



Understanding the Impact of Teaching Experience on Vocational Teachers in Retaining the Teaching Profession: Implications for Vocational Teachers

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Abstract. Individuals entering the teaching profession face dilemmas in retaining their careers. It appears that teacher education has limited impact on teacher retention. Therefore, this paper aims to describe the dynamics of vocational teachers' teaching experiences in schools that impact their careers as educators. To address this question, we conducted a literature review by documenting research findings describing vocational teachers' experiences that impact their retention in their teaching careers, and we also summarized these findings thematically. The results indicate three themes: motives of student teachers, teachers, and professionals entering the teaching profession; factors supporting teachers in retaining the teaching profession; and factors leading teachers to leave the teaching profession. This literature review provides implications for vocational teachers, considering the role of peer teaching among teachers contributing to retaining their careers as educators, especially in retaining teachers in schools. Documentation of vocational teachers in retaining their careers is still limited. Therefore, these findings provide recommendations for further research on vocational teacher experiences in retaining their careers.

Keywords: Teaching Profession, Teacher Experience, Vocational Teacher, Vocational Teacher experience, Literature Review

1 Introduction

Teacher retention, crucial for maintaining stability and continuity in schools globally [1], refers to schools' ability to keep their teachers over time, minimizing turnover rates. However, teacher turnover remains pervasive worldwide [2], posing a significant challenge to education systems globally. This phenomenon warrants careful examination, as various factors influence teacher attrition, including job satisfaction, working conditions, and administrative support [3], [4].

Research into teacher attrition reveals a complex interplay of factors influencing educators' decisions to stay or leave the profession. While some enter teaching with long-term career aspirations, many leave due to challenges encountered during their tenure [5], including workload pressures and inadequate resources [2], [6], [7].

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers and practitioners to develop effective strategies for improving teacher retention rates.

Addressing teacher retention goes beyond workforce stability; it profoundly affects education quality and student outcomes. High turnover disrupts learning environments, impacts student performance, and undermines school cohesion [8]. Thus, initiatives to enhance teacher job satisfaction and well-being are crucial [9]. By fostering supportive environments and providing resources, schools can mitigate turnover rates and ensure quality education delivery [10].

Discussions on teacher retention are essential for sustainable education systems and nurturing educators' professional development. This study employs a literature review to explore vocational teachers' experiences and motivations in the teaching profession. Vocational teachers play a unique role in preparing students for the workforce [3], bridging academic learning and practical skills acquisition. By synthesizing research, we aim to understand factors influencing vocational teachers' retention decisions.

Through a literature review, we examine initial motivations and challenges vocational teachers face. This study contributes evidence-based insights into vocational educators' experiences, aiding policymakers and educators in developing informed strategies to support and retain them, ensuring the provision of quality vocational education programs.

2 Literature Review

In this section, we explain vocational education and vocational teacher education including their definition and role. We also discuss vocational high school competencies in Indonesia, including the areas of expertise of vocational high school in Indonesia, and their changes. Finally, we identified the challenge of implementing existing regulations in Indonesia's vocational teacher education.

2.1 Vocational Education

Vocational education is designed to equip young people and adults with the knowledge and skills necessary for the workforce, aiming to contribute to accelerated economic growth [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16]. By facilitating lifelong learning, vocational education enables individuals to acquire the specific skills required for productivity and citizenship [16], [17]. This purpose of vocational education varies across a spectrum, ranging from specialized training for specific occupations to broader preparation, encompassing different institutions and life stages, emphasizing the acquisition of skills relevant to particular fields [13], [16], [17]. According to the latest research conducted in 2020, Indonesia offers 142 different skills spectrums through vocational schools, also known as *sekolah menengah kejuruan* (SMK) or vocational high school (VHS). Additionally, there have been 80 spectrums available for teachers' majors in higher education [15].

Vocational education is frequently regarded as a tool for driving economic growth, aiming to mitigate youth unemployment and capitalize on economic globalization [18].

These consideration encouraged the Indonesian government to initiate a revitalization of SMK/VHS through regulatory reforms in 2016. However, the implementation of these regulations led to a shortage of teachers due to the rapid expansion of vocational schools. The latest research revealing that 62 out of 142 skill-based competencies (further information for the competencies see on Lampiran Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Nomor: 4678/D/KEP/MK/2016) currently face a shortage of available teachers [15].

Regarding of Attachment to Decree of Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Number 4678/D/KEP/MK/2016 in 2016, there are nine areas of expertise in Indonesia's VHS consists Technology and Engineering, Energy and Mining, Information and Communication Technology, Health and Social Work, Agribusiness and Agrotechnology, Maritime Affairs, Business and Management, Tourism, Arts and Creative Industries. However, Ministerial Decree of Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia Number 56/M/2022 in 2022 updated the areas of expertise to ten areas. This change covers the number of areas of expertise to ten areas by including the Construction Technology and Property as area of expertise. In addition, the Aircraft Technology expertise program was removed from the spectrum. Moreover, there is adjustment in the names of areas of expertise. For example, Arts and Creative Industries becomes Art and Creative Economy.

2.2 Vocational Teacher Education

In the realm of vocational education, vocational teacher education (VTE) plays a pivotal role in preparing vocational student teachers to teach practical skills and theoretical knowledge in fields like trades, technology, and industry [19]. VTE programs, found in countries such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Estonia, aim to equip future teachers with the skills needed to guide students in vocational training [20], including Indonesia.

Vocational teachers have diverse responsibilities beyond teaching their specific subjects. They integrate general subjects, assist students in preparing for real-world work, handle administrative tasks, and ensure the quality of graduates entering the workforce [21]. Essentially, vocational teacher education ensures that vocational student teachers are equipped to support students in their vocational learning journey, helping them gain practical skills and theoretical understanding for their chosen professions [19].

The quality of vocational education heavily relies on the expertise of vocational teachers who effectively transmit specialized technical knowledge and practical skills to students. Furthermore, these educators play a pivotal role as mentors, offering guidance and support to vocational student teachers as they navigate their career paths. However, it is imperative to address the career development needs of novice vocational teachers, particularly those new to the field. Targeted training programs are essential to enhance the capabilities of these educators, given the demanding nature of their profession [16].

The government plays a critical role in addressing challenges within vocational education, including the availability of qualified teachers [15]. As we discussed earlier,

recent regulations in Indonesia aimed at revitalizing vocational schools have led to an increase in their numbers but have also increased the shortage of teachers, particularly in pivotal skill-based competencies [15]. To address these challenges, vocational teacher education should align with the evolving needs of the workforce and the local community. Moreover, professional preparation should cater to the development of capacities necessary for effective vocational education, including accommodating local decisions and providing adequate resources and experiences [14]. By investing in the professional development of vocational teachers (student teachers), stakeholders be able to create an environment conducive to vocational education, ensuring its relevance and efficacy in preparing students (pupils) for the modern workforce.

3 Method

In this section, we conducted a literature review by applying a semi-systematic or narrative review approach at the domain-based level to map out teachers' experiences in retaining the teaching profession, and the process involved four stages comprising: designing research objectives; methods for searching, collecting, and assessing document quality; analysis process; and writing study results and demonstrating potential contributions [22], [23].

This study describes the impact of teachers' teaching experiences on retaining the teaching profession and provides implications for vocational teachers. The researchers used the term "teacher retention" along with the term "vocational teacher" in searching and gathering article documents on Google Scholar. A total of two articles were quantitatively documented, one article qualitatively and mixed method documented. Due to the limited scope of these results, we expanded our search without specifically including the term "vocational teacher". A total of eight articles were quantitatively documented and five articles qualitatively documented. Therefore, a total of 17 articles related to teacher retention were collected. Consequently, we also examined materials from non-vocational fields since they were more extensively documented, utilizing them for reflection among vocational teachers. Additionally, we attempted to gather information related to the motivations as the basis for student teachers and teachers entering the teaching profession, and elaborated on how they sustain their careers. A total of 23 articles related to motivations for pursuing a teaching career were collected. Furthermore, the mapping of search results can be seen in Table 1. Subsequently, we examined articles that were open access. We reviewed these articles by building themes from research findings related to what contributes to a teacher in retaining their career as an educator and their motivation [23], [24].

Table 1. mapping the search results of articles

Topic	Field	Method	Author(s)
Teacher retention	Vocational	Quantitative	Moser et al. [25] Preechawong et al. [26]
		Qualitative	Hasselquist et al. [3]

Topic	Field	Method	Author(s)
		Mixed method	Tyler et al. [27]
	Non-vocational	Quantitative	Räsänen et al. [2]
			Toropova et al. [4]
			Perryman et al. [7]
			Maready et al. [9]
			Casely-Hayford et al. [10]
			Miller et al. [28]
			Fuller et al. [29]
		Qualitative	Opoku et al. [30]
			Rinke et al. [5]
			Frahm et al. [6]
			Admiraal et al. [31]
			Shuls et al. [32]
			Seelig et al. [33]

4 Results

Our study findings indicate three themes constructed in this paper regarding the impact of teachers' teaching experiences on retaining the teaching profession and its implications for vocational teachers. Firstly, concerning the motivation of student teachers, teachers, and professionals entering into the teaching profession. Secondly, regarding factors for teachers to retain the teaching profession. Lastly, factors for teachers want to leave the teaching profession.

4.1 Motives of Student teachers, Teachers, and Professionals Entering the Teaching Profession

Various studies highlight the importance of motives behind choosing the teaching profession. Previous research findings indicate that although there is consensus on the high social status of the profession, the alignment between the characteristics of the profession and teachers' perceptions of it remains a matter of debate. However, altruistic motives, such as a belief in the importance of the teaching profession, have been shown to be the primary drivers for many individuals to choose and remain in this profession. In fact, some studies suggest that devotion to a higher purpose also serves as a strong motive for the majority of teachers [34], [35]. Savira et al. argue that the motivation of prospective student teachers serves as a mental state to sustain their intention to become teachers, whereas once in the field, they (students who have become teachers) consider income as their orientation [34]. Altruism can be understood in two dimensions: behavioral and psychological. Regarding motivation, altruism entails a desire to improve the welfare of others by sacrificing personal interests. In the behavioral dimension, altruism encompasses all actions that may arise from altruistic motivations [36].

Moreover, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are also present. For example, previous studies utilizing theoretically valid instruments and analytical frameworks such as the Factors Influencing Teaching as Career Choice by Watt et al. [37] yield diverse results, yet consistently point towards intrinsic and altruistic motivations as the most dominant [38], [39], [40], [41], [42], [43], [44], [45], [46], [47]. However, in the context of teachers in Africa, extrinsic motivations were found to be more dominant. This is because it is easier to complete their education programs [48]. Furthermore, the development of instruments outside of that context also tends to show results that lean towards intrinsic and altruistic motives [49], [50], [51], [52]. Previous qualitative research findings suggest a tendency towards intrinsic motivations, with their motives being intertwined [53], [54], [55]. However, in vocational teachers in Australia, Tyler et al found that external factors are more dominant for vocational teachers (generally, vocational teachers in Australia have secondary careers). Furthermore, they explain that vocational teachers are driven to enter the teaching profession because of working conditions, lifestyle balance, and professional development support [27]. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in activities that naturally appeal to or satisfy oneself. Conversely, extrinsic motivation is defined as engaging in activities to achieve specific outcomes. For instance, a student completes their assignment solely out of fear of parental sanctions if they fail to do so, indicating that the action is driven by the desire to avoid the consequence of parental penalties [56].

On the other hand, a study in the Netherlands highlights the selection process undertaken by experts (from the industry) transitioning careers towards vocational education. Although external motivations such as salary and working hours do not play a major role in their decisions, previous work experience becomes a significant factor in influencing their orientation and expectations towards the new career. This study suggests that prior work experience provides a strong foundation for individuals to consider alternative careers, with unique considerations compared to those who choose vocational education careers as their first step in their career [57].

4.2 Factors Supporting Teachers in Retaining the Teaching Profession

Numerous previous quantitative studies have examined factors predicting teacher retention, including interactions with school teachers and peers, job satisfaction, and motivational factors. Firstly, the study by Maready et al. highlights predictors of effective mentoring, identifying the characteristics of mentors and the frequency of mentoring, which contribute to the retention of early-career teachers [9]. Secondly, Casely-Hayford et al. examined by individual factors such as perceived health state, work motivation and collegial support as predictors to teachers' intention to remain in the profession [10].

Thirdly, Miller et al. found that the level of person-organization fit with teaching colleagues is strongest predictor of teacher retention [28]. Fourthly, a study by Moser et al. examined career commitment by using teacher connectivity to gain perspective on teacher retention. Four elements were tested: within-school, other teachers, curricular, and community. Only two factors, school connectivity and teacher connectivity, had a positive effect on career commitment, with these factors predicting

12% of the variance in career commitment [25]. Fifthly, the study by Fuller et al. found that strong leadership and teacher cohesion encourage teachers to stay in their schools [29]. Lastly, the study by Opoku et al. used structural capital and social capital to examine teachers' intention to stay in the profession. Those forms of capital promote teacher retention in the context of rural schools in Ghana [30].

Moreover, regarding teacher retention related to job satisfaction, the study conducted by Toropova et al. found that teacher workload, teacher cooperation, and teacher perception of student discipline in schools were the factors most closely related to teacher job satisfaction. Additionally, it also contributes to the well-being of both teachers and their students [4]. Furthermore, by examining both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, Tyler et al. studied VET educators, and found that new VET educators have a strong intrinsic sense of vocation, with many eager to prepare the next generation of tradespeople. Extrinsically, opportunities to follow industry developments, promotional opportunities, and attractive leave provisions also play a role in motivating educators [27].

Furthermore, numerous of qualitative studies also report on teacher retention, emphasizing the importance of interactions with school-teachers and peers, as well as school support. For example, a study by Seelig et al. found that the centrality of relationships influence teachers' decisions to stay in their rural schools based on their commitment to students, opportunities for leadership and collaboration, connections to community, and personal and professional ties [33]. Moreover, support and development provided by schools, such as supportive administration, a culture of trust and openness, academic freedom, personalized professional development, early-career teacher induction program, and leadership training, contribute to teachers remaining in their profession [31], [32]. However, in rural schools, school leaders must make more efforts and adopt more active strategies to retain early-career teachers due to the constraints within rural education, such as geographic distance from population centers, limited resources, and lower salary and benefit packages [6].

4.3 Factors Leading Teachers to Leave the Teaching Profession

We identified factors from previous studies that might influence teachers' intentions to leave the teaching profession. Various factors may compel individuals currently teaching to consider leaving the profession [2]. First, recent studies highlighting workload as a significant factor influencing teachers to leave the profession. For example, teachers often work 11-hours days, and they sometimes have to complete work at home, taking away their personal time [7]. In addition, the teachers feel overwhelmed trying to fulfill the students' needs. Furthermore, they find that school system to be broken, which disadvantages them, leading to being underpaid and overworked beyond their capacity [2], [5]. Second, teacher burnout is another factor mentioned in previous studies. Burnout, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, contributes to a moderate level of teachers leaving the profession [5], [26]. This burnout results from being overworked. Third, previous studies mention that a lack of commitment leads teachers to leave the profession. For example, teachers with few opportunities to learn and

develop new skills relevant to their future teaching work perceive this lack as a significant reason for their intention to leave, which strengthens over time [2]. In addition, job satisfaction in the teaching profession is related to several factors, including salary, working hours, colleagues' support, training and development opportunities, career promotion, recognition, and workload [26].

Moreover, challenges in interactions perceived by teachers, such as parent-teacher interaction, student-teacher interaction, and peer interaction, lead to turnover intention. For example, teachers feel overwhelmed by parents with high expectation for their children (pupils), classroom problems that result in students (pupils) displaying negative attitudes and misbehavior, and low peer connection due to geographic issues, leading to a perceived lack of connection in the school environment [2], [6]. Furthermore, previous studies mention disillusionment among teachers, which stems from ineffective principals who fail to manage human resources within the school system. This leads to a lack of trust among staff members and creates a divisive work environment [5].

5 Discussion

To date, teachers' motivations have been found to be quite complex. Research in non-vocational fields tends to emphasize altruistic and intrinsic motivations, while research in vocational fields tends to focus on external motivations. However, by understanding the motivations behind choosing the teaching profession, career development over time, and the relationship between formal education and teacher career development, we be able to better appreciate the crucial role of teacher graduates' motivations in strengthening the foundation of education and overall community development.

Considering that personal and contextual factors influence teachers' perceptions of their professional development, it's crucial to also take into account the experiences of teachers during their early teaching careers. Teachers' evaluations of professional development outcomes, whether successful or not, can significantly shape their professional identity perceptions, subsequently influencing their decisions to remain in or exit the teaching profession [58].

Some reasons why teacher graduates enter the teaching profession include wanting to make a difference in their career development, especially in influencing students, previous experiences as educators or tutors or teaching assistants inspiring them to work with young people (students), and even not being accepted in their initial career choices [5]. In addition to altruistic and intrinsic factors, regardless of their experience level in schools (novice, mid-career, or senior teachers) and location (urban or rural teachers), the importance of support from peer teaching demonstrates the most significant impact on teachers' decisions to remain in the teaching profession [3], [4], [6], [9], [10], [25], [28], [29], [30], [31], [32]. Furthermore, the role of school leaders in providing support to teachers becomes another factor for them to sustain their careers in the teaching profession [29], [32], [33]. For example, school leaders ensure the availability of necessary classroom practice equipment, select high-quality staff, and provide social recognition for excellent performance [29].

However, despite these motivating factors, teachers often face significant challenges that can impact their job satisfaction. These challenges include overwhelming workloads, which result in stress and frustration at the school level (for example, ineffective leadership from school principals) as well as being underpaid [2], [5], [6], [7], [26]. Consequently, other studies suggest that managing workloads effectively is a key factor in teacher job satisfaction [4]. Teachers who perceive high level job satisfaction in areas such as salary, working hours, support from colleagues, training and development, career promotion, recognition, and workload are more likely to remain dedicated to their careers [26]. Furthermore, teachers assigned in rural areas are more likely to leave the teaching profession due to limited access to community centers and insufficient resources for teacher development [6].

Thus far, teaching experience significantly impacts perceptions of the teaching profession, and motivations can evolve throughout teachers' careers [51], [59]. Research from Bowling et al. emphasizes the dynamic nature of teachers' belief systems, which underpin their motivation change over time. These beliefs are notably influenced by the teachers' career stage, leading to shifts in focus as they accumulate experience. Nonetheless, a consistent aspect is their determined belief in the importance of students (pupils) motivation, which remains a primary focus throughout all stages of their careers [60]. Additionally, stereotypes related to the teaching profession do not always align with objective reality [53].

6 Conclusion

The career stability of teachers is examined through their direct field experiences. While prior research indicates that initial entry into the teaching profession is often driven by altruistic motives, these experiences can influence the pursuit of alternative careers. This presents new challenges for higher education institutions to prioritize understanding the requirements and motivations of prospective student teachers, particularly in vocational fields, to foster a commitment to the teaching profession. Emphasizing the attainment of qualifications and certifications is crucial for ensuring quality. Simultaneously, recognizing the altruistic and intrinsic motives of prospective student teachers is essential for identifying individuals with a genuine interest and talent in teaching profession. Drawing insights from past teaching experiences and utilizing peer teaching and other support from schools as a reflective tool in vocational settings are important strategies for supporting teachers' careers, particularly those of novice teachers. These strategies aim to mitigate the attrition of vocational teacher graduates from the profession. Further reflection is needed, particularly in Indonesia. Where there is a shortage of vocational teachers. Previous research has acknowledged this shortage [15].

7 Limitation, Recommendation and Future Study

Through this literature review, we provide evidence-based insights into the motivations of teachers who remain in the profession as well as those who leave. However, this

research is limited in demonstrating the impact of teacher experience on their careers, particularly in vocational fields. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the experiences of vocational teachers who stay or leave the teaching profession to provide additional evidence and draw more robust conclusions. Finally, elucidating the phases of teacher career progression is crucial for familiarizing prospective student teachers with the teaching profession, aiming to cultivate interest and dedication towards pursuing it.

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