Teaching as a career and factors that influence job satisfaction of novice teachers: Findings from seven Vietnamese provinces

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Highlights

* Novice teachers entered the teaching profession mainly for enjoyment from working with children, and opportunities for further studies
* Novice teachers are generally satisfied with school reputation, recognition, superiors, school leadership and working conditions
* Novice teachers are generally less satisfied with opportunities for promotion, school infrastructure, and communication with colleagues
* Satisfaction factors varied among different school location settings, namely rural, township, and inner-city areas

Abstract

This study investigated motivations of novice teacher in choosing teaching as a career, and identified factors that affect their job satisfaction. Data were collected through surveying 320 novice teachers in seven Vietnamese provinces. The results showed that novice teachers choose teaching mainly for enjoyment from working with children, and opportunities for further studies. The study also found that novice teachers are satisfied with school reputation, recognition, superiors, school leadership and work conditions, while less satisfied with promotion and colleagues. Finally, the study discovered that level of satisfaction varied among different location settings.

*Keywords:* novice teachers; job satisfaction; teaching career; work performance; work motivation

1. **Introduction**

A strong education system is vital for a developing country, and needs competent teachers at its core. McKinsey's report "How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top" provides ample evidence to suggest that the quality of teachers is fundamental to the performance of students (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). Increasingly many educators and researchers agree. For example, student performance has been shown to be strongly influenced by the professionalism of teachers (Desimone, 2009; Yoon, et al., 2007), as well as their international competitiveness (Wei and Darling-Hammond, 2009). But perhaps most importantly, a school's accomplishments and the performance of its students are largely determined by how satisfied the teachers are with their job (Pepe et al., 2017).

When it comes to job satisfaction, teaching as a profession comes with great challenges (Mansfield et al., 2016). Many factors, including working conditions, status, and accomplishments, affect a teacher's actions and his or her teaching performance (Grion and Varisco, 2007). Teachers are also among professions that report the highest level of stress and dissatisfaction (Lomas et al., 2017). At a time when other careers offer higher salaries, clearer pathways for development, greater social prestige, and better working conditions (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2005; Ramsay, 2000), teaching seems to be less attractive than it was 30 years ago. With an increasing shortage of teachers, there has been global interest in understanding what motivates people to choose teaching as a career, and what motivates them to persist in it, especially since the job has become more complex and demanding (OECD, 2005). Novice teachers have to spend few years in the beginning to reach to the level of expertise, however before attaining that level, approximately 40-50% of teachers quit the profession in the first five years (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). Several investigations point out several challenges that novice teachers encounter in the transition period, including becoming independence, dealing with praxis shock, reality shock or transfer shock (Chaaban and Du, 2017).

While a large body of research on job satisfaction of teachers has been conducted in developed countries, little has been done in developing countries (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014). In Vietnam, studies on teachers' job satisfaction are quite limited in scope. For example, the study by Tran and Le (2015) is done at high school level, while Duong (2013) addresses only university level. This study, in addressing this gap in research, attempted to build an understanding of why Vietnamese novice teachers choose the profession, and factors that affect their job satisfaction. The study was carried out through a quantitative research of 320 novice teachers in primary schools across seven Vietnamese provinces, from the North to the South. It is hoped that the findings in this study will contribute to the existing literature, and provide guidance for school management, policy makers, and curriculum developers to improve the working environment and commitment of novice teachers, as well as to provide better support for them.

* 1. *Teaching as a career*

The motives of teachers who choose teaching as a career fall into three main categories: extrinsic (e.g., salary or lengthy holidays), intrinsic (e.g., interest, personal experience, or intellectual fulfillment), and altruistic (e.g., the desire to contribute to the growth of others) (Moran et al., 2001; Brookhart and Freeman, 1992). Indeed, according to the OECD report, the most important reasons for the decision of becoming a teacher are: working with children and adolescents, making a social contribution, making a difference, job security, job benefits, enjoyment of teaching, compatibility with other interests and activities, compatibility with family life, and self-education (OECD, 2005).

Since 1950s, several theories of career choice have been developed. According to one of the earliest theories -- Super’s self-concept theory -- the question "Who am I?" is a determinative factor in an individual' choice of profession (Super, 1953). Yet Gottfredson claims two variables that form the occupation choice: sex-type rating and prestige level, in which an individual selects a career through considering its appropriateness to his or her gender and its level of prestige (Gottfredson, 1981).

Mainstream research finds that the motives behind choosing teaching as a career derive from intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic attractors. For example, Hayes (1990) and Stiegelbauer (1992) both suggest that the altruistic reason of making a positive change in children's lives is the most substantial motivation. On the other hand, Kyriacou et al., (1999) place more emphasis on intrinsic reasons. In their study, the majority of pre-service teachers choose "enjoying teaching" and "enjoying working with children" higher than the other factors. Yet, Sinclair (2008) finds that primary pre-service teachers assert that working with children are their fundamental motivations besides the work being intellectually encouraging.

It is seemingly difficult to pinpoint the reasons for teaching as a career choice. Kyriacou et al., (1999) suggest that the differences in cultural, social, and economic settings, as well as in subjects being taught by the teachers cause variations in responses across studies. Certainly, motivations for career choice often stem from personal values and expectations, experienced in particular sociocultural settings within the context of different demand and reward structures (Watt et al., 2012).

* 1. *Job satisfaction in teaching*

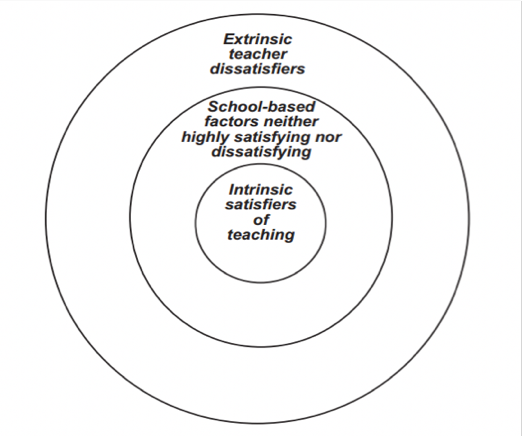
Job satisfaction is considered a motivating factor, and refers to how teachers generally feel about their jobs (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2015; Locke, 1976). Job satisfaction stimulates teachers' enthusiasm, teacher-student relationships, and teacher retention (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2010). When teachers are motivated and have a high degree of job satisfaction, their students perform better and become more motivated, resulting in the teachers themselves being motivated by their students' success. This positive cycle often continues (Czubaj, 1996).

One of the most well-known theories of job satisfaction in educational settings is that of Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman's (Dinham and Scott, 2000). Dinham and Scott (1997) claim that different job motivators affect job satisfaction directly. Certainly, there have been attempts to explain job satisfaction as a dependent variable described by numerous factors. According Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), which is commonly used in explaining human behavior, people have five categories of needs, following a specific order. In contrast, Herzberg’s theory identifies two set of job variables affecting people's attitudes toward their work: satisfiers and dissatisfiers. Satisfiers include recognition, responsibility for one's work, personal growth, achievement and advancement. Dissatisfiers (hygiene factors) include relationships with colleagues and supervisors, pay, work conditions and security (Herzberg et al., 1959). The absence of hygiene factors can create job dissatisfaction, but their presence does not motivate or create satisfaction. Satisfiers are associated with long-term positive effects in job performance, while hygiene factors consistently produce only short-term changes in job attitudes and performance, which quickly fall back to its previous level. Although Herzberg's two-factor theory has been widely applied, it has also been criticized for being too reliant on a specific methodology, and for being limited in the number of categories. Vroom (1964) proposes that seven aspects should be considered as key components of job satisfaction, including: administration, promotion, job nature, superiors, salary remuneration, working conditions, and colleagues (Vroom, 1964).

Job satisfaction of teachers have been shown to positively affect individuals and schools in several studies (Corbell et al., 2010; Høigaard et al., 2012; Malinen and Savolainen, 2016). Fantilli and McDougall (2009) remark that many teachers exit the profession before making an impact on student achievement. The first year is generally considered the most difficult in a teacher’s career, when novice teachers have to assume the same duty as experienced teachers (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). Tait (2008) emphasizes that novice teachers who have high levels of job satisfaction are more motivated, committed and determined to remain in the profession, despite high job demand. Consequently, highly motivated novice teachers focus their energy mainly on the growth of their students and their own (Lam and Yan, 2011), leading to increased efficiency and improved educational outcomes (Moè et al., 2010). Chaaban and Du (2017) conclude that with job satisfactions, novice teachers form healthier connections among co-workers and collaborate better with supervisors. On the other hand, factors such as dissatisfaction with the teaching environment, hindrance in communicating with others, disappointment with mentoring support, are often found in the novice teachers about to quit their job (Chaaban and Du, 2017).

Because of increasing concern about teacher satisfaction, Dinham and Scott (1997) measure teacher motivation, satisfaction, and health. Their findings indicate that the most significant aspects in determining teacher satisfaction come from intrinsic factors of Sergiovanni (1967) and Herzberg et al. (1959). However, slightly differently from Sergiovanni, Dinham and Scott see altruism and personal growth to be the most influential intrinsic factors. Other studies have discovered that teachers generally derive job satisfaction from factors integral to teaching, namely helping children grow, developing good relationships with students, and experiencing self-growth (Lam and Yan, 2011). These studies, similarly to Dinham and Scott (1997), also show slight changes over time in the specific intrinsic factors that influence teachers. Some studies show that hygiene factors, including increasing workloads, low status in their society, and low salaries (Lam and Yan, 2011) as well as reduced teacher autonomy (Moore, 2012; Shann, 1998) contribute to teacher dissatisfaction. In general, the findings unanimously suggest that intrinsic factors shape teacher job satisfaction.

While the similarities in these findings are significant, there is one major difference. Dinham and Scott (1997, 2000) also identify so-called school-based factors, which fall between the intrinsic rewards and extrinsic hindrances, and which is where there is most variation among schools. School-based factors include school leadership, climate and decision making, and school reputation and infrastructure (Dinham and Scott, 1997). These school-based factors differ from satisfiers because they are not intrinsic to teachers and they differ from hygiene factors because they have the capacity to increase job satisfaction (Dinham and Scott, 1998). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) find that teachers’ sense of belonging, often associated with job satisfaction, can be connected to supervisory support (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.**A three-domain model of teacher satisfaction.

Reprinted from Dinham & Scott (2000, p. 393).

School working conditions in fact can negatively affect job satisfaction of novice teachers (Dinham and Scott, 1997; Lam and Yan, 2011; Rhodes et al., 2004). Novice teachers often report that they teach classes in multiple rooms and have inadequate supplies or equipment (Johnson, 2004). A recent research on teacher stress, job satisfaction and teaching efficacy underlines an association between accessibility of resource and job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012). Clotfelter et al., (2005) and Johnson (2004) show that they have to handle more demanding tasks than their experienced colleagues. In a survey of 486 first- and second-year teachers by Kardos and Moore Johnson (2007), 36% of teachers report that they have heavy workload, and 52% do not have enough time for planning and preparation. Lam and Yan (2011) note that *"when the school environment allows for teachers to focus on the core business of teaching and allows a reasonable work-life balance, teachers are more likely to become engaged in teaching"* (p. 345). To provide a basis for planning, policy making, and enhancing teacher commitment, this study investigated specific variables commonly associated with job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

* 1. *The Vietnamese educational context*

In Vietnam, education has always been a cornerstone of national development, as the Vietnamese government reserves nearly 20 percent of public expenditures for education (OECD, 2011). However, in the era of globalization, there are concerns that the Vietnamese education system falls short to equip its population with necessary skills in a more competitive economy (Bodewig, Badiani-Magnusson, Macdonald, Newhouse, & Rutkowski, 2014). In the Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) for 2011-2015, the government emphasizes that rapid development of a skilled workforce is essential for the modernization and development of a knowledge-based economy (General Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam [GAV], 2010).

In 2013, the Fundamental and Comprehensive Education Reform (FCER) was adopted, which aimed for national education to meet "the requirements of industrialization, modernization, and international integration in a socialist-oriented market economy" (Central Steering Committee [CSC], 2013). At its core, the FCER advocates for learning that focuses more on competency of learners rather than contents, in general education (grades K-12). It aims to improve students' cognitive and behavioral skills, critical and creative thinking, abilities to apply knowledge from multiple areas in problem solving, teamwork, and communication skills (CSC, 2013). However, the realization of such a reform depends almost exclusively on the preparedness of teachers to adopt the new pedagogical models. Indeed, one of the principles of the FCER stresses that teachers should be more professional and be ready to adapt to different, constantly changing contexts. Hence, teachers are considered the core of the reform process. Teacher training and support activities focus on greater interaction between professionals, reciprocity, hands-on mentorships, and coaching and on-time advice to teachers (World Bank [WB], 2016).

Despite positive results in education of Vietnamese teachers, there is a lack of high quality, responsive, and continuous onsite professional development for teachers. One of the biggest challenges is better coordination among all involving actors in teacher education to meet new demands. To address these challenges, the National Teacher Education Program (NTEP), conceived by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), has developed a comprehensive strategy for teacher education reform (Government Prime Minister [GPM], 2016). It is expected to facilitate necessary changes to meet training objectives in consideration of teachers' needs (WB, 2016).

1. **Methodology and Method**

To investigate job satisfaction of Vietnamese novice teachers in primary school, the authors conducted a survey in the academic year 2016-2017. The survey focused on two main issues: (i) reason for choosing teaching as a career; (ii) main factors that affect to the job satisfaction.

* 1. *Samples and settings*

The population for this study was novice teachers in public Vietnamese primary school (during the 2016-2017 academic year), with between one and three years of teaching experience.

Schools were selected randomly from seven provinces across the country, namely (1) northern midlands and mountainous area (Ha Giang province), (2) northern Central area (Nghe An province), (3) Red river delta area (Hai Phong province), (4) coastal province in south central region (Quang Nam province), (5) central highlands region (Gia Lai province), (6) south east region (Tay Ninh province) and (7) Mekong delta region (Can Tho province).

The authors used Yamane Taro’s (1967) simplified formula for proportion, n = N/(1+N\*e2), to determine the sample size. The population size (N) was 874 and the acceptable sampling error (e) was 0.05, corresponding to a confidence level of 95% and p = 0.5. The minimum sample size (n) should therefore be 274, which accounted for 36,61% of the 874 novice teachers in the seven provinces during the period of the study. Table 1 showed the number of novice teachers, with data collected from Department of Education and Training (2016).

**Table 1.** Samples data in 7 province

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location | Number of school | Number of teachers | Number of novice teachers  *(2% of teachers)* |
| Ha Giang | 228 | 6,485 | 130 |
| Nghe An | 465 | 11,440 | 229 |
| Hai Phong | 172 | 5,286 | 106 |
| Quang Nam | 230 | 5,663 | 113 |
| Gia Lai | 300 | 7,591 | 152 |
| Tay Ninh | 221 | 3,950 | 79 |
| Can Tho | 134 | 3,273 | 65 |
| **Total** | **1,750** | **43,688** | **874** |

*\*Source: Data collected from Department of Education and Training in 7 provinces of sampling*

The authors distributed questionnaires randomly to 320 participants. In general, 65.3% of Vietnamese people live in rural areas, only 34.7% live in township areas (of which 60.3% lives in inner-city locations). In particular, 74.02% of novice teachers from the seven provinces work in schools located in rural areas, hence a majority of the questionnaires were distributed to rural areas to ensure the sample set could well represent the population as a whole. School location was also classified into three categories: rural area, township area and inner-city area.

All 320 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate 100%. Of the 320 novice teachers, 17.19% were male and 78.13% were female. 60,31% of the participants were from rural areas. Most participants were formally educated and fully trained: 30.94% had degrees in teaching, 28.95% had teaching certificates, 20% had both degrees and diplomas/certificates, and 3.13% had postgraduate qualifications.

* 1. *Instruments and procedure*

The questionnaires included general questions about the demographic of respondents and personal factors such as: place of birth, ethnic, teaching experience, highest teaching qualification, and school location. An informed consent was also included foremost in each questionnaire. Teachers were asked about their views on teaching as a career, in particular external environment issues such as reasons for choosing the profession, self-evaluations on teaching as a career in the country, personal and community perception of teaching, view of position in next 10 years. Furthermore, there were questions on factors which affect job satisfaction, performance, and career expectations. Finally, the authors included open-ended questions asking for suggestions to improve the quality of teaching in the country. Job satisfaction was measured using a Likert-type scale which includes strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

* 1. *Statistical methods*

This is a descriptive study based on the survey method through questionnaires. Collected data were analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation (SD), percentages and frequency were used to determine the reasons for choosing teaching as a career, and to examine job satisfaction among novice teachers.

1. **Result and Discussion**
   1. *Reasons to choose teaching as a career*

Regarding reasons to choose teaching as a career, the majority of teachers chose *“teaching provides a good opportunity to further my studies”* (Mean = 3.45, SD = 0.571), followed by *“enjoying working with children”* (Mean = 3.42, SD = 0.537), and *“people (relatives/friends) recommended teaching as a field of study”* (Mean = 3.03, SD = 0.67) (Figure 3). On the other hand, relatively few teachers chose *“as a teacher I only work half-day, with three/four holidays a year”* (Mean = 1.92, SD = 0.707)and *“teaching provides a good salary”* (Mean = 2.07, SD=0.631) (Table 2). These results suggested that a large number of teachers pursued teaching mainly out of passion and a sense of mission (with low standard deviations, ranging from 0.537 to 0.571). Factors such as salary and payroll were not considered as too important by most novice teachers (with standard deviations ranging from 0.631 to 0.707).

**Table 2.** Novice teachers’ reasons to choose teaching

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Missing | Mean | SD |
| With a teaching qualification I am assured of a job. | 8.75 | 57.19 | 26.25 | 2.81 | 5.00 | 2.76 | 0.655 |
| As a teacher I only work half-day, with three/four holidays a year. | 1.56 | 15.94 | 52.50 | 26.56 | 3.44 | 1.92 | 0.707 |
| I view teaching as a calling. | 10.00 | 29.38 | 37.81 | 16.88 | 5.94 | 2.35 | 0.895 |
| People (relatives/friends) recommended teaching as a field of study. | 20.31 | 62.19 | 10.94 | 3.13 | 3.44 | 3.03 | 0.673 |
| I have always enjoyed working with children. | 43.44 | 53.44 | 2.19 | 0.00 | 0.94 | 3.42 | 0.537 |
| Teaching provides a good opportunity to further my studies. | 47.50 | 45.63 | 3.75 | 0.00 | 3.13 | 3.45 | 0.571 |
| Teaching gives me an opportunity to do a second job additional to my teaching. | 3.44 | 23.75 | 55.94 | 14.06 | 2.81 | 2.17 | 0.709 |
| Teaching provides a good salary. | 1.56 | 18.13 | 62.19 | 14.38 | 3.75 | 2.07 | 0.631 |

**Figure 2.** Novice teachers’ reasons for choosing teaching

A number of studies report findings similar to ours, that a desire to work with children and adolescents is among the dominant reasons that draw individuals into a teaching career (Alexander, Chant, & Cox, 1994; Joseph & Green, 1986; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Moran et al., 2001; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Tudhope, 1944; Valentine, 1934). Similarly, according to an OECD report (OECD, 2005), common reasons for choosing teaching as a career are desires to work with children and adolescents, opportunities for intellectual fulfilment, and contributing to society. In contrast, some research findings in varied sociocultural settings such as Brunei (Yong, 1995), Zimbabwe (Chivore, 1988), Cameroon (Abangma, 1981), and Jamaica (Bastick, 1999), have showed that extrinsic motives such as salary, job security, and career status dominate. It seems evident that sociocultural settings form and shape motivations for career choice, satisfaction and persistence.

For the final question of whether they would reconsider their career, fifty-two teachers, constituting 16.25% of the sample set, wanted to change career (Table 3). Although 16.25% is a relatively small percentage, and this research did not pursue the matter further, we note that it might be worthwhile to investigate the main reasons behind the wish to change career by these teachers.

**Table 3.** Would you choose the teaching profession again?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Yes | 267 | 83.44 |
| No | 52 | 16.25 |
| Missing | 1 | 0.31 |
|  | 320 | 100.00 |

* 1. *Factors affect novice teachers’ job satisfaction*

Using factor analysis, existing literature has identified several variables affecting job satisfaction of teachers, namely recognition, responsibility, pay, administration, superiors, promotion, work conditions, colleagues, school leadership, school reputation and school infrastructure. Our research provided empirical data that demonstrates the significance of each factors (Table 4).

On **recognition**, our data showed that certain perceptions were unpopular, namely *“teaching is a threat to the culture of my community”* and *“my community will always see teaching as a low status job”*, with means of 1.27 and 1.57. On the other hand, most teachers agreed that *“teaching is highly regarded in the community”,* with a mean of 3.37. These results suggested a bright future for the interviewed teachers in their respective communities. Weiss (1999) found that for first year teachers, positive perceptions of workplace conditions predict a stronger commitment to teaching.

Regarding **personal growth**, our data suggested that novice teachers could benefit from having more leave days to pursue further studies or training. For primary school teachers specifically, leave days are still a luxury, since one teacher is responsible for too many classes -- the number of teachers per class ranges from 1.2 to 1.5, according to the Vietnam’s Educational Law.

Zeytinoglu et al. (2007) finds that low job satisfaction, abilities, and heavy work are connected. Our data showed that novice teachers have to take on too much **responsibility**. This may have resulted from a change introduced by the Ministry of Education and Training, in which all elementary schools switched from half-day to full-day programs, and one teacher has to take care of all subjects, except physical education and special subjects.

Novice teachers are expected to have lower pay rates than their more experienced colleagues, which might threaten their work commitment and quality of work, as shown by Smith (1992), Okpara (2004), and Liu et.al, (2000). The results in this study seem to indicate that there are as many teachers who think their **pay** is too low as there are teachers who think otherwise. This difference in opinions might be attributed to the regions the teachers come from (see Figure 3).

According to our data, novice teachers did not encounter many serious obstacles in **administration**. This result may be attributed to the fact that Vietnam has been improving its administrative procedures.

Although a number of novice teachers experienced conflicts with their **superiors**, they are in general satisfied with their head of department and consider management supportive. Conflicts might result from miscommunication and misunderstanding due to the teachers being new in their career. Maghradi (1999) notes that employees with greater satisfaction with supervisors have greater working experience.

Nias (1996), Shan (1998), and Dinham and Scott (1998) point out that the possibility of promotion is a factor contributing to teachers’ job satisfaction. According to our data, **promotion** opportunities for Vietnamese novice teachers were low, likely due to established bureaucratic processes in assessment for promotion, which require years of teaching experience.

In general, the interviewed teachers showed satisfaction on **working conditions** for teaching and learning.

Our data suggested that novice teachers had some trouble communicating with **colleagues**. New teachers might hesitate in communicating with experienced teachers. In Vietnam, primary school teachers engage in professional team work only once per month, which, together with few opportunities for class observation, offer limited chances for interacting with colleagues.

School-based factors such as leadership, reputation and infrastructure were also investigated. Novice teachers were quite satisfied with **school leadership** in overall. Although the majority of surveyed schools are in rural areas, the results showed a high degree of satisfaction on **school reputation**. **School infrastructure** were also an important factor, as increasing investment in technology likely improves job satisfaction in employees (Attar and Sweiss, 2010). Our data showed that the infrastructure generally was not a big obstacle to novice teachers.

**Table 4.** Factors evaluated by novice teachers

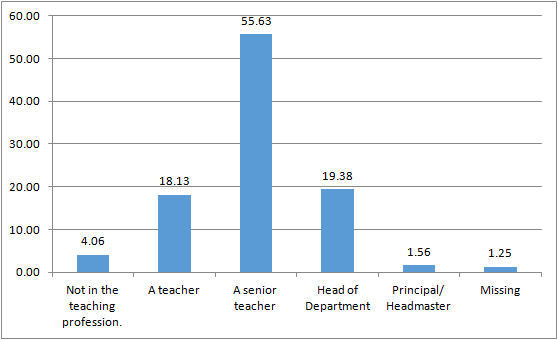
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Missing | Mean | SD |
| **Recognition** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| My community will always see teaching as a low status job | 46.88 | 46.88 | 2.81 | 0.94 | 2.50 | 1.57 | 0.602 |
| It is changing. (My community is starting to see the value of teacher.) | 1.25 | 14.69 | 68.44 | 11.88 | 3.75 | 2.94 | 0.571 |
| Teaching is a threat to the culture of my community. | 73.13 | 21.25 | 0.94 | 0.94 | 3.75 | 1.27 | 0.525 |
| My community holds teaching in high regard. | 0.31 | 2.50 | 55.94 | 39.38 | 1.88 | 3.37 | 0.551 |
| Parents value me as a teacher. | 0.94 | 18.44 | 34.06 | 45.94 | 0.63 | 3.26 | 0.788 |
| Society has a high regard for teachers. | 1.25 | 18.44 | 33.44 | 45.94 | 0.94 | 3.25 | 0.799 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Personal growth** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Insufficient number of in-service training opportunities | 20.00 | 31.56 | 32.19 | 14.38 | 1.88 | 2.42 | 0.973 |
| Low prospects of securing study leave to pursue further studies/training | 7.81 | 21.88 | 40.63 | 27.50 | 2.19 | 2.90 | 0.904 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Responsibility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Too much work | 5.00 | 24.38 | 53.75 | 15.31 | 1.56 | 2.81 | 0.755 |
| The classes at my school are overcrowded | 0.63 | 40.31 | 45.31 | 12.19 | 1.56 | 2.70 | 0.686 |
| **Pay** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Insufficient salary | 17.50 | 35.63 | 34.38 | 11.56 | 0.94 | 2.40 | 0.911 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Administration** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Administration staffs at the school are competent. | 1.25 | 6.56 | 68.13 | 23.13 | 0.94 | 3.14 | 0.575 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Superiors** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Conflict with educational authorities | 20.00 | 23.75 | 22.81 | 31.88 | 1.56 | 2.68 | 1.130 |
| Conflict with school management | 18.13 | 26.25 | 26.56 | 27.50 | 1.56 | 2.64 | 1.077 |
| Management at my school is not supportive. | 27.19 | 63.75 | 5.94 | 0.63 | 2.50 | 1.79 | 0.570 |
| I believe that my head of department is competent. |  | 0.31 | 46.25 | 52.81 | 0.63 | 3.53 | 0.506 |
| **Promotion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Low prospects for promotion | 2.50 | 20.63 | 36.25 | 37.50 | 3.13 | 3.12 | 0.831 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Work conditions** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| My classroom is sufficient for teaching and learning. | 3.44 | 10.31 | 63.13 | 22.5 | 0.63 | 3.05 | 0.683 |
| There are sufficient resources (e.g. books) at my school to assist me in teaching. | 0.31 | 14.06 | 60.94 | 23.75 | 0.94 | 3.09 | 0.622 |
| My school provides an effective environment for teaching and learning that contributes to my professional status. |  | 0.94 | 64.38 | 33.44 | 1.25 | 3.33 | 0.490 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Colleagues** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of communication with other teachers | 13.75 | 25.31 | 34.69 | 25.00 | 1.25 | 2.72 | 0.995 |
| Conflict with colleague(s) | 20.31 | 23.13 | 25.63 | 29.69 | 1.25 | 2.66 | 1.115 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **School leadership** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I respect my principal. |  | 1.25 | 26.69 | 68.13 | 0.94 | 3.68 | 0.495 |
| My principal values and supports my professional development | 0.63 | 1.56 | 53.44 | 43.75 | 0.63 | 3.41 | 0.559 |
| Principals are often appointed because they know the right people and not because of their competence. | 20.63 | 67.50 | 10.00 | 0.94 | 0.94 | 1.91 | 0.583 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **School reputation** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I feel proud to be a teacher at my school. |  | 0.94 | 53.75 | 44.69 | 0.63 | 3.44 | 0.516 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **School infrastructure** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Poor quality of general social infrastructure (classroom, lighting, tools, etc. | 16.56 | 27.50 | 38.13 | 15.31 | 2.50 | 2.54 | 0.952 |
| There is enough space for students to play during break time. | 0.63 | 8.13 | 62.81 | 26.88 | 1.56 | 3.18 | 0.592 |
| Poor quality of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) | 8.44 | 29.38 | 48.75 | 10.94 | 2.50 | 2.64 | 0.794 |

Figure 3 breaks down the survey results in different school settings: inner city, rural and township areas. The results indicated that novice teachers in inner city and rural areas care more about salary compared to those in township areas. A very similar dichotomy is seen regarding prospective for promotion, about which teachers in inner city and rural areas share approximately the same level of concern, which is higher compared to the level of concern shown by teachers in township areas. For rural and township areas, the most concerning issue was promotion, while for inner city areas, relationships with colleagues and opportunities to pursue further studies were more important.



**Figure 3.** Comparison across different areas

Lastly, teachers were also asked about how they see their career in the next 10 years (Figure 4). The results indicated that the majority of teachers hope to stay in teaching, but in a higher position. A small percentage (4.06%) of teachers see themselves leaving the profession.



**Figure 4:** Question on seeing yourself in ten years’ time

1. **Conclusion**

The early years of teaching are vital in shaping professional competency of teachers, as well as shaping an entire educational system. An educational system may experience unexpected impact when novice teachers face too many issues and challenges in their early stage of profession development. The literature suggests that examining how teachers perceive their job conditions holds promise for understanding the reasons behind teacher turnover.

Our research findings showed that the two most dominant reasons for choosing teaching as a career among novice teachers in seven provinces were enjoying working with children and opportunities for further studies. Although teaching is not a well-paid job in Vietnam compared to other professions, the survey results showed that salary is not a deciding factor for teachers in choosing their career, agreeing with several previous works such as Alexander et al. (1994); Joseph & Green (1986); Kyriacou & Coulthard, (2000); Moran et al., (2001); Richardson & Watt (2006); Tudhope (1944); and Valentine (1934). Interestingly, the study showed that most novice teachers would stick with teaching if they were to choose their profession again.

Regarding job satisfaction, the results presented in this paper exhibited all factors found in the existing literature. In particular, novice teachers have experienced less satisfaction in personal growth, responsibility, promotion, colleagues and pay. Nevertheless, relatively high levels of satisfaction are found in several other factors, namely recognition, administration, superiors, work conditions, school reputation, school leadership and school infrastructure. Novice teachers who experience high levels of job satisfaction are more motivated, committed and determined to remain in the profession despite high job demands (Tait, 2008), leading to enhanced teacher productivity and improved educational outcomes (Moè et al., 2010). Several studies have concluded that job satisfaction has positive consequences for the individual and the school (Corbell et al., 2010; Høigaard et al., 2012; Malinen and Savolainen, 2016). In fact, the majority of novice teachers felt proud to teach at their school.

Major concerns of novice teachers varied geographically. Compared to teachers in inner city and rural areas, those in township areas concern less about salary. For rural and township areas, the dominant concern was job promotion, while for inner city areas, relationship with colleagues and opportunities to pursue further studies were more important.

Being a developing country, Vietnam has always been striving for educational reforms. One of the key solutions is to enhance teacher competency, which reform programs such as ETEP and NTEP aim to achieve. For these programs to be effective, they need to develop a deep understanding of why teachers choose their career, as well as of how their job satisfaction is affected by the stress and challenges they often encounter during their early years of teaching. Towards this goal, the current paper provides empirical observations that can inform policymakers and curriculum developers of problematic areas. In particular, it is the authors’ hope that these findings will lead to intervention measures that aim to improve work commitment and reduce turnover, through improving the working environment and support for novice teachers.

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**Conflict of Interest**

The author declare that they have no conflict of interest

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