



“Teacher education is a good choice, but I don’t want to teach in schools.” An analysis of university students’ career decision making

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports qualitative findings from a large study on Indonesian teacher education students’ career aspirations. The participants were 133 final-year undergraduate students who entered teacher education programmes with no intentions to teach in schools or had intentions to teach only for a short period upon graduation before pursuing another career. Their motivations to choose teacher education programmes are analysed from the perspectives of the social learning theory of career decision making. The most popular reasons were good reputation of the universities, convenient campus location, and comparatively low tuition fees for the programme. Provision of scholarship was also an attraction. Career possibilities outside teaching was another key reason for entering the programme. While a few students perceived teacher education as a stepping stone to pursue another career, some did not have any specific plan but followed their parents’ advice and friends’ choice of study. Participants’ perceptions about teacher education programmes and teaching are discussed along with implications.

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Introduction

In the past decade, there has been a considerable increase in the number of students enrolling in teacher education programmes in Indonesia. According to mass media, the high status of teachers, increasing salaries, and career prospects with possibilities to become civil servants are the main reasons for this influx. National statistics indicate that almost 300,000 students are graduating from teacher education programmes every year, while the need for a teacher workforce is around 40,000 annually (Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education/MoRTHE, 2018). However, the limited data on retired teachers and teacher turnover cannot provide a clearer picture of the teacher workforce.

Attracting right candidates into teaching and retaining skilled teachers in the profession is a key concern in many countries around the world. There have been a number of studies conducted in different contexts investigating career entry motivations of teacher education students including in Indonesia (Suryani, Watt, and Richardson, 2016; Suryani, 2017; 2020), Australia (Watt and Richardson 2007, 2008, 2012; Watt, Richardson, and Smith

2017), the US (Lauermann et al. 2017), Europe (Jugović et al. 2012; König and Rothland 2012), China (Lin et al. 2012), and central Asia (Eren and Tezel 2010; Eren 2017). These studies highlight altruistic and intrinsic values as the key motivations for choosing a teaching career. Researchers have explored the reasons why teachers leave the profession within the first few years (e.g., Wilhelm, Dewhurst-Savellis, and Parker 2000) and found four main reasons: low salary, unrealistically high workload, low social status, and challenging classroom behaviours. However, there are very limited studies reporting on the early attrition of prospective teachers. In the UK, a study identified that around 4% of 453 preservice teachers did not want to enter teaching (Jarvis and Woodrow 2005). A Norwegian study with 283 teacher education students has reported that a quarter of them were still uncertain about taking a teaching job in the future (Roness and Smith 2009). The current study investigated this underexplored area in the Indonesian context, exploring why teacher education students do not intend to teach in schools despite graduating from teacher education programmes, and analysed their perceptions about teaching as a career.

Theoretical framework: social learning theory of career decision making

Career decision making is a multidimensional process influenced by individuals' personal and social attributes. A thorough search identified three potential theoretical frameworks that could justify the process: Theory of Life Course Perspectives (Elder, Kirkpatrick Johnson, and Crosnoe 2003), Sociological Theory-Bourdieuian Perspective (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997) and Social Learning Theory (Krumboltz 1979).

The first framework, Theory of Life Course Perspectives (Elder, Kirkpatrick Johnson, and Crosnoe 2003), proposes the following five key principles:

- Human development and ageing are lifelong processes. There are changes over time in people's lives, such as work and socio-economic situations.
- Individuals actively construct their own life course; they make choices and negotiations depending on the opportunities and circumstances.
- Individuals' life experiences are embedded and shaped by historical context and place.
- The developmental antecedents and consequences of life transitions, events and behavioural patterns may vary depending on when these happen in an individual's life.
- Individuals' lives are often influenced by social changes and interpersonal relationships with others.

These principles highlight the importance of individual choices and decision-making along with social contexts and the timing of events. The role of relationships with significant others in human life and how these relationships contribute to career decision making are also emphasised.

The second framework, the model of *careership* by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), was developed in the context of youth, blending social and cultural factors with personal choices. This model consists of three integrated dimensions:

- The pragmatically rational decision-making, which explains decisions as pragmatic rather than systematic, and created based on personal or work experiences or others' suggestions.
- The decision-making process, which is in the habitus of the person, indicates that a person's beliefs, ideas, and preferences are subjective and are influenced by the objective of social networks and cultural traditions.
- The career decision making, which is closely related to interactions with others in the field as well as personal choices.

The third framework, the social learning theory of career decision making (Krumboltz 1979; Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones 1976), explains why people enter education programmes or choose a particular occupation at different stages of their lives. This theory is adapted as the underpinning theoretical framework for the current study. According to the social learning theory of career decision making, the interaction among four factors leads to career decisions: genetic factors (personal characteristics), environmental conditions, learning experiences, and performance skills. At each decision-making stage, an individual may have one or more decision options. The personal and environmental influences shape the number and nature of these options and how each individual responds to the available options (Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones 1976). The theory proposes that there may be too many options so that individuals feel incapable of choosing, or individuals may be left with very limited options, so they feel that there is only one option for them.

Personal characteristics, or genetic factors, are essential components of the social learning theory of career decision making (Krumboltz 1979). Individuals are born with specific inherent qualities (e.g., gender, race, and other personal traits) that may set some limits on their educational and professional skills, preferences, and choices.

The environmental conditions and events are factors that are usually located outside the control of an individual. In the context of teacher education, these include the number and nature of job and training opportunities that are available and accessible to students; policies and procedures for selecting prospective teachers; and the role of return that represents the ratio of potential monetary and non-monetary rewards to the cost of preparation for teaching. Other possible factors include family resources (e.g., family values and practices), neighbourhood and community influences, and the educational system (e.g., the school organisation and policies).

The third factor is the *learning experiences*. Past learning experiences have a significant influence on an individual's decision making. Learning experiences result in emotional responses of liking and disliking. It also produces cognitive performance skills. It is possible that the response individuals receive from other people about the quality of their past performance may affect their future performance. Consequently, the overall effect of various learning experiences and the individual's cognitive and emotional responses to these learning experiences affect the decision to enrol in any specific educational programme.

The fourth factor that could affect the career decision making is *task-approach skills*. Due to the interaction between the genetic and environmental influences, individuals may develop certain skills, work habits, some specific cognitive processes, and emotional responses. Individuals apply these skills into each new task that affects the outcome, which in turn may modify the skills.

This theory was modified by Chapman (1983) for teaching and teacher education contexts. Based on Chapman's adapted version of the social learning theory of career decision making, Rots et al. (2010) developed and tested a hypothetical model that was more specific to teacher education and teaching career choices, further highlighting the relevance and currency of this theory. Our conceptual framework, which is an adapted version of the theoretical model of Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones (1976), Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996), and Rots et al. (2010), comprises four factors (Figure 1). Individual characteristics and external influences may affect students' decisions to choose teacher education programmes, while learning experiences and task approach skills may influence their decision not to choose teaching.

Past studies suggest that the initial motivation for entering teacher education programmes may vary across individuals and it may influence their career decision making, including whether to pursue teaching as a profession or not. For instance, a study of 209 teacher education graduates in Belgium identified that completion of a teacher education course may not predict entry into the teaching profession (Rots et al. 2007). In Malawi, a group of trainee teachers were reportedly pursuing teacher education as a 'springboard' to other careers with no plan to work as teachers (Mtika and Gates 2011). A study from India reported that some of the male participants viewed teaching as a 'stop-gap arrangement' while preparing for civil service examinations including those for the Indian Administrative Services (IAS), Indian Police Services (IPS), and Indian Revenue Services (IRS) (Ramachandran et al. 2006). Another study of 217 preservice teachers in Belgium revealed that the initial motivations for entering teacher education, labour market, and

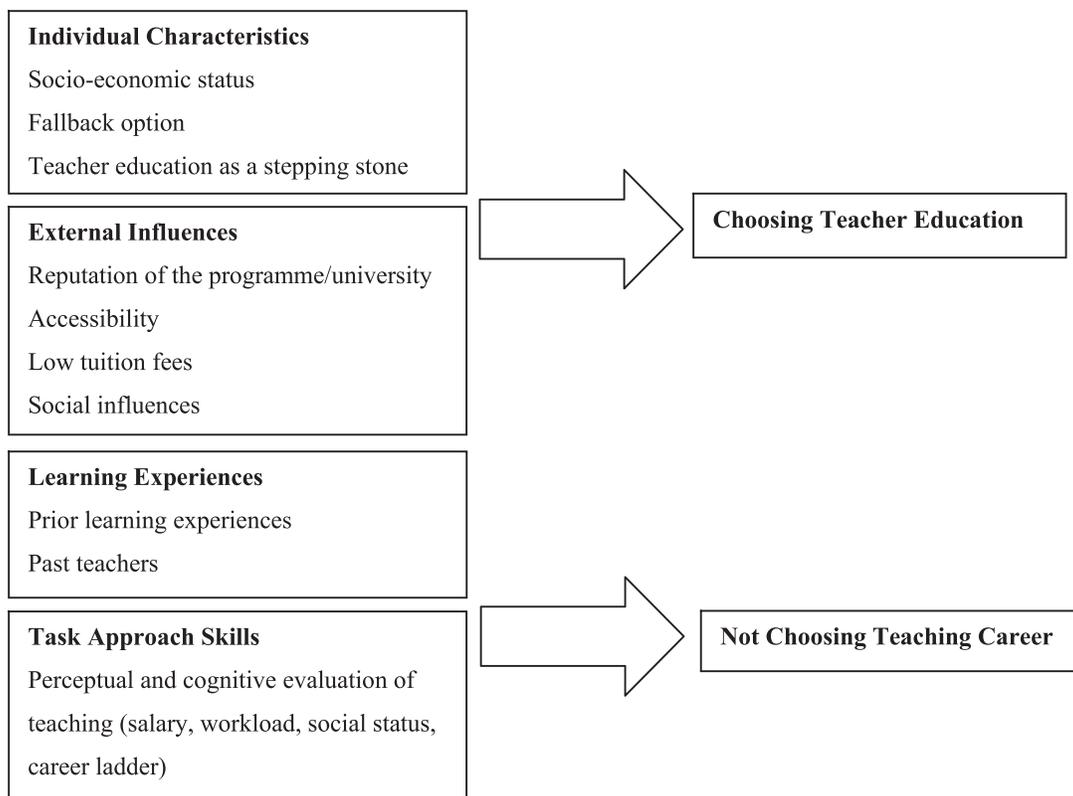


Figure 1. Conceptual framework: University students' career decision making.

support students receive during teacher education programmes were the key factors that predicted their decision to choose a teaching career or not (Rots, Aelterman, and Devos 2014).

There are also studies reporting on the changes in motivations while students were completing teacher education programmes (e.g., Cheng, Tang, and Cheng 2014). It was identified that this ambivalence could be related to concerns about career prospects, self-influences such as lack of perceived abilities, lack of subject knowledge or professional expectations, and social influences such as influence from family and friends. An opportunity to interview retired teachers was reported to be highly inspiring for teacher education students and their passion for teaching. Emotional connections were found to be associated with the positive emotional responses of teacher education students (Santoro, Pietsch, and Borg 2012). Thornton and Reid (2001) found that students' career choice was influenced by how study counsellors portrayed teachers and teaching profession, and if they had sound knowledge about the programme.

The job market and relative job opportunities other than teaching might also influence teacher education students' plans to pursue a teaching career (Rots, Aelterman, and Devos 2014). When students become more aware of different career options, they may choose non-teaching occupations. It has also been reported in many contexts that teacher education was being chosen as a fallback option (e.g., Wang and Fwu 2002; Wong, Tang, and Cheng 2014). People who were unable to find a position in their preferred profession (Watt and Richardson 2012) and those who were unhappy with other jobs they have done (Sinclair, Dowson, and McInerney 2006) reported teacher education as a fallback option. These individuals may consequently be less committed to continue towards teaching as a profession.

Context of the study

Teacher education programmes in Indonesia have undergone many changes in the past few years. Following the Teacher Law in 2005, it has become mandatory for all Indonesian teachers to complete the minimum academic qualification of four-year post-secondary education (such as a bachelor's degree), followed by a successful completion of one to two semesters of postgraduate professional training in teaching.

Selection and enrolment

The selection process for teacher education varies across programmes and universities. All senior secondary students must undertake national examinations, but these scores do not affect university entry as each university has its own entrance test and selection criteria. For undergraduate programmes, applicants will be accepted based on their entrance test scores. There are specifically designed national tests for public university enrolments, while private universities often have their own selection tests that are not nationally organised. Selection for postgraduate programmes is based on applicants' previous grade point average (GPA). Attributes such as candidates' attitudes to the discipline and/or profession, intellectual curiosity or critical thinking capacities, commitment to ethical and sustainable practices, and professional aptitude are not considered. The lack of interview or individual selection procedures together with the heavy reliance on test scores makes it

difficult to determine whether those students who enter teacher education intend to pursue a teaching career.

Method

The participants' views on teacher education and the teaching career were collected using open-ended questions. There were questions related to participants' schooling experiences, particularly regarding their best and worst experiences with their teachers. Subsequent questions investigated participants' perceptions regarding working as a teacher in Indonesia, focusing on their general concerns of being a teacher, followed by the teaching career ladder, teacher social status, salary, and workload. The final question centred on their main reasons for choosing teacher education at their university. Participants' demographic information were also collected.

After obtaining ethics approval, we contacted four Indonesian universities and administered the questionnaire. The participants were 133 fourth-year undergraduate teacher education students from two state universities and two private universities from Jakarta and Yogyakarta (Table 1). These universities were chosen due to their established teacher education programmes for over five decades, offering several undergraduate and post-graduate studies. At the time of data collection, participants had completed six of eight semesters of their programme and were likely to have clear career plans regarding whether they want to become teachers or not upon graduation. Following the ethical guidelines, the participants' identities were kept confidential and their responses were reported using participant numbers in this paper.

Referring to the thematic analysis technique, each response was analysed separately, then comments were categorised using major conceptual themes. We identified recurrent themes using a collaborative analysis approach to bring a diversity of perspectives to the data analysis (Cornish, Gillespie, and Zittoun 2014). Initially these themes were provisional and only accepted if they repeatedly emerged across the dataset and were agreed upon

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants ($N = 133$).

Profile	Number
Gender	Women ($n = 95$) Men ($n = 38$)
Age	18–28 years old
University	Jakarta State ($n = 61$) Private ($n = 28$) Yogyakarta State ($n = 16$) Private ($n = 28$)
Living Area	Suburb ($n = 53$) City ($n = 41$) Small town ($n = 26$) Village ($n = 13$)
Programme of study	English language education ($n = 46$) Mathematics education ($n = 34$) Early childhood education ($n = 16$) Primary education ($n = 11$) Guidance and counselling ($n = 9$) Special education ($n = 9$) Science education ($n = 8$)

by the researchers. The repeated use of language and alignment of examples enabled each category to be further defined by specific characteristics.

Findings

Career plan

There were 94 participants who planned to teach in schools temporarily then switch careers, while 39 participants did not intend to teach in schools at all. Participants who planned to become school teachers temporarily and switch to another career later planned to teach between one to five years, and then work as a private sector employee ($n = 18$), have their own business ($n = 16$), work as a lecturer ($n = 12$), editor/journalist ($n = 5$), social activist/volunteer ($n = 5$), civil servant ($n = 4$), artist/musician ($n = 3$), undertake postgraduate study ($n = 3$), be a housewife ($n = 3$), or were not sure ($n = 25$). Those who did not plan to teach preferred to work in occupations such as becoming a private sector employee ($n = 10$), business owner ($n = 6$), writer/editor/journalist ($n = 6$), civil servant, lecturer, or housewife ($n = 1$ for each), with a few who have not yet decided or did not know ($n = 14$).

Main reasons for choosing teacher education

It was interesting to note that the participants' reasons for choosing teacher education were different from their decisions for not choosing a teaching career. There were four key themes: participants' personal/individual characteristics, external influences, prior learning experiences, and task approach skills. Individual characteristics and external influences affected their decisions to choose teacher education programmes, while learning experiences and task approach skills seemed to have a significant influence on their decision not to choose teaching.

Individual characteristics

Socio-economic background. The participants were asked to indicate their income if they were in paid work, including pocket money from parents. Most participants ($n = 84$) lived with monthly incomes of less than Rp 1,000,000. Others ($n = 46$) had a monthly income over Rp 1,000,000 and 3 participants did not answer. A majority ($n = 92$) spent less than Rp 1,000,000 per month, others spent over Rp 1,000,000 monthly ($n = 36$) and 5 participants did not answer. At the time of data collection, Rp 1,000,000 was approximately AUD 111. Most participants' studies ($n = 103$) were financed by their families, some were partially funded by scholarship and families ($n = 10$), nine were solely self-funded, five were sponsored by a scholarship while the remaining had their studies paid partially from a combination of family, self-funded and work sponsored ($n = 6$). Fifty participants were undertaking paid work during their study, 55 did not work but had prior work experience and 28 had not worked at all. Out of those who were working or not working at the time of the study but had some work experience, the majority ($n = 94$) had teaching experiences such as private tutoring and being a casual teaching assistant at schools. As a significant number of participants were relying on parents for their tuition fees, teacher education tuition fees were affordable for most of them.

Fallback option. Ten participants did not have specific reasons and merely entered teacher education because they did not get accepted into another programme or they did not know any other programmes. This was reported in other contexts too (e.g., Wang and Fwu 2002; Wong, Tang, and Cheng 2014). Comments such as ‘I only got accepted in this university’ (ID 501) and ‘I only passed the entrance test to this university’ (ID 248) were made by the participants.

Teacher education as a stepping stone. Like the reports from Belgium (Rots, Aelterman, and Devos 2014), the relative job opportunities other than teaching were reported as a strong influence in students’ plans to enter teacher education. Three participants perceived teacher education as a stepping stone to another career, whether it be related or not related to education. A female participant studying physics education who planned to teach temporarily but still did not have a clear career plan chose teacher education as it ‘offers greater career options’ (ID 126). Similarly, a primary education participant who planned to work as a religious activist and news writer responded, ‘teacher education graduates have better career prospects, not only in teaching occupations ... also students at this university are active in social organisations’ (ID 179). ‘I can easily find a job’ was a response from an early childhood education participant (ID 770).

External influences

Reputation of the programme/university. The most popular reason to enter teacher education was the good reputation of the university, with 54 participants highlighting this reason as their main motivation. For instance, a female participant chose her programme ‘because the reputation of this university is well known, its graduates are in demand and highly sought by companies’ (ID 847). Prior to enrolling in teacher education, she had decided that she did not want to teach, but instead preferred to work as a writer or editor upon graduation as she enjoys reading and writing in English.

Male participants tended to have a similar perspective. For example, a male participant described the university he attended as ‘[having] a good quality and it is easy to get a good job’ (ID 807). This participant reported that he did not plan to become a teacher but wanted to work as a designer or event organiser as he had already built a network and acquired some prior experience in that area. He just needed a degree from a reputable university.

Eleven participants specified the quality of the programme as their preferred reason for choosing teacher education. For example, a male participant from a guidance and counselling programme commented, ‘it is well known that this university produces a reliable quality of graduates’ (ID 811). He indicated his preference for switching careers after teaching for two years and wanted to become a musician, as he felt his interests and talents lie in the musical industry.

Education systems have been highlighted as an influential factor in the social learning theory of career decision making (Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones 1976). Hence, it is plausible that the good reputation of the university and programme would attract students to pursue said programme, even if they do not intend to teach in schools. The reputation of the university was interpreted as positively associated with the support that they might gain from the faculty to graduate. This was reported by many scholars as an

important teacher education variable for students' personal and professional development (e.g., Caires, Almeida, and Vieira 2012).

Accessibility. The number and nature of training opportunities are important factors of career decision making (Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones 1976). Extrapolating this to the selection of university/courses, a convenient campus location was a popular reason indicated by 20 participants in the current study as the universities they studied at were easy to access and close to the participants' residence. Both males and females shared similar reasons. For example, one male participant considered his university as 'quite famous for its good graduates and also because it is close to my home' (ID 293). This student expressed a desire to not become a teacher but to own a private tutoring business as he believed it would provide more income than teaching in schools.

A female participant selected her university 'because of the convenient [campus] location that is easy to reach' (ID 842). She did not have any specific future plans but chose teacher education just to achieve a university qualification as it may help her parents who own a garment business. Similarly, another female participant preferred her university 'because this campus is located close to my home' (ID 757). She planned to teach temporarily in pre-school for a year before establishing her own day-care business.

Relatively relaxed and easier selection procedures were also an influential factor that made them choose teacher education. For example, one participant stated, 'I was selected and received an offer to study at this university without an entrance test' (ID 122). He planned to teach for two years before working in the Ministry of Education and Culture. Another comment was 'because this university gave me an early acceptance offer, so I just got in and did not apply for another university' (ID 664).

Low tuition fees. The next common reason was inexpensive tuition fees ($n = 13$). One male participant aspired to work with the Ministry of Education and Culture as a civil servant because it offered a more reliable career path compared to teaching. Therefore, he chose teacher education as a logical step, in addition to his university being 'a state university with cheaper tuition fees' (ID 255). Likewise, another male participant who had similar career intentions to be involved in education policy making instead of teaching, stated, 'I just followed whatever my friends chose; the tuition fee [for teacher education] is also less expensive' (ID 782). A female participant who was so keen to invest in businesses had plans to teach for five years, commented, 'the tuition fees in this university are affordable' (ID 006). A similar comment was made by another male participant who intended to teach for a couple of years and then to pursue his childhood dream of working as a policeman, 'it is a state university; the tuition fees are cheaper' (ID 777).

Krumboltz and colleagues have suggested that the potential costs and risks for preparing for any career would affect the decision-making process. For the same reason, a scholarship offer could be a significant positive predictor. This was reported by five participants. One participant who had plans to work as a social worker at a hospital joined the university and took teacher education 'because this is a Catholic university and I have received a scholarship' (ID 816). Given that many of the participants were of middle to low socio-economic status and most of them were relying on parents for their tuition fees, it was not surprising to identify low tuition fees of teacher education programmes as a key influence for choosing this programme.

Social influences. Participants were asked to indicate their parents' levels of education and occupations. In a collectivist society like Indonesia, parents often have strong influences on their children's lives, including educational decisions. The participants, in general, indicated that their decisions to choose a programme of study were influenced greatly by parents or by spouses, followed by friends, siblings, and other relatives. Most participants' parents had graduated from senior secondary ($n = 56$, for father and $n = 60$, for mother), followed by a diploma and bachelor's degree ($n = 48$, for father and $n = 44$, for mother). According to the social learning theory of career decision making, the exposure of a person to multiple opportunities is an important predictor for choosing a career (Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones 1976). Given that most of the participants were coming from families where parents had completed their secondary school education, it could be interpreted that participants' parents were not aware of many other job opportunities and might have influenced their children to choose teacher education.

It was highlighted in the comments that parents and family had significant influences in students' decisions to choose a teacher education programme. Seven participants agreed that social influences were the main reasons. For example, one female participant said she chose the programme 'because my father said so' (ID 524). Another female participant said that she was asked by her mother 'to study English education ... to be able to teach my own children' (ID 844), although she wanted to pursue a career as make-up artist. Another female, who had intentions to build her own business said, 'teacher education is my parents' choice' (ID 280). Siblings were found to also have a significant influence in participants' decision-making. For example, a female participant who wanted to try teaching for a short period and then move on to working as translator or writer commented that she selected English education at that university as her 'sibling studied at the same university' (ID 651). A few participants stated that they entered teacher education because of their peers, 'I followed my friends' choice' (ID 658).

Previous research has reported the influence of significant others, including family members and close relatives, in making career decisions (e.g., Sinclair 2008). However, it was interesting to note in the current context that it was mainly female participants who reported the influence of parents and siblings as a main reason for choosing a teacher education programme.

Main reasons for not choosing a teaching career

Learning experiences

The third factor in the conceptual model includes two components: prior learning experiences and interactions with past teachers. There are studies reporting on prior experiences as a key influence in choosing teaching. It could be an influential teacher (e.g., Suryani 2017) or the positive learning experiences during teacher education (e.g., Rots, Aelterman, and Devos 2014) that might have affected their decision to become a teacher. Although it was not explicitly identified as a strong influential factor for not entering teaching in this study, some participants reflected on their worse learning experiences, and their comments provided good reasons for us not to neglect a potential negative impact that these experiences might have had on their decision against a teaching career. However, it is acknowledged that the definition of great and bad teachers was very

subjective based on participants' personal perspectives. In general, they perceived negativity from teachers, a lack of teacher-student relatedness, an authoritarian style of classroom management including corporal or physical punishment, and disengagement as negative attributes of teachers. Their resentment was quite evident in their comments:

I had teachers who gave physical punishment to students and they did not explain the materials, so we did not understand the lesson at all. (ID 613)

Yes, I had a bad teacher once. Often, he was bad-tempered in class for no reason. Sometimes he disciplined students and beat them with a rattan. (ID 845)

He swore to students in my class; his behaviour was unacceptable. I don't have respect for such teachers and his behaviour made me less inclined to a teaching career. (ID 600)

His evaluations were very subjective. He often discouraged low ability students. He did not motivate his students to learn. (ID 852)

Task approach skills

Everyone has a set of skills, values, and perceptual and cognitive processes resulting from the interactions between individual characteristics and external influences. The task approach skills in the context of the current study consist of participants' perceptual and cognitive evaluation of teacher salary, workload, social status, and career ladder. The rate of returns of various occupations is an important predictor of career decision making. The reward for any given occupation may vary in different cultural settings due to the actions of the government or institutions, which would affect one's future planning. It was evident in the responses of both male and female participants who did not have any intentions to teach in schools at all. Most participants acknowledged that there was no standard for teacher salary across public and private school teachers. Hence, teachers' salaries varied depending on the area and type of school. Some examples are:

Some teachers receive high salaries, but others gain relatively low salaries. (ID 111)

Public servant teachers receive fairly high salaries, but teachers with part-time or casual positions receive very low remunerations. The government should take this into account in their teaching policy. (ID 293)

Most Indonesian teachers receive low salaries, especially those teaching in rural and remote areas. (ID 699)

They also raised concerns regarding teachers being treated differently in the country. For example, a female participant intending to work as a civil servant in the Ministry of Education and Culture observed that 'teachers in cities received much better remuneration. Teachers in villages were less fortunate and received less earnings' (ID 783). Another male participant commented that 'there was less attention given to Indonesian teachers; they have an important role in educating the future generation, but countless teachers were still living in underprivileged circumstances' (ID 782). One male English language education student who preferred to work as a translator remarked, 'permanent and full-time teachers received adequate remuneration, but casual part-time teachers gained very little compensation' (ID 633). Other comments were:

... there were big gaps in income between teachers in the cities and villages. (ID 037)

We could see clear discrepancies between civil servant teachers in big cities who receive sufficient remuneration and part-time teachers in small cities who receive much less compensation. Also, fresh graduate teachers were often underestimated by reputable schools. (ID 067)

Low salary was a concern for participants when considering how retired teachers were often forced to live in underprivileged situations. For example, one female participant observed, '... retired teachers do not get enough attention and support from the government' (ID 820). It was also noticed that society and media have played a role in shaping their perceptions about teachers and teaching. One female participant commented, 'I often heard from the news that honorary or casual teachers and teachers in remote areas received very low salaries and limited facilities' (ID 111).

Participants' perceptions about low salary were further affected by their perceptions of heavy workload. Teacher workload is not an isolated issue in Indonesia. Teachers across the world report unrealistically high workloads and it has been identified as one of the major reasons for teacher attrition in many geographic contexts. Participants in the current study perceived teaching as a career with lots of responsibilities and no clear guidelines and regulations from the government. They also found behaviour management as an enduring issue for them to address. For example:

[Teachers] have a very heavy workload because they are responsible for their students' success. (ID 562)

[Teachers have a] huge responsibility and massive tasks to do. (ID 113)

[Teachers have an] increasingly heavy workload. It includes long teaching hours with more and more assignments, in addition to their main task in developing students' characters. (ID 067)

We added one theme under task approach skills which we found as frequently mentioned by the participants, that is, their knowledge about the teaching career progression pathways and options in Indonesia. Some participants did not know much about the teaching career ladder while others commented on the lack of information available to them as student teachers. Subsequently, they expressed a desire for more information about this issue. They were also unaware of career development opportunities. Some of the key comments from participants who did not intend to teach at all or intended to teach for a short period were:

I did not know about teaching career ladders, grades and promotions. (ID 783)

I am not sure about it. It seems the amount of salary was calculated based on the length they have been teaching in schools. (ID 651)

... most schools did not have clear career pathways for teachers. (ID 633)

Outlook and future directions

While we are mindful of the limitation of the study that our data were collected only from four universities and we did not collect data at multiple time points, including at the entry point to identify any changes in their motivations, we would like to emphasise the theoretical and practical implications of the study. These findings contribute to the literature on teacher education selection and preparation. The social learning theory of career decision making was used as an important theoretical foundation for

interpreting the findings that rationalised the personal and social influences of participants' career choices. The study adds to the existing knowledge on career entry motivations of pre-service teachers by providing data from a context where teacher oversupply has been a problem. It also enhances our understanding regarding the complex issue of early attrition in the teacher workforce within a country where many students enter teacher education with clear intentions to not choose teaching as a career.

Universities often advertise the possibilities for their teacher education graduates to work in non-teaching occupations. While this may sound positive and enable teacher education students to consider a wide range of career opportunities, the focus of teacher education should be mainly confined to preparing future teachers. Therefore, it is highly necessary to develop and implement stricter selection guidelines for students entering teacher education programmes. Universities may consider teacher education students' short- and long-term goals in their selection/enrolment criteria. The determining factor may not only be the student's goals but also the plan or learning process during their study in teacher education. Consequently, it is also important that universities provide necessary support for career planning. Scholarship policies should also be revised. If students are not intending to teach, offering them scholarships to undertake teacher education is merely wasting public funds.

While it is not possible to restrict teacher education students to choose teaching in schools as a short-term career prior to shifting to other careers, either related or unrelated to education, the findings revealed that this tendency was predominantly due to their lack of knowledge about career development opportunities such as teaching career pathways and promotions. Teacher education programmes should offer students adequate opportunities to develop a better awareness of career pathways and possibilities. It is recommended that relevant authorities take necessary actions to address the concerns regarding discrepancies in salary and living expenses, particularly for those working in villages, rural and remote areas. This would help in recruiting and retaining good teachers in the field.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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