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**In-service teachers' perceptions of teaching as a career – Motives and commitment in teaching<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

A questionnaire survey was administered to 106 in-service teacher education students of a university in Hong Kong to study their motives and commitment in teaching. Of the three motive factors in taking up teaching as a career, the most influential one is “intrinsic/altruistic motive”, followed by “extrinsic motive/job condition” and “influence from others”. Four factors influencing the teachers' commitment in teaching were found, viz. “students' learning and school development”, “demands on teaching and school practices”, “teaching as a career choice”, “teacher - pupils interaction and attitudes”. Correlational analyses showed that intrinsic/altruistic motive was significantly related to the four commitment factors. Further analysis showed that elements affecting teachers' commitment in teaching involve school head, colleagues, students, parents and educational changes, which deserve the attention of the education authority to address with appropriate measures.

**Introduction**

The quality and performance of teachers have always been a focus of concerns in education and teacher education research (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997; Hong Kong, 1992). The quality of teaching is not only governed by the qualification, knowledge and skill competence of teachers but also their enthusiasm, dedication and commitment in teaching. When a teacher is motivated and loves the teaching profession, the students not only learn the content taught by the teacher, but the students are also motivated toward learning (Czubaj, 1996). Teachers who are dedicated to teach would facilitate school based innovations or reformations that are meant to be beneficial to students' learning and development.

The problems of recruitment and retention of good teachers especially Science, Mathematics, Language and Special Education have been repeatedly reported in different countries. The constant leaving of good teachers from the teaching

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profession to other careers (such as the Business and government sectors) suggest the teaching career is not attractive enough to retain good and committed teachers. Literature review on teachers turnover rate shows the first few years of teaching seem to be critical for novice or beginning teachers. Studies showed that a fairly high proportion of teachers leave the teaching profession in the early years of teaching and that some potential teachers do not join the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 1992, "Teacher Shortages", 2001). Recently, there is an increasing tendency for school teachers in Hong Kong to seek early retirement or leave the teaching profession, many of them have 10 to over 30 years of teaching experiences, proficient and fit for work. It is worthy to investigate the issue if we are concerned about the quality of education with a large turnover of school teachers

Obviously, there are many reasons for the turnover of teachers in the teaching profession. For example, the salary, the status and working conditions would be considered by some people as determining reasons to decide whether to join and stay or leave the teaching profession. Besides, the psychology or perception of teachers cannot be ignored. Reports and research have indicated that stress and burnout resulting from the teaching tasks and environment (e.g. constant changes in educational policy, school and curriculum reforms, class management problems, guidance work, etc) may cause teachers' feel tired and emotionally exhausted, subsequently diminish their enthusiasm and commitment to teaching (Chan & Hui, 1995, Chan, 2003). Eventually, some of them leave the teaching profession with disappointment and a sense of helplessness.

Therefore, studies of teachers' motives and commitment in teaching would provide useful information for teacher educators and school authorities better understand their situation, and to address the problems with appropriate measure.

### **Related Literature**

To educators and researchers, the degree of teacher commitment is one of the most important aspects of performance and quality of school staff (National Centre for education Statistics, 1997). The importance of teacher commitment has made it a subject of research in teacher professionalization (e.g. Kudva, 1999; Rikard,1999). Teacher commitment is closely associated with job satisfaction, morale, motivation, and identity (Day, 2004). Probably teachers are influenced by the motives in taking up teaching as a career, the confidence level and concerns in teaching. Qualified teachers lacking the motivation to teach often have little enthusiasm and driving force in their work. When a teacher has taught for sometime, work may become routinized. Consequently, interest decreases and the teacher fails to work to his/her full capacity

and becomes less effective. In concrete terms, the result is lack of planning, resistance towards change, and general negligence.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the motives of senior secondary students, university undergraduates and teachers entering the teaching profession in (e.g. Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Johnston, Mckeown, & McEwen, 1999; Reid & Caudwell, 1997; Yong, 1995). Research on prospective teachers in the US and Britain show that their major motives in choosing a teaching career are both altruistic and intrinsic. However, the study conducted by Yong (1995) shows that extrinsic motives were the determinants for teacher trainees entering into teaching in Brunei Darussalam. In a study of non-graduate pre-service teacher education students by Chan (1998), it was found that their major motives in enrolling in the teacher education program were mainly extrinsic. It would be interesting to find the motives of in-service teachers, and the association of the teachers' motives with their commitment in teaching. Based on the findings, implications can be drawn to enhance teacher professionalization and teacher qualities.

According to Day (2004), teacher commitment is a predictor of teachers' work performance, absenteeism, burn-out, and turnover, and exerts important influence on students' achievement and attitudes toward school. Different facets of teacher commitment have been researched, including commitment to student learning, teaching, teacher efficacy, and school loyalty (e.g. Steen, 1988). In a joint study of teacher efficacy and teachers' commitment to teaching by Coladarci (1992), commitment to teaching was defined as the "teacher's psychological attachment to the teaching profession" (p.326). When teachers are not committed to the teaching profession, most of these teachers left the teaching field within the first five years of teaching; with teachers attrition rate being highest in the math and the science subject areas. The most frequently reported reason for leaving the profession was low salary and working conditions. When teachers were surveyed whether they would choose the profession again, the reasons given by the teachers not wanting to return to the profession included. "excessive non-teaching responsibilities, large classes, lack of job autonomy and discretion, sense of isolation from colleagues and supervisors, insufficient administrative support, and powerlessness regarding important decision-making processes" (Coladarci, 1992, p.327). These reasons might also prevail in the Hong Kong teacher population, affecting their motives and commitment in teaching, and could form the basis for the present study.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the motives of in-service teachers in choosing teaching as a career ?
2. What are the factors affecting in-service teachers' commitment in teaching ?

3. Are the teachers' motives to teach related to their commitment in teaching? If so, how are they related?

### **Method**

A questionnaire was administered to 106 in-service teacher education students of a university in Hong Kong. 21 items were written to measure the motives of the participants to take up teaching as a career and 34 items were written to examine the teachers' commitment in teaching. The questionnaire items were rated on a five point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Participants were also asked to supply their demographic data including gender, age, elective or subject, teaching experiences and level (primary or secondary) in completion of the questionnaire .

### **Participants**

106 in-service teacher education students, of which 95 enrolled in Mixed Mode Bachelor of Education (MMBE) (89.6%) and 11 (10.4%) in PGDE programme. Because the number of participants from PGDE programme was relatively small, they were grouped together with the MMBE participants for an overall analysis and no separate analysis for the programmes were conducted. Of those who indicated their gender, 17 were male (18.1%) and 77 were female (81.9%). The age distribution was 20-25, (31, 30.1%), 26-30, (30, 29.1%), 31-35 (20, 19.4%) and 36 and above (22, 21.4%). For those who indicated their major elective, (95, 92.2%) were language, (5, 4.9%) were Business and Technology and (1, 1.0%) each for Cultural, Science and Mathematics and Social subjects. Their teaching experiences ranged from less than 1 year (6, 5.8%) to more than 20 years (8, 7.7%). The majority were grouped around 1-5 years (39, 37.5%), 6-10 years (24, 23.1%), 10-15 years (21, 20.2%) and a few 16-20 years (6, 5.8%). All the in-service teachers taught in secondary schools. In addition, 23 (21.9%) reported one family member was teacher, 15 (14.3%) reported two family members were teacher, 10 (9.5%) reported that three or more family members were also teachers, 15 (14.3%) replied 3 of their family members were teachers and 57 (54.3%) reported none of the family members was teacher.

### **Data Analysis**

Exploratory factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis and Varimax Rotation was conducted to determine the number of motive and commitment factors to teach. Reliability Cronbach alphas of the motives and commitment factors or subscales identified were computed. Multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was also applied to investigate if there was any significant difference of the identified factors or

with respect to the demographic characteristics of the participants. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to study the relations between the motive and commitment factors in teaching.

## Results

### 1. *Motives to Teach*

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of individual item responses. When the reasons were examined, four reasons of an overwhelming high percentage (80% and above) were chosen by the teachers. These included (in descending order) “Desire to teach subject(s) I like” (89.6%), “Meaningful job nature” (83.9%), “Desire to help others” (83.0%) and “Interest to work with children/teenagers” (80.2%).

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics of the reasons in taking teaching as a career

Items	Disagree *	Neutral	Agree #
M1 Easy to find teaching post	81 (76.4%)	18 (17.0%)	7 (6.6%)
M2 Better job security	43 (40.6%)	28 (26.4%)	35 (33.0%)
M3 Higher salary	26 (24.5%)	35 (33.0%)	45 (42.4%)
M4 More holidays	32 (30.2%)	33 (31.1%)	41 (38.6%)
M5 Better working hours	56 (53.3%)	32 (30.5%)	17 (16.2%)
M6 Higher social status	52 (49.1%)	32 (30.2%)	22 (20.7%)
M7 Good career prospect	64 (60.4%)	33 (31.1%)	9 (8.5%)
M8 More opportunities for continuing education	35 (33.0%)	41 (38.7%)	30 (28.3%)
M9 Government’s regard for education	67 (63.2%)	30 (28.3%)	9 (8.4%)
M10 Reflecting my religious belief	36 (34.0%)	33 (31.1%)	37 (34.9%)
M11 Fitting my personality	6 (5.7%)	21 (19.8%)	79 (74.6%)
M12 Meaningful job nature	2 (1.9%)	15 (14.2%)	89 (83.9%)
M13 Challenging job nature	7 (6.6%)	18 (17.0%)	81 (76.4%)
M14 Interest to work on campus	3 (2.8%)	22 (20.8%)	81 (76.4%)
M15 Interest to work with children/ teenagers	1 (.9%)	20 (18.9%)	85 (80.2%)
M16 Desire to help others	--	18 (17.0%)	88 (83.0%)
M17 Desire to teach subject(s) I like	3 (2.8%)	8 (7.5%)	95 (89.6%)
M18 Influence of teacher(s)	28 (26.4%)	24 (22.6%)	54 (51.0%)
M19 Influence of family	61 (57.5%)	28 (26.4%)	17 (16.0%)
M20 Influence of peers	68 (64.2%)	27 (25.5%)	11 (10.4%)

M21 Influence of the mass media	86 (81.1%)	18 (17.0%)	2 (1.9%)
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\* Sum and percentage include Strongly Disagree and Disagree

# Sum and percentage include Strongly Agree and Agree

The item responses were factorized to identify the motive factors to take up teaching. With eigen-value of 1 as the cut-off point and scree-plot check, three factors were extracted accounting for an accumulative percentage of variance equals to 50.36%. The first factor accounts for a variance of 21.16%, the second factor 19.21% and the third one 9.99%. With factor loading of .3 as cut-off point, 7 items loaded on factor 1, 7 items (item 10 has a loading value of .299 and was excluded) loaded on factor 2 and 6 items loaded on factor 3. According to the nature of items, factor 1 was labeled “Extrinsic/Job condition”, factor 2 was labeled “Intrinsic/Altruistic” and factor 3 was labeled “Influence from others”. The factor structure and the mean, standard deviation and reliability (Cronbach alpha) of the extracted factors are given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Factor structure, mean, standard deviation and reliability (Cronbach alpha) of the motives in choosing teaching as a career**  
**Rotated Component Matrix (Principal component and Varimax rotation)**

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
M3 Higher salary	.812	-.216	-
M2 Better job security	.779	-.178	-.162
M4 More holidays	.770	-.178	-
M5 Better working hours	.726	-	.226
M7 Good career prospect	.667	.123	.410
M1 Easy to find teaching post	.638	-	-
M6 Higher social status	.637	.307	.172
M15 Interest to work with children/ teenagers	-	.840	-
M12 Meaningful job nature	-	.830	-
M13 Challenging job nature	-.114	.793	-
M11 Fitting my personality	.128	.710	-
M16 Desire to help others	-.209	.630	.127
M14 Interest to work on campus	-	.613	-
M17 Desire to teach subject(s) I like	-	.430	-
M10 Reflecting my religious belief	-.157	.299	-

M20 Influence of peers	-.130	-.108	.781
M21 Influence of the mass media	.161	-.151	.755
M19 Influence of family	-	-	.703
M9 Government's regard for education	.387	.109	.504
M8 More opportunities for continuing education	.248	.211	.428
M18 Influence of teacher(s)	.110	.333	.335
Mean	2.604	4.065	2.478
Standard Deviation	.752	.542	.609
Reliability (Cronbach Alpha)	.858	.835	.661
	(N = 105) (7 items)	(N = 106) (7 items)	(N = 106) (6 items)

As indicated by the relative mean values of the three motive factors in taking up teaching as a career, the most influential one is Intrinsic/Altruistic (mean = 4.065, SD = .542), followed by Extrinsic/Job condition (mean = 2.595, SD = .674) and Influence from others (mean = 2.433, SD = .686). MANOVA study of the motive factors showed no significant differences at .05 level with respect to participants' sex, gender, elective, teaching experience and how many family members were teachers.

## 2. *Commitment to Teach*

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of individual item responses in describing the reasons affecting commitments in teaching. Of 34 items representing the reasons affecting teachers' commitment in teaching, 20 items were positive or supporting statements (Mean = 3.78, SD = .54, N = 106, Cronbach Alpha = .91) and 14 items were negative or discouraging reasons, denoted by (-) sign, (Mean = 3.01, SD = .59, N = 104, Cronbach Alpha = .79)

**Table 3 Descriptive statistics of the positive/supporting and negative/discouraging reasons (-) for commitment in teaching**

	Disagree *	Neutral	Agree #
C1 My aspiration is to be a teacher	16 (15.1%)	20 (18.8%)	70 (66.0%)
C2 I like teaching more than before	20 (18.9%)	26 (24.5%)	60 (56.7%)
C3 I like to teach my elective subject matter knowledge to my students	--	20 (18.9%)	86 (81.1%)
C4 I am willing to try my best to help my school development	4 (3.8%)	25 (23.6%)	77 (72.7%)

C5 No matter how bad students behave, I am still trying my best to teach them	4 (3.8%)	33 (31.1%)	69 (65.1%)
C6 Teaching is not my first career choice. (-)	54 (51.4%)	17 (16.2%)	34 (32.4%)
C7 Teaching different types of students make me like teaching more.	16 (15.1%)	32 (30.2%)	58 (54.7%)
C8 My teaching experience of students made me more committed in teaching	7 (6.6%)	23 (21.7%)	76 (71.7%)
C9 Should I know teachers have to bear such a great pressure, I won't choose teaching (-)	17 (16.0%)	27 (25.5%)	62 (58.5%)
C10 I found teaching a very interesting task, full of satisfaction.	4 (3.8%)	29 (27.4%)	73 (68.9%)
C11 To be a teacher is one of my first three career choice.	9 (8.5%)	14 (13.2%)	83 (78.3%)
C12 Teaching is meaningful, students need my help in their development	--	18 (17.0%)	88 (83.0%)
C13 Teaching is too hard and there is no adequate return (-)	44 (41.5%)	27 (25.5%)	35 (33.0%)
C14 If school does not provide teachers sufficient support, then teachers need not be committed in implementing school policy promotion (-)	34 (32.1%)	44 (41.5%)	28 (26.4%)
C15 The school teachers' attitudes and performance in teaching have enhanced my commitment to teach	5 (4.7%)	41 (38.7%)	60 (56.6%)
C16 The students' attitudes and behaviour have weakened my enthusiasm to teach (-)	41 (38.7%)	37 (34.9%)	28 (26.4%)
C17 The teaching workload is too much for me and I want to give up teaching. (-)	42 (39.6%)	25 (23.6%)	39 (36.8%)
C18 The parents' attitudes and unreasonable demands made me feel frustrated (-)	35 (33.0%)	33 (31.1%)	38 (35.9%)
C19 I am frustrated with the school's emphasis in students' drilling and practices to get a better results (-)	32 (30.2%)	49 (46.2%)	25 (23.6%)

C20 In general, I like teaching my students	1 (.9%)	22 (20.8%)	83 (78.3%)
C21 I like school life and am willing to teach lifelong	10 (9.4%)	23 (21.7%)	73 (68.9%)
C22 Too many school reforms make teachers burn out, reduce their enthusiasm to teach.(-)	82 (77.4%)	16 (15.1%)	8 (7.5%)
C23 If I have to sit for the language proficiency/information technology proficiency assessment test, I 'll better give up teaching(-)	21 (20.0%)	33 (31.4%)	51 (48.6%)
C24 I am concerned about students' learning attitudes and behaviour, I'll continue to teach them with patience and not give up	3 (2.8%)	27 (25.5%)	76 (71.7%)
C25 I am frustrated, with no sense of achievement in teaching (-)	17 (16.0)	28 (26.4%)	61 (57.6%)
C26 If there is a better paid job, I won't teach any more (-)	24 (22.6%)	32 (30.2%)	50 (47.2%)
C27 I believe every student can be taught to be good	11 (10.4%)	32 (30.2%)	63 (59.5%)
C28 The appreciation displayed by the school/principal made me work harder	6 (5.7%)	20 (18.9%)	80 (75.5%)
C29 I found I am now not as energetic as before (-)	39 (36.8%)	35 (33.0%)	32 (30.2%)
C30 It is difficult to teach the remedial class, and there is no sense of achievement (-)	26 (24.5%)	25 (23.6%)	55 (51.9%)
C31 I have a strong sense of belonging to the school I teach	23 (21.7%)	43 (40.6%)	40 (37.7%)
C32 I value more about my students' acceptance of my teaching than the principals' acceptance	4 (3.8%)	23 (21.7%)	79 (74.6%)
C33 If I am going to choose again, I still choose to be a teacher.	10 (9.4%)	18 (17.0%)	78 (73.6%)
C34 I am very satisfied with the school I teach.	19 (17.9%)	41 (38.7%)	46 (43.4%)

\* Sum and percentage include Strongly Disagree and Disagree

# Sum and percentage include Strongly Agree and Agree

The items explaining reasons for commitment were factorized with principal component analysis and varimax rotation as what has been done for motives of teaching and four factors were identified (eigen-value of 1 and scree-plot test with loading value of .3 as the cut-off) accounting for an accumulative percentage of variance equals to 51.71%. The first factor accounts for 29.41% of variance, the second, third and fourth factors account for 9.45%, 7.43%, and 5.42% of variance respectively. The factor structure and the mean, standard deviation and reliability (Cronbach alpha) of the extracted factors are given in Table 4. These four factors represent the reasons influencing the in-service teachers' commitment in teaching in different perspectives/areas. According to the nature of items loaded on the factors, the four factors were labeled respectively as "Students' learning and school development", "Demands on teaching and school practices" "Teaching as a career choice", "Teacher - pupils interaction and attitudes"

**Table 4: Factor structure, mean, standard deviation and reliability of the commitment in teaching  
 Rotated Component Matrix (Principal component and Varimax rotation)**

Item	1	2	3	4
C21 I like school life and am willing to teach lifelong	.731			
C8 My teaching experience of students made me more committed in teaching	.729			
C24 I am concerned about students' learning attitudes and behaviour, I'll continue to teach them with patience and not give up	.716			
C10 I found teaching a very interesting task, full of satisfaction.	.714			
C34 I am very satisfied with the school I teach.	.699			
C2 I like teaching more than before	.697			.366
C31 I have a strong sense of belonging to the school I teach	.687			

C20 In general, I like teaching my students	.643		.326
C4 I am willing to try my best to help my school development	.635		
C12 Teaching is meaningful, students need my help in their development	.627		
C28 The appreciation displayed by the school/principal made me work harder	.604		
C5 No matter how bad students behave, I am still trying my best to teach them	.602		
C7 Teaching different types of students make me like teaching more.	.583		.456
C25 I am frustrated, with no sense of achievement in teaching (-)	.417	.395	.317
C23 If I have to sit for the language proficiency/informaiton technology proficiency assessment test, I 'll better give up teaching(-)		.627	
C17 The teaching workload is too much for me and I want to give up teaching. (-)		.622	.461
C18 The parents' attitudes and unreasonable demands made me feel frustrated (-)		.553	
C19 I am frustrated with the school's emphasis in students' drilling and practices to get a better results (-)		.541	
C14 If school does not provide teachers sufficient support, then teachers need not be committed in implementing school policy promotion (-)		.536	.372
C29 I found I am now not as energetic as before (-)	.445	.515	
C9 Should I know teachers have to bear such a great pressure, I won't choose teaching (-)	.346	.512	.342
C22 Too many school reforms make teachers burn out, reduce their		.493	

enthusiasm to teach.(-)				
C13 Teaching is too hard and there is no adequate return (-)		.483		.378
C11 To be a teacher is one of my first three career choice.			.824	
C6 Teaching is not my first career choice. (-)			.819	
C4 I am willing to try my best to help my school development			.818	
C3 I like to teach my elective subject matter knowledge to my students	.509		.539	
C33 If I am going to choose again, I still choose to be a teacher.	.454		.506	
C16 The students' attitudes and behaviour have weakened my enthusiasm to teach (-)				.667
C15 The school teachers' attitudes and performance in teaching have enhanced my commitment to teach	.397			-.509
C32 I value more about my students' acceptance of my teaching than the principals' acceptance				.490
C27 I believe every student can be taught to be good	.317			.486
C26 If there is a better paid job, I won't teach any more (-)	.372	.368	.382	.416
C30 It is difficult to teach the remedial class, and there is no sense of achievement (-)		.324		.373
<b>Mean</b>	3.720	2.914	3.846	3.259
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	.594	.670	.806	.578
<b>Reliability (Cronbach Alpha)</b>	.910	.783	.819	.588
	(N = 106)	(N = 105)	(N = 105)	(N = 106)

As indicated by the relative mean values of the four commitment factors in teaching, the most influential one is “Teaching is my career choice”, (mean = 3.846, SD = .806), followed by “Interest in students’ learning and school development”, (mean = 3.720, SD = .594), “Sense of achievement, collegial and school practices”

(mean = 3.259, SD = .578) and “Deterrents and stress in teaching” (mean = 2.914, SD = .670). MANOVA study of the commitment factors showed no significant differences at .05 level with respect to the participants’ sex, gender and elective, teaching experience and how many family members were teachers.

### 3. *Relation between motives and commitment in teaching*

Table 5 shows the correlation coefficients between motive and commitment factors. Several pairs of significantly correlated variables were found in Pearson correlation analysis between the motive and commitment factors. Within the motive factors, Extrinsic/Job condition and Influence from others motive were significantly and positively related at .01 level ( $r = .296, p = .002$ ). Between motive and commitment, Intrinsic/Altruistic motive was significantly and positively related to overall commitment in teaching at .01 level ( $r = .639, p = .000$ ).

On further analysis of the relation between individual motive and commitment factors it was found that Intrinsic/Altruistic motive was significantly and positively related to all four factors in commitment, viz. with Interest in “Students’ learning and school development” at .01 level ( $r = .700, p = .000$ ), “Demands on teaching and school practices” at .05 level ( $r = .222, p = .023$ ), “Teaching as a career choice” at .01 level, ( $r = .509, p = .000$ ), and ,” “Teacher - pupils interaction and attitudes” at .01 level ( $r = .437, p = .000$ ).

Extrinsic/Job condition was significantly and negatively related to “Teacher - pupils interaction and attitudes” at .05 level ( $r = -.223, p = .022$ ). The magnitude was weak to weakly moderate. No significant correlations were found between Extrinsic/Job condition and the other three factors of teacher commitment.

There was no significant correlation between the motive “Influence from others” and all four factors in teacher commitment.

**Table 5 : Correlation between motives and commitment in teaching**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Extrinsic/Job Condition	1								
2.Intrinsic/Altruistic Motive	-.071	1							
3.Influence from others	.296(**)	.116	1						
4. Totmotiv+	.715(**)	.494(**)	.678(**)	1					
5. Students’	-.181	.700(**)	.061	.249(*)	1				

learning and school development									
6. Demands on teaching and school practices									
7. Teaching as a career choice									
8. Teacher - pupils interaction and attitudes									
9. Totcommi#									

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

+ Totmotiv refers to total commitment , comprises the three motive factors together

# Totcommi# refers to total commitment, comprises the four commitment factors together

## Discussion

In the present study, three motive factors were identified for the in-service teachers to take up teaching as a career, viz., extrinsic/job condition, intrinsic/altruistic motive and influence from others. In terms of the mean values of the three motive factors (Table 2 refers), the in-service teachers in the present study chose teaching as a career mostly due to the “intrinsic/altruistic” motive, next, the “extrinsic/job condition” and last the “influence from others” factor. Paired- sample t-tests showed the mean value of “intrinsic/altruistic” motive was significantly different from that of “extrinsic/job condition” and “influence from others” factor at .01 level. The result suggested it was a significant factor in motivating the in-service teacher’s choice of teaching as a career. That is, the in-service teachers under study took up teaching as a career mainly due to the fact that they liked to work with children and teenagers; they liked to help others and found the work meaningful and challenging, and suited their personality. Material rewards such as salary, stability, working condition such as holidays, and easy to find a job as contained in the “extrinsic/job condition” factor were not as important and determining as the “intrinsic/altruistic” factor in their career choice in joining the teaching profession. Also, “influence from others” factor such as teachers, parents, peers and mass media was not as decisive when compared with the previous two factors.

The finding was different from previous studies of pre-service teachers who joined the teaching profession mostly based on extrinsic motive factor (Chan, 1998;

Young, 1995). The difference was probably due to the different composition and characteristics of the samples in the studies (e.g. educational qualification and background). In the previous studies of pre-service teachers (Chan, 1998; Young, 1995), the students usually took teacher education program as an alternate means or last resort of continuing further study when they could not enter their desired university programs. Thus, they might not be intrinsically or altruistically motivated to join the teaching profession. In the present study, the sample comprised in-service teachers who had already got the Certificate in Education qualification (qualified teacher status) and wanted to upgrade their qualification to university graduate status through part-time study. They had destined to take up teaching after completing their Certificate course (a full-time two or three year sub-degree program designed to prepare non-graduate teachers for primary and junior secondary level teaching) some years before they enrolled in the MMBEd program. The intrinsic/altruistic motive factor would be more influential in keeping them in the teaching profession.

Four commitment factors were identified, of which the factor “Teaching as a career choice” had the highest mean value, followed by “Students’ learning and school development”, “Teacher - pupils interaction and attitudes” and lastly “Demands on teaching and school practices” (see Table 4). Except the factor “Demands on teaching and school practices”, all other three factors had mean values above the mid-point (“3”) of the five point scale, pointing to the areas or aspects of teaching which the in-service teachers in the present study were mostly concerned about and dedicated in their teaching. The significantly high mean values of the factors “Teaching as a career choice” and “Students’ learning and school development” suggested the in-service teachers under study had high commitment in their teaching work, caring much about their students’ learning and development, as well as the development of the schools they teach. They had reached the “impact concerns” level of Fuller’s model of concerns. The relative high values of the factors “Teaching as a career choice” and “Students’ learning and school development” suggested there existed close bearing to the motives of the in-service teachers, especially their intrinsic/altruistic motives, which included the interest to work with teenagers/children, etc. In-service teachers who carry the intrinsic/altruistic motives probably would consider teaching as their career choice and they were concerned with the learning and development of students. The close relationship of the intrinsic/altruistic motives and commitment factors in teaching was further supported by the high to median correlation coefficients of the two variables (intrinsic/altruistic motives and interest in students’ learning, intrinsic/altruistic motives and teaching is my career choice and intrinsic/altruistic motives and sense of achievement, collegial and school practice) which were significant at .01 (e.g. (see Table 5). On the other

hand, stress and burnout, resulting from heavy teaching load, (e.g. “ I found I am now not as energetic as before”, “Too many school reforms make teachers burn out, reduce their enthusiasm to teach”) and unreasonable expectation from parents (e.g. “The parents’ attitudes and unreasonable demands made me feel frustrated”), and frustration resulting from dealing with students (e.g. “ The students’ attitudes and behaviour have weakened my enthusiasm to teach”, “I am frustrated, with no sense of achievement in teaching”) might weaken teachers’ commitment in teaching, when the in-service teachers had the intrinsic/altruistic motives to work with teenagers and adolescents. As well, if in-service teachers joined the teaching profession with extrinsic/job condition motive, they would decrease their commitment in teaching when they could not find adequate collegial and school support, which was in contrast to the job or working condition they expected when they took up teaching as their career (e.g. “The teaching workload is too much for me and I want to give up teaching”, “If school does not provide teachers sufficient support, then teachers need not be committed in implementing school policy promotion”,. The relationship was illustrated by the significant and negative correlation coefficient between “Extrinsic/job condition” and “Teacher - pupils interaction and attitudes” factors at .05 level (see Table 5).

On further analysis, it was found that some of the responses were positive and supporting to teachers’ commitment in teaching. These included, for example, “My teaching experience of students made me more committed in teaching” (71.7%), “Teaching is meaningful, students need my help in their development” (83.0%), “In general, I like teaching my students” (78.3%), “I like to teach my elective subject matter knowledge to my students” (81.1%), “To be a teacher is one of first three career choice” (78.3%), “The appreciation displayed by the school/principal made me work harder” (75.5%), “I value more about my students’ acceptance of my teaching than the principals’ acceptance” (43.4%), “The school teachers’ attitudes and performance in teaching have enhanced my commitment to teach” (56.6%). On the other hand, there were negative and discouraging elements weakening the teachers’ commitment in teaching. These included, for example, “Should I know teachers have to bear such a great pressure, I won’t choose teaching” (58.5%), The teaching workload is too much for me and I want to give up teaching” (36.8%), “If I have to sit for the language proficiency/information technology proficiency assessment test, I’ll better give up teaching” (48.6%), “If there is a better paid job, I won’t teach any more” (47.2%), “It is difficult to teach the remedial class, and there is no sense of achievement” (51.9%). “I am frustrated with the school’s emphasis in students’ drilling and practices to get a better result” (23.6%). The findings matched with Day’s (2004) view that teachers’ commitment may be enhanced or diminished by factors

such as student behaviour, collegial and administrative support, parental demands, educational policies and their own professional histories and career phases.

Overall examination of these positive and negative elements indicated that the motives and teachers' perceptions of teaching as a career were important, which affected the psychology and emotions of the teachers towards teaching, whether they leave or stay in the teaching team. Elements including the attitudes and behaviour of students, colleagues, school heads and parents, administrative and teaching support as well as frequent changes and reforms in educational policy were definitely influential, either enhancing or weakening teachers' commitment in teaching. The results are in line with previous studies (e.g. Maddox, 1998; Ruhland, 2001) which investigated the main factors affecting turnover in the teaching profession, indicating that lack of teacher empowerment, lack of administrative, community, student and parental support, alienation, feelings of entrapment were causes of teacher burnout and stress, accounting for their leaving of teaching profession.

### **Conclusion and Implication**

The present study examined teachers' motives to choose teaching as a career and their commitment in teaching, as well as their relations. Despite a relatively small sample size, the results would be meaningful and significant. As stressed by Day (2004), good teaching is fundamental to raising standards, it is clearly both the responsibility of the teachers and the schools to ensure that teachers are able to continue sustain passion, to exercise the love, care and respect necessary to good teaching and carry on for a better future. The identified factors which affected teachers' enthusiasm and commitment in teaching are seemingly important for the relevant parties, including the education and school authorities, parents and teachers to reflect and address. Teaching efficacy is to expected decrease with teachers' lowering of confidence in teaching. Passion and commitment would begin to fade as teachers become debilitated by the daily demands of students, the environment and personal life factors (Day, 2004). A reduction of anxieties, stress and burnout, an awareness of the need for life-work balance, coupled with support from colleagues and others, under a good leadership in the school would have to be formulated in order to restore teachers' passion and commitment in teaching. Appreciations from students and parents of teachers' passion and commitment, a trusting and respectful relationship among students and teachers, parents and teachers; and collaborative working among school members definitely would uphold the spirit of teachers and maintain their enthusiasm and commitment in teaching. Nevertheless with the frequent and enormous educational reformations and changes, the school with the personnel stand alone would find it hard to cope with all the problems and constraints,

and inevitably need the adjustment and support from the policy makers of the education authority. In education, it has been too common to say that a top down policy mechanism is ineffective, and that consultation and collaboration with schools, teachers and other parties are essential, yet it is surprisingly to find flaws and problems which happened before are repeating. While keeping education ideals is important, it is hope that we are not going to give in overwhelming anxiety and eventually lose the teachers' passion, motive and commitment to teach.

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