

Factors Influencing Teachers to Stay in The Profession Case of Albania

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Abstract

Researchers show that exist many factors that influence teachers to remain in the profession. Legal changes happening in Albania during these years have brought some difficulties in the profession of a teacher, raising their workload and a lot of documents to fulfill that in some cases drain the teacher's energy and limit their time to work with children. This article comes as a result of a previous study on searching for factors that influence teachers to choose their profession. The aim of this article is to study why teachers in Albania stay in their profession using semi-structured interviews with 68 (sixty-eight) teachers at different levels. The methodology used in this study consists of a qualitative design. This study highlighted some factors that influence teachers in Albania to stay in their profession such as internal factors (motivation, love for students, job satisfaction, working with children, etc.) and less external factors (sustainability in salary, financial stability, etc.).

Keywords: Teacher, profession, internal factors, external factors.

Introduction

The evolution of a society is based on the available skilled human resources. This is ensured through the education of the whole population (Polat, 2022). Teachers play a crucial role in this process because all professions are taught by the teachers. Therefore, the necessity to have well-qualified teachers is fundamental for the future of the society.

Nowadays we are living in a dynamic, global, and constantly changing and developing world. The progress in the education system has an important impact on the industry and of course developments in the industry force changes in education (Aslan Efe & Hanas, 2022).

Due to legal changes in Albania, the road to becoming a teacher requires more years of studies and training. Thus, to become a teacher, which is a regulated profession, for lower and upper secondary education, students have to finish a master's study program with 120 credits. After the university, they should perform professional practice and then it is obligatory to pass the state exam in order to start a job as a teacher. (Initial education for teachers working in early childhood and school education | Eurydice (europa.eu)).

Reasons to choose teaching as a profession differ from and are related to internal and external factors. Internal factors include the willingness to work with children and to give a contribution to their development, perceiving teaching abilities such as having the qualities of a good teacher, etc., and external factors include job stability, economic reasons, etc. But what motivates teachers to stay in the profession?

In fact, when choosing a profession is done according to personal traits, the likelihood to stay in that profession is greater.

A Plethora of studies shows the motives that drive teachers to enter the profession and while these motives play an important role in the decision to become a teacher, according to Skalvik and Skalvik (2011) occupational well-being is decisive for staying in the profession. And when we talk about occupational well-being, according to Aldrup et al., (2018) it is a result of the interplay between the presence of positive experiences and the absence of negative ones (Lucksnat, et., al., 2022).

Literature review

During the last three decades, a lot of studies have been done on teacher mobility and their intention to leave the job (Ghoulbzouri, 2022). Teachers, which are members of a profession as old as human history (Uslu & Uzgun, 2022) play a crucial role in the successful fulfillment of educational activities in the school (Hoy & Miskel, 2010, as cited in Erturk, 2023), and their dedication to work plays an important role in the whole educational system (Beare, 2001, as cited in Erturk, 2023). During these times, the duties and responsibilities of teachers are increasing very fast. (Turali, 2014 as cited in Celik & Ergin, 2022). A profession is part of the individual identity and every teacher has a teaching identity, that is different from the other teachers this professional identity is formed throughout life since they observe their teachers from childhood till the end of the teacher's time in the profession (Rubio, 2023). The challenges that face the teaching profession nowadays are enormous, and staying in the teaching profession requires an altruistic heart and also a high level of motivation (Medina-Carls, 2020). In fact, the attractiveness of the teaching profession has a high impact on the decision-making stage and is directly connected to career choice motivation (Luchenko & Yurchenko, 2023).

Prather – Jones (2011a & 2011b) as cited in Bacsá-Ban (2021) made a survey among teachers and found 8 elements among factors that contribute to staying in the profession and he divided these factors into two groups. The first one is the group of individual characteristics and the second one is linked with the grants arriving from the institution.

But as cited in Bacsá-Ban (2021), several researchers have highlighted additional factors for staying in a teaching career such as:

- Satisfaction and mental health (Berry, 2012);
- Support received at the beginning of the career (Parker-Ndoye-Imig, 2009);
- Relationship with colleagues, and administrative support;
- Role of helping associated professions (school psychologists) (Gallant, 2009).

These aspects are related to the characteristics of the institution, such as:

- Workload;
- Size of class and group;
- Type of the director of the institution;
- Location of the institution;
- The school atmosphere;
- Role of collegiality;
- Characteristics of the composition of students, etc. (Paksi et al, 2015, as cited in Bacsá-Ban 2021).

A lot of studies show the existence of intrinsic motivations as the key factors in staying in the profession and in the decision to choose the career. Also, studies revealed that career choices were based on 5 factors such as appropriate skills; shaping the future of children/adolescents; the importance of working with them, and also the internal value of the career and the previous teaching/learning experience that has shaped their career choices (Paksi et al, 2015a & 2015b as cited in Bacsá-Ban, 2021).

According to Day (2002) the core elements that make the teachers' professional identity and affect their retention are motivation and commitment, beliefs, personal and professional values, efficacy, and job satisfaction (Saks, et., al., 2021).

In general, early career teachers have altruistic motivations; they have a lot of satisfaction in working with children, helping them to learn new ideas, and have a great desire to teach. (Watt et al, 2012, as cited in Whipp & Salin, 2018). Although the teaching profession may be very stressful and demanding, there are a lot of factors that lead to satisfaction and quality of work-life. And the main reasons that keep teachers in their profession are "general satisfaction", "Professional interaction" and of course "students" (Whipp & Salin, 2018).

Aim of the study

This study aims to examine the reasons why teachers in Albania stay in their profession, despite all the legal changes that have happened over the past years.

Research question

What motivates teachers in Albania to stay in the teaching profession?

Research method

The methodology design used in this study was qualitative design. According to Denzin (1994), qualitative research helps researchers study things in their natural state, trying to give them meaning or to interpret the phenomenon according to the opinion of the people who bring it.

Sample: In this study participated sixty-eight teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools in the city of Tirana. Of them sixty-nine were females and nine were males. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted to understand their reasons for staying in the teaching profession.

Procedure: After taking permission from the directorate of six schools in Tirana, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with forty-two teachers and two focus groups with sixteen teachers. In the beginning, it is explained the aim of the study and is

guaranteed anonymity. Interviews and focus groups are conducted in the period March-April 2023. One interview lasted approximately fifteen minutes and a focus group lasted approximately twenty-five minutes.

Data analysis: Data analysis was carried out based on the interpretative phenomenological approach. Forty-two interviews were transcribed one by one, as also discussions from focus groups. Each of them has been analyzed and then four themes were identified.

Data analyses

After the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, this study revealed some factors that contribute to staying in the teaching profession in Albania, and four important themes are identified: teaching is a mission, deep interest in the teaching profession and the values it holds, perceiving teaching abilities, and salary is low but gives financial stability.

A part of the interviewees believed that internal factors such as the passion to work with children/adolescents, the willingness to contribute to the forming of the children's personalities, and the internal desire to be with children and help them in difficult situations are strong factors that motivate and give them a high level of job satisfaction. Some of them, even though the teacher salary in Albania is low, believed that this profession gives them somehow financial stability and sustainability, and this is the reason why they stay in this profession even from time to time they thought to change it during their career span.

As mentioned above, this study pointed out four important themes, namely:

Teaching is a mission.

Most of the teachers who participated in this study believed that their profession is not exactly a profession. It is more of a mission. We can see this in the transcripts below:

"Teacher is at the top of all professions because teaching in itself is a mission" (T.16, tenure 14 years)

"My mission and my contribution as a teacher are to prepare young generations with the necessary skills to serve my country". (T.34, tenure 32 years)

"I choose this profession with all of my heart, and I do believe that this mission is entrusted to me to give my contribution to the young generation". (T.41, tenure 28 years)

".....We teach all other professionals, so... all the society...." (T.62, tenure 12 years)

Deep interest in the teaching profession and the values it holds

Some of the teachers, even though they have a lot of years in this profession and are all aware of the difficulties with the workload and filling out all the documents that sometimes drain their time and energy, again express a strong interest in the teaching profession.

“There are a lot of factors that make me stay in my teaching profession, but I would like to highlight the fact that this profession is the only one that gives me pleasure and job satisfaction” (T.6, tenure 18 years)

“...In fact, since a was a child, I wanted to become a teacher. I like very much to help children in their way to build their personality. Children are the future of our country and if we want a better future, we must work very hard with our children” (T.19, tenure 28 years)

“What I like most from this profession is that teaching offers the opportunity to contribute to shaping the children’s personality, and at the same time you get great pleasure when you see how children’s mind work and function”. (T.53, tenure 21 years)

“A teacher should work almost all the time with children...” (T.12, tenure 18 years)

“What makes me stay in this profession is related to motivation, I feel I am able to fuel the personality development of the children” (T.64, tenure 16 years)

“I have never thought to change profession, even though I know that recently the teaching profession has become very demanding and there are a lot of documents there to be filled out” (T.37, tenure 22 years)

“I love to transmit to children the love for books and reading books because this is the only way they can be powerful”. (T.9, tenure 15 years)

Perceiving teaching abilities

Teachers who participated in this study believed that they have all the necessary skills to be good teachers and to contribute to the future of the children. Working with children gives them positive vibes.

“What makes me stay in this profession is related to motivation, I feel I am able to fuel the personality development of the children” (T.64, tenure 16 years)

“Managing the class and communicating with adolescents is one of my favourite tasks as a teacher” (T.18, tenure 19 years)

“Hmmm.... what makes me stay in this profession.... No doubt is my energy when I work with children, despite the difficulties in our society nowadays” (T.57, tenure 24 years)

“When I work with children, I feel like I can freely breathe. I know all the difficulties already present today but I can’t do any other job. I am exactly where I should be” (T.36, tenure 29 years)

“Children give me a lot of positive energy. I can’t even imagine my profession without them. I think we are in sync with each other...I can understand them” (T.11, tenure 10 years)

“The best teacher teaches from the heart and not from the books” (T.48, tenure 17 years)

Law salary but gives somehow financial stability

Teachers, the subject of this study, are aware of the law salary but they also are aware of the reality, and even though the teaching profession is demanding they think that this job somehow gives them financial security.

“.....The salary isn’t rewarding, but... I am glad for my personal motivation in working with children” (T.27, tenure 11 years)

“The government should have appreciated more teachers, but having regard to the reality, the teacher salary gives a sense of stability and a feeling of financial security.....” (T.47, tenure 19 years)

“.....but, hmmm....the salary of a teacher should be more motivated....” (T.15, tenure 8 years)

Conclusions

This study highlighted some factors that influence teachers in Albania to stay in their profession such as internal factors (motivation, love for students, job satisfaction, working with children, etc.) and less external factors (sustainability in salary, financial stability, etc.). On the one hand, the passion to work with children/adolescents, the willingness to contribute to the forming of the children’s personalities, and the internal desire to be with children and help them in difficult situations are strong factors that motivate teachers in Albania to stay in the profession and give them a high level of job satisfaction. They, fortunately, believe in their capability and willingness to work with children because the best compensation for them is a bright future for the new generation and for our country.

On the other hand, even though this profession is very demanding, and the salary is low, this profession gives them somehow financial stability and sustainability in salary, and this is the reason why they stay in this profession even from time to time they thought about changing it during their career span.

Limitations of the study

- Lack of sincerity in responding.

- Sixty-eight teachers do not generalize all the teachers in Albania.

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