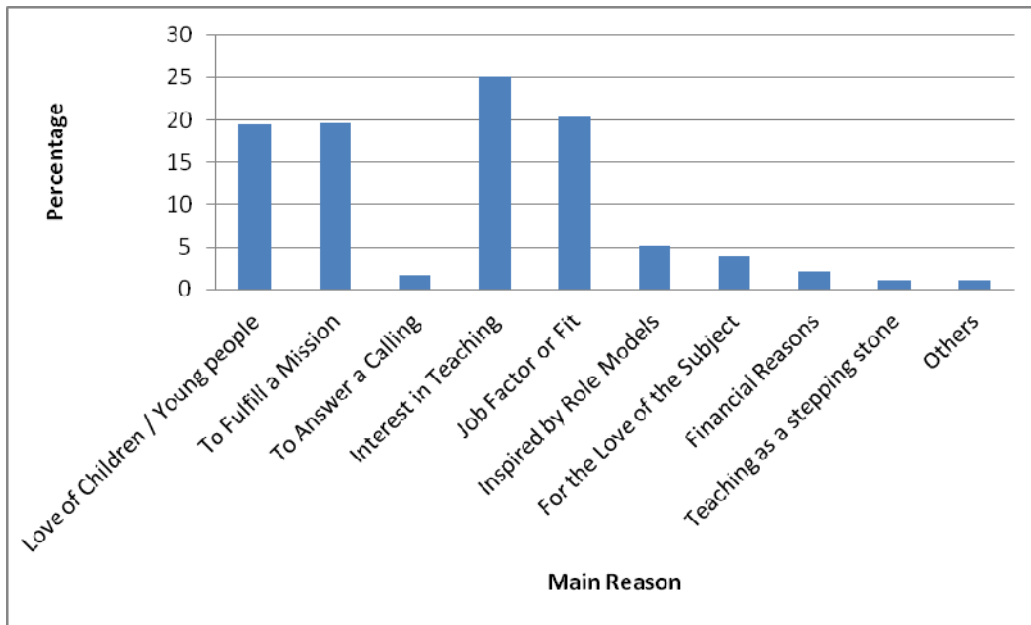


Figure 3. Distribution of reasons across categories of Altruistic, Intrinsic and Extrinsic reasons by programmes.

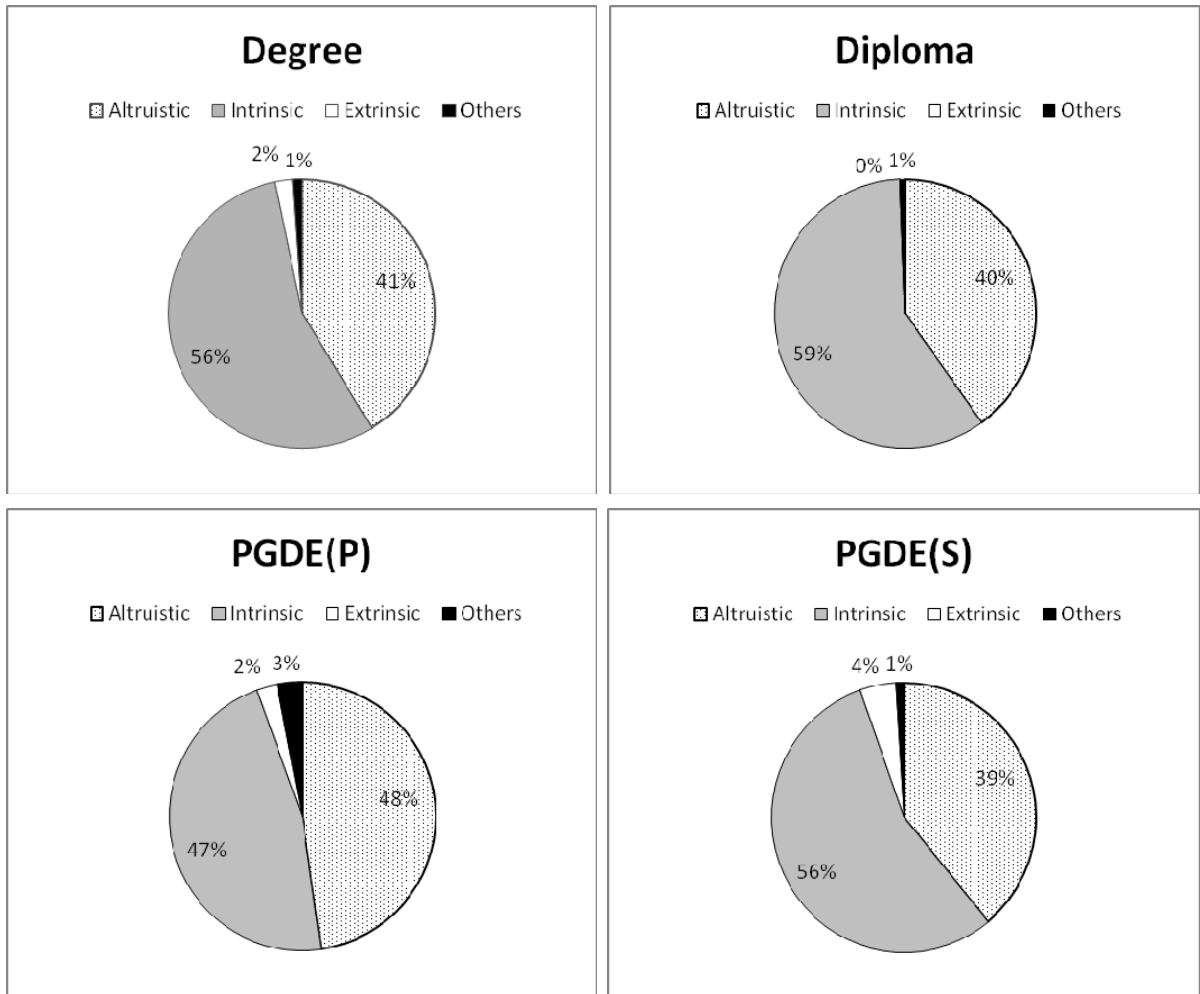




Figure 4. Main reason for joining the teaching profession, as chosen by student-teachers of each programme.

