

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO CHOOSE TEACHING CAREER IN ENGINEERING INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this paper is to explore the reasons advocated by faculty members of engineering institutions for choosing the teaching profession. The study is vital in order to evolve the important factors that decide the faculty to be within an institution and take active part in the development of technical education and also the institution. The study is significant at the time when institutions of higher learning are struggling to recruit and retain talented teaching faculty to run their regular courses. The current study was undertaken among 324 teaching faculty from various engineering institutions in Tamilnadu, India. Faculty were administered a modified version of Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT) scale (Watt & Richardson, 2007) to rate the importance of various factors in influencing their career choice. The findings of the study would contribute to the body of knowledge on motivating factors to choose teaching career. The study also helps academic administrators, higher education leaders to identify and enhance the factors that drive young graduates towards academic career. The findings of the study revealed that, majority of the faculty choose the teaching career because of their self belief about their teaching ability, importance they attach to teaching career and the commitment to teaching for younger generation.

KEYWORDS

Teaching Faculty, Motivation, Career Choice, Career Decision.

1. INTRODUCTION

Good teaching faculty is the most valuable resource, the pivot around which the whole teaching-learning process revolves in an educational institution (Thankamma et al., 2010). Recruiting and retaining competent faculty is considered as a perennial problem facing higher education system in many countries all over the world (OECD, 2004). Faculty crunch in Indian higher education system especially in technical education is more severe than many countries. There is a dearth of about 4 lakh faculty members in Indian higher education system (Ranganth, 2012). The rapid growth in economy accelerated by industrial operations together with the explosive progress in information and technology has forced the technical institutions to increase the intake of students to a large level. Unfortunately the availability of qualified faculty members to match the growing student population has not improved in spite of various measures. Institutions are struggling hard to get the required faculty members to satisfy the teacher to student ratio as per AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) norms. The important issue which needs immediate attention is the failure of institutions to attract a sufficiently large number of talented youth to the life of teaching and scholarship (Sunder, 2011). Even though the institutions are producing good number of engineering graduates every year, most of the graduated students are not impressed to take up teaching job as their initial profession. Faculty shortage persists to be a severe problem in the branches of engineering where the market demand for engineers is very high. Richardson & Watt (2005) rightly pointed that unless teaching can be made an attractive career choice for new graduates as well as for those who switch to teaching after pursuing other careers, the shortage of suitably qualified and experienced teachers' promises to worsen.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

There is growing concern about the quality of faculty in higher technical institutions in the country (Rao, 2006). A high-power committee for faculty development in technical institutions, appointed by the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in the year 2006, has come out with startling revelations about the quality of faculty in the country's 1,500-odd engineering institutions. The findings of the committee reported that technical competence of the faculty throughout the country has been abysmal and concluded that the shortage of competent teachers is the gravest problem bedeviling the country's system of technical education. This problem would become worse as the intake of engineering students posed to grow threefold in five years.

Engineers of current generation have various career options and opportunities after graduation. The rapidity in the growth of Information and Technology (I.T.) sector has opened up wide range of career opportunities for young engineers and also to other graduates who wish to migrate to I.T. industry. Further, there is a general opinion in the Indian society that teaching is not considered as a lucrative career in terms of salary and benefits. In spite of various detractors from choosing a career in teaching, it is interesting to know why still people choose to enter teaching profession in engineering institutions (Watt & Richardson, 2009). Thus the foci of the study were intended to enquire into the profile of characteristics and motivations for those who enter into and remain in teaching profession. Thus the study aimed to investigate "whether those who are attracted into teaching have the sufficient ability, knowledge, self interest and enthusiasm for teaching to enliven and sustain the interest of students". Hence it is vital to understand what motivates and attracts people to choose teaching profession.

Most of the international research on motivating factors to choose teaching career has originated from western literature especially from North America. However recent research interest in this domain has been advanced by the seminal work of Watt & Richardson (2007) through their FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) framework which provides a comprehensive and coherent model to guide systematic investigation into this problem. As it was vital to study the motivation for choosing teaching as a career in Indian context using a standard measure, the authors proposed to use standardized measures to analyze the problem. The current study was such an effort to apply Modified FIT-Choice based model in Indian context to study the motivation for choosing teaching career. Though the initial framework was developed, tested and validated in the Australian context, every effort were while modifying the scale to suit the Indian context.

3. RESEARCH EXPERIMENT DESIGN

This study employed a quantitative research methodology in which a questionnaire was used. A questionnaire based research instrument was most appropriate for collecting data from large number of participants and it was also easier also for the participants to complete within a timeframe. The instrument was validated by a panel of experts as most appropriate and feasible for answering research questions. The instrument consisted of two parts. The first part contained 39 items to measure the 11 constructs of motivation to choose teaching career. The second part dealt with the demographic details of the

participants. The validity of the instrument was verified by conducting validity tests. The data obtained was analyzed using the software package – SPSS 17.0 to study the significant results.

3.1. SAMPLE AND SETTING

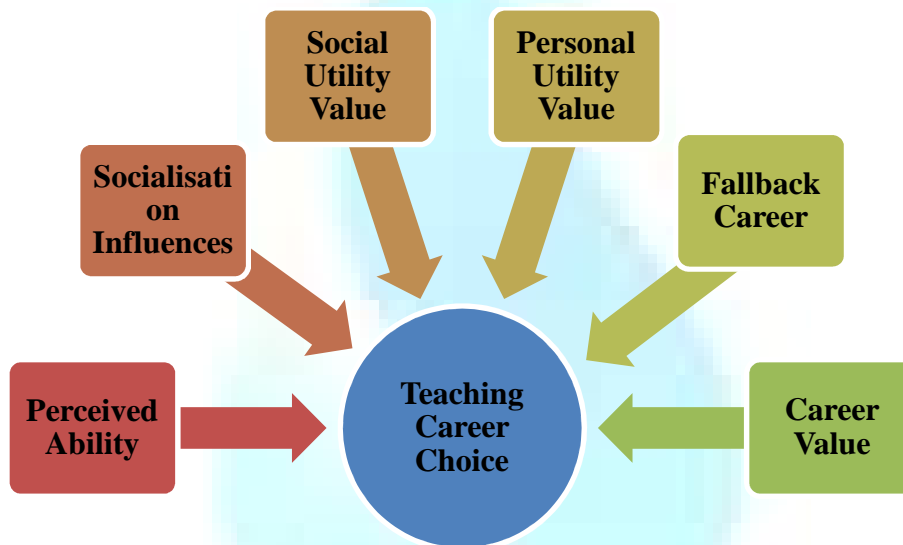
The study was conducted among the randomly selected sample population consisting of 324 faculty from various self financing engineering institutions situated around Chennai, Tamilnadu. All the participating institutions are conducting four year degree courses leading to Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.) / Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech.) degrees. All the institutions participated in the study are privately managed and affiliated to the Anna University, Chennai. The reason for conducting the study with private institutions is that they enroll more than 80% of students in engineering studies (Banerjee and Muley, 2010).

3.2. DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUMENT USING - MODIFIED FIT FRAMEWORK

Motivations for choosing teaching as a career were assessed using the *FIT-Choice* [Factors Influencing Teaching Choice] scale (Watt & Richardson, 2007). The scale was designed to measure the major motivation constructs such as *perceived ability*, *career value*, *personal utility values*, *social utility values*, *socialization influences and fallback career*. Here, *perceived ability* refers to the one’s self confidence in their ability to perform a task, while *career value* relates to the enjoyment one gets from completing a given job. *Personal utility values* measure the extent to which individuals consider tasks to be important, in terms of their personal goals, while *social utility values* are intended to measure ones desire to provide a service to society and make worthwhile contribution. *Socialization influences* measure the extent of influence of others on one’s decisions. *Fallback career* means considering teaching as a second career choice, should one’s first choice of career is not available(Watt & Richardson, 2007).

The authors made few changes to the original instrument which was developed to suit Australian sample. Though the redesigned scale contains all the six major motivations (Figure 1), some of the sub-constructs are removed which does not fit well in Indian context. Hence the final scale contains 39 items to measure 6 motivation factors. Each factor was measured by multiple item indicators with response options from 1 (Strongly Disagree) through 6 (Strongly Agree). Reliability analysis was conducted and the scale yielded Croan bach alpha value of .814, which is well above acceptable level.

FIGURE 1: INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN TEACHING CAREER CHOICE



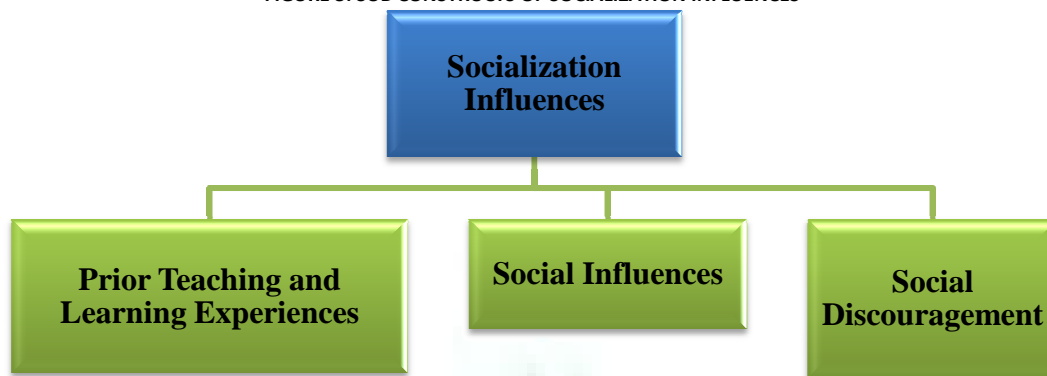
Among the six motivating factors, personal utility value measured three sub-constructs such as job security, time for family, job transferability. Similarly social utility value comprised two sub-constructs namely make social contribution and work with younger generation.

FIGURE 2: SUB CONSTRUCTS OF UTILITY VALUES



Socialization influences (Figure 3) included two sub-constructs such as prior teaching and learning experiences, social influences, social discouragement. Hence the total number of motivating factors including sub-constructs count to 11.

FIGURE 3: SUB CONSTRUCTS OF SOCIALIZATION INFLUENCES



4. DEMOGRAPHICS

The distribution of the respondents in terms of their Gender and Marital status was as shown in the Table 1.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SAMPLE

Factor	Variable	N	%
Gender	Male	181	56
	Female	143	44
Marital Status	Married	161	49.6
	Unmarried	163	50.4

The distribution of the respondents in terms of their experience category was as shown in the table 2.

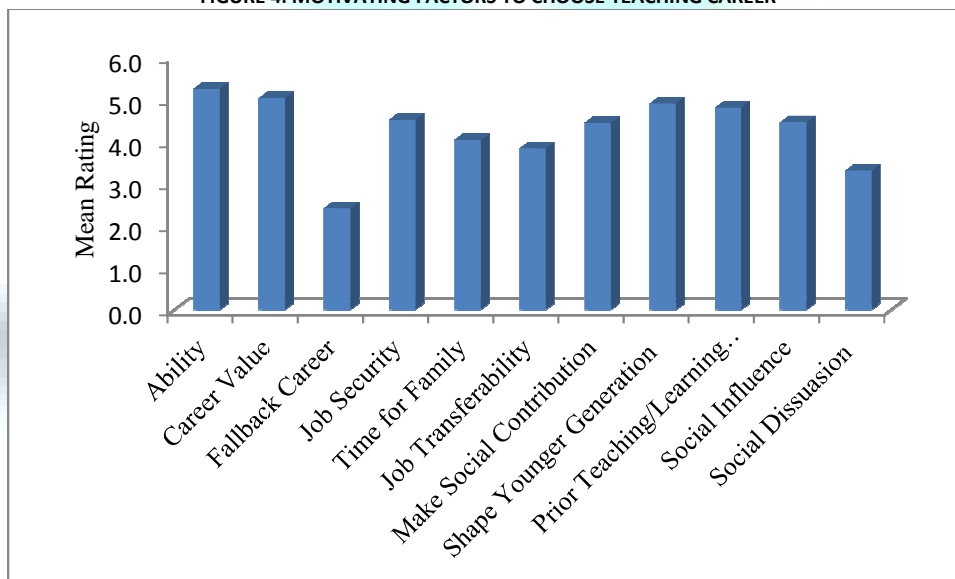
TABLE 2: EXPERIENCE CATEGORY

Experience Category	N	%
0-2 Years	109	34
3-10 Years	157	18
More than 10 Years	58	48

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mean rating scores for the various motivating factors were displayed in the bar graph as shown in figure 4. Overall faculty rated that perceived ability to teach as the dominant motivating factor (Mean=5.3) to choose teaching profession. Similarly faculty considered the intrinsic value they place on teaching career as the next important motivation (Mean = 5.0). Social utility values such as shape younger generation(Mean = 4.9) and positive prior experiences of teaching and learning(Mean = 4.8) were also rated as important motivating factor. The lowest rated motivation to choose teaching career was considering it as a fallback career something they choose because their career options were limited with mean rating of 2.4. Social discouragement against opting for teaching profession was also rated as a lowest motivation factor with mean value of 3.3. These patterns of motivations thus obtained are similar to those previously documented for teachers across different domains and areas of teaching (Richardson & Watt, 2006). However social influence factor with mean rating of 4.5 was significantly higher in comparison with other studies(Richardson & Watt, 2006, 2009). This could be attributed to the influence of society which consists of parents, relatives and friends on the career decisions of people in Indian society.

FIGURE 4: MOTIVATING FACTORS TO CHOOSE TEACHING CAREER



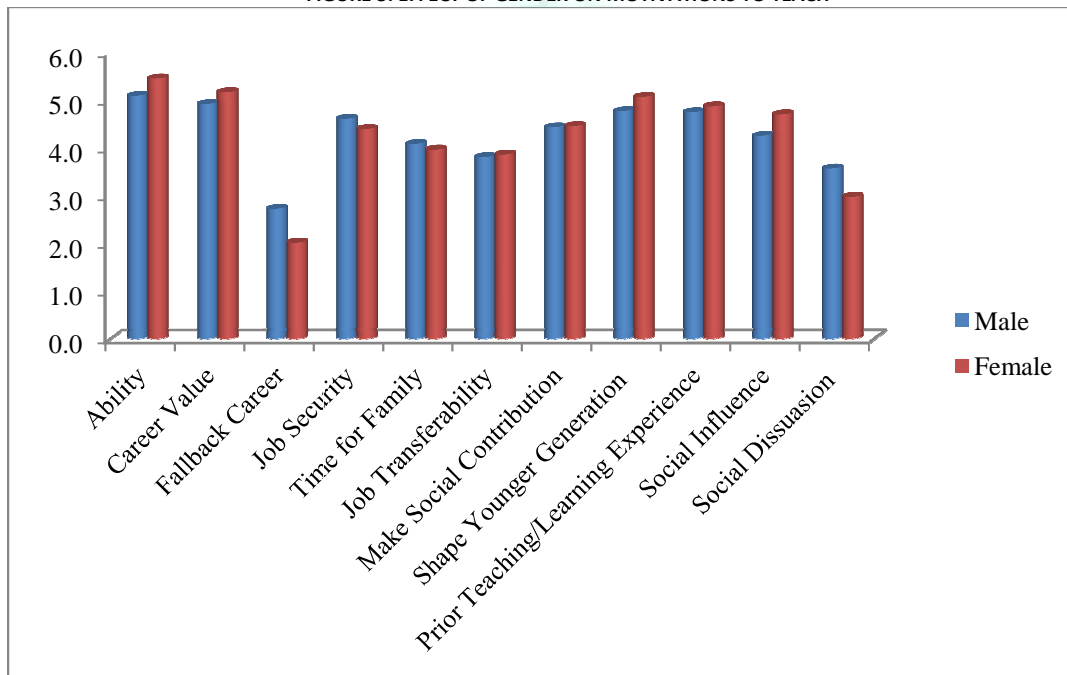
5.1. EFFECT OF GENDER ON MOTIVATIONS TO TEACH

Independent sample t-test was conducted to study the effect of gender on motivating factors to choose teaching career(Figure 5). Significant differences were observed between male and female on majority of factors.

- Female faculty gave higher ratings ($M = 5.45, SD = .62$) for their perceived ability to teach than male faculty ($M = 5.09, SD = .71$) with the level of significance $t(322) = 4.79, p < .001$.
- Similarly female faculty valued teaching career on a much higher scale ($M = 5.17, SD = .76$) than male faculty ($M = 4.92, SD = .76$) and the level of significance was $t(322) = 2.88, p < .005$.

- Even though faculty rated fall back career as the lowest motivation for choosing teaching career significant differences exists among male and female in their level of motivation to choose teaching as a last resort career [$t(322) = 5.61, p < .001$]. Male faculty reported stronger motivation ($M = 2.72, SD = 1.20$) than female ($M = 2.01, SD = 1.0$) to choose teaching career when they could not find job elsewhere other than teaching.
- Male faculty believed that teaching career is more secured ($M = 4.61, SD = .65$) than any other profession compared to female ($M = 4.39, S = .82$) and the level of significance was $t(322) = 2.60, p < .005$. Male faculty believed that the demand for faculty positions in engineering institutions continues to grow as government is keen to increase enrollment in higher education from the current 17% to 30% by the year 2020 (Chetan Chouhan, 2012). Moreover it is widely believed that the economic recessions in the past did not affect the education sector to a great extent in India.
- Female faculty reported working with younger generation as the most important motivation factor ($M = 5.07, SD = .82$) compared to male faculty ($M = 4.77, SD = .96$) and the level of significance was $t(322) = 2.93, p < .005$. This finding is synonymous with previous studies by Watt & Richardson(2009) with the Australian sample.
- Social influences played a vital role in career decisions among female faculty ($M = 4.7, S = .65$) compared to male faculty ($M = 4.25, SD = .91$), $t(322) = 5.12, p < .001$. The most important influences for women to choose teaching were family members and teachers.
- Similarly social discouragement from society to choose teaching career was significantly higher for male faculty ($M = 3.56, SD = .94$) than female faculty ($M = 2.97, SD = .91$), reported significant value was $t(322) = 5.67, p < .001$. This could be attributed to the general belief that teaching has traditionally not been perceived as a high paying profession.

FIGURE 5: EFFECT OF GENDER ON MOTIVATIONS TO TEACH



5.2. EFFECT OF CAREER STAGE ON THE MOTIVATIONS TO TEACH

A one-way ANOVA between subjects was conducted to study the effect of career stages of faculty on the decision to choose teaching career. Career stage of faculty was classified into three categories such as *early career stage* (experience between 0-2 years), *mid career stage* (experience of 3-10 years) and *late career stage* (experience > 10 years). There were significant differences at $p < .05$ among the career stage of faculty for five factors.

- There was significant difference between career stage of faculty and their perceived ability to teach [$F(2, 321) = 7.08, p = .001$]. Early career faculty reported their ability to teach on a higher mean rating ($M = 5.5, SD = 0.67$) compared to mid career ($M = 5.1, SD = 0.72$) and late career faculty ($M = 5.2, SD = 0.62$).
- Early career faculty reported higher mean rating for career value ($M = 5.1, SD = 0.77$) compared to mid career ($M = 4.9, SD = 0.75$) and late career faculty ($M = 4.9, SD = 0.78$). It is interesting to find those early career faculty members who comprise cohorts of fresh graduates new into teaching are highly motivated and enthusiastic about the teaching career, which is good sign for the engineering education of the country.
- There was significant difference between career stages of faculty members in considering the teaching as a fallback career [$F(2, 321) = 10.47, p = .000$]. Mid career faculty with mean rating ($M = 2.7, SD = 1.24$) and late career faculty with mean rating ($M = 2.5, SD = 1.05$) differ significantly from early career faculty with mean rating ($M = 2.0, SD = 1.07$).
- There was significant difference between career stage of faculty in reporting the job transferability construct [$F(2, 321) = 7.85, p = .000$]. Mean rating of mid career faculty was higher ($M = 4.0, SD = .75$), late career faculty reported mean rating ($M = 3.8, SD = .72$) and early career faculty ($M = 3.6, SD = .85$). Faculty in the mid stage of their career are bound to search for better alternatives in other institutions, if they are not satisfied in current position. Hence a teaching career provides a good opportunity for them, to easily migrate to other institutions.
- Social influence was significantly different between career stage of faculty [$F(2, 321) = 4.15, p = .017$]. Early career faculty exhibited stronger mean rating ($M = 4.6, SD = 0.81$) compared to mid career faculty ($M = 4.3, SD = 0.86$) and late career faculty with mean rating ($M = 4.4, SD = 0.80$). As it is apparent that career decisions of young graduates are influenced by their relatives and friends, they reported a stronger motivation for social influences.
- Social discouragement which is the degree with which others advised against pursuing a career in teaching, differed significantly across career stages of faculty [$F(2, 321) = 14.02, p = .000$]. Mean rating of mid career faculty was higher ($M = 3.6, SD = .96$) than late career faculty with mean rating ($M = 3.3, SD = .71$) and early career faculty ($M = 2.9, SD = 1.01$). The reason could be there were diverse career options for mid career faculty compared to late career faculty and hence they were strongly distracted against choosing teaching career. On the other hand early career faculty members who are predominantly female were encouraged to opt for teaching career.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study has provided a detailed portrait of who chooses teaching career in engineering institutions. The effect of demographic variables such as sex and marital status, career stage on the factors influencing career choice was studied. It was identified that teaching ability related beliefs such as intrinsic career value, social utility value like shaping the younger generation, positive prior experiences of teaching and learning were all important motivations for faculty to choose teaching career. However male faculty participated in the study has reported strong experiences of social discouragement, which typically reflects the

perception of Indian society about the teaching profession. Female faculty reported strong social influence which again echoes the Indian culture where career decisions of women are strongly influenced by their family members and relatives.

Understanding influential motivations for individuals who choose teaching career has important implications for recruitment and retention process. It is suggested that faculty recruitment process could include relevant procedures to target the positive motivations to effectively attract young engineering graduates into teaching career. Similarly positive encouragement from society to choose teaching profession can significantly influence the career decisions of younger graduates. On the other hand, social discouragement to choose teaching career should be minimized by creating awareness among public about the values and benefits of teaching profession. Academic leaders can strategize methods to identify students with good teaching abilities and motivate them to take up teaching profession. Thus they ultimately become better teachers of tomorrow.

The collective implication of the study insists that at the recruitment level, the intrinsic and altruistic reasons for candidates to join teaching are a positive aspect that needs to be recognized and nurtured during the initial period. Moreover, there is a need to ensure that the motives for entering into teaching are realized during their teaching career. In other words, there must be a good match between expectations before coming into teaching and reality when in the profession. Unless issues facing the teaching community such as equity in pay and promotion are addressed and better working environment is not guaranteed any efforts to retain the competent faculty will be unsuccessful.

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